‘Modern money is not a neutral means of exchange’
Legal scholar Isabel Feichtner critically observes distributive effects of the emerging political economy of extraction in the global commons.

‘Arctic imaginaries reflect contested visions of order’
Maren Hofius identifies an emerging discourse that cuts across previous paradigms and promises to provide common ground for all stakeholders in the Arctic: the ‘Global Arctic’.

‘Commonswashing constitutes a capture of the language’
Mélanie Dulong de Rosnay introduces the concept of commonswashing and the semantic preemption of the concept of commons by private actors.

New fellows and their projects at the Centre, presented on p. 24.
Editorial

Dear Readers,

I hope that this issue of quarterly magazine finds you well and healthy, despite rising numbers of Covid infections. In this issue we focus on pressing problems of degradation and depletion of the global commons, understood as large resource domains that fall outside of the jurisdiction of any one country, and call for global cooperation to protect and maintain them for human mankind. Contributions in this issue cover re-valuing the commons in the field of deep seabed minerals (Feichtner), politics of redrawing boundaries in the Arctic’s pristine ecosystem (Hofius) and the appropriation of the global cyberspace through commonswashing (Dulong de Rosnay).

You might also be interested in reading Mahlert’s tribute in honour of Amartya Sen that highlights his role as a contributor to global cooperation at the occasion of him being awarded the Peace Award of the German Book Trade. For those who could not attend we include a report on our international conference on ‘Urgency and Responsibility in Global Cooperation – Covid-19 and Beyond’, organized in cooperation with the School of Global Studies at the University of Gothenburg.

We also introduce you to the new cohort of fellows that is joining the Centre for the next academic year. Please feel free to contact them! Finally, I would like to draw your attention to forthcoming events (all in virtual format) which include Käte Hamburger Lectures on Cybercrime by Jonathan Lusthaus, the History of Business and Global Governance of the Environment by Glenda Sluga, and the Ebb and Flow of Global Governance by Alexandru Grigorescu, as well as a Dialogue on the Virtualization of Global Cooperation.

Have a nice autumn and stay healthy!

Sigrid Quack
Managing Director

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In recent years, interest in the global commons as repositories of minerals has increased. States, international and regional organizations as well as corporations see the extraction of minerals as a potential source of growth, revenue and supply of raw materials. At the same time, the International Resource Panel warns that global resource extraction is a major cause of biodiversity loss and climate change (IRP 2019).

The confrontation between economic exploitation of ocean floor minerals and protection of marine ecosystems presently comes to a head. Along with corporations and states, the International Seabed Authority advocates for the swift completion of the so-called mining code to allow mining activities to proceed from exploration to large-scale commercial exploitation. By contrast, scientists and civil society organizations call attention to the risks that deep seabed mining poses to largely unexplored, fragile and interconnected ecosystems (Smith et al. 2020). The International Seabed Authority, which is being critiqued for downplaying these risks and lacking the institutional capacity to address them, assures that regulation will be put in place to protect the marine environment against undue harm from mining.

In this contribution, I seek to widen the focus. I am concerned not only with the conflict between exploitation and preservation, but more generally with the distributive effects of the emerging political economy of extraction in the global commons (Feichtner 2019). In this political economy, law not only has the function to regulate economic activity and ensure its sustainability. Rather, it also serves as a constitutive building block. The legal make-up of a political economy and the legal design of its central institutions are decisive for how value is being produced, how minerals and ecosystems are being valued.

Taking deep seabed mining as a case study, I seek to explain how international law co-constitutes a political economy of extraction and how it affects value production and valuation processes.
**Viewing the ocean as a repository of raw materials**

The United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), sometimes also called the constitution of the ocean, reinforces an imaginary of the ocean as a repository of raw materials. It does so by designating the deep seabed (i.e. the ocean floor beyond national jurisdiction) and its minerals as the common heritage of mankind and making it the subject of a particular legal regime that aims at the economic exploitation of seabed minerals. The central institution of this legal regime is the International Seabed Authority, an international organization, which is established by UNCLOS and has as its mandate the development of seabed minerals and the administration of mining activities. Consequently, the law of the deep seabed results in an enclosure of the ocean floor (Ranganathan 2019). It designates the seabed as a site of extraction and its minerals as resources to be turned into commodities.

While these legal operations pave the way for economic value production through the extraction of minerals, they leave open various options as to the exact mode of value production. Two expectations as to the production of value from seabed minerals and its subsequent distribution were crucial in the decade-long negotiations of UNCLOS. One was the expectation that developed and developing countries would mine the deep seabed in partnership. The other central expectation was that benefits from seabed mining would be equitably distributed. To date, both expectations remain unmet.

**Value production in partnership turned competition**

To overturn colonial logics of extraction and prevent a scramble for minerals, initial proposals had envisaged that mining would be conducted by a single entity. An international mining enterprise – the ‘Enterprise’ – was to be established in order to recover seabed minerals on behalf of the international community as a whole.

Yet, this proposal fell prey to the opposition of a number of industrialized states. While UNCLOS 1982 provides for the establishment of the Enterprise, it also allows mining by individual, private and state-owned, enterprises alongside the Enterprise. To apply for a license to conduct mining activities enterprises must be sponsored by a state, whose role it is to ensure that enterprises comply with their legal obligations. If the application meets all legal requirements, a license is granted in the form of a contract with the International Seabed Authority and the applicant becomes a ‘contractor’. To date, the International Seabed Authority has concluded 30 contracts for the exploration of vast areas of the ocean floor.

The Enterprise, however, which symbolized aspirations for a New International Economic Order and was seen by some as a new prototype of internationalist economic organization (Bedjaoui 1979), only exists on paper today. The 1994 Implementation Agreement, which was intended to make the law of seabed mining more market-oriented, further dismantled the Enterprise’s privileged access to financing and technology. Its operationalization is made dependent on commercial viability.

The idea of mining the seabed in partnership has given way to mining in competition. Its subversion significantly affects the second expectation that informed the negotiation of the regime of deep seabed mining, namely the equitable sharing of benefits from mining. In the 1970s, an expectation was widely shared, in part sustained by exaggerations and misinformation (Ranganathan 2019), that revenue from seabed mining would be significant and could substantially reduce world poverty. A legal obligation was included in UNCLOS that economic and financial benefits from mining be shared equitably, giving particular consideration to the needs of developing countries. Current negotiations of a payments mechanism reveal, however, that competitive mining makes it unlikely that significant revenue will accrue to the International Seabed Authority for redistribution.

**Valuing seabed minerals and ecosystems**

Today, discussions at the International Seabed Authority on the financial obligations of miners revolve around a study and model by economic experts from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (Kirchain/Field/Roth 2019). In brief, the experts suggest that royalty rates should not endanger an adequate return to miners on their investments. In their modelling, they take into account contractors’ allegations that deep seabed mining is a high-risk activity – given it has not been done before – and that consequently capital costs are high and commercial viability thus requires a significant rate of return. If the International Seabed Authority follows this logic, which it appears ready to do in order not to disincentivize commercial mining, royalty rates will be set at a low percentage of the seabed minerals’ market values. This means in turn that initial expectations, that significant mining revenue will accrue to the International Seabed Authority to be used to alleviate poverty, will not be met. Especially, since UNCLOS demands that revenue is first used to cover the costs of the International Seabed Authority before any surplus can be distributed.
Given this bleak outlook on fiscal redistribution and the existing legal obligation that seabed mining ‘must be carried out for the benefit of mankind as a whole’ and that benefits are equitably distributed, efforts are underway to redefine ‘benefit’ in non-monetary terms. Mining corporations and the International Seabed Authority point to the demand for minerals in the development of clean energy technologies to underline the urgency of seabed mining and to make the argument that market supply satisfies the benefit sharing obligation (Lodge 2020).

