

# Remaking Globalisation!

HELMUT  
SCHMIDT  
LECTURE  
2023



03





# DEAR READERS,

TEXT: ELISABETH WINTER, EVA KRICK  
AND JULIA STRASHEIM

Since February 2022, Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine has triggered massive shocks to the global economy. The war has been a driver of global inflation, food insecurity and energy poverty. For many countries across the globe, and particularly for those already affected by poverty, violence and political instability, the economic fallout has come on top of already rising social inequality and economic nationalism. The war has followed substantial declines in incomes and existing challenges arising from the climate crisis and the COVID-19 pandemic. Amidst intensifying systemic rivalry, collective solutions to these issues from the international community remain elusive. Multilateral cooperation is in retreat; global supply chains are being interrupted and diverted. And all too often, the most vulnerable people along these supply chains are being neglected. At the same time, global interdependence and communication are reaching unprecedented highs. Globalisation is far from dead, but it needs to be remade to be more socially sustainable and equitable.

But how can this be achieved? This year's BKHS Magazine and Helmut Schmidt Lecture approach this question from a wide range of angles. The aim is to develop tangible, multifaceted ideas about what needs to be done and who must act to remake globalisation for the better. Our view of globalisation is a broad one, encompassing the pronounced interconnection and interdependence of peoples and countries around the world. We include in our interpretation all kinds of processes, ranging from the economic, social, cultural and technological, to the institutional interconnectedness of ideas, knowledge, information, goods and services that have spread around the world.

As the editors, we invited a diverse group of

people – academics, think tankers, politicians, activists, educators and artists – to contribute their expertise and experience in relation to the most pressing global issues. Using different formats such as essays, memes, murals and photos, the authors all share food for thought and recommendations for action with us. Taken together, they highlight the complexity of globalisation – as well as the many actors that can shape this complex process. By bringing together various perspectives and approaches, we believe that the BKHS Magazine can support the transformation towards a sustainable and equitable globalised world.

For this year's Helmut Schmidt Lecture, we were honoured to secure a speaker at the forefront of remaking globalisation. Moritz Schularick is the President of the Kiel Institute for the World Economy and Professor of Economics at Sciences Po. He is an internationally recognised economist whose research has made an impact on policy. Keen to find solutions to central challenges facing societies today, Professor Schularick studies the past and future of globalisation and engages in academic, public and policy discourses to advance economic knowledge and address global inequalities.

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For me, remaking globalisation means adapting to a different form of globalisation in a changed world under the auspices of geopolitics, i.e. foreign and security policy. In the future, we will pay more attention to both, the extent to which trade with other countries makes us dependent and vulnerable and the extent to which trade makes countries that we do not consider close friends economically strong. It will be a new world economic order compared to what we have been used to for the last 30 years, and it will challenge us. While we should try to preserve the financial benefits of openness, integration and trade, including those in capital markets, we should keep in mind the idea of insurance. Insurance implies to limit damage to our domestic economies in case of global shocks like we have experienced in recent years. For particularly critical goods, such as pharmaceuticals, this may mean maintaining emergency production capacity at home. In general, companies need to diversify in order to reduce their dependence on individual countries, both in terms of production and sales markets. Of course, this increased security comes at a price. Our focus of globalisation is shifting in a changing world. It is no longer on the greatest possible prosperity from global value chains but also on their reliability and their political implications. I look forward to facing this challenge from the academic side.

**Moritz Schularick:** President of the Kiel Institute for the World Economy and Speaker of the Helmut Schmidt Lecture 2023



# Economic security as human security



The world is entering a new phase of globalisation. In itself, this is not such a bad thing. Globalisation as we know it desperately needs to be updated to pave the way for a green and just transformation. But unfortunately, this is not the kind of transition the global economy is currently experiencing. A collective understanding of economic security as human security could help to reframe and to redirect globalisation's trajectory.

