Postdoctoral Research Position

in Legal & Constitutional Theory

The **European Research Council** (ERC) project "*Blockchain Gov*", directed by Primavera De Filippi, is looking for a postdoc researcher with expertise in legal philosophy, legal theory, constitutional and political theory, to investigate the **governance of blockchain** networks and decentralized applications, focusing in particular on analyzing the interplay between the "***rule of law***" and the "***rule of code***".

Blockchain Gov

Blockchain Gov is an ***interdisciplinary*** research project that will study the impact of blockchain technology on new and existing governance systems, and its consequences for ***legitimacy*** and ***trust***. The project is a 5 year long (2021-2026) EU-funded (ERC grant of €2M), hosted at the *Centre National de Recherche Scientifique* (France) and the *European University Institute* (Italy), with Principal Investigator and advisors from the *Berkman Klein Center at Harvard University*.

The project will investigate the ***governance*** of existing blockchain systems, and analyze the ***power dynamics*** at play within these systems. This will be done through the study of formal and informal governance practices in existing blockchain communities, analyzed in light of legal and political theory. The project relies on both an **empirical** and **theoretical** approach, with a view to develop a theoretical framework for distributed governance. It will explore the use of blockchain technology to support new models of distributed governance characterized by more decentralized and participatory decision-making, greater transparency and accountability. Drawing from these insights, the project will elaborate new distributed governance practices for blockchain communities that will be tested and implemented by selected pilot communities. Finally, the project will assess and support the adoption of the new governance models at the ***community level***, at the ***institutional level*** and at the ***global governance level.***

Blockchain Gov is building an **interdisciplinary research team** comprising legal scholars, social and political scientists, who will work in close collaboration with computer scientists and blockchain engineers. All team members are expected to already have acquired a proper understanding of blockchain technology. All should be interested in exploring the potential that blockchain technology offers in the field of distributed governance, while nonetheless maintaining a **critical stance towards the technology.**

Job Description

The scope of the post-doc position comprises the following research activities:

- **Blockchain as a source of trust and confidence**

  The post-doc will explore the multiple meanings of "trust" in different disciplines: trust as *security*, trust as *relationship*, trust as the flipside of *risk*, etc. Drawing from the distinction between "*trust*" and "*confidence*"—as theorized by Luhmann and others—the researcher will investigate the impact of blockchain technology on both confidence and trust and the inherent limitations of a "trustless" technology.

- **Blockchain for institutional governance**

  The post-doc will explore how public/permissionless or private/permissioned blockchains can serve as a "***regulatory technology***", using technological guarantees to achieve specific regulatory or policy objectives (*e.g.* promoting more transparency, auditability and accountability). Building upon the empirical data and the theoretical analysis of the research, the researcher will explore the use of blockchain-based mechanisms as a means to ***increase confidence*** in the information system of public or private institutions, with a view to ***restore confidence and trust*** in these institutions. The post-doc will also investigate new ways of embedding constitutional constraints into the technological fabric of these information systems, to promote a greater degree of compliance between the *rule of code* and the *rule of law.*

- **Blockchain technology and regulatory equivalence**

  Drawing from the notion of *functional equivalence* (Polanski 2006) and *principle-based regulation* (Black 2008), the researcher will explore the extent to which the affordances and constraints of these blockchain-based solutions can be regarded as functionally equivalent to the requirements enshrined in existing laws and regulations (*e.g.* formalities and reporting obligations) and whether this may justify a reduced regulatory burden for those that incorporate these solutions into their information system.

The post-doc researcher will also be expected to undertake the following tasks:

- **Guide and support the work of doctoral students** in investigating (a) the operations of both formal and informal governance structures in blockchain communities; (b) how blockchain technology can serve as a regulatory technology, using technological means to achieve specific regulatory or policy objectives.
- Contribute **to the drafting of a monograph** and an **edited volume.**
- **Collaborate** with a **multidisciplinary team** (legal scholars, social researchers, data scientists, designers, computer scientists) to **support pilots communities** who will experiment with new governance structures.
- **Present** the main outcomes of the research in **international conferences**, and **publish** in leading research journals.
- **Maintain** fluent communication with international academic groups, blockchain projects and the developer community to facilitate collaboration and to promote cross-pollination.

Benefits

Flexible working-hours:

- The researcher will be able to work remotely, with regular face to face meetings.
- The research will be managed with a goal-oriented approach, focusing more on deliverables than actual working hours.

Career opportunities:

- International recognition
- Publications in high impact journals
- Organization of seminars and conferences at CERSA/CNRS or EUI
- Collaboration with an international network of leading researchers at Harvard, Berkeley, MIT, etc

Remuneration:

- Gross monthly salary: €2000 to €5000 for 0-3 years of postdoctoral experience. Note: for more experienced profiles, salary may surpass the mentioned range.
- Funding for visiting fellowships, conferences, and professional trainings

Requirements

The candidate will need to fulfill **at least the following requirements**:

- **PhD** (completed or planning to be submitted in less than a year) in Legal Philosophy, Legal Theory, Constitutional Theory, Political Theory or related fields
- **Demonstrated interest and pre-existing knowledge** in several of the following topics: blockchain technology, peer-to-peer technologies, distributed governance, commons-based peer-production, science and technology studies, Internet governance and politics.
- **Fluency in English**, excellent writing and presentation skills
- Be based in Paris (France) and/or available for face to face meetings once every two weeks, when the current pandemic allows
- **Ability** to work in multidisciplinary teams, autonomy, critical thinking

In addition to the eligibility requirements, selection criteria will consider the applicant's academic record, research plan, research motivation, and knowledge/experience in the research areas of the project. Additional points will be given to any combination of the following requirements:

- **Research publications** in relevant conferences and/or journals
- Active or passive **participation in existing blockchain communities** or projects
- Demonstrated interest and previous experience with **decentralized architectures**
- Experience in **agile methodologies**, research projects and multidisciplinary teams.
- **Teamwork and interpersonal skills**, collaboration, empathy and adaptation
- Interest or experience in social movements, activism, commons-oriented initiatives, co-ops, and/or open collaborative communities
- Underrepresented minorities in the blockchain space to increase the team diversity

Application Instructions

Interested candidates should submit the following document:

(1) **CV** (max 3 pages)

(2) **Research Plan**, with a statement of the applicant's ideas on the research questions, theoretical framework, and methodological approach (max 3 pages).

(3) Two **Letters of Recommendation**: referees can send the letter of reference directly.

(4) **Letter of Motivation** describing the applicant's reasons to apply for this job, research experience, career plans, and available start date.

Applicants are encouraged to apply as soon as possible, at the latest by **March 15th 2022**, in order to start early **April 2022**. The position is renewable yearly for up to 2.5 years.

Please submit your complete application by email (only PDF files —other formats will not be read—excluding letters of recommendation) to:

Primavera De Filippi — pdefilippi+jobs@cyber.harvard.edu

All applications and communications should include in the subject "ERC position: Postdoc".

Informal enquiries are welcome.

Shortlisted candidates will be invited to an interview with the selection board in late **March 2022.**

Decisions will be made by late **March 2022**.