

## **THE STATE VIS À VIS ECONOMIC AND PRIVATE POWERS IN THE DIGITAL AGE**

CAGLIARI, 3-4 October 2025

### **CALL FOR PANELS AND PAPERS**

Over the past three decades, technological evolution has profoundly reshaped the architecture of global powers, triggering many changes in society and in the life of institutions. In particular, the spread of the Internet has led to the growth of new entities, so-called G-techs, which have progressively acquired a dominant role in the world and have become de facto supranational actors. These new economic actors are characterized by a financial and influential capacity that sometimes exceeds that of many nation-states. Furthermore, we cannot overlook the conditioning of public power by private powers, so much so that the problem no longer appears to be merely to regulate and limit the latter, but to defend public power from the risk of being “caught” within the net of private powers. In addition, these companies have progressively built their own governance structures, dispute resolution systems, as well as embryonic forms of “private jurisdiction”. This is the case, for example, of the dispute resolution function, which can be carried out by alternative remedies to litigation (this happens with, say, e-Bay workers) or by ad hoc bodies (think about the Facebook Oversight Board).

The rise of large transnational private powers poses a systemic challenge to state apparatuses, which are forced, on one side, to rethink traditional legal categories in the face of a technological expansion that transcends national borders, and, on the other, to admit that they cannot individually frame and regulate the issues that arise from the very wide spread of new technologies. In light of these reasons, an outlook of the relationship between regulation and innovation – considering not only the “Draghi report”, but also the U.S. President's Executive Order of January 23, 2025, aimed at strengthening American leadership in the digital economy – appears to be increasingly problematic. In addition, the presence of different models of regulation - the laissez-faire model of the United States, the authoritarian model of China, the rights-oriented model of the European Union - does not facilitate forms of oversight of these actors.

In addition to these problems, there are those related to the relationship between the State and the providers of new technologies, including models of artificial intelligence. Indeed, new accountability mechanisms and new modes of public-private relations are established, and we are necessarily called to face new issues: privacy protection, the management of special categories of personal data, constraints on freedom of communication and freedom of thought, the protection of fundamental freedoms and rights, the de-regulation of productive activities, but also the problem concerning working conditions in these new digital ecosystems.

This scenario deeply questions contemporary legal theory: what new forms of legitimacy and control can be constructed? How to redefine the relationship between public institutions and digital economic powers? How can public law intercept global phenomena that escape traditional classifications? What is the relationship between the state and digital powers? How are they regulated and with what limits? Who are the competent judges?

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These issues are further connected to the more general one regarding the development of the digital State: in what ways do the new technologies influence the exercise of public powers? And with what limitations? In which areas of administrative activity is artificial intelligence mostly used?

All of this raises additional questions about the very concept of the State: can new technologies give rise to new forms of governance or, at the very least, to new political entities centered around the management of data and networks?

The aim of the sixth conference of the Italian Chapter of ICON•S is not only to explore these crucial dynamics, but also to foster a debate about:

- The transformations of the State in the digital ecosystem
- The new forms of regulation of global economic powers
- The emergence of models of public and private responsibility
- The protection of fundamental rights in technological contexts
- Working conditions and the rights of digital workers
- Possible post-statal institutional architectures
- Crimes committed in the Internet or through the Internet
- Jurisdictional issues

These are just some of the issues that will be discussed at the University of Cagliari on 3 and 4 October 2025.

**Submission of proposals:** abstracts (in **Italian or English**) of individual papers (maximum 500 words) or fully formed panels (maximum 1000 words) must be submitted by **3 April 2025** via the submission form at <https://www.icons-italia.it/modulo-di-invio-proposte-submission-form/>.

Panels **must** include **at least 4** and **no more than 5** participants, including the Chair or panel moderator. This will allow a rational use of time and space. Under penalty of exclusion, panels **must** also respect gender balance. It is encouraged that the composition of the panels ensures diversity in terms of geographic, institutional, and disciplinary backgrounds. The aim is to foster as much as possible a dialogue and an exchange of different ideas and perspectives. Individual presentations as well as entire panels may take place either in Italian or in English. The submission of a final conference paper is not required.

To encourage the widest participation, also this year there is a limit to the number of panels to which each participant can take part in: each participant may take part in a maximum of two panels as speaker (either as sole author or as co-author) and may participate in no more than one additional panel as Chair.

**Selection:** The outcome of the selection process will be communicated to participants by **5 May 2025**.

ICON•S ITALIAN CHAPTER – SIXTH CONFERENCE

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For those who wish, the final versions of the contributions may be published, subject to the respective evaluation process, in *Diritto pubblico*, *Quaderni costituzionali*, *Rivista trimestrale di diritto pubblico*, *Istituzioni del Federalismo*, *Italian Journal of Public Law*, nel *Forum dei Quaderni costituzionali*, nella collana degli *IRPA Working Papers*.

February 3, 2025