

**Who is the Court for?
Bringing the Human (back) into Human Rights (Research)**

Despite being considered the most successful system of human rights protection worldwide, the European Court of Human Rights is often criticised for shying away from its responsibilities when faced with complex questions about the accommodation of religious and cultural diversity in its member states. Critics say the Court too quickly and easily resorts to the doctrine of the margin of appreciation, which is perceived as compromising the counter-majoritarian aspirations of human rights law, to the detriment of minorities. Doing so, moreover, runs counter to the Court's stated duty to provide individual relief to applicants, and to its presumed interest in the meanings attached to human rights by their intended beneficiaries. By giving voice to the 'real people' involved in litigation, the envisaged analysis will bring members of religious and cultural minorities back into the frame and ask them if/how justice has been done. In so doing, this book will ascertain what the Court *is* and *does* and how that converges, diverges and interweaves with what the Court *ought to be* and *do vis-à-vis* diversity claims brought by these minorities. This empirical investigation will be carried out by combining doctrinal analysis of documents with the in-depth reconstruction of 'information-rich cases' from their origin to the present-day, drawing on the ethnographic extended case method. Through this innovative methodology, the project will not only expose and disentangle the two-way relationship between the Court's approach to diversity, on the one hand, and diversity as experienced on the ground, on the other hand, but also identify the potential and possibilities for the Court to be(come) an institution for delivering genuine justice to religious and cultural minorities.