TEXT: ELISABETH WINTER

Globalisation is of course about far more than just international trade. It refers to a process in which interdependencies between the world's economy, cultures and populations increase to such an extent that not just goods and services but also social and cultural influences gradually converge around the world. Nevertheless, the core of this dynamic remains the cross-border trade in goods and services set in motion by diplomatic efforts and legal treaties between nation-states. Despite the often-proclaimed demise of nation-states, they remain the main actors in the governing of international trade. As legislative bodies, states control border crossings and determine the conditions and rules of international trade as they negotiate and sign the bilateral and multilateral legal frameworks.

#### **How globalisation challenged nation-states**

Although international trade has clearly been promoted by states, the neoliberal demand for a separation of state and economy has dominated international trade policymaking for almost half a century. Until recently, it appeared to be axiomatic amongst policymakers and academics in the Global North that almost any state intervention in the economy would represent interference with the self-regulating "invisible hand" of the market. Accordingly, scholars and

practitioners alike expected to see the nation-state retreat from international trade policymaking.

And indeed, for a while it seemed that non-state actors might take over global trade governance. States increasingly committed to international trade cooperation and even ceded regulatory authority to the multilateral World Trade Organisation (WTO). Over time, the number of WTO member states grew from 128 at the time of its founding in 1994 to 164 today. Members include all major powers, despite their very different political views. Similarly, regional organisations increased in importance as they received rule-making power. The EU, for instance, is also a customs union and single market. All EU member states have delegated their trade policy sovereignty to the European Commission.

Moreover, international organisations such as the WTO opened up their rule-making procedures to trade unions, NGOs and other societal actors. Access to WTO procedures for businesses was also enhanced by the WTO, but this of course started from a much higher level. Additionally, large businesses and their federations increasingly committed to the introduction of new regulations that focused on labour rights and environmental protection.

“Today, the developed world fears the consequences of globalisation – and the economic interdependence it brought about.”

### Nation-states turn back the globalisation tide

As with almost every ideal, the reality is very different. Unfortunately, the WTO has never remotely resembled a multi-level structure with flat hierarchies, as envisaged in its founding documents. One reason might lie in the fact that globalisation as we have known it since the early 1990s has produced winners and losers. Of course, it is far too easy to blame the WTO alone for the shortcomings of global trade governance. A major problem has always been that member states rarely search for common ground. Instead, they are driven mainly by their own national interests that they balance up against each other when shaping international trade regulations. This can be illustrated by the fact that the WTO's member states have not been able to conclude any major agreement since the organisation's foundation in the mid-1990s. Several issues, even minor ones, have dragged on for years. A major controversy, for example, relates to agricultural subsidies between the Global South and the Global North.

Even though almost every country was interested in joining the WTO, each state started with a different set of resources. Some states were rich in money and big business, others had plenty of natural resources at their disposal, while still others had an abundance of cheap labour. As a consequence, WTO member states have diverged in their financial ability to engage in WTO consultations to advocate and advertise for those regulations most beneficial for themselves. Moreover, some WTO member state economies have been at a disadvantage when competing with their already industrialised and digitised counterparts. From the outset, the

economies of the richer states were better off. Several emerging markets have been able to catch up, yet large parts of their societies have still been left out in the cold, disadvantaged by globalisation. As calls for institutional reforms of the WTO go unheard, these countries unsurprisingly have lost trust in the international rules-based system.

These challenges of global inequalities, however, did not ignite the current discussion about “the death of globalisation”. This debate only took hold when the Global North began to experience the downside of globalisation first hand. Today, the developed world fears the consequences of globalisation – and the economic interdependence it brought about. Perhaps the most significant buzzword we have heard in this debate over the past few years is “weaponised interdependence” (Farrell & Newman 2019). The claim is that states such as China and Russia are exploiting the “West's” economic dependence on their resources to press for strategic and security political gains.

