



ASSER INSTITUTE

Centre for International & European Law

TWO SOULS IN ONE BREAST: THE INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTIONAL LAWYER AS SCHOLAR AND AS PRACTITIONER

7 MARCH 2019

International institutional law builds on a wide variety of legal sources and different forms of legal labour. It constitutes a domain of international law, which is deeply embedded in the law of treaties, the doctrine of sources and the doctrinal schemes that structure international legal thought. Yet, at the same time, international institutional law also manifests itself as a technical, splintered and pragmatic practice, fine-tuned to the managerial exigencies of international bureaucratic life.

In this context, it is not surprising to find many scholars-practitioners who give life and meaning to this binary character of international institutional law. If, indeed, as Martti Koskenniemi phrased it, international law is what international lawyers do and how they think, it seems relevant to reflect on the particularities of this professional identity – the challenges it entails, the different audiences it addresses and the sensibilities it fosters. Multiple dualities and dilemmas seem to be involved in this role: law vs. administration, scholarship vs. practice, international lawyering vs. international civil service. How does one move between the esprit de corps of international law and a managerial, outcome-oriented practice in international organisations? How has the authority, fate, and outlook of international law(yers) evolved in these organisations, where, as one scholar-practitioner observed, one sometimes 'has to avoid talking, acting and even thinking like a lawyer'. And what does this tell us about the nature of international institutional law: can we distill a conceptual or normative unity from the deformalised and fragmented practices that constitute this professional field?

This OXIO Talk features an informal conversation between Gabrielle Marceau and Niels Blokker, two prominent scholars-practitioners, revolving around these questions. Catherine Brölmann serves as moderator. The audience is warmly invited to take part in the discussion.

About the speakers:

- Niels Blokker is Professor of International Institutional Law (Schermers Chair) at Leiden University. From 2000 to 2013 he was Senior Legal Counsel and later Deputy Legal Adviser at the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs.
- Gabrielle Marceau is Counselor in the Legal Affairs Division of the WTO, as well as Associate Professor at the Law Faculty of the University of Geneva and Visiting Professor at the Graduate Institute of International Affairs and Development in Geneva.
- Catherine Brölmann is Associate Professor at the University of Amsterdam and co-editor-in-chief of Oxford International Organizations.

Registration

Registration for this event is **now open!** Visit www.asser.nl or [click here](#) to learn more. The event will take place at the Asser Institute on 7 March 2019, 17:00-18:30, followed by a reception. For more information on OXIO, view [here](#).