Reference to a ‘need for minerals to combat climate change’, in order to make the case that seabed mining is beneficial to humanity, raises a number of questions. Among them is the concern that the availability of seabed minerals may undermine efforts to minimize extraction, e.g. by reducing consumption and recycling. More importantly, argumentation based on the use value of minerals holds little persuasive force in an economic system driven by exchange value. As indicated, corporate decision-making on whether or not to extract, proceeds on the basis of profit expectations. The decisive question becomes whether the capital invested in mining will yield a monetary return, whether it will lead to the production of surplus value (M-C-M’). While the production of surplus value does not proceed entirely independently from the production of use value, the two do not necessarily coincide. Even if there was a market for seabed minerals this would not necessarily prove that humanity requires these to mitigate climate change. Moreover, the justification of seabed mining with reference to a global need for minerals brings us back to the initial expectation of mining in partnership. It raises the question, whether cooperative mining by a single entity and on a confined plot, rather than competitive mining by multiple enterprises and on multiple mining sites, driven primarily by profit, may not be better suited to ensure that mining only takes places to satisfy need (and causes as little environmental harm as possible).

**Ecological value in a monetized world**

The legal requirement that mining must be beneficial to humanity and that benefits from mining be equitably shared not only affects the valuation of seabed minerals, but also of ecological concerns. One strategy to make the case against seabed mining due to the risks it poses to the environment, has been to monetize ecological concerns. This means that ecological harm from seabed mining is translated into a monetary cost and that a monetary value is assigned to ecological benefits produced when the seabed is left intact. This monetization of ecological concerns makes it possible to conduct a cost-benefit analysis and determine whether seabed mining produces a net benefit or not. Methodologies to arrive at monetary values for ecological concerns include the assessment of willingness to pay for fictitious commodities – such as ecosystem services – or restoration and replacement costs.

While such exercises render values commensurable by using money as a common unit of account, they can be critiqued on two counts in particular. Firstly, while monetization purports to employ money as a mere unit of account, it imports into processes of valuation the distributive biases built into the (legal) design of money. As an increasing body of scholarship reveals, modern money is not a neutral means of exchange and unit of account. Rather, when money is brought into existence as a form of credit, it favours certain goods and activities over others and this distributive bias continues to attach to money, thus calling into question its suitability as a neutral measure of value (Desan 2020). Secondly, valuation by making values fungible and commensurable through monetization impoverishes our world. Valuation in terms of money requires commodification. And even if such commodification is just imagined and conceptual (‘what would people be willing to pay for the conservation of tiny octopods living around manganese nodules if there was a market for such conservation services?’), such conceptualization impacts our thinking and flattens our worlds – worlds which are shaped to a significant extent by our values and relations of value production (Graeber 2001). How we value the ocean affects our perception of and our relationship with the ocean. To use the words of Margaret Radin:

> Our conceptualizations of what is matter for what is. Because words and the world are linked, the result at which a normative discourse arrives is not detachable from that discourse without altering the meaning of the result. (Radin 1996: 88)

**Re-imagining value**

The foregoing reflections on value production and valuation bring me to the conclusion that we need to re-imagine value. To address the conundrum that commercial extraction is expanding into the global commons, even though it threatens to destroy what many people and communities cherish as spiritual, cultural, and ecological values, does not require more or better regulation, but rather changes in valuation and value production.

Against this background, initiatives to accord rights to nature as well as the design of complementary currencies and cryptoeconomics may be assessed for their potential to reimagine and revalue (Massumi 2018). Rights of nature, for example, may...
be understood as the recognition of spiritual value that, like human dignity, is not quantifiable and cannot be entered as a figure into a cost-benefit analysis to determine whether an environmental harm is outweighed by an economic benefit. Complementary (crypto-)currencies have been proposed, inter alia, to institute alternative measures of value, based for example on time or energy (Ruzzene 2018) and to finance activities that collectives value, such as care and reproductive work, irrespective of the profitability of such activities (NEF 2015).

References


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A changing Arctic
With a changing climate comes a changing Arctic. In no other region of the world are the effects of global warming more visible and profound. Latest climate research, covering data collected over the past forty years, shows how the Arctic is warming three times as fast as the global mean (Schmidt 2020). But what happens in the Arctic does not stay in the Arctic. Rapidly melting sea ice does not only endanger the Arctic region’s pristine ecosystem and with it the natural habitat of animals and basis of existence for local populations. Collapsing ice shelves and sustained glacial retreat in e.g. Greenland are among the key causes of a global rise in sea levels. The ripple effect is felt in faraway coastal areas such as those in Bangladesh.

‘One of the planet’s last great frontiers’?
Sea ice melt is also turning the Arctic into a region of global geopolitical interest. The future prospect of opening sea routes and extracting natural resources from the Arctic Ocean’s seabed has attracted the interest from non-Arctic actors, who seek to profit from new commercial opportunities in the far North. Leading print media quickly translated these developments into images of a new ‘gold rush’, a ‘race’ for resources or even a ‘scramble for the Arctic’ that might provoke a new ‘Cold War’. These headlines evidence how the long-time imaginary of the Arctic as terra nullius – the possibility to claim land and engage in territorial expansion – is appropriated and blends with the more recent imaginary of the frontier that holds natural riches for both state and non-state actors from outside the Arctic region. The pressing question seems to be what kind of frontier the Arctic is, if it is one at all. The answer naturally varies with the perspective taken, but it raises the issues of ownership and control, of access to and use of the region’s marine resources, including fish, marine mammals and natural resources such as oil and gas that lie on or under the seabed of the Arctic Ocean as well as its shipping routes. In other words, the controversy centrally revolves around the question of who owns the Arctic as core norms of international law – above all sovereignty – stand contested.

Two competing discourses about the Arctic offer an illustration of the different stakes in the debate. They reflect opposing visions of ownership, governance and ordering in and of the Arctic. The first discourse is primarily represented by actors outside the Arctic who see the Arctic as a ‘global commons’. The second is chiefly argued by Arctic states, especially the Arctic’s five coastal states, comprising Canada, Denmark, Norway, Russia and the United States of America (USA), that rebut the ‘global commons’ argument by claiming that most of the area above the Arctic Circle is under uncontested sovereignty or national jurisdiction of the Arctic states.

