



The 17th Annual Workshop of the  
[International Society for the History and Theory of Intellectual Property](#) (ISHTIP)  
will be hosted by Faculty of Law, University of São Paulo, Brazil.

### **Call for Papers**

### **Intellectual Property and Democracy**

**25-26 June 2026**

Faculty of Law, University of São Paulo (USP)

In recent years, fundamental elements that had been taken for granted in western liberal democracies appear to be in retreat: the rule of law, separation of powers, and the protection of individual rights, such as freedom of opinion and expression or the right to non-discrimination. Concomitantly, there has been a rise in scholarship in the last decade that have critiqued the proliferating discourse of human rights as being a ruse, which disguises a political reality beset by problems that are social and material in their origins and which cannot be addressed adequately by a rights-centered discourse with an aim to uphold liberal democracy. Beyond these two developments, the very value of democracy is being questioned whilst authoritarian, nationalistic and racist tendencies are on the rise globally.

Historically, western modern intellectual property forms that are now codified in many legal jurisdictions, be they democratic or not, have arisen together with liberal democratic polities, both at domestic and international levels. The idea of a “patent republic” in France and the United States is a conceptualisation of these parallel developments. Intellectual property, both legal and non-legal forms, incorporate assumptions and norms about the public and private, about the role of government, and desired political outcomes. Whilst intellectual property may be construed as constituting a natural property right tied to a polity, historical studies have shown how intellectual property was used as techniques of political control, some of which were undemocratic in nature, such as limitations on freedom of expression. Intellectual property rights have also not applied equally across all jurisdictions at various times or in an equitable manner. Studies in critical intellectual property, as well as in anthropology and sociology, analysed how they have acted differentially across different persons and jurisdictions: what may seem like a badge of citizenship in one country will be the unwanted loss of political self-determination and identity in another.

This workshop aims to take stock of the relationship between intellectual property and democracy – both in its norms, rhetoric, and effect – by bringing together interdisciplinary scholarship which explores this relationship historically and theoretically.

The workshop invites reflections on how intellectual property rights have been shaped by certain democratic ideals and ideologies, such as shifting notions of citizenship and ideas of property, as well as influencing them in turn. It also invites critical explorations of incompatibilities of intellectual property norms and practices with democracies and their economic organisations. Beyond the common understanding of patents, trademarks, copyrights, and other intellectual property as techniques of commodification, the workshop welcomes historical and theoretical analyses of intellectual property based on other forms of political organisation than western liberal market-based democracies.

Topics and questions might include, but are not limited to:

- IP and political representation
- IP and/in authoritarian regimes
- IP as/against human right
- IP and elite formation
- IP and inequality
- IP and non-western cosmologies/polities
- The role of participatory democracy in the framing of IP
- Citizen movements and IP
- IP and lobbying
- Nexus of IP and political theories
- IP and democracy in the global south

### **Guidelines for contributors**

Papers that address this call from historical or theoretical perspective are welcome from scholars from all disciplines. As always, we are happy to consider any other paper which is within ISHTIP's scope. Established and junior scholars are encouraged to submit papers. There will be a session devoted to presentations from doctoral students.

Proposers should be aware that authors (except for PhD students) do not present their own papers at ISHTIP workshops. Rather a discussant presents a summary and critique of a paper to facilitate an interdisciplinary discussion. To allow this, complete papers should be submitted by 15 May 2026.

Please submit a paper abstract of no longer than 300 words and a two-page CV to Vitor Ido, Gabriel Galvez-Behar, and Hyo Yoon Kang [e-mail: [vitor.ido@usp.br](mailto:vitor.ido@usp.br); [gabriel.galvez-behar@univ-lille.fr](mailto:gabriel.galvez-behar@univ-lille.fr); [hyo-yoon.kang@warwick.ac.uk](mailto:hyo-yoon.kang@warwick.ac.uk)] to be considered.

**Date for submission of proposals:** 22 December 2025

**Expected date for notification of acceptance:** 30 January 2026

**Date for submission of full papers:** 15 May 2026

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**ISHTIP Executive Committee ([ishtip.org](http://ishtip.org)):** Gabriel Galvez-Behar, Université de Lille; Hyo Yoon Kang, University of Warwick; Vitor Henrique Pinto Ido, University of São Paulo; Kathy Bowrey, University of New South Wales, Sydney; Jose Bellido, University of Kent; David Pretel, Centro de Ciencias Humanas y Sociales (CCHS), Madrid.