

EWIS Workshop Call for Papers: 2-4 July 2025 Krakow: In-between Contingency and Change - New theoretical approaches to norm contestation in international politics and international law

Co-Convenors: Dr Sassan Gholiagha, European-University Viadrina Frankfurt(Oder), Germany (gholiagha@europa-uni.de), Associate Professor Cecilia Jacob, Australian National University, Australia (cecilia.jacob@anu.edu.au)

The global order, the behaviour of actors, and individual norms are constantly changing and evolving, thus shaping the contemporary world. As the changing contours of the global order increase the access of diverse actors to norm contestation, we have witnessed the diversification of norm configurations in a wide range of global governance domains. These diverse configurations reflect the situated agency, cultural values, and historical contingency across the global order, leading to wide variations in global governance outcomes and different interpretations of international law, technological developments, and global governance initiatives. Importantly, variations in norm configurations can lead to new opportunities for synergies between norm regimes and complexes or to increased conflict and norm collisions. Thus, change is always ambiguous, because it always depends on the perspective from which one views certain developments that have the potential to widen societal cleavages or close existing gaps.

This workshop provides a space to discuss new theoretical approaches to studying norm configurations through the lens of contingency and change. It will focus on three cross-cutting issues relevant to the processes of contestation, that is a) agency, b) time, and c) culture. The workshop participants demonstrate in their contributions how interpretations of norms change across time and space, leading to new norm configurations in practice. By paying particular attention to what happens ‘in-between’ contingency and change, the workshop aims to shed more light on individual aspects of the process of norm contestation. The workshop is based on a specific understanding of norms: Norms are understood, on the one hand, as markers of change, and, on the other hand, help to reconstruct the *process* of change by focusing on their contestation. Workshop papers should demonstrate these theoretical claims with reference to a range of issues including global migration, state recognition, international criminal justice, human rights, the anti-atrocity norm, or norm development in the field of technology. Through such contributions, this workshop offers new ground for norm research by addressing the dynamics of norm development, interaction, and contestation and by highlighting the process in between. By attending explicitly to themes of agency, time, and culture, such a perspective will contribute to a new understanding of the ambiguity and hybridity of ongoing processes of norm contestation, and thus to a better understanding of international politics and international law in general.

The aim of the workshop is to bring together researchers with backgrounds in norms studies and international law and a variety of empirical foci to discuss existing and emerging theoretical and empirical analyses that help us to better understand overlapping, contradictory and self-reinforcing contestation processes. We aim to publish revised manuscripts of the workshop participants in a special issue entitled “In-between Contingency and Change - New theoretical approaches to norm contestation in international politics and international law”.

If you are interested in joining the workshop, please submit your abstract according to the EWIS guidelines. If you have any questions, please reach out to Cecilia and Sassan.