

Feminism and International Law Interest Group

ESIL Annual Conference, Riga, 8-10 September 2016

## ***The Gendered Imaginaries of Crisis in International Law***

Agora Proposal: Call for Papers

“International lawyers revel in a good crisis. A crisis provides a focus for the development of the discipline and it also allows international lawyers the sense that their work is of immediate, intense relevance.” Thus read the first lines of a now seminal piece written by Hilary Charlesworth in 2002 about the 1999 ‘Kosovo crisis’. Thirteen years later and in the midst of an intense wave of terrorist attacks reviving ‘war on terror’, a shifting has occurred focusing the international community’s attention back to the seemingly endless problem of international security posed by new types of so-called non-state actors. It is certainly timely to assess the relationship of international law, and international lawyers, to crisis as a paradigm for reflection and action. For international law to improve its capacity to inform and contribute to the regulation of international society, international lawyers cannot keep rediscovering that their discipline is in fact crisis-ridden, nor can they treat each ‘crisis’ as a supposedly new problem to solve on its own. There are fundamental causes to the disciplinary and real-life episodic patterns encountered in the making and using of modern international law.

Law, and international law in particular, is a powerful site for imaginaries, those enshrined in the values protected by the norms and principles it is made of, overlapping with those projected onto the subjects and objects of said norms/principles. Thinking about international law, and acting within its ambit, mobilises, and therefore validates, certain visual and rhetorical images of the world revolving around invisible yet forceful, historical and political cognitive structures such as gender, as well as race and class. The use of sanitized vocabulary or the focus on certain aspects of crises and not on others makes in turn for a selectivity within international law itself. The international agenda is therefore narrowed down in accordance, on the basis of what international lawyers consider their “heroic mission” to be, which is also seen in international law’s treatment of women, either a victim of conflict or western hero. These stereotypes are inadequate to fully address the systemic and complex positionalities women experience in conflict or post-conflict societies as well as peacetime.

This bilingual roundtable (agora) seeks to convene various perspectives on the ways current crisis-ridden international law, or utopian crisis-free international law, thrive on gendered narratives, as well as how the contributions feminist approaches can offer enlarged critical engagement with the status quo of international law and its focus on crisis. Set up as a roundtable rather than a traditional panel, the agora aims at providing an interactive platform for feminist and/or gender-related engagement with the past, present and future of international law within and without its recurrent crises. Innovative approaches such as research on visual images as well as interdisciplinary reflections uncovering the powerful discursive complex resulting from the interaction between media coverage and international institutions’ communication politics and their impact on the gendered narratives of international law are welcomed. Contributions in French are strongly encouraged.

## Themes

Given its broad and transversal focus, contributions for this agora can touch a wide array of topics, including but not limited to: case studies of everyday politics of international law and in particular the silenced positions of women in international crises management and depictions; structural bias discourse analysis of international lawyers/international law institutions on specific crises or on crisis in general; feminist and/or postcolonial deconstruction of the ideal type crisis in international law (savior complexes and triumphant interventions versus historical and colonial narratives); case studies and/or theoretical deconstruction of feminist temporalities in international law (regression, redemption, rupture and repetition).

## Application process

A selection committee will be composed of members of the coordinating committee of the Feminism and International Law interest group.

Please submit an abstract in Word or PDF of no more than 800 words to Dr Loveday Hodson at [Loveday.Hodson@le.ac.uk](mailto:Loveday.Hodson@le.ac.uk)

The following information must be provided with each abstract:

- The author's name and affiliation;  
The author's CV, including a list of relevant publications;
- The author's contact details, including email address and phone number;
- Whether the author is an ESIL member;
- Whether the abstract should be considered for the ESIL Young Scholar Prize.

The following selection criteria are drawn from the criteria for acceptance to the ESIL annual conference:

- Originality and innovativeness of the work;
- Links to the conference theme;
- Geographical, linguistic and gender balance;
- Only one abstract per author will be considered.

Abstracts will be selected for inclusion in the agora proposal on the additional basis of their alignment with the agora description and objectives.

The deadline for submission of abstracts is **15 January 2016**. Applicants will be informed of the selection committee's decision no later than 25 January 2016. The selection committee will submit a panel proposal to the ESIL conference organizers by 31 January 2016 and will have a response by 31 March 2016.

The Interest Group is unfortunately unable to provide funding for travel to and attendance at the conference. Please see the call for papers and the ESIL website for information on finances and for other relevant information about the conference.

## Agora Organising Committee

Loveday Hodson; Troy Lavers; Gina Heathcote; Emily Jones and Bérénice K. Schramm