

Laudation

For the Jean Blondel PhD Prize 2024

The Jury has this year chosen to award the prize to Lukas Schmid of Goethe University Frankfurt.

The jury had the following to say:

Lukas Schmid's PhD dissertation, titled *Three Essays on the Legitimate Authority of Immigration Control*, represents a groundbreaking contribution to contemporary political theory. Defended with distinction, it challenges conventional approaches to the ethics of state control over immigration by shifting the focus from justice to legitimacy.

Lukas's work is highly innovative in extending the normative debate about immigration policies. By doing so, he strengthens the bridge between normative and empirical analyses in political science. This bridging of theory and practice in his work not only enriches scholarly debate but also provides a grounded and practical framework for assessing state authority in the real world.

Lukas's work is notable for its immanent critique of migration control, utilising the very norms and standards that underpin the practice to reveal its limitations and inconsistencies. Rather than simply questioning whether states have the moral right to control their borders, Lukas interrogates whether such control is legitimate – whether it can claim authority that justifies obedience or non-interference on the part of either societal actors or migrants themselves. This nuanced approach is not only theoretically sophisticated but also deeply relevant to the real-world challenges that states face in the governance of migration.

The dissertation is organised into three essays, each unpacking different aspects of state legitimacy in immigration control. Through rigorous argumentation, Schmid demonstrates how states often fail to meet the criteria for legitimate authority when exercising control over immigration. Two essays critically examine the legitimacy of states' authority over would-be immigrants, particularly when exclusion is enforced through coercion. The third essay extends this critique to international agreements, arguing that attempts by states to involve other nations in their migration control efforts can sometimes produce binding agreements that lack legitimacy.

The Jury members were particularly impressed by the innovative nature of Lukas's arguments and the methodological rigor with which he developed them. His work transcends abstract speculation, grounding political theory in the practical realities of how institutions operate. This makes his dissertation not only an essential reference for scholars in the field but also a valuable resource for policymakers and practitioners grappling with the ethical complexities of immigration control.

In sum, the dissertation is a significant achievement that challenges us to rethink the foundations of state authority in the context of immigration. It is a work that will leave a lasting mark on the field and beyond.

Hana Kubátová

On behalf of the Jean Blondel PhD Prize Jury
European Consortium for Political Research