

GETTING CLOSURE

HUMAN RIGHTS AFTER HUMAN RIGHTS

Graduate International Conference
4-5 May 2015
Université libre de Bruxelles

This conference will explore themes and perspectives that have emerged after and as a reaction to the increasing number of human rights critiques in the recent years. Some of these have been of such a fundamental nature that they have left not few researchers in the field with a nagging doubt about human rights and their status as an ideological project and a so-called 'last utopia'. Still, human rights continue to play a significant role both in high-level politics and, even more importantly, in grassroots initiatives, becoming in fact the dominant vocabulary for expressing and challenging injustices. This two day event provides an opportunity to confront the challenges that result from the ambivalence of human rights.

This conference takes place within the framework of the IAP research project *Human Rights Integration* (see www.hrintegration.be). The call for papers addresses especially early-career scholars, PhD candidates and post-doctoral researchers working on ways to incorporate the theoretical criticisms in concrete, interdisciplinary research projects.

Keynote speakers

Martti Koskeniemi (University of Helsinki),
Vidya Kumar (University of Birmingham) &
Justine Lacroix (Université libre de Bruxelles).

We expect abstracts to be submitted to mbaumgrt@ulb.ac.be before **March 8th, 2015**, Women's day. Submission should contain:

- (i) a *title*,
- (ii) the *abstract* (max. 300 words),
- (iii) a *short biography* (max. 100 words),
- (iv) an *indication* of the panel of interest (see panels below).

Applicants will receive a response within a week. Working papers will have to be submitted before **April 24th, 2015**. All submissions should be in English.

For more information, please contact Moritz Baumgärtel (mbaumgrt@ulb.ac.be) or Ivana Isailovic (ivana.isailovic@ulb.ac.be).

The conference will address the following themes:

- **‘Private Matters’: Beyond Human Rights?**

This panel focuses on the interplay between the human rights field and 'private' actors, including standard setting bodies, private creditors, multinationals and 'private' concepts such as: property, contract, debt, family and codes of conduct. How are human rights practices and techniques affecting our understanding of these notions? How are they regulating 'private' actors? How is the human rights field constituted by 'the private'? What are the normative effects of these interactions?

We welcome papers that offer new perspectives on the interactions between human rights law and economic law, family law and law and regulation.

- **‘Foreignness’ as a Legal Experience**

The recent growth in migration to Western countries has led to an increase in numbers of 'precarious residents' such as asylum seekers, irregular migrants, seasonal workers, and 'tolerated' persons with temporary leaves to remain. This stream focuses on the experiences and encounters of people with hostile legal systems that define them by their status as a 'foreigner'. Where and how does 'foreignness' express itself in legal systems? Which legal strategies and coping mechanisms are being used to confront it? What, if any, is the value of human rights and anti-discrimination law in the context of 'foreignness'? Generally, how these experiences fit with our common understandings of the rule of law?

We welcome in particular contribution from legal sociology and anthropology, asylum and migration law as well as labor and welfare law.

- **Reframing or Being Framed? On Alternative Human Rights Discourses**

This panel examines the ways in which social movements, mass protests (as for instance in Ferguson or by the Occupy movement) and indigenous groups in the global South use human rights discourses to frame their demands and to contest social practices in particular spaces. What do these actors gain or lose by using the human rights framework? Do they address the human rights critiques? What do these developments tell us about the future of human rights practice and theory? Are human rights effective in challenging the 'root causes' of social marginalization or are they enabling exclusion?

This panel welcomes submissions from human rights scholars and practitioners in politics, anthropology, sociology, political economy and theory.

- **Revamping the Sources of Human Rights**

Fragmentation processes on the global level have brought about a surge in legal regimes and norms, and with it a confusion about the normative position of various instruments. In consequence, the traditional, positivistic understanding of legal sources is turning into

a conceptual baggage that is difficult to carry in human rights research and practice. Should we strive to reformulate the theory of legal sources, and if so, how? Or is the discussion about legal sources *passé* and superfluous for human rights practice? If so, what are the implications for lawyers, judicial bodies and other human rights users? What can theoreticians in this regard learn from legal practice in the human rights field?

We welcome contributions from legal theory, human rights law, and international law.

- **Contentious Identities & Legal (Counter) Revolutions**

This stream examines the various ways in which human rights discourses and norms regulate individual and collective identities, casting light on their side effects on the one hand, and their potential as a theoretical reconstruction tool on the other hand. Some of the themes we wish to address are: the role of conservative advocacy groups and their networks; the contestation of social exclusion; the limits of notions such as identity & identity politics, equality or inclusion or the relevance of queer theory.

We welcome papers relating to family law, gender & sexuality, law & culture, EU law and theory.

- **Narrating Human Rights: Stories and Histories**

The last decade has seen a growing interest in the historical origins of human rights. This panel will consist of contributions that seek to introduce new narrations of human rights, ranging from intellectual genealogies to oral histories. What are the intellectual roots of the human rights discipline? Who are the lead characters of these stories? How are traditional accounts being contested and how are forgotten stories being recovered? How are human rights being narrated in a post-colonial context? How does the historical account enable us to grasp the nature of regional, domestic or international human rights systems? What is the concrete impact of such historical accounts for the human rights practice?

