

Monday, 16.05.2022; 4:15 - 6:00 pm CEST

Hendrik Hartog, Princeton University:

Jack Robbins and the Boy Problem in Progressive Era America

Abstract:

The talk will reflect about the relationships between criminal law and policing, on the one hand, and property law, on the other, focusing on the historical case of Jack Robbins, something of a confidence man as well as a master of advertising. He also focused public attention on "the boy problem," which was a pervasive and real concern in early twentieth century America. His story offers an interesting counter-narrative to the histories that have been written about Progressive reform and the development of the juvenile court and other carceral reforms of the early twentieth century. In 1914 and 1915, he created "The Boys' Brotherhood Republic" in Chicago as an alternative to the reform schools and other juvenile court related institutions of the city. For the next thirty plus years, the BBR would be an institution run by the boys, from which adult control was rejected. Robbins's critiques and writings offer an early twentieth century preview of arguments of today's police and prison abolitionists. This will be a story that highlights dissent and conflict.

Bio:

Hendrik "Dirk" Hartog is the Class of 1921 Bicentennial Professor in the History of American Law and Liberty, Emeritus at Princeton University, where he taught from 1993-2019. For more than a decade, he was the director of Princeton University's Program in American Studies. Hartog has spent his scholarly life obsessed with the difficulties and opportunities that come with studying how broad political and cultural themes have been expressed in everyday legal conflicts. He has worked in a variety of areas of American legal history: on the history of city life, on the history of constitutional rights claims, on the history of marriage, on the history of slavery and emancipation, and on the historiography of legal change and of legal history. He is the author of *Public Property and Private Power: the Corporation of the City of New York in American Law, 1730-1870* (1983), *Man and Wife in America: a History* (2000), *Someday All This Will Be Yours: A History of Inheritance and Old Age* (2012), and *The Trouble with Minna: A Case of Slavery and Emancipation in the Antebellum North* (2018). He has been awarded a variety of national fellowships and lectureships, and for a decade he coedited *Studies in Legal History*, the book series of the American Society for Legal History. In 2016, he was made an Honorary Fellow of the American Society for Legal History. Before coming to Princeton, he taught at the University of Wisconsin Law School (1982-92) and at the Indiana University (Bloomington) School of Law (1977-82).