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Sirens + Silences: Law in Lockdown

Thirteenth Annual Doctoral Forum on Legal Theory ONLINE / VIRTUAL EVENT

Co-hosted by IILAH, Melbourne Law School & UNSW
Critique Network, UNSW Sydney

Call for Expressions of Interest

Thursday 26 and Friday 27 November 2020

EOIs due 1 September 2020 ([via here](#))

Inquiries to docforum.legaltheory@gmail.com

It has been a year of silence and sirens. On the one hand, stilled streets, empty establishments, days stretching interminably. On the other, speeding emergency and police vehicles, eruptions of online hysteria, the panic of the rising curve. It has been a year marked by upheaval and stasis: ground constantly shifting under our feet even as the stillness of the lockdown has blurred days and weeks into an indefinable whole.

Our moment of culminating crises is defined by this cacophony of sirens and silences. As legal researchers, how might we work through the sirens, the silence, the upheavals, the stillness? How has the *nomos* -- the normative universe where law is in constant dialogue with narrative -- changed when we were looking away? How has the shadow cast by this upheaval impacted our approach and positionality to our work? How have the interleaved moments of disquiet affected our ability to pay attention to the things that unfolded while we were otherwise preoccupied? What methods have we crafted to respond to the moment? How do we excavate the radical potential of critique in this 'new normal'?

For twelve years, the Melbourne Law School has been home to the Doctoral Forum on Legal Theory, fostering a supportive community for emerging work run for and by doctoral candidates. This locked-down year, we hope to expand our collaborative community, joining hands (metaphorically, given physical distancing!) with the UNSW Critique Network in organising the forum.

Due to the current circumstances, this year's forum **will take place online** (during business hours in Australian Eastern Daylight Saving Time (AEDT)).

We take this moment as an impetus to orient ourselves towards practice and play around with the traditional conference format. We therefore invite presentations across two themes:

1) *Theory cafe*:

Presenters break out into parallel rooms to lead a more intimate discussion on their paper with a smaller group of participants. After a designated period, participants move into a new break out room, giving the presenter a chance to discuss their work across different groups.

- 2) **Paper swap:** Pairs of participants exchange their papers in advance and present a (generous!) summary and response to each other's key arguments before opening up to a general discussion.

In your EOI, please indicate which format you would prefer to present in (if you are open to your paper being considered for both formats, please indicate the same). We invite EOIs from doctoral scholars that develop our provocations around sirens and silence in law along the following lines (this list is not exhaustive):

- **Piercing the law's silences:** How do we attune to law's silences? What are the positivist/formalist, gendered, sexualised, racialised, colonial, and ecological silences within the law and legal ordering? What are possible productive roles of silence in law: for example, the interpretative gap of judicial interpretation, the right to silence, the right to be forgotten.
- **Hearing the law's sirens:** What do sirens announce (and what do they suppress) beneath their deafening noise? How do we sift through the spectacular displays of legal force versus the hidden, slow stressors of legal order: mass incarceration, wage theft, gendered and domestic violence, land grabbing, identity-based discrimination, border control. How can we employ critical race, Indigenous, queer, feminist, political economy and post/decolonial approaches to re-describe law's sirens?
- **Methods in/of crisis:** What are the ways in which our conceptual frameworks and research methods might be transformed by moments of upheaval? When the ground shifts, how do we position ourselves in relation to our work and to the world? How do we navigate new terrains of knowledge and power?
- **The (new?) nomos of crisis:** How might we unsettle the boundaries of international, transnational, national and Indigenous legal orders and trouble notions of citizenship, duties and rights? How can we seize moments of crisis to rupture dominant legal discourses, recast legal narratives and build future legalities? Or have we been here before - the treadmill of perpetual crisis?
- **Rewilding critique:** How do we interrogate the role of critique, the worlds it helps us to hear, the futures it silences? What is the role and responsibility of critique in our time of crisis?

In addition to the presentations, this year's forum will also include two skillshare sessions with leading Melbourne and UNSW law academics. More details on these sessions will be shared closer to the date.

Please submit your EOI (including a short abstract of your proposed paper & bio) [via this online form](#) by Tuesday 1 September. Any inquiries are welcome to docforum.legaltheory@gmail.com. Follow us on Twitter [@MLS MDFLT](#) for updates.

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