

This special issue of *Nordicum-Mediterraneum* contains select proceedings from the meeting of the **Nordic Summer University** (NSU) research circle “*Human Rights and International Relations*”. The meeting took place in Wroclaw, Poland, from the 24th to the 26th of February 2017, where we were very well received by the **University of Wroclaw**, for which we thank them warmly.

The program of the research circle, “*Human Rights and International Relations*”, runs from 2015 to 2017. This circle explores how human rights militancy and more generally the protection of human rights are affected by the international human rights regime and the way this regime enters state relations, and it also examines how the international human rights regime modifies the relations between states and how this is explained in international relations theory.

The contributions from this circle address the issue of human rights implementation. What happens when universal principles are translated into concrete action. Magdalena Tabernacka analyses the political battles surrounding the implementation of the Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence. Barbara Gornik shows how the plan to redress the erased residents of Slovenia was derailed. Athanasia Petropoulou demonstrates how visions of European citizenship fail the test of reality. Liudmila Ulyashyna reflects on how human rights law can be rooted into national legislation through education, in order to enhance the implementation. Eyassu Gayim addresses the relationship between human rights law and humanitarian law, and reflects on the nature of the human being and its rights in both of them. If they are based on the same fundamental considerations, why implementing them separately? Mogens Chrom Jacobsen challenges common views about Protestantism as the originator or foremost promoter of human rights. Implementation often depends on how human rights conform to pre-existing ideas about religion and politics, but such conformity can also be constructed to fit the purposes of the moment.

An additional contribution by long-time collaborator of *Nordicum-Mediterraneum*, Prof. John McMurtry, is also included, in which the worrisome implications of Brexit for human rights in the UK are discussed, given their EU-based emanation, with special emphasis on labour, environmental and financial regulation. McMurtry, who was Honorary Theme Editor for UNESCO’s *Encyclopedia of Life Support System*, authored therein the encyclopaedia of

philosophy called “Philosophy and World Problems”. It is in the same spirit that he offers his contribution to *Nordicum-Mediterraneum*, in the hope of prompt and wide circulation. Consistently, the text is listed in a new category called “Philosophy and World Affairs”.

The abstracts of the published papers can be found below, as these were submitted by the authors:

Athanasia Petropoulou

On the Margins of Citizenship: The Refugee Crisis and the Transformation of Identities in Europe

Transformations of the notion of citizenship in today’s globalized context brings us closer to what Yasemin Soysal calls a post national citizenship characterized primarily by the erosion of the national identity as the distinctive form of belonging and the generalization of rights to non-nationals that initially were only attributed to members of the polity. While this vision has proven to be rather relevant in analysing changes in contemporary membership formations, it fails in some measure to capture the shortcomings of the universal human rights regime and the inherent tensions between the status of aliens and nationals-citizens. The current so called “refugee crisis” in Europe shows the predicaments of populations seeking to escape from war and deprivation and the uncertain legal status of these populations, whose rights are seriously impaired. Drawing on the notion of the “right to have rights” the study aims to explore how the European responses in this context, based on strong inclusion-exclusion mechanisms, can be pertinent for analysing and capturing current transformations of the notion of European citizenship and its future developments. In this respect, the current shortcomings of the international human rights regime can help us reconsider the foundation and notion of European citizenship. It is further suggested that the institution of European citizenship in its current form needs to be superseded, in order to attain a truly cosmopolitan content and to provide a foundation for a universalistic human rights regime. The main proposal presented in this direction, stresses the need to rethink human rights in terms of political practices and to “rediscover” the revolutionary heritage of human rights from an Arendtian perspective.

Barbara Gornik

The Politics of Victimhood in Human Rights Violations: The Case of the Erased Residents of Slovenia

In 1992, during the process of gaining national independence, the Slovenian government unlawfully erased 25,671 individuals, mainly citizens of other republics of the former Yugoslavia from the Slovenian Register of Permanent Residents. These individuals, who later become known as the Erased, became irregular foreigners; nevertheless, many of them continued to live in Slovenia for more than a decade without enjoying basic human rights. In 2012 the European Court of Human Rights in the case of Kurić and others vs. Republic of Slovenia held unanimously that there had been a violation of the 8th, 13th and 14th Articles of the European Convention on Human rights. Following this judgement the Slovenian government adopted a compensation scheme for the Erased, where it introduced the criteria determining conditions for their redress. Building on this, the article reflects on the political and legal construction of victimhood and reveals the elements that constitute the victims of human rights violations. The article highlights the notions of political loyalty, legal conformity and territorial attachment as one of the most decisive elements of victimhood. In this manner it shows that the subjectivity of victims in the case of the Erased is not defined within the human rights discourse but is grounded in nationalist terms and categories.

Eyassu Gayim

Humanity and Human Rights: The contours of international law

Laws regulate conducts by responding to social and political requirements. This holds true for international law as well, which now follows two separate tracts, one for international human rights law and another one for international humanitarian law. If these two branches of law are intended to protect the dignity and worth of human beings as it is often said, why separate them? Does humanity really exist? If it does, how does it relate to human rights? If the two are distinct where do they converge? This article highlights these questions by revisiting the contours of international law.

Liudmila Ulyashyna

Human Rights Education for lawyers: A Case Study Into the Universality and Its Relativism

Normative universality in the international human rights law shall be rooted into national legal contexts for its effective implementation. Human Rights training for lawyers ensures that lawyers receive appropriate education for the practical application of the principle universality. The case study shows that learners often lack the knowledge of the peculiarities of international human rights law, which differ from the "classical" public law notions. Human rights training curricula should include topics, which form lawyers' understanding of international and national legal regimes in their interdependency. Concepts of "International Human Rights Standards", "Implementation and de facto implementation", "Status and Role of Individual/Human Rights Defender" being delivered to learners increase their knowledge and awareness of the direct applicability of international human rights norms and make them effective actors of the two-way process facilitating "a cross-fertilization" between national law and international human rights standards.

Mogens Chrom Jacobsen

Protestant Origins of Human Rights Challenged

This paper will challenge common views about Protestantism as the originator or foremost promoter of human rights. The idea of a Protestant origin is launched by Georg Jellinek and disputed by Emile Boutmy. The idea is still current and John Witte can thus claim that Protestantism was in part a human rights movement. The point of departure for this strain of thinking is religious toleration, which is seen as a particularly Protestant achievement. We will argue that a more precise notion of what 18th century human rights were and a closer look at mainstream Protestant political philosophy will tell another story.

Magdalena Tabernacka

The Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence in the Polish Social Safeguard System

The ratification of the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence in Poland was preceded by a heated debate. From the very beginning it was the object of political battles between the conservative and liberal circles. Culturally and socially conditioned position of women has influenced its operation

and the scope of its implementation. The Convention is a universally binding tool which guarantees the protection of human rights in events of violence against the woman and children. The case of this Convention in Poland proves the existence of a universal European understanding of human rights protection standards. The Convention thus has a protective function not only for individuals but also, in a broader context, for the common European cultural identity.

John McMurtry

Is Brexit a Neo-Liberal Coup against 45 years of Life-Protective Law and Regulation?

The self-maximizing growth of private-money power over all life and life support systems – life capital in a word – to exploit for non-producer profit is not yet recognized as a master degenerative trend built into the ruling meta program of which Brexit and Trump are the latest Anglo-American expressions. Central to this unseen meta trend is the compulsive dismantling of life-protective law and rights whose masking justification has shifted from ‘globalization’ to ‘nationalism’. The Left is befuddled. It sees the anti-Labour implications in both the financialized EU and the de-regulating Brexit with no coherent program to overcome both. The Right blindly follows the inner logic of the ruling economic model while Liberals offer only partial and incompetent market fixes for collective life capital sustainability. All fail to see Brexit’s giant step towards life capital degeneration and eco-genocide at the margins as environmental and civil commons are stripped of their public funding by privatization and de-regulation. The cumulative carcinogenic conversion of organic, social and ecological life organization into ever faster private money-profit sequences multiplying to the unproductive few is the predictable system result.