



Call for Papers

Connecting social practices to legal outcomes

ESIL Interest Group on the Social Sciences and International Law

1 September 2022, Utrecht, 09:00-12:00

The ESIL interest group (IG) on Social Sciences and International Law is a forum in which members that draw methodologies, concepts, theories, or experimental evidence from the social sciences can present their research, gain feedback from like-minded scholars, and broaden their knowledge of neighbouring disciplines. The IG has two objectives: (1) to further our understanding of how, when, and whether to integrate insights from social sciences in the analysis of international law; and (2) to stimulate debate regarding the benefits and limitations – from both a positive and a normative perspective – to social sciences approaches to international law.

The IG's second meeting in Utrecht will focus on the specific methodological challenges that arise from the application of social sciences to the study of international legal processes and institutions. In recent years, international legal scholars have borrowed from a variety of analytical approaches pertaining to the social sciences, including cognitive research, (behavioural) economics, social psychology, field sociology, practice theory, social network analysis, anthropology and ethnography. Yet, important questions remain open as to the value of social science approaches in describing or predicting the conduct of international legal actors and the production of normative outcomes in the international world.

Building on these premises, at the IG meeting, we will discuss issues such as:

1. To what extent can we rely on human behaviour and social interactions as determinants of international legal processes and/or predictors of international normative outcomes? What value do they add to the traditional study of norms, principles, and procedures?
2. Whose behaviour and interactions should be studied and how?
3. How can we strengthen the external and internal validity of empirical social studies as applied to the analysis of international law?
4. What are the epistemic challenges and blind spots associated with a given social science-inspired approach to international law?

The IG meeting will not be held in a ‘conventional’ conference-style format. Instead, we will discuss these issues in an informal setting that will allow us to become acquainted with each other, our research, and our disciplinary outlooks.

We are looking for participants who are willing to present **‘think pieces’ of approximately 2-3,000 words** that will structure the discussion and debate at the meeting. Those who are interested in doing so are invited to send an email to Tommaso Soave (soavet@ceu.edu) and to the IG convenors, Veronika Fikfak (veronika.fikfak@jur.ku.dk), Daniel Peat (d.c.peat@law.leidenuniv.nl), and Eva van der Zee (eva.leora.van.der.zee@uni-hamburg.de), explaining the ideas that they would like to present in a maximum of 300 words. Emails should be received by **10 April 2022 at 12:00 CET**.

Depending on the number and quality of the submissions, the convenors may consider turning the contributions into a series of blog posts on EJIL:Talk!.

Please note that, due to their short length, the think pieces will not be eligible for the ESIL Young Scholar Prize 2022.