This revival of geoeconomic tactics – the use of economic means to achieve security-related goals – has been fuelled by successive years of events that have rocked the global order. The economic repercussions of the 2008 financial crisis severely challenged the US and the EU. Then, in 2016, Brexit and the election of Donald Trump shook both sides of the Atlantic. At least some voters saw globalisation, along with technological change and deindustrialisation, as a cause of their economic stagnation or even social decline (Rodrik 2021). Distrust in democracy, economic nationalism and protectionism increasingly gained traction.

As globalisation advanced, many individuals clearly felt unheard. While businesses enjoy easy, and most importantly, influential lobbying access, representatives of the public receive less attention and struggle for impact. This is particularly problematic because it means issues that have direct consequences for individuals – such as environmental protection, labour and human rights regulations – occupy a much lower position on the agenda.

Trump's trade war against China and allies such as the EU, coupled with interruptions of global supply chains that lasted for years due to the COVID-19 pandemic, increasing insecurities in production driven by climate change, Russia's war against Ukraine and the subsequent energy crisis have caused globalisation to break down even further. As more states "weaponise interdependencies", reducing economic linkages becomes desirable as a way to reduce political vulnerabilities. The upshot is that state interventions in economic and trade policies have almost become the new normal.

Globalisation as we know it not only neglects the interests of the Global South. It also impacts on the needs of the planet and of many people in the Global North. Moreover, the current transformation of globalisation is neither green, nor just. Instead, globalisation seems to be on a path to fragmentation, frequently along nationalist and ideological lines. It is no longer the case that the opportunities globalisation can offer guide today's policy decisions. Rather, its potential risks are what count. Economic interdependencies – once celebrated as a tool to make wars less likely – are being weaponised in the pursuit of security policy objectives.

### Introducing human security to international trade policymaking

Today, governments on both sides of the Atlantic are questioning the "laissez-faire" approach to globalisation they have propagated for several decades. Many believe we are seeing the first shift to the economic paradigm in the Global North since the 1980s. But instigating change to a process as complex as globalisation is difficult. Russia is instructive when considering the difficulties of disentangling economies: for almost two years, G7 countries have tried to isolate Russia from the world economy by imposing massive sanctions, but have had only minor success.

Change is particularly difficult due to the current great power rivalry. Security concerns often trump economic considerations. But the future nature of the security-trade-nexus is still up for debate. It will be shaped not just by the different interests of nation-states and their relationships with one another, but also by the growing climate crisis. A progressive understanding of economic security should include a just and green transformation of globalisation. States will remain central to the adoption of such strategies, because national security is still a policy area in which states protect their sovereignty against the involvement of non-state actors.

To date, there has been a lack of a common understanding of de-risking and economic security amongst decision-makers. "De-risking" is a new concept for states. Since it was introduced to the world by EU Commission President Ursula von der Leyen in March 2023, representatives of governments, think tanks and lobby firms have all

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“A progressive understanding of economic security should include a just and green transformation of globalisation.”

been eager to define the new strategic imperative. For its part, "economic security" as a concept has a much longer pedigree, at least in academia. But the economic security strategies of various countries have only recently risen to prominence. Japan, as an early mover, introduced it to the G7, which in turn agreed upon the goal of economic security at its 2023 Hiroshima Summit. However, the members' national approaches (still) differ in their priorities and specific policy measures.

### Strength in numbers: the future of human security

In my view, the global trade order lacks a collective economic understanding of "human security". Human security focuses on individuals as the primary object of security and therefore includes "issues such as poverty, underdevelopment, hunger and other assaults on human integrity and potential" in its definition (Buzan & Hansen 2009: 36). If states approached economic security through a human security lens, they would take the lives and risks of individual people into account when making policies. They would reconsider the different sectors in society and would seek to completely reframe economic and security policies.

Japan and the EU have already introduced economic security strategies. At the national level, they focus on security, the economy and technological challenges. Internationally, they consider supply chain risks. However, analysis at the level of the individual play only a minor, subordinate role. Positively, the first steps taken by the US towards a definition of economic security do include elements that potentially point more in the direction of human security. The aim of the Biden administration is to "build capacity, to build resilience, to build inclusiveness, at home and with partners abroad" (Sullivan 2023). Nevertheless, the US position often puts America first, promoting economic nationalism and forgetting about the humans involved throughout supply chains.