The Arctic as a global commons?
To clarify the ‘global commons’ discourse, it is necessary to engage in a brief definitional exercise. The global commons are defined as large resource domains that fall outside of the jurisdiction of any one country. If not managed under a particular property regime, humankind as a whole has legal access to its common pool resources. Until today, four resource domains have been recognized as a global commons: Antarctica, the high seas and deep seabed minerals, the atmosphere, and space (Buck 1998: 1). With the high seas and maritime resources recognized as the oldest global commons, the Arctic Ocean could potentially be seen as the least likely case to cause controversy or conflict over resources. However, besides the oceans regime being the most complex of
all global commons regimes (Buck 1998: 75), melting sea ice and significant advancements in technology have increased the prospect of accessing and exploiting non-living resources in the Arctic Ocean. It is in light of these developments that the political construction of the Arctic as a global commons particularly gained momentum. Especially non-Arctic states such as China and India, Japan, Singapore and South Korea, but also non-state stakeholders such as the European Union (EU) advanced the claim of the Arctic as a global commons in the 2010s.

Since the term global commons is a ‘political construction’ (Vogler 2012: 63), its pertaining discourse is not stable but ambiguous. Advocates of this discourse pursue various economic, ecological and scientific as well as security-related interests in the Arctic so that rationales for the global commons claim at times contradict and sometimes even reinforce each other. Stakeholders usually resort to two alternating rationales: While the economic rationale depicts the Arctic as a resource frontier whose natural reserves and shipping routes should be openly accessed or used for economic profit, the ecological rationale builds on an imaginary of the Arctic as an environmental reserve that needs conservation. Where the Arctic is considered a pristine ecosystem worthy of conservation, the aim is to avoid a new ‘tragedy of the commons’, where the effects of climate change and resource overuse lead to degradation, depletion or destruction. Former EU High Representative Federica Mogherini’s Arctic framing at a 2017 EU conference falls within this argumentative pattern. As she claimed, the Arctic ‘is a common good, and we have a common responsibility to preserve it – for its people and for the world’ (EEAS 2017). Sustainably managing the Arctic is thus seen as a ‘common responsibil-
ity’, not only that of intraregional actors, as the Arctic is less a frontier but a ‘true gateway to the world’ (ibid.). In terms of the envisioned governance framework by advocates of the global commons argument, Indian policymakers have been most pronounced in arguing for a management regime under UN auspices. In a direct analogy to the Antarctic treaty regime, they wish to see the Arctic subjected to a comprehensive international regime to effect a sustainable use of resources and change the Arctic Ocean’s property status to ‘common heritage of mankind’ (Gautam 2011: 9). It is the Indian position that most strikingly reflected demands for fairness and distributional justice when chastising Arctic regional conservation for its enclosed resource management in the early 2010s. What is common to all stakeholders is that they centrally build on the baseline imaginary that the Arctic is becoming more global as climate change in the Arctic is having planetary effects. A warming Arctic arguably renders the region as of inter-regional, not intra-regional concern.

Against the global commons

In stark opposition to this global commons discourse has stood a discourse in defence of sovereignty and the management of the Arctic Ocean through traditional state enclosure. This state-centric discourse has been entertained by the five Arctic coastal states, with Canada and Russia leading the way. Any challenge to the system of sovereign states is chiefly refuted on legal grounds. Arctic states are most eager to present the region as governed by the norms of international law by which all Arctic coastal states abide in orderly fashion. They insistently point to the flawed comparison of the Arctic with Antarctica, which is an uninhabited landmass and subject to a specialized treaty regime, the 1959 Antarctic Treaty. In contrast, the Arctic as a semi-enclosed ocean is surrounded by inhabited land and principally subject to the 1982 United Nations Convention of the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS). Pursuant to this treaty regime, all littoral states (except for the US, which is not a signatory to the treaty) exercise their jurisdictional rights in the Arctic Ocean. UNCLOS clearly defines the limits of the territorial sea at 12 nautical miles (nm), exclusive economic zones (EEZs) at 200 nm and delineates the outer limits of the continental shelf areas at anything beyond 200 nm. So, in addition to being able to claim sovereign rights up to the outer limits of their individual EEZs, coastal states can and have each lodged claims to extend their continental shelf as far as possible under UNCLOS. Russia’s flag-planting on the seabed of the Lomonosov Ridge in 2007 can be read as the most infamous example of an Arctic coastal state’s attempt to propose new outer limits of its continental shelf that reaches up to the North Pole. From the legal provisions under UNCLOS it follows that the freedoms exercised on the Central Arctic Ocean remain limited, for it is not the entire Arctic Ocean, but only the high seas, ‘The Area’ - the seabed and ocean floor and subsoil thereof – and free rights of transit that qualify as a global commons.

Arctic states are therefore avid to underline that the Arctic is no unbounded space or a ‘legal vacuum’ with ‘unclear jurisdictions’ as former Norwegian Ambassador to the Arctic noted at the Arctic Futures Symposium in 2012 (Østhagen 2012). Nor do Arctic states consider the Arctic a lawless resource frontier as media tropes such as the ‘scramble for the Arctic’ imply. Much to the contrary, they cultivate a cooperative spirit by coquetting with the idea that there is simply ‘not that much to fight over’, as Käpylä and Mikkola note (Käpylä and Mikkola 2019: 155). Estimates suggest that of those global oil and gas reserves suspected to be found in the Arctic, 85 percent are under the Arctic states’ national jurisdictions and for that reason do not qualify as global commons resources (Vogler 2012: 63). In sum, the discourse’s legal grounding in international law endows their practices with legitimacy and until recently has helped them thwart off challenges to globalize the region and, thus, effect changes to the status quo of the state-dominated Arctic order.

From global commons to global Arctic

The distinction between a state-bounded vs. state-transcending discourse paints a picture too neat to reflect political realities on the ground. As stated earlier, the discourses are internally ambivalent and, together with their imaginaries, they are subject to changes over time. More importantly, this discursive juxtaposition leaves out alternative imaginaries of both intra-regional and extra-regional non-state actors that have existed in parallel and blur the clear-cut boundaries (Steinberg e.a. 2015). Recently, a discourse has emerged that cuts across previous paradigms and promises to provide common ground for all stakeholders in the Arctic: the ‘Global Arctic’. Both its origin and status as a term remain ambiguous (Dodds 2018: 191). For its proponents in policy
circles, it has been strategically employed to advocate a new vision or governance model for cooperation within the Arctic Council that includes extra-regional stakeholders. Academics present it as a useful ‘method’ (Heininen and Finger 2018) that pays witness to and can map the Arctic’s changed geopolitical context in light of climate change: It is both affected by but also contributes to globalization. Understood along these heuristic lines, the term seems to resonate with the ‘global commons’ baseline imaginary of a globalizing Arctic rather than conforming to the state-centric imaginaries of the Arctic as entertained by the ‘Arctic five’.

Rather than a neutral method, it might be better read as a mediating frame. It connects various imaginaries of spatial ordering across scales and, hence, serves as a site of contestation for the multiplicity of stakeholders in the Arctic who negotiate which ordering vision is best suited to sustainably manage the Arctic. Using the term ‘Global Arctic’ as an academic therefore demands remaining attentive to the labour it performs (Dodds 2018: 191), but it also holds critical purchase to zoom in on the political ‘struggles’ in the Arctic (Shadian 2018: 197). Focusing on the struggles reveals that the debate concerning the Arctic’s ownership is not only about access to Arctic riches.

It is primarily about changing dynamics of political authority and, thus, access to political participation to determine the future of Arctic governance. The competition between Arctic discourses has already had visible effects on Arctic governance: The Arctic Council’s decision at its 2013 Kiruna meeting to, inter alia, welcome China, India, Japan, Singapore and South Korea as new ‘observers states’ may be read as a compromise struck between acknowledging a globalizing Arctic and containing the global commons discourse from within. Whether this enlargement is to ultimately challenge the prevailing order of sovereign states remains to be seen.

