



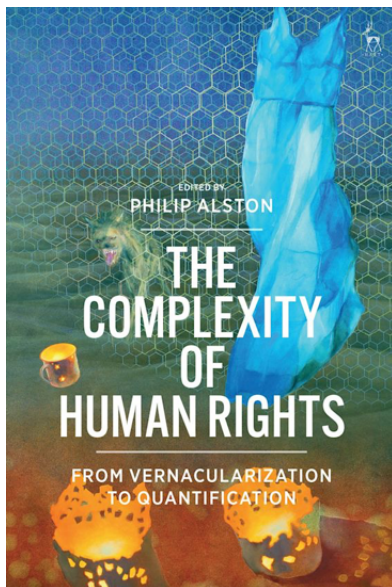
# **The Complexity of Human Rights: A Discussion of Sally Engle Merry's Work**

written by Allegra  
March, 2024



**Webinar  
Series**  
in honour of  
**Sally  
Engle  
Merry**  
(1944-2020)





Human rights are avowedly universal but must be translated by local activists to make sense in specific contexts, a process Sally Engle Merry called vernacularization. Human rights progress is conventionally measured through global quantitative indicators which give the illusion of control and comparability, but radically oversimplify social and political processes. How can we avoid “the seductions of quantification” and understand how human rights are materialized, appropriated, and implemented in everyday social justice activism? In her decades-long research on human rights, Sally Engle Merry brought

to light the complex social dynamics in which human rights are embedded and demonstrated how their presentation as single, universal, and immutable elides their flexibility and many strengths.

To celebrate a new book in her honour, [\*The Complexity of Human Rights: From Vernacularization to Quantification\*](#), leading human rights scholars come together to discuss how the concepts Merry pioneered help us to understand current human rights challenges and crises.

**Where:** Online with Allegra Lab

**Who:** Philip Alston, Julie Billaud, Jane Cowan, Meg Davis, Mark Goodale, César Rodríguez-Garavito, Jack Snyder, Richard Wilson with Sridhar Venkatapuram as discussant.

**When:** 16 May, 4 PM (CEST), 3 PM (UK), 11 AM (EDT)

**Registration**

**link:**

<https://us06web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZwoc-CqpjMqH9QTdKLQnjb25Ax6w3mFCUZJ>