

CALL FOR PAPERS

8th ECPR General Conference – University of Glasgow, 3-6 September 2014

THE CONSTRUCTION OF VICTIM/PERPETRATOR IDENTITIES IN TRANSITIONAL JUSTICE

Panel for early stage researchers – Section Varieties of Transitional Justice

Discussant: Prof. Kieran McEvoy, Queen's University Belfast

Panel Chair: Julie Bernath, University of Basel & swisspeace

The panel aims at bringing together early stage researchers to explore how transitional justice accounts for the complexity of identities in political violence. In the context of mass atrocity, the line between perpetrators and victims is often blurred and the complex “network of human relations [...] [cannot] be reduced to the two units of victims and perpetrators” (Levi 1989).

The panel is interested in how diverse transitional justice mechanisms such as memorials, tribunals or truth commissions represent, shape and reify identities in the aftermath of mass atrocity. The panellists will discuss how transitional justice mechanisms construct identities in post-conflict societies between the need for the acknowledgement and specific naming of identities and the challenge of reducing their complexity and nuances. The panel is specifically interested in theoretically informed case studies on the construction of victimhood in the aftermath of mass atrocity. Transitional justice mechanisms may for instance merely be interested in representing or responding to ‘pure’, ‘innocent’ or ‘ideal’ victims. They may thereby introduce a problematic hierarchy of victims that excludes or marginalises more complex experiences of victimized individuals and prevents questioning the processes of othering that initially led to political violence. The panel will also ask how the construction of who is a ‘victim’ relates to the construction of what it is to be a ‘perpetrator’, and how the very conception of a ‘victim’ frames how we think about political violence and the justice that is required to address it.

We welcome theoretical and empirical papers embedded in various approaches and disciplines from early stage researchers who engage with the issue of complex identities in transitional justice.

*Please submit an abstract of around 150 words **by 10th February 2014** to Julie Bernath, Contact Person for Early Stage Researchers, ECPR Standing Group for Human Rights & Transitional Justice (julie.bernath@swisspeace.ch)*