If a larger group of states were to jointly reinterpret economic security as human se-

curity, they could reframe and redirect the current path of globalisation. Understanding globalisation and economic security less as a trade-off would allow for globalisation to be remade in a way that ensures economic security not in spite, but because of a green and just transformation.

→ Elisabeth Winter is Programme Director "Global Markets and Social Justice" at BKHS.

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**"We should all remember the ancient Roman words of wisdom that Cicero gave us: *salus publica suprema lex*.**

**Or in English: let the welfare of the people be the supreme law – not my own personal selfishness."**

The nexus of politics and economics fascinated German Federal Chancellor Helmut Schmidt. An economist by training, he recognised the scope of globalisation and identified many of its challenges from a young age. But globalisation has changed enormously since that time. This year, Helmut steps aside to make room for political economists from around the world. We asked them: *What does it take to make global markets serve the common good?*

# Regionalised markets are central to a more sustainable economy



“Zeit für Utopien” (“Utopia time”) premiered as a cinema documentary in 2018. The film showcases positive examples of sustainable economic activities from around the world. Most of the companies featured are organised as cooperatives, meaning they are enterprises that are democratically governed and jointly owned by their members. We talked to the film’s director, Kurt Langbein, about his motivations for making the documentary and the lessons it offers for remaking globalisation in a sustainable way.



INTERVIEW WITH FILMMAKER  
KURT LANGBEIN ABOUT HIS  
DOCUMENTARY  
"ZEIT FÜR UTOPIEN"

What impressed you the most when meeting people all around the world who are working to remake capitalism?

Their commitment and their will to cooperate in a world ruled by destructive competition.

How did you select the projects featured in "Zeit für Utopien"?

I wanted to find meaningful examples in food production and consumption (the most important areas from an environmental and social perspective), the globalised production of technical products, urban living and workforce organisation.

Your film is very encouraging, but we wondered if there's a problem that all the projects share?

Yes, they cannot succeed in competition with the market economy on a large scale without a general shift, so they remain impressive examples that show how a cooperative economy is possible.



You believe in the importance of regionalised markets. What obstacles to regionalisation do you see in a globalised economy?

I believe regionalised markets are essential for the creation of a more sustainable economy – and the experience of the consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic have taught us that they are also important for our survival during crises. With the accelerating climate crisis, a fundamental transformation of our economy is becoming even more urgent. I think small-scale cooperatives should increase their ability to scale their models.

Today, we are facing multiple global crises. When talking about utopia, would you do anything differently now than five years ago?

I wouldn't change anything, these transformations are even more important and urgent now.



Have you been following some of the projects after you completed filming?

Yes! For instance, Hansalim, a large food cooperative in South Korea with over 600,000 members continues to grow and is also increasing its impact. It is now even organising food distribution at schools.

How can documentaries like yours contribute to remaking globalisation?

Discussions and open mind of a broader audience are fine, but there is a lot to do.

How can we support the work of filmmakers who have a vision to increase their impact?

You are on the way to doing it, thanks a lot.



WATCH THE DOCUMENTARY "ZEIT FÜR UTOPIEN" (IN GERMAN) ON THE GERMAN FEDERAL AGENCY FOR CIVIC EDUCATION'S WEBSITE FOR FREE HERE [↗](#)

# Climate activism goes global: powerful protest needs to be distinctive again





Extinction Rebellion is one of the largest and most effective environmental movements of the 21st century. The group's use of new, dramatic and disruptive protest methods helped it to grow from a handful of activists in the south of England into a transnational movement.

TEXT: PETER GARDNER

In October 2018, a new social movement took to the streets of London. Inspired by the principles of civil disobedience action they observed in the US civil rights movement and Gandhi's nonviolent resistance practices, Extinction Rebellion declared themselves in active rebellion against the UK government and its insufficient action on climate change. In the following months, local chapters of the movement were established across the UK. By the group's next major protest in April 2019, the original supporters were joined by thousands of new members from across the country.

