

On the Concept and Representation of Constitutions in the Atlantic World

The thesis of the Atlantic Revolution is meant to serve the conference as a starting point for a comparative perspective upon constitutional cultures. Constitutions, in their enactment, set up a new order, but at the same time lay claim to future legitimacy. Constitutions can only do justice to their central tasks of legitimizing and integrating political communities and their institutions if their normative rules and offered meanings are accepted and practiced, if communication about fundamental values and patterns of behavior takes place between wielders of power and citizens. This permanent process of conveying and securing the basic patterns of social-political arrangement and loyalty has a subjective dimension that is conveyed through symbols.

Even and especially in a modern constitutional state – which represents in the first place a legal phenomenon – a constitution is also just as much a matter of a symbolic order. In the newer constitutional-historical and cultural-historical discussion, this is referred to as constitutional culture. The concepts of political order and the guiding ideas inscribed into the constitution are not self-evident; they must be conveyed symbolically. In order for the constitution to develop a binding force it first requires a conceptual community of citizens in which the central ideas of political order are identified with the constitution itself. The importance of this dimension becomes especially clear in the negative example of the failure of a constitutional order. But it can also be seen when parties in political conflict appeal to the constitution despite contrary goals and reasons, where the constitution thus becomes a unifying symbol.

Place and Time:

May 12th - 14th, 2011
Agora Tagungshotel, Münster
Bismarckallee 11b
Seminarraum 1 a|b on the first floor

Registration:

Registration is free but to register, please email ConstitutionalCultures@uni-muenster.de by May 2nd, 2011

Organisation:

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Cover Illustration:
Allegory of the Mexican Constitution

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CONSTITUTIONAL CULTURES

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The United States Capitol in Washington, D.C.



Voting for the president of the French Republic



Obelisk of the first Bavarian Constitution



The French Constitution



Front page of the first Mexican Constitution

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Agora Tagungshotel, Münster

Introduction: Constitutional Cultures

- 14:30-15:00** **Welcome**
Silke Hensel and Hans-Ulrich Thamer (Münster)
- 15:00-15:35** **The Constitution as Symbolic Order: On what "Constitutional Culture" Means**
Hans Vorländer (Dresden)
- 15:40-16:15** **Hispanic Constitutionalism and the Federal Republic of Mexico**
Jaime E. Rodríguez O. (Irvine)
- 16:20-16:50** **Coffee**
- 16:50-17:25** **The Imperial Crisis of the Spanish Monarchy**
José M. Portillo Valdés (Vitoria / Mexico City)
- 17:30-18:05** **Competing Strands of French Constitutional History in the First Half of the 19th Century**
Klaus Deinert (Wuppertal)
- 18:10-18:40** **Section Discussion**
Discussant: Andreas Biefang (Berlin)



Oath of Louis-Philippe before the peers and deputies

Representation of Constitutions: Constitutional Bodies and Celebrations I

- 9:30-9:55** **Representations of Competing Political Orders: Constitutional Festivities in Mexico City (1824-1846)**
Katrin Dirksen (Münster)
- 10:00-10:25** **Representing the Constitution in the U.S. Capitol Building: Freedom and Slavery**
Vivien Green Fryd (Nashville)
- 10:30-11:00** **Coffee**
- 11:00-11:25** **Spatial and Temporal Dimensions of Institution Building: The Congress of Michoacán (1823-1835)**
Sebastian Dorsch (Erfurt)
- 11:30-11:55** **Failing to Construct a Lasting Order? Constitutions and Constitutional Bodies in Yucatán (1823-1839)**
Ulrike Bock (Münster)
- 12:00-13:00** **Section Discussion**
Discussant: Annick Lempérière (Paris)
- 13:00-14:30** **Lunch**

Constitutional Bodies and Celebrations II

- 14:30-14:55** **Celebrate the Constitution: Political Culture in France during the Long 19th Century**
Armin Owzar (San Diego / Münster)
- 15:00-15:25** **Symbolic Politics and the Visualization of the Constitutional Order during the First French Republic (1792-1799)**
Christina Schröer (Freiburg)
- 15:30-16:00** **Coffee**
- 16:00-16:25** **Allegorical Embodiments of the Ideal Constitutional Political Order in Early Southern German Constitutionalism (1800-1850)**
Martin Knauer (Münster)
- 16:30-17:30** **Section Discussion**
Discussant: Hans-Ulrich Thamer (Münster)

The People as Sovereign: Elections

- 9:30-9:55** **Representation, Suffrage and Political Order in the River Plate during the Era of the Revolutions**
Marcela Ternavasio (Rosario)
- 10:00-10:25** **The Symbolic Meaning of Electoral Processes: Mexico in the Early 19th Century**
Silke Hensel (Münster)
- 10:30-11:00** **Citizenship without Democracy: The Culture of Elections in France under the Constitutional Monarchy (1814-1848)**
Malcolm Crook (Keele)
- 11:00-11:30** **Coffee**
- 11:30-11:55** **"Apples of Gold in Frames of Silver?" Symbolic Politics, Suffrage Laws, and Electoral Practices in the United States of North America (1770-1880)**
Christian Müller (Münster)
- 12:00-13:00** **Section Discussion**
Discussant: Ulrich Mücke (Hamburg)



The laying of the foundation stone of the constitutional column in Gaibach