

Call for abstracts

**Conference «Are We Owned? A Multidisciplinary and Comparative  
Conversation on Intellectual Property in the Algorithmic Society»**

University of Stirling, Friday 8<sup>th</sup> October 2021

Intellectual Property (IP) plays a crucial role in allowing uses of new technologies that are detrimental to society and preventing beneficial uses. IP is everywhere and lends itself to monopolise virtually anything. We may think we own 'our' phone, but it factually belongs to the holders of the copyright on the code running on it, the manufacturers owning its design and the patents on how it works, as well as trademarks on logos, on the way you swipe, etc. What happens when it is no longer just computers and phones to be embedded with software and other IP-protected digital content? In an Internet-of-Things world, these proprietary smart objects are everywhere: in our bedroom, in our bathroom, in our body. Our behaviour becomes heavily restricted by those Terms of Service, Privacy Policies, End-User License Agreements, etc. that cover every aspect of the things we thought we owned. We have become digital tenants, not owning or controlling any object and data around us. To the point that, one can argue, that we no longer own: *we are owned* (Mulligan 2015; Fairfield 2017).

This **in-person conference** is generously **funded by the Modern Law Review**, accordingly there will be no registration fee and the Review has the right of first refusal for papers presented at the conference. Confirmed speakers include Professor Christina Mulligan (Vice Dean of Brooklyn Law School), Professor Marco Ricolfi (Co-Director of the Nexa Center for Internet & Society, University of Turin), Associate Professor Dr Matthew David (Department of Sociology, Durham University), and Amy Thomas (Research Associate at CREATE / University of Glasgow).

We welcome **300-word abstracts** on **any topic related to IP in the algorithmic society, including:**

- Can AI create art and other copyright materials? Is there anything else beyond the copyright-public domain binary? Is Brexit an opportunity to abandon the “author’s own intellectual creation” originality standard?
- One of the fundamental principles in IP law is that software “as such” cannot be patented. If every physical object becomes embedded with software, would this mean that every software becomes patentable?
- A combination of IP rights, contracts, and technological protection measures is allowing companies to ‘own’ our data. Is this justified? How can we counter ‘data dispossession’? Is antitrust the solution?
- Under the General Data Protection Regulation, data subjects do not have a right to access their personal data if this adversely affects third parties’ IP rights. How will this provision play out in practice?
- Can a strategy centred on the ‘commons’ and on openness be the solution to the problems of IP in the algorithmic society?

Postcolonial, queer, feminist, posthuman, and critical perspectives are particularly welcome. In order to ensure diversity of speakers, **three “widening access” bursaries** are available to cover for travel and accommodation costs of colleagues from underrepresented groups (BAME), from remote communities, early career academics (including PhD students), and other colleagues from disadvantaged groups (e.g. precarious workers). Please, do specify in your submission whether you qualify for a bursary.

**Deadline for the abstracts: Monday 1<sup>st</sup> March 2021**

Date of the conference: Friday 8<sup>th</sup> October 2021

Venue: Stirling Court Hotel

Abstracts can be sent to Associate Professor [Guido Noto La Diega](#)