References


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1 Cf. e.g. a speech by the former President of Iceland and now Chairman of the Arctic Circle who has chiefly propagated the term (Grimsson 2015).
Commonswashing – A Political Communication Struggle

Mélanie Dulong de Rosnay

The enclosure and the commodification of the commons are identified processes. Commonswashing, the appropriation of the semantics and the message of the commons for commercial purposes without endorsing its values, constitutes an additional co-optation phenomenon. Conceptualized as an extension of the logic of greenwashing, commonswashing constitutes a capture of the language, but also potentially of the imaginary and the social benefits of the actual commons.

Introduction

The concept of ‘commonswashing’ (similar to greenwashing) refers to the tendency of for-profit companies to seek mental association with or directly frame their activities under the umbrella of the commons or in order to benefit from public sympathy, advertising objectives of openness, participation or sharing with a community, with the objective to endorse values and ethics of commons-based sharing, but without actually respecting its fundamental principles, thus creating more fuzziness in public opinion on the actual definition, principles and values of genuine commons.

In this article, I introduce the concept of commonswashing and the semantic preemption of the concept of commons by private actors communicating around concepts of commons, openness and sharing without adopting their principles nor values. Examples in the digital and information commons realm of intangible resources produced and shared online will illustrate the pervasive effects of this conceptual appropriation of the commons, to which actors of the genuine commons must resist in order to preserve both the meaning of the concept and the commons themselves which might be threatened by this usurpation and message blurring.

Commonswashing differs from public domain or common pool resources depletion, commercial co-optation or appropriation by freeriding. The enclosure of commons by private actors, or the commercial appropriation of resources, is another identified phenomenon (for public domain knowledge or information, Boyle, 2010). The development of lucrative business models based on commons-based production such as free and open source software is also a well-known practice (Birkinbine 2020, Lund & Zukerfeld 2020). But models of ‘profits from enclosures’, such as the scientific publishing industry, and ‘profits from openness’, such as open source software (models names borrowed from Lund & Zukerfeld 2020) both differ from the concept of ‘commonswashing’. Within information and digital commons became noticeable a tendency to co-opt or claim elements of the language of openness and the ethics of sharing to designate for-profit initiatives that neither follow commons-based production models nor display any criteria for openness, besides being accessible online. Social networks such as Facebook also use a discourse which encourages users to ‘share’ information with a ‘community’, while the content is neither owned nor governed by the users, who are not provided with the affordances to organize as a community. This lexical field appropriation leads to freeriding on and benefiting from the sympathy capital which the public addresses to the movement of the actual digital commons which is becoming more mainstream since one or two decades thanks to initiatives such as Wikipedia or Open Access scientific publications.

Such a takeover may even lead to new forms of enclosure of commons resources, if private actors claiming to work for the commons and the common good by using its semantics may come to dominate the governance structures for the production of a good or the provision of a service as a commons, thus perverting the key characteristics and values of commons-based peer production.

This semantic appropriation can be seen as an extension of the logic of the concept of greenwashing (Kahle, Gurel-Atay 2014), around which is forged the term commonswashing. Greenwashing is ‘a form of spin in which green PR or green marketing is deceptively used to promote the perception that an organization’s products, objectives or policies are environmentally friendly’ (greenwashing Wikipedia page, 2018), and a way for capitalist logic to colonize spaces that were still outside its field of action.

The commons are now recognized and valued in many sectors of society and, as a concept and a governance model, they retain a strong heterogeneity (Papadimitropoulos 2017, Broumas 2017), to the extent that
Defining the commons and digital commons

In order to understand and flag initiatives which pretend to be a commons, but are not commons, it is necessary to provide a basic definition of the commons before showing examples of previous usage of commonswashing.

For Elinor Ostrom (1990) drawing on thousands of case studies, the elements characterizing commons are a shared resource, a community managing and curating it, and self-determining its governance rules. ‘Digital commons are a subset of the commons, where the resources are data, information, culture and knowledge which are created and/or maintained online. The notion of the digital commons is an important concept for countering legal enclosure and fostering equitable access to these resources.’ (Dulong de Rosnay and Musiani 2016). Wikipedia is the most famous example of a digital commons, produced and maintain by a decentralized community and accessible under a Creative Commons license allowing others to reuse and build upon articles only if they contribute back to the commons.

Analytical criteria can help identifying the different shades between actual digital commons, and user-generated content or crowdsourcing online platforms which may be practicing commonswashing. Detecting if a product or a service is a commons, or surfing on the tendency to get social kudos, can be achieved by considering design features such as the ‘ownership of means of production, technical architecture/design, social organization/governance of work patterns, ownership of the peer-produced resource, and value of the output’ (Dulong de Rosnay and Musiani 2016). Based on these five design features, a hint that a project is a digital labour platform rather an actual commons can be the fact that the platform is owned by a for-profit corporation, as opposed to a cooperative or a community of volunteers. The control on the technical features or affordances (who is able to modify the settings, to exercise censorship, to delete a contribution) and the fact that governance decisions are centralized will also be indicators. And finally, if rights on the resource, the output of the users’ participation and production, remain within the corporation and its stakeholders rather than shared within the community, it will be not be a commons.

Instances of commonswashing

While the concept of commonswashing has already been used by colleagues, mostly within the francophone actors of the commons, denouncing ‘political marketing (...) rhetorics or the ‘cynical’, ‘abusive’ exploitation of a ‘buzzword’, there has not been any systematic attempt of an academic definition to my knowledge and after an exploration of search engines and academic databases. The audience of a panel at the 2018 conference of the International Association for the Study of the Commons (IASC), where I first presented this paper, also confirmed the lack of prior usage of the concept in the academic field.

Previous examples of commonswashing, based on a search on Twitter of the term #commonswashing, can be found in two areas, information technology, and French politics and funding. Authors of the tweets are also noting a confusion between the commons and the common good, a concept closer to the public interest than to the commons. Bitcoin analogy with Wikipedia is not accurate, even if mining can be compared to volunteering one’s IT capacity in order to make the system work, the value created is not shared with the community at large and remains in the drive of the individual miners.

Several French politicians¹ have been using expressions of commons and common good without relation with their actual meaning: the 2018 Summit for tech for good was also piggybacking on the common good, with French president asking high tech world leaders to defend the common goods of education, labor law and social rights (a model qualified of ‘industrial paternalism’ of the XIXth century) and pay a 3% tax (a project which has been abandoned in January 2020 after pressure by the US government) to fund so-called

¹ Tweets with the hashtag #commonswashing by Lionel Maurel, Rémi Mathis, Régis Ursini, Lancelot Pecquet: https://twitter.com/hashtag/commonswashing?src=hash.
² Aurore Bergé, Aurélien Tache.
common goods, creating a confusion with actual public infrastructure and public services.

