



Report on the activities and plans of the ESIL Interest Group on International Law of Culture (September 2018 – September 2019)

The [ESIL Interest Group on International Law of Culture](#) was established on 15 September 2018 at the ESIL 14th Annual Conference in Manchester. Since then the activities of this IG have greatly developed. In particular, the IG prepared two events within the framework of the ESIL 15th Annual Conference in Athens (12-14 September 2019), under the umbrella theme of the general conference: ‘Sovereignty: A concept in a state of flux?’. First, the IG launched a *Call for Papers* concerning an agora proposal ‘[Culture As or Against Sovereignty](#)’. The response was wide, varied, and of a high level. The final selection of papers took especially into account the interconnections among them allowing for rich and in-depth debates, critical for the ESIL agora format. We were also particularly interested in supporting early career researchers (ECRs) in this process, and were lucky to receive a number of excellent proposals from ECRs. The IG agora proposal was selected by the conference organising committee and the event took place on 14 September, as Agora XI.



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Speakers and attendees to this agora showed high interest in the topic, and the presentations generated enthusiastic and sophisticated discussions. Importantly, two different audiences benefitted from this agora: academics and international lawyers specialised in the International Law of Culture; and those who were not so familiar with this area of International Law.



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The second event of the IG during the 14th Annual Conference was held on 12 September, as a workshop titled [‘Approaches to Culture and Sovereignty in different areas of International Law’](#). This pre-conference event had two parts: the presentation and discussion of a group of papers; and a conversation about the future work agenda and activities of the IG. The papers generated a rich debate among participants and it was rewarding to see among the participants not only researchers already very involved in the group but also newcomers to the field hailing from many different countries and from different approaches of International Law related with culture in one way or another. Concerning the future activities of the IG, discussions took place around the idea of holding a meeting before the ESIL 16th Annual Conference in Stockholm, 10-12 September 2020, in order to keep the momentum of the IG’s projected common work. Some participants proposed specific host institutions and research projects that could provide logistical and substantive support for this event, which the IG is currently discussing. The IG is also working on a future activity for the ESIL Research Forum [‘Solidarity-The Quest for Founding Utopias of International Law’](#) that will take place next Spring in Catania.

At the workshop possible avenues for publication of the IG’s work results were also addressed. It was considered important to do it in a way allowing quick publication of the

results, again bearing in mind the need to maintain momentum from one ESIL annual conference to another.

Further, members present in Athens discussed the role of an IG on IL of Culture beyond its immediate scholarly scope. Together with the goal of producing results in terms of academic impact, present members considered the IG's involvement in the mechanism of United Nations dealing with cultural aspects of human rights (or directly with cultural rights) or with UNESCO as possible future activities of the group. Methodological aspects of IL of Culture were also highlighted as a possible issue to be addressed by the group as part of its joint agenda.

Beatriz Barreiro

Andrzej Jakubowski

Lucas Lixinski