

**Yvonne Kleinmann**

## How to narrate constitutional history beyond the state? The case of Poland

### The problem

It is unclear what the content of a constitutional history of Poland actually is. This is due to long disruptions of Poland's statehood in the 19th and 20th centuries, but also to different conceptions of constitution, which poses the challenge of analysing the constitutional development of a constantly reconfiguring polity that was intensely entangled with early modern European and North American constitutionalism as well as with the European empires of the 19th century and the post-war Soviet bloc.

### Core interest

Constitutional historiography is predominantly normative and national, which is plausible from the perspective of legal pragmatism. However, postmodern historiography has to consider other questions as well. My aim is to expand Polish constitutional historiography with the questions and methods of cultural history, the sociology of law and *histoire croisée*: what or whom do constitutions represent? How do they come into being? What is their narrative? How can they be described in terms of living law?

### global dis:connect

Polish constitutionalism from its early modern beginnings was entangled with Western European and North American constitutional thought and practice. Nevertheless, political actors also referred to Polish-Lithuanian legal traditions. Similarly, Poland slowly adopted Soviet ideology after World War II, while nationalism was still active and the democratic constitution of the interwar period partly remained in force. In both cases global connectedness faced resistance – a process demanding close analysis.

### Preliminary results

The construction principles of several Polish constitutions and externally imposed constitutions could be worked out systematically, which is an indispensable precondition for a typology. On a methodological level, the expansion of the source base has produced new insights. By integrating drafts and provisional constitutions in addition to constitutional texts into the analysis, constitution-making receives the emphasis it deserves. Through interpretation of legal iconography, Polish constitutionalism could be directly linked to revolutionary France in 1789.

