

ONLINE SYMPOSIUM 11

Symposium:

FUTURE-PROOFING HUMAN RIGHTS: TOWARDS THICKER FORMS OF ACCOUNTABILITY

Coordinators:

Name of Coordinator 1: Tine Destrooper

Institution: Ghent University

Curricular Summary: As an associate professor at Ghent University's Human Rights Centre, I am currently the PI of Justice Visions, an ERC-funded project, which reviewers praised for its methodological innovativeness, theoretical depth, analytical rigor and empirical ambition. I am also the lead coordinator of the Futureproofing Human Rights research project. Following my MA in Politics, Security and Integration at University College London, I obtained a PhD in Social and Political Science at the European University Institute, Florence. My PhD analysed the impact of foreign donors on agenda-setting and mobilization strategies of women's rights movements in Central America. From there, I went on to do a postdoc in public administration, analysing strategies and impact of interest groups (Leiden University), and another one in legal studies, examining how local actors understand the human rights presented to them by international development agencies (Antwerp University). After this I became, initially a visiting scholar at, and then the managing director of, the Center for Human Rights and Global Justice at New York University's Law School. After a subsequent yearlong research stay – funded in part through a Marie Skłodowska-Curie fellowship – at the prestigious and profoundly multi-disciplinary Institute of Advanced Studies in Berlin, I then came back to Belgium and became the director of the Flemish Peace Institute, a research institute on policy-issues related to peace, security and human rights, funded by the Flemish Parliament.

Name of Coordinator 2: Stijn Smet

Institution: Hasselt University

Curricular Summary: I am an Assistant Professor of Constitutional Law at Hasselt University (since 2018) and Senior Research Associate at Melbourne Law School (since 2018). Prior to joining Hasselt University, I was a Postdoctoral Research Fellow at Melbourne Law School (2017-2018) where I worked on a collaborative Australian Research Council-funded project in comparative constitutional law. Prior to that, I was a Postdoctoral Fellow (*doctor-assistent*) at Ghent University (2014-2016), where I co-founded the Human Rights Law Clinic. I hold a PhD in human rights law from Ghent University (2014). I wrote my dissertation as part of a collaborative European Research Council-funded project on 'Strengthening the European Court of Human Rights: More Accountability through Better Legal Reasoning' (2009-2014). My dissertation, which received high praise from the jury, provides a legal-theoretical analysis of the case law of the European Court of Human Rights on conflicts between human rights. After defending the PhD, I rewrote the entire dissertation into a book, which has been published as *Resolving Conflicts between Human Rights: The Judge's Dilemma* (Routledge, 2017). My primary research expertise is in human rights law, with a focus on the European Convention on Human Rights and on conflicts of rights, and in comparative constitutional law, with a focus on freedom of religion. I am currently also developing a research line on constitutional backsliding and democratic resilience. I am co-editor (with Eva Brems) of *When Human Rights Clash at the European Court of Human Rights: Conflict or Harmony?* (OUP 2017).



Line(s) of discussion (symposium description):

How can thicker accountability for human rights violations be achieved, so as to ensure better human rights protection in line with the everyday experience of rights holders?

Human rights are increasingly described as in crisis. One reason for this is that current accountability mechanisms cannot adequately deal with intricate and multilayered human rights violations that occur in rapidly changing and vastly complex social contexts. Thus, if human rights are to continue to offer a widely accepted framework for thinking about (social) justice, we urgently need to reconstruct the very notion of accountability on which it is pinned, so that better protection is offered. This project revisits the questions of what counts as a human rights violation, who holds human rights duties and how to actually deliver human rights accountability, in the context of pressing and complex challenges.

The identification of a variety of avenues for achieving better human rights protection can provide the basis for a better conceptualization of the notion of (human rights) accountability, which can face up to current social challenges, such as COVID-19, corporate abuse or surveillance dilemmas.

This panel seeks to address three questions:

What counts/should count, as a human rights violation, i.e. what types of substantive wrongs (do not) trigger accountability in practice?

Who can/should be held accountable (i.e. who is a duty-bearer), but now slips through the net?

How can the human rights framework be altered to accommodate this, i.e. what are good practices?

Languages of abstracts that will be accepted for presentation:

English (X)