A comparable tendency of semantic appropriation of a non-profit concept to serve the agenda of corporate branding is the concept of ‘ethical AI’, where companies try to distract and pretend to develop ethical AI while just bearing the name of ethical, misleading the public and the regulator. **AI Commons**, an initiative which participated to the Global Forum on AI for humanity in October 2019, gathers companies developing AI products for humanity and being a common knowledge hub without any relation with the commons or the knowledge commons, a well-identified research field where knowledge is co-created and shared (Frischmann, Madison, Sandburg 2014), or to initiatives trying to develop the field of AI as a commons.

**An appropriation of the concept of the commons in the information and digital realm**

Cultural commons are often victim of enclosure. Even public cultural heritage and memory institutions with a mission of preservation such as museums and libraries exercised what is called copyfraud, the undue addition of a layer of copyright to digitized versions of public domain work (Dulong de Rosnay 2011). On the contrary, some museums and libraries are collaborating with Wikipedia to place their public domain works in the commons. So do volunteers who upload photographs of sites of natural beauty, such as Machu Picchu, and contribute them to the commons.

However, in 2019, Northface, a company selling sportswear, hacked Wikipedia, with the intention to get its products higher in the Google search results, after noticing that all trips start with a Google search and that Wikipedia often is the top result. A Northface employee replaced Wikipedia photos of tourist destinations with very similar photos showing their products in the shot and ‘in some cases, outright photoshopped a North Face product into an existing photo of trekking popular tourist destinations’.

The company made a promotional video to present their strategy, pretending they were ‘collaborating with Wikipedia’. Not only were they not ‘collaborating’ with the biggest actor of the digital commons, but they were violating its terms of use, which forbid commercial campaigning. Wikipedia editors quickly noticed the scam and removed the photos showing the NorthFace logo and the company received some criticisms among the community of the commons, taking advantage of free publicity caused by articles reporting the case.

In an activist scholarship perspective, how can we protect both the commons and the concept of commons? Resistance against enclosure, commodification and commonswashing may combine approaches of reframing political imaginaries and designing policy solutions protecting the commons.

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3 See the photos.

**Acknowledgments**

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**References**


**Mélanie Dulong de Rosnay**, PhD in law (University Paris 2, 2007), is Associate Research Professor at the French National Centre for Scientific Research (CNRS) since 2010. Since 2019, she is the co-founding director of the CNRS Center for Internet and Society, and since 2020, she also directs a CNRS-national research network on Internet, AI and Society.

Her research focuses on digital commons, regulation by technology, information technology law and policy. She recently worked on network infrastructure as a commons with the netCommons European project, algorithmic regulation, peer production platforms, citizen science, distributed architectures, open access and open licensing (public sector information, scientific data and publications, public domain works and digital native heritage).

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In Honour of Amartya Sen, Initiate of Global Cooperation par Excellence

Bettina Mahlert

On 18 October 2020, Amartya Sen has received the Peace Prize of the German Book Trade in Frankfurt am Main. This is a welcome occasion to honor him from the nearby location of the Centre for Global Cooperation Research in Duisburg.

Originally from present-day West Bengal, where he was born in 1933, Sen studied economics and philosophy in Calcutta and later in Cambridge. He served as professor at numerous elite universities in India, Great Britain and the United States, and received the Nobel Prize in Economic Sciences in addition to many other renowned awards. ‘I never had a noteworthy non-academic job’, commented Sen in his typically modest way on his unprecedented academic career. Rooted in welfare economics and philosophy, his publications address poverty and inequality, development, famines, the notion of the ‘living standard’ as well as freedom, democracy, and collective choice among others.

While Sen’s immense academic merits have been highlighted on many occasions, what is remarkable from the view of the Centre for Global Cooperation Research is that he is an initiator of global cooperation par excellence. I am referring here to global cooperation as understood at the Centre, namely as ‘extensive and intensive collaboration among two or more parties in addressing a collective problem of global scale’ (Centre for Global Cooperation Research 2020). The collective problem that Sen has focused on throughout his academic life is to enhance human welfare, especially for the most disadvantaged, thus creating a more equal and just world. Sen believed that academia needs more and new ways of collaborating across established disciplinary borders in order to effectively contribute to this overall goal. He conceptualized welfare in terms of capabilities – i.e. the freedom to realize valuable functionings, which means ways of being and doing. This framework has not only become immensely influential but is specifically devised so as to enable inter-disciplinary collaboration.

Sen effectively opened up welfare economics to key themes of moral philosophy, stimulating a dialogue between the two disciplines that has persisted over several decades. With many others, Sen shared a deep discontent with the longstanding concentration on utility, GNP, and related income-based measures of development. But it was he who, in cooperation with a group of other economists, provided a collaborative space for all who shared that discontent. Based on Sen’s concept of capabilities, the Human Development Approach and Index were introduced in 1990 by explicitly inviting scholars from all disciplines to bring in their ideas for enhancing the proposed analytical framework – and they did. Today, those who work with Sen’s ideas range from local practitioners, global analysts, activists, and gender researchers to philosophers, sociologists, and pedagogues, among others.

How did Sen manage to initiate these and other path-breaking forms of global cooperation? Putnam (2004) offers some illuminating insights. First, Sen radically criticized economic theory while at the same time insisting that the perceived deficits needed to be addressed within its general framework. By sticking to this framework instead of discarding it altogether, Sen valued the professional identity of his colleagues, thus making it easier for them to engage with his arguments. Second, over the years, Sen forced welfare economics to recognize that its key concern with economic well-being is inherently moral and cannot be addressed in a responsible manner as long as economists refuse to take reasoned moral argument seriously. With this, Sen broke down walls between economics and philosophy that had so comfortably sheltered economists from the fuzzy and politicized

world of evaluation. He achieved this by appealing to
the key value commitment among his audience – sci-
entific soundness. In order to convince his colleagues
by way of scientific argument, he engaged tirelessly
in drawing together all available evidence. By taking a
holistic approach, Sen demonstrated how weak mon-
ey and GDP are as measures of economic well-being.
More specifically, he showed how limited the informa-
tional base of economists will be if they do not col-
lect information on the different capabilities that the
same income level enables under varying conditions:

‘The relationship between income and capability [is]
strongly affected by the age of the person (e.g. by the
specific needs of the very old and the very young), by
gender and social roles (e.g. through special respon-
sibilities of maternity and also custom-determined
family obligations), by location (e.g. by the proneness
to flooding or drought, or by insecurity and violence
in some inner-city living), by epidemiological atmos-
phere (e.g. through diseases endemic in a region), and
by other variations over which a person may have no
- or only limited - control’ (Sen, cited in Putnam 2004:
57).

By taking this holistic approach, e.g. referring to so-
cial roles or flooding, multiple other disciplines are
invited to enter the process of inter-disciplinary col-
laboration. Third, Sen did not only criticize others but
offered a concrete proposal himself – the capability
approach – in order to remedy the perceived deficits.

Sen’s efforts have been remunerated abundantly. In
order to further increase their pay-offs in the future,
let me add some proposals from my personal back-
ground in sociological development research. Soci-
ologists have well received Amartya Sen’s capability
approach; incorporating it into their analytical frame-
work has worked out well, especially within the field of social inequalities. Conversely, it might be also fruitful to open up economically dominated development research not only to philosophy but to sociology and other social sciences as well. In his late work on inequalities in India (together with Drèze), Sen built intensely on sociological knowledge; however, this remains an exception in welfare economics.