Extinction Rebellion began to spread fast and was impressively transnational from the start. By the end of November 2018 – just one month after their first public demonstration – 131 new Extinction Rebellion chapters had been registered, spanning six continents. From Vancouver to Queensland, Australia and from Cape Town to Bhopal, like-minded individuals began to discuss how they might go about building the movement locally. But how did a group like Extinction Rebellion transform itself from a small band of activists in the south of England into an international movement?

#### Powerful protest is contagious

After a public reading of the "Declaration of Rebellion" on 31 October 2018, Extinction Rebellion staged its first roadblock. Around 1,000 people who had come to hear the declaration sat down in the road outside the UK's Houses of Parliament, blocking traffic for several hours. Less than a month later, the group returned with many more supporters, this time bringing the centre of London to a standstill by occupying five key bridges across the River Thames.

However, much larger protest events were to come. In the spring of 2019, the group's first international rebellion was staged. Thousands crammed on to the streets of London to demand that policymakers and the media tell the truth about the severity of the climate and ecological emergency and act in line with the science. This time, they were also joined by hundreds of thousands of activists in at least 34 countries worldwide.

But it was not just the size of the protests that made them distinctive. The atmosphere was jubilant and joyful; more akin to a festival than a traditional protest or demonstration. Art proliferated through the streets, from giant pink octopuses to painted coffins. Bodies became canvasses, supported by performance art and music. Extinction Rebellion's iconic flags, symbols and graphic designs were everywhere. And at each event throughout 2018-19, increasing numbers of people were arrested en masse, demonstrating a willingness to go to prison for the planet.

Powerful forms of protest like this are contagious, especially when they strike a chord. People from around the globe had followed the science on climate change, experienced extreme weather events and had come to an understanding that decarbonising was a matter of life or death. Yet governments were not acting in line with the scale of the problem. For many, it had become clear that individual actions, such as recycling, plant-based diets, avoiding flying and driving, or even writing to their political representatives, were far too limited. Collective action was needed.

18,000 kilometres away from the British Houses of Parliament, an activist in Auckland sat captivated as she listened to the news report on the incidents that followed the Declaration of Rebellion. "When London was shut down", she told me, "I thought, wow - I wish that was happening here". Within weeks, she and thousands of others were planning Aotearoa New Zealand's first rebellion. In the US, chapters sprang up in Los Angeles, New York, Washington, DC and Boston in the autumn of 2018. As one of the founders of Extinction Rebellion Los Angeles explained: "October of 2018 - I just saw a headline in The Guardian and went, Oh my God. These people, you know - 150 people or there about - shut down London with great tactical prowess, and I was captivated."

A short time later, in Banjul, Gambia on Africa's northwest coast, a group of environmental activists decided to form a chapter of the movement. Although they had already been active in climate policy advocacy for a couple of years, the group decided to take on the Extinction Rebellion mantle. "When we saw the protests in 2019 where [they] blocked London Bridge", one activist told me, "when we saw such a movement that is able to tell the government that "this is what you need to do", and then they succeeded in telling the government to declare a climate and ecological emergency, we were inspired." Being part of a global movement connected them to other activists worldwide, and in particular to other Extinction Rebellion groups across Africa.

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"By the end of November 2018 - just one month after their first public demonstration - 131 new Extinction Rebellion chapters had been registered, spanning six continents."



Although the movement took very different forms across the societies in which chapters were built, and each met starkly divergent realities in terms of the sorts of protest actions they could undertake, all were inspired by the demonstrations Extinction Rebellion had staged. The lesson here is that social movements proliferate where a thirst for social change is met with dramatic, distinctive and disruptive protest events. And, with each of Extinction Rebellion's more than 1,000 local groups across the world organising their own protest events, it appears that effective protest begets more protest.

