Dear colleagues,

We are delighted to invite you to submit an abstract for an upcoming stream at the 2025 Critical Legal Conference (4th-6th September, University of Exeter) on *Law and Process* (see below for stream description).

The deadline for submissions is **1st August 2025.** The conference is **in-person only.**

More information on the conference venue, other streams, registration, etc., can be found here: <https://sites.exeter.ac.uk/clc2025/>

**Law and Process**

Convenors: Kyriaki (Korina) Pavlidou, Jessica Elias, Clair Quentin, and Conor Heaney

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Dominant modes of thought presuppose *things*, made out of matter, bounded in space, persisting through time in their composition and arrangement, and complying (or failing to comply) with a set of putative norms that govern the categories to which *things* belong. Those modes of thought are substance-ontological, and substance ontology is friendly to capitalism, white supremacy, ableism, cisheteropatriarchy, and other forms of domination and oppression. It underpins the commodity form,*homo economicus*, essentialised notions of race and sex, disabling conceptions of the body, and comparable exclusionary norms of all kinds.

This stream foregrounds alternative modes of thought which, grouped under the heading ‘process ontologies’, view *things* as abstractions from *processes*. To take for example the land and the sea – the two ‘things’ whose interrelation forms the inspiration for the theme of this conference – these ‘things’ may be better understood not as things at all but as abstractions from entangled geological, tectonic, hydrological, social-ecological, political, technological etc. processes. It is in view of the amenability of such (as it were) ‘natural’ phenomena to a process-ontological outlook that the natural sciences provide process ontologies with perhaps their most readily appreciable application. No more so is this the case, moreover, than in the science of that paradigmatically processual phenomenon, life itself. And indeed philosophy of biology is the discipline of one of today’s foremost exponents of process ontology, the University of Exeter’s own John Dupré.

The purpose of this stream is to share the uses that may be made of processual thinking/practice by critical legal scholars.

How might concepts of flux, of becoming, of process, be of use in understanding the juridical?  How have process thinkers historically conceived of law within a broader process metaphysics and how can we situate these contributions within the history of legal thought? What phenomena emerge when law interacts with physical, chemical, geological, biological, reproductive, and dissipative processes? What theoretical tools may be drawn from the natural sciences, insofar as those sciences seek to understand a universe in constant motion, for use in critical legal scholarship? What does the impossibility of stasis – bearing in mind such inevitable features of existence as mortality and ever-increasing entropy – mean for the kinds of fixity and determinacy that law seemingly calls for? If, as process ontology suggests, there is no such thing as a *thing*, what might that mean for legal scholarship and for human social organisation more generally?  Can (or should) process ontology be translated into a language legible to our political and legal institutions or are these institutions indelibly attached to substantialist notions? If we as legal scholars, like life itself, are to resist substance ontology, what does that mean for the legal form, legal relations, legal persons? Is the juridical an island of substance ontology in an ocean of flux, and if so what may be found by scholarly beachcombers on its shores?

If you have any questions, queries, or would like a chat in relation to this stream and whether or not your work would fit, please do not hesitate to drop me a line and I will be happy to discuss further.

Looking forward to receiving your abstracts!

All the best,

Jessica

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