Sen always refused to identify universal capabilities that would be valuable for every human being. Instead, individuals and groups should themselves identify the capabilities that they would like to achieve. Institutionalizing this evaluative exercise is a key lever for giving people at the ‘receiving’ end of so-called development ‘cooperation’ an active role in their own development. At the same time, scholars have pushed forward strong arguments in favor of both the necessity and feasibility of referring to elementary universal capabilities – such as basic human needs for food and shelter, security, social recognition, or self-actualization. Resonating with this, many projects and studies within the Human Development tradition opt for combining both – caring for the elementary bases first and giving space to specific desired capabilities on this base afterwards. An example would be Alkire’s work on the ‘vital core’ (cf. Martin 2020). Sociology could contribute relevant methods and modes of thought here (Mahlert 2020). Drawing on these resources would resonate with Sen’s above-mentioned holistic approach. In order to implement it in the most effective manner, this approach can be tailored to the specific goals at stake in each concrete development project. For each individual project, an interdisciplinary team can be put together, selecting professionals from those and only those disciplines that are relevant to the specific goals.

As a final observation, a certain Western bias is inherent in the capability approach, as reflected in its emphasis on individual freedom. This might have been required in order to get welfare economists on board for Sen’s concerns at all. Today, however, it is no longer necessary. The way forward in global cooperation in service of human welfare is to include the Global South on fully equal terms.

References


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http://www.gcr21.org/opinion

**Bettina Mahlert**, Associate Senior Fellow at the Centre, is Assistant Professor of General Sociology and Sociological Theory at the University of Innsbruck. Mahlert received her doctorate in 2013 with a thesis on the sociology of global inequalities and habilitated in 2019 on ‘Instruments for Observing and Assessing Reality: Numbers and Terms in Global Development Policy’. In her current research, Bettina Mahlert focuses on the implications of postcolonial critique for sociological theory and on processes of global cooperation among others.

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The international conference organized by the KHK/GCR21 and the School of Global Studies of the University of Gothenburg on October 5th and 6th, focused on urgency and responsibility in global cooperation. Over the two days, the conference reunited scholars from multiple disciplines, with different approaches and frameworks, from all across the world.

The first panel focused on responsibility in migration during Covid-19. Alan Gamlen, who compared global cooperation during the ongoing pandemic to previous shocks, such as the global refugee crisis of 2015, argued that past shocks resulted in a more coherent international reaction and that the current pandemic revealed a reassurance of state-sovereignty at the national level. Karen Anne Liao, based on her work on the repatriation of Filipino migrant workers, observed an increase in international cooperation in the health sector. Darshan Vigneswaran referred to episodes of xenophobia and exclusion of migrants during Covid-19 but also moments of empathy between migrants and host countries.

The second panel dealt with strategies of mobilization and cooperation on human rights and urgency. Monica Baar called for a better consideration of people with disabilities. As their situation and traumata are not easily conveyed through images, their cases are usually neglected in favour of more ‘urgent’ ones that attract the global public’s attention. Again, in terms of visuals, Christine Unrau showed how images of Amnesty International counter the ideology of necessity and are used to frame migration as a human right. Regarding the latter and its connection to urgency, Johan Karlsson Schaffer advocated for a reconsideration of human rights by connecting political science and political philosophy.

‘Hunger, Memory and Responsibility after Famines’ was tackled in the third panel, first by Joanna Simono, who demonstrated how certain memories of famines are contested and remembered differently in India and among Indian exiles in Canada. Regarding the Bengal famine of 1943, Ram Krishna Ranjan highlighted the difficulty to tell stories of famines through the methodology of films and memory work. Fisseha Fantahun Tefera argued that strong selectivity neglects some aspects and leads to forgotten violence in the context of urgent action and called for justice and responsibility. Camilla Orjuela compared the Chinese famine of 1958-62 to the great Irish famine of mid-1800s and showed the different space for commemoration under repressed memory politics.

The fourth panel dedicated to urgency and responsibility in peacebuilding revealed the existing gap between the support of states to mandates related to

Franklyn Lisk – What kind of global cooperation is needed?

At the moment, the WHO at least has the mandate to play a leading role in the coordination of international action to combat the pandemic. Unfortunately, the situation is such that the WHO and the multilateral institutions have not been able to fulfill this important requirement. And this is why I think global cooperation is indeed relevant to the pandemic, right through from prevention to diagnosis, to treatment, vaccine and even plans for recovery and reconstruction. But what kind of global cooperation is needed? And what has happened so far? I think it is important to look at this if we are to have an understanding or at least an idea of what are the gaps and what are the prospects for filling these gaps in the requirement for the right type of global cooperation.

now, who demonstrated how certain memories of famines are contested and remembered differently in India and among Indian exiles in Canada. Regarding the Bengal famine of 1943, Ram Krishna Ranjan highlighted the difficulty to tell stories of famines through the methodology of films and memory work. Fisseha Fantahun Tefera argued that strong selectivity neglects some aspects and leads to forgotten violence in the context of urgent action and called for justice and responsibility. Camilla Orjuela compared the Chinese famine of 1958-62 to the great Irish famine of mid-1800s and showed the different space for commemoration under repressed memory politics.

The fourth panel dedicated to urgency and responsibility in peacebuilding revealed the existing gap between the support of states to mandates related to
the protection of civilians and their real response. As pointed out by Aidan Hehir, country leaders accept such norms but rarely respond. For Joakim Öjendal this indicates a general crisis of peacebuilding, as he showed the difficulty to understand where peacebuilding starts and ends, and what role violence plays in the matter. Finally, Theresa Reinold focused on the phenomenon of court proliferation and identified the alignment of preferences among actors as a key to better implement the rule of law.

‘Urgency and Responsibility around Gender Violence’ was discussed in the fifth panel, during which Swati Parashar and Amya Agarwal addressed the very urgent theme of gender-based violence in times of the ongoing pandemic while David Duriesmith called for a reframing of masculinity to prevent it. Roxani Krystalli reflected on feminist teaching, theories and activism and Elina Penttinen pointed out a lack of strategies of Northern governments to protect vulnerable people. She also mentioned the necessity to raise awareness in order to overcome the normalized notion of violence in the private sphere. Philipp Schulz focused on male survivors of wartime sexual violence in Uganda since 2015 and pondered how to respond to urgent situations while implementing long-term solutions.

The sixth panel of the conference tried to reconcile urgency, responsibility and accountability in cybersecurity governance. Tatiana Tropina commenced the panel by reflecting on accountability and urgency in times of Covid-19 with a focus on misinformation and disinformation and how harmful this proves to be to free speech. Carolina Aguerre tackled locating and tracing apps used during the current pandemic and advocated for international standards for the international digital corporation as well as responsible behaviour in international data governance regimes. Enrico Calandro took the example of Southern African cyberspace governance and argued for a ‘new technology diplomacy’ to achieve cyber-stability. Finally, Louise Marie Hurel analyzed different concepts and ‘models’ that have sustained and challenged the role of CSIRTs as both institutional responses to growing cyberattacks and vulnerabilities, but also as communities of practice that are both culturally and contextually networked.
During panel seven, ‘Do We Have Time for Democracy and Reflections on Civic Participation during Climate Emergency’, Aysem Mert called for a reframing of the Anthropocene, stating that this should include crises such as global pandemics. Peter Newell tackled the failing of states to protect their citizens and argued that everyone bears responsibility for a democracy in crisis to some extent. He also mentioned the urgent need for social mobilization.