### **Collapse and rebuilding**

In most places where Extinction Rebellion chapters were formed, from 2018 to 2020 the movement was growing in numbers, confidence and belief that change was coming. Then the COVID-19 pandemic hit. In-person interactions were either avoided out of choice or banned by governments. Meetings, social gatherings and protest events no longer appeared possible. Previously active members of the movement dropped out in droves, burdened with new care commitments, financial and work-related challenges and crippling fear. By the end of 2020, chapters that had once struggled to find public buildings large enough to house their weekly meetings found themselves on conference calls with fewer than ten participants. Among the activists we spoke to in 2021 and 2022, the sense of disappointment was palpable.

Yet, as recovery from the pandemic has continued, thousands of activists worldwide worked hard to rebuild the movement, sometimes from the ground up. While some chapters fell apart, many held on and are now experiencing a resurgence. In a sense, the movement needs a second surge, with the inspiration to take action once again spreading like wildfire. To do so, however, may require a new form of protest that is similarly dramatic, distinctive and disruptive.

→ Peter Gardner (@PeteGardner111) is a Social Science Researcher and Lecturer at the University of York, UK.

# CAPITALISING ON THE "CONNECTIVITY CONTEST" TO RESHAPE GLOBALISATION



To truly reshape globalisation for a more sustainable, inclusive and just future, discussions about building infrastructural connectivity require more intense engagement from host countries and recipients of investments. The EU can and should help steer the “connectivity contest” to one that emphasises norms and standards, transparency and accountability.

TEXT: YEO LAY HWEE

Globalisation connotes massive flows of people, goods, services and capital, resulting in increased integration and interdependence of economies and societies. This process has created unprecedented economic growth and development. However, the transformation has been uneven. Increased inequality has emerged, while development has often come at the expense of other socio-economic outcomes and environmental sustainability.

This “lop-sided” globalisation – where economies are increasingly intertwined and material interests have converged, but political governance, values and ideas remain contested – has become untenable. The winners of globalisation – those who have benefitted from economic integration and the increasing convergence in values, lifestyle and outlook – may want the “merry-go-round” to continue. But many societies are facing a pushback against globalisation by those who either feel left behind or believe that the gains from economic integration are not enough to compensate for the loss of their identities and sense of control over their own destiny.

After a more positive narrative about the benefits of globalisation, the tide has turned. Today, globalisation is increasingly viewed negatively, leading to policy responses that have encouraged economic nationalism and the closing of borders and minds. For policymakers who believe that globalisation has uplifted millions from poverty, it is not the right response to stop or reverse the process.

Instead, “connectivity” has become their new buzzword. As the COVID-19 pandemic has accelerated digitalisation, an increasing number of people believe that connectivity is the tool needed for economic transformation.

### **Connectivity as the new buzzword**

So how to make sense of connectivity – what does it mean and how can it be harnessed to reshape globalisation for a better outcome?

By many policymakers, connectivity is viewed in terms of the infrastructure and technologies needed to enable connections and communication that are vital for commerce and development. What matters are ports, pipelines, roads and railways and digital superhighways. Increasingly, however, connectivity has also expanded to mean institutional connections – a reference to the interoperability of standards; and even people-to-people ties. In short, connectivity can facilitate greater connections for people and institutions – primarily but not just for commercial exchanges.

Global geopolitical tensions and geo-economic competition have led to a proliferation of connectivity strategies in the last decade – from the Chinese Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) to Japan’s Free and Open Indo-Pacific strategy, to the EU’s Strategy for Connecting Europe and Asia. As the rivalry between major powers intensifies, the desire to outdo one another has become saturated with slogans and promises. These include “Build Back Better”

from the US and the EU's "Global Gateway". The latest connectivity strategy was unveiled at the 2023 G7 Summit in Hiroshima with the pledge to identify new opportunities for a Partnership for Global Infrastructure and Investment.

The emphasis on infrastructure investments to build connectivity across and within regions – whether in the Indo-Pacific or Africa – should be welcomed. We need to transform the strