

## Call for papers

### ‘The manifold forms of contemporary international legal scholarship’

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International lawyers constantly (re)shape the world around them in legally relevant terms, be it as scholars, teachers, advisors, or judges,<sup>1</sup> and do so through many different forms. The writing of journal articles and books, for instance, are well known and even dominant forms through which international lawyers engage in international legal scholarship. However, classical forms of scholarship are slowly but surely giving way to other, more contemporary forms of engagement with international law’s events.<sup>2</sup>

Notably, international legal reflections on global politics by scholars have risen sharply in the last decade or so, and social media have played a big part in this: [blogs](#), [videos](#), [podcasts](#), threads on X and [interviews](#) abound. These ‘new’ forms of international legal scholarship are reaching an increasingly expanding audience, drawing responses different from the academic ‘replies’ in journals, which are often behind a paywall, and with what may sometimes feel like instantaneous response times from their audience. Fellow scholars, students, and members of the public actively respond to reflections, not as passive consumers, but as ready interlocutors, actively engaging in debates across various, often open, platforms. Of course, the substance and subject matter of a scholar’s reflection, piece or message will play a significant role in its content and reach. For instance, as rightly pointed out by many, not all events seem to draw the same level of attention from the invisible college of international lawyers: some elicit direct engagement because they appear on our 24-hour news cycle; others seem to be forgotten.<sup>3</sup> But the form in which that message is delivered, and the effect this can have on its content (and impact), ought not be discounted.

Different forms are tailored to permit specific ways of delivering messages, and to differing audiences. A written thread on X may, for example, impact the content of a message in a way that a one-hour podcast may not. Likes and re-posts may lead to quicker societal engagement than citations. And so, the forms in which international lawyers engage in scholarship matter greatly, not only for the ways we can and do deliver perspectives on international law, but for the content we include/exclude considering the audience we will have in mind. This raises a host of questions the international lawyer will be familiar with in their everyday work. For instance, who is the audience? How much time do we have to convey our points? How does a message appear on a (web)page? Or what does the message sound like? Yet, the novel forms of scholarship made possible by the digital-age also raise a host of other questions. For instance, do posts on LinkedIn

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<sup>1</sup> Martti Koskenniemi, ‘Foreword’ in Fleur Johns, Richard Joyce and Sundhya Pahuja (eds), *Events: The Force of International Law* (Routledge 2011).

<sup>2</sup> Johns, Joyce and Pahuja (eds), *Events*.

<sup>3</sup> Hilary Charlesworth, ‘International Law: A Discipline of Crisis’ (2002) 65 *The Modern Law Review* 377. 382.

count as scholarship? Must we rush, to post on social media in response to global events with international legal implications? Are the 'new' platforms more inclusive, giving more space to voices from underrepresented (groups of) scholars to be heard, or do they have implicit biases, favouring particular voices over others? And could one argue, for instance, that our output has become more superficial due to the presumed need to post quickly and respond to the demands of a widening audience?

Notwithstanding the profound changes and manifold forms that the digital age has brought to international legal scholarship, and the various novel questions they raise, there has been little reflection on the impact this may have on both the content of our work and daily practice of international lawyers.

This volume of the Netherlands Yearbook wishes to reflect on the interplay between form and substance as key elements in how international lawyers engage with and beyond the discipline. To phrase the volume's core question in the broadest possible terms: *'How do international lawyers engage with international law in their contemporary writing and speaking and what are the implications thereof for contemporary international legal scholarship?'*

In asking this question the current call for papers is situated against the backdrop of the cross-section of applied linguistics (conversation and discourse analysis), communication studies, literary theory, cultural studies and bibliography<sup>4</sup> – though we invite contributions that put forward other theoretical frames for considering this question. For example, in *The Textual Condition*, Jerome McGann distinguishes between a text's "linguistic" and its "bibliographic code", the first being the words themselves and the second being the material form in which they appear to us.<sup>5</sup> McGann argues that the meaning of a text follows from the interplay between its linguistic and bibliographic code, thereby expanding the traditional focus on the author/reader interaction. Karin Littau takes this even further by arguing for a view of reading as a bodily experience, which is very much influenced by the material form in which we absorb a text. This matter in which a text comes to us – be it sound, sight, a combination of both, or any of the other ways in which we engage – plays on our minds as well as on our senses. As such, texts are 'making sense' not just in the cognitive, but also in the physical sense of the word.<sup>6</sup>

Considering the work of international lawyers in this light, we are particularly interested in contributions that address the interplay between substance and form in contemporary modes of international legal work, for example the recording of podcasts, the use of X or blogposts – which may in turn be juxtaposed with more 'traditional' outputs such as books or articles. Possible questions that could be taken up include, *but are not limited to*:

- How (by what means) are events identified in international legal practice and scholarship?
- Through what forms are scholars addressing international legal issues raised by the events they identify as legally relevant?
- Relatedly, what is the relation between form/matter and substance in these contributions?
- What role does social media play in international legal scholarship? e.g. the use of Instagram or X as forms of output for scholars using these platforms?
- What kinds of and whose engagements are invited by these different forms? Are they the same, or are they different, and if so, how?

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<sup>4</sup> Per Karin Littau, *Theories of Reading: Books, Bodies and Bibliomania* (Polity Press 2006) 2.

<sup>5</sup> Jerome J. McGann, *The Textual Condition* (Princeton University Press 1991) 13

<sup>6</sup> Littau, *Theories of Reading*, e.g. at 8-9.

- What qualifies as international legal scholarship and who qualify as scholars in the digital era?
- What can be gained from a closer (comparative) look at the differences between the content published by the different outlets (eg peer-reviewed journals, blogs or social media post) which international scholars contribute to, in relation to particular events or cases?

We also welcome contributions that address contemporary developments in international law within the domestic legal system and institutions of the Netherlands for our *Dutch Practice in International Law* section.

Lianne Boer, Daniella Dam-de Jong and Carl Lewis, the editors of Volume 55 of the Netherlands Yearbook of International Law, are pleased to invite submissions for this volume, with the aim for it to be published in February of 2026. Authors are invited to submit an abstract of no more than **400 words** by **25 November 2024**. Authors of selected abstracts will be informed by 8 December at the latest and will then be invited to send a first full draft of no more than 10,000 words including footnotes by **24 March 2025**. All emails and files should be sent to [nyil@asser.nl](mailto:nyil@asser.nl).

Kindly note that invitation to submit a draft paper does not guarantee selection for publication. All submitted drafts will undergo a double-blind peer review process and a final decision will be made upon the recommendation of the reviewers. Authors may feel free to contact the volume editors in case they need further information, or if they want to check whether their paper idea fits with the overall theme of the volume. All abstracts and drafts must be submitted in Word (.docx) format and must conform to our style guidelines. For any further information about the process, please email: [nyil@asser.nl](mailto:nyil@asser.nl).