



UNIVERZA V LJUBLJANI  
Pravna fakulteta



Vabilo na predavanje

## *Heredity: The Legal Roots of a Biological Concept*

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Univerza Cambridge

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## **Povzetek**

My presentation will explore, from a *longue durée* perspective, the various practices, standards, and architectures of hereditary knowledge and the “spaces” which they formed by their respective historical conjunctions in the Early Modern period. No general concept of heredity was underlying the discourse of the life sciences (including medicine, anthropology and the moral sciences) in the Early Modern period and such a concept was only slowly emerging in the first half of the nineteenth century. Remarkably, while few connections existed between the legal sphere and notions of biological inheritance before the nineteenth century, the biological concept of heredity derived its meaning from very specific legal concepts of property transmission. Biological heredity was not concerned with the constancy of species form, but rather with the transmission of variation at a sub-specific level. As long as such patterns coincided with the distribution of life over locally circumscribed environments, such patterns were readily explainable by the permanence of ties between organisms and their “natural places”. In these cases, it seemed to be the place, which, in a sense, “inherited” its inhabitants and impressed its character upon them. It was only when such ties were dissolved to open up a variety of relationships between forms, places, and modes of transmission, that a need arose for a complex metaphor as heredity (in its complex legal sense) to be inserted in order to account for the proliferating phenomena.