Finally, the eighth panel of the international conference tackled the themes of urgency and responsibility in the politics of (de-)legitimation. Christopher Smith Ochoa, who analyzed how legitimacy functions and is produced in the case of Edward Snowden, mentioned the urgency among states to act quickly in terms of surveillance. Hortense Jongen focused on discourse, legitimacy and global governance at the ICANN to measure awareness and endorsement towards democracy, effectiveness and fairness. Benard Musembi Kilaka, who studies the LAPSSET corridor in Kenya, addressed the legitimacy of security practices in order to understand why some protection measures were considered controversial. Finally, Fredrik Söderbaum and Kilian Spandler dealt with populism and the liberal international order by analyzing the domestic populist strategies of Hugo Chávez, Viktor Orban and Rodrigo Duterte.

17th Käte Hamburger Dialogue on Global Cooperation under Covid-19

The first day of the conference ended with the 17th Käte Hamburger Dialogue on ‘Global Cooperation under Covid-19’. While pointing out the shortcomings of international organizations such as the WHO, panelists Tine Hanrieder, Franklyn Lisk, Maryam Deloffre and Adia Benton explored various possibilities to enhance global cooperation, especially between Western countries and the Global South. Former pandemics, such as Ebola, were discussed to try to understand what could be improved and how cooperation could benefit all actors.

Philipp Michaelis, Sabrina Pischer and Victoria Derrien
Theresa Reinold – If more regular people cared

I do like the idea that responsibility embodies this cosmopolitan view that we do have a responsibility for things that happen outside our own little community. That we shouldn’t be selfish and look at just ourselves. If we would internalize this notion to a greater extent, and I am not talking about political elites. I am talking also about us as citizens because, ultimately, whatever Angela Merkel does or doesn’t do: it depends on the domestic pressure she is facing. And if more regular people cared about what is happening in Yemen or Saudi Arabia or whatever, and put pressure on political elites, then these people, even if they might not be intrinsically motivated to implement a responsibility to protect, they want to be re-elected. So it’s a bottom-up process and in the Western world it’s in our hands essentially.

Roxani Krystalli – There are echoing repercussions throughout, in the universe in which research has a very large footprint.

I realized that the political economy of research that governs my life also governs theirs and a lot of them derive their livelihood from being part of international research projects and international interventions. I’ve been thinking about how it’s all very well and good for me not to be conducting research right now for all sorts of reasons, but there are echoing repercussions throughout, in the universe in which research has a very large footprint and organizes the lives and livelihoods of the people involved in it.

Christopher Smith Ochoa – In these moments, critique becomes the lifeblood of democracy

It’s typical of the executive to use the urgency of a crisis to implement policies which are otherwise not possible democratically and the pushbacks against those moves are inevitable in democratic societies. […] Of course, these critiques can take on narrative strands more in line with conspiracy thinking that potentially also seeks to undermine democracy. We’ve experienced that in Germany, as the far-right co-opted protests critical of government overreach with its Covid measures. In my mind, these are uncomfortable yet necessary aspects of democracy, by which enough space must exist for voices critical of executive decisions to protest. In these moments, critique becomes the lifeblood of democracy, calling into question policies in moments of extreme urgency.

David Duriesmith – What are young people seen as being responsible for?

When I tried to narrow down ‘what are young people seen as being responsible for, and how should they act responsibly,’ in the interviews with participants, it tended to have quite a mix between what I would see as genuine feminist concern and a sort of ‘neoliberal betterment.’ […] In the research it seemed that youth were being seen as being responsible not only for shifting patriarchal gender relations but for becoming respectable for changing their practices in ways that older generations saw them as being desirable, safe, and respectable more broadly.
Aysem Mert – We have become a little bit too comfortable in our democracies

Who is responsible for making democracies responsive to crises? - Us. All of us. We have become a little bit too comfortable in our democracies. We have become so used to living in democracies that they feel like a right and something that we live in, like an ecosystem. But that ecosystem is under stress and perhaps we have to rethink the kind of democracy we want to bring into our societies and revolutionize it a little bit.

Louise Marie Hurel – Moments of Transformation

Covid-19 has contributed to fears about national cyber-resilience. [...] These moments of transformation call attention to specific security issues, and while they do so, they also render less visible the background of labour and expertise that have been constantly operating since the early days of the commercial internet.

Monika Baar – What happens to those causes that do not get the support and the marketing?

Why are there urgent situations that don’t get the attention that they deserve? Considering the situation in Yemen: No one would doubt that would fall under the category of urgency, still it is not coming up. The humanitarian field seems pretty noble, but in fact it’s a global marketplace where different agents and actors are vying for the attention of the public and using various strategies to do it. They might for instance employ global celebrities to make an impact on the global public, let it be signing petitions or making donations. It is important to look at how these dynamics work, because it is very likely that one person gives support to a cause that is defined as urgent, so it is very likely that this person will also support other comparable actions because this support has a feel-good factor. So the question is: What happens to those causes that do not get the attention not because they are not urgent, but because they did not get the support and the marketing?

Darshawn Vigneswaran – The pandemic reveals to us how immobile so many migrant populations are.

International migration flows had nothing to do with the course of the pandemic itself. We have seen problems emerging of tourists—of people who are in power to move across international borders—and one of the things that the pandemic reveals to us is precisely how immobile so many migrant populations are. They are not in fact the ones that move across international borders with such ease, with such continuity, such frequency. The problems are emerging for other sorts of mobilities that create challenges that then create problems for migrants.

Swati Parashar –

We must stop speaking somewhere, listen, rethink, build new alliances, collaborations and bear witness to the depletions and transformations that are around us. And I want to end this on a positive note:

Although the wind blows terribly here, the moonlight also leaks between the roof planks of this ruined house.

Izumi Shikibu, translated by Jane Hirshfield
Briefings

Briefings usually focus on one of the policy fields the Centre is working on. They combine facts and conceptual questions on topics that are discussed at the Centre’s public events.

Briefings are available on the Centre’s website and printed on demand.

Issues

2020
Cybercrime
Das Glücksversprechen der Nachhaltigkeit
2019
Migration, Utopie, Stadt
Populism and Global Cooperation
2018
Online Defamation

https://www.gcr21.org/publications/briefings
You are invited to follow our livestreams and share your thoughts with our team on Twitter.

For latest updates on our events, please see our website.

Please visit GCR21.ORG for details & updates.

Access links for online events are provided after registration.
New Fellows at the Centre

The Centre recently welcomed new fellows already participating in its ongoing research working groups on ‘Pathways and Mechanisms in Global Cooperation’ and ‘Polycentric Governance’.

Dr Carolina Aguerre
Senior Research Fellow
09/2020 – 08/2021

Internet Governance and Data Issues: Future Paths of Cooperation Mechanisms?

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Dr Malcolm Campbell-Verduyn
Senior Research Fellow
09/2020 - 08/2021

Blocking Climate Change or Pathways to Climate Governance? Assessing Transscalar and Transsectoral Experimentation with Blockchain Technologies for Climate Finance

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Dr Dinh Thi Ngoc Bich
Senior Research Fellow
09/2020 – 08/2021

PPP in Practice: Assessing Business Goals in Combating Climate Change in the Case of Vietnam

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Dr Alena Drieschova  
Postdoc Research Fellow  
07/2020 - 06/2021  
Representants and International Orders  
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Nathalia Sautchuk Patrício  
German Chancellor Fellow (Humboldt Foundation)  
10/2020 - 09/2021  
Learning from the German Experience on Promoting and Protecting the Open Internet: the Cases of Network Neutrality and the Fight against Illicit Online Content  
✉️ nathalia.sautchuk-patricio@uni-due.de

Dr Michele Tedeschini  
Postdoc Research Fellow  
07/2020 - 06/2021  
Assessing the Performative Effect of the NIEO Ideology on Contemporary Projects of South-South Cooperation, with Particular Reference to the BRICS  
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Dr Janet Hui Xue Holz  
Senior Research Fellow  
10/2020 - 09/2021  
Governing Personal Data in the Digital Economy: A Comparative Study of the EU and China and Implications for Future Regulation  
✉️ holz@gcr21.uni-due.de
In a variety of issue-areas in global governance, hybrid solutions have been experimented with in order to address the dilemma created by the export of Western templates of good governance, democracy, the rule of law, etc. to non-Western contexts. The latest manifestation of this global trend towards hybridity are hybrid anti-impunity commissions which have begun to proliferate in Latin America, and which are likely to produce ripple-effects beyond the continent. Their prototype, the Comisión Internacional contra la Impunidad en Guatemala (CICIG), was deployed in Guatemala; later, variants of CICIG were created in Honduras, El Salvador, and Ecuador. However, the new hybrids remain largely under-researched [...]
Reviews


Do international organizations and networks reproduce, transform or enhance stratification? Or do they—thanks to communications, to equal voting and formal rights—integrate and thereby reduce inequalities in the long run? Katja Freistein and Caroline Fehl just edited a special issue of Global Society dealing with this crucial question. Membership in International Organizations (IO) results in quite different (‘layered’) roles and activities. Contributions to the volume show how, by these very practices, IOs ‘reproduce and transform broader stratification patterns in their global social environment’. Articles in the issue deal with stratification patterns in UN agencies, in peacekeeping missions, the IPCC, among the G20, and in the exemplary case of China’s role in the WTO, but also in historic contexts like the League of Nations and the Council of the European Union (1995–2008). One author argues that IOs differ from states by perspective, committed to the continuous transformation of global hierarchies and finds proof of this by IO support for a new hegemony: China’s Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB).


The debate of whether there is a trend towards regionalization in peacekeeping missions has gone undecided for almost two decades because a lack of reliable data made statements difficult. The authors review these shortcomings in detail and present their own MILINDA data set of 293 third-party military and non-military interventions occurring on a global scale between 1947 and 2016. Four types of missions are coded: Peace Enforcement, Peacekeeping, Observer, and Other. This data set ‘enables systematic analyses of peace operation patterns across time, regions, and legal contexts for the first time’. The authors succeed in elucidating a nuanced picture. There is a regionalization in peacekeeping missions, predominately in Africa and Europe but absent from Asia. An implicit finding, made explicit in concluding remarks, is the value of UN legitimation for missions of regional organizations, including political missions. These are trending (category: other).


Mathieu draws the reader in with a deconstructing argument. The concept of sovereignty, complex and well researched, does not cause the dissatisfaction felt by many scholars. Rather, ‘it is the myth’ constructed around that concept. Sovereignty, Mathieu argues, suggests a kind of gold standard for statehood and even more: reaching equality in the international community. The myth thus ‘generates a vision of IR as a noble, enlightened and universal enterprise’. Mathieu identifies three mythical foundations: that ‘sovereignty means independence and non-intervention’, that ‘external and internal sovereignty are independent’, and that ‘sovereignty is defined by the practices of the ‘international community’’. Sovereignty becomes a ‘transcendental norm’, where a norm circle is at play: state sovereignty depends on meeting the norms of an international community which is a product of those sovereign states. Mathieu ends his mythological analysis appropriately, with a reflection on what the myth is hiding: silencing.


Whereas a decline of multilateralism was observed at least during the last decade and authoritarian regimes were seen as on the rise, scholars of global governance have struggled so far to conceptualize a seemingly changing dynamics in the distribution of power. Hegemony and World Order steps in here to present and to question different forms of legitimate dominant power. Well aware of current debates, the editors open the lens with a wish to ‘move beyond traditional concepts of state-based hierarchies centered on material power’. Contributions to the volume that spans diverse theoretical perspectives show an interest in transnational configurations of hegemonic power and forms of power using ‘complexity’ as their hegemonic marker (Scholte). The absence of a hegemon is observed in Central Asia with a wink. Systemic hegemony by financial standards and currencies, dominant ideas, and narratives expand the concept.

Reviews: Martin Wolf
What follows is a list of new publications of the Centre’s current and former fellows and staff as well as authors from our wider academic network. We publish an updated list and invite you to inform us about your recent contributions to the field of global cooperation research. The published list represents a selection of titles that we feel are substantive contributions to the field.


Research Agenda
A detailed elaboration of the Centre’s research agenda is available on the Centre’s website:
https://www.gcr21.org/research/research-agenda

Global Cooperation Research Papers
ISSN 2198-1949 (Print)
ISSN 2198-0411 (Online)
doi: 10.14282/2198-0411-GCRP-[issue]

Global Dialogues
ISSN 2198-1957 (Print)
ISSN 2198-0403 (Online)
doi: 10.14282/2198-0403-GD-[issue]

Refection Governance in Europe and Northeast Asia Multilateralism and Nationalism in International Society
By Uwe Wissenbach
222 pages | 1 B/W Illus. Hb: 9780367321666
eBook: 9780429317125
£115.00 £92.00

Mapping and Politics in the Digital Age
Edited by Pol Bargués Pedreny, David Chandler and Elena Simon
Hb: 9780815357421
eBook: 9781351170369
£29,95

Every Wednesday...
... we tweet the Centre’s MID WEEK BRIEF on current affairs under the lense of our policy fields. Our twitter bird loves to cite statements from fellows and affiliated scholars as well as public figures related to our research.

China’s New Role in African Politics. From Non-Intervention towards Stabilization?
Edited by Christof Hartmann, Nele Nlosselt
244 pages
Hardback: 9781138392076
eBook: 9780429422393
£115.00 £92.00

Routledge Global Cooperation Series
Series Editors: Tobias Debiel, Dirk Messner, Sigrid Quack, Jan Aart Scholte
www.routledge.com/books/series/RGC/

The Routledge Global Cooperation series develops innovative approaches to understanding, explaining and answering one of the most pressing questions of our time – how can cooperation in a culturally diverse world of nine billion people succeed? This interdisciplinary series welcomes proposals from a wide range of disciplines such as international relations and global governance, environment and sustainability, development studies, international law, history, political theory or economy which develop theoretical, analytical, and normative approaches concerning pressing global cooperation questions.

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The Centre’s website displays in a responsive design on your portable devices and provides a new section. ‘Opinion’ invites contributions to current topics and focuses - among others - on recent developments in the Centre’s policy fields: climate, peacebuilding, migration and internet.

www.gcr21.org 2.0

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