

Call for Papers for EWIS2020 Workshop
‘Multiplicity: IR’s Strangely Familiar Common Ground’
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Workshop Conveners:

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This workshop engages the EWIS theme (‘strange and familiar in IR’) by expanding the research programme of Multiplicity to focus on difference – and the ways we mediate it.

International Relations today is doubly estranged. On the one hand, the human world is divided among many peoples with many languages, cultures and histories. Nowhere is this fundamental fact of *difference* – with all the dark fears and creative possibilities that it brings with it – more visible or ‘familiar’ than in IR. On the other hand, the discipline of IR is estranged from itself, split into numerous approaches that no longer share an intellectual common ground. As Christine Sylvester has argued, the ‘fourth great debate’ did not enlarge the existing conversation. Instead, it proliferated many new ‘camp fires’ – inward-looking discussions that brought new insights but no longer fed into a common discourse.

Yet a single idea, Multiplicity, could both mediate IR’s estrangement from itself *and* better equip it to explain, understand and even address the human condition of difference. This idea was first proposed in the 2015 Carr Memorial Lecture, and has developed into a many-sided, collaborative research programme, including an EISAPEC19 section, a forum and a special issue.

Multiplicity’s starting point is the ontological claim that human social existence is, and always has been, plural: it is distributed across a multiplicity of societal entities. This simple fact provides the *raison d’être* for a discipline of IR: we study the profound consequences of societal multiplicity for the human world: co-existence, difference, interaction, combination and dialectical change. How do these consequences structure the international as a dimension of social reality? What are their implications for the social sciences and humanities at large? Via such questions, Multiplicity provides both a way of exploring ‘the international’ as a dimension of social reality and a new common ground for the fragmented world of IR theory. For in the end, all IR theory is concerned either with the consequences of human plurality or with the consequences of thinking this plurality in particular ways.

Thus far, the Multiplicity debate has largely focused on ‘interaction’ as a way of countering ‘internalist’ conceptions of social existence and change. At EWIS2020 we seek to enlarge this focus by more explicitly considering difference – and its relations to the other consequences of multiplicity - by questioning e.g.:

- How does societal multiplicity entail difference as a property of the human world?
- What axes of difference – political, cultural, historical, ecological, epistemological etc. – operate in inter-societal affairs?
- To what kinds of tension, conflict and creativity does difference give rise, and through what specifically international mechanisms do these effects operate?
- How do existing IR theories – realist, liberal, Marxist, feminist, poststructuralist, decolonial, queer, ecological etc. – conceptualise difference and its role in world affairs?
- How does multiplicity let us see difference differently?
- How does multiplicity enable *all* IR theories to share their insights on the constitutive role of difference in the human world?

We welcome proposals on these and other questions related to multiplicity (or explorations of such) from across IR – mainstream and critical, theoretical and empirical, contemporary and historical.