Gender and PIL (GaP): A New Transdisciplinary Research Project

written by Ivana Isailovic & Ralf Michaels

We are excited to announce the launch of a new transdisciplinary research project, *Gender and Private International Law (GaP)*, based at the Max Planck Institute for Comparative and International Private Law (MPI).

This project is born out of a sense of scholarly and political urgency in a rapidly shifting world, where both conversations about gender equality and a powerful backlash against gender and LGBTQI justice are on the rise. Unlike other legal fields, private international law ("PIL") has for the most part been absent from this conversation, with some rare (here, here & here) exceptions (see also the panel on women & PIL). The field is almost never analyzed using the concept of 'gender', or using methodologies and ideas developed by gender studies scholars. Similarly, scholars working on gender and the law tend to overlook how PIL regulates gender and distributes power and privilege at the transnational level. Transnational studies focusing on gender, often prioritize human rights analyses, or cultural issues, ignoring how PIL techniques and practices interact with identity, and negotiate differences.

Our goal is to create a space for transdisciplinary research and cross-learning at the intersection of PIL and gender and feminist studies. Over the course of this academic year, we will put in place a series of discussion groups bringing together a diverse group of legal scholars working on gender, and PIL scholars interested in gender justice issues. Sessions, organized around short readings, will address methodological questions as well as some of the most pressing topics in PIL, such as the regulation of transnational surrogacy, the recognition of Islamic family law, or international abduction. Our goal with this project is also to give a platform to emergent scholars representing a diversity of voices and backgrounds.

This academic year, we plan to organize three types of events at the MPI in Hamburg.

- **The first one will be the kick-off event,** taking place on **Friday**, **Oct.**

25, from 2-5 pm. Ivana Isailovic (MPI and Northeastern University, US) and Roxana Banu (Western University, Ontario, and Queen Mary University, UK) will guide a discussion examining the connections between gender studies and PIL. The event will be followed by a brainstorming session on how to move the project further.

- Over the course of the Fall 2019, and possibly into the Spring, we will also organize **a series of intimate reading groups** around canonical texts in gender studies and PIL respectively. PIL scholars and scholars working on gender and law will meet to discuss these texts in an informal setting. More information about these reading groups will be available soon.
- **The final event for this academic year,** to take place in the Spring of 2020, will be **a full-day workshop with discussion groups** organized around several specific themes. Similarly to the kick-off event, each discussion will be guided by a PIL expert and gender and law scholars.

In order to ensure that cost is not a barrier for participants, travel reimbursements will be available for emerging scholars who could not otherwise attend.

If you want to attend the kick-off event, please write, by October 18, to veranstaltungen@mpipriv.de. For any general questions concerning the project, including the stipend, please write to gender@mpipriv.de.

We look forward to seeing you at the MPI in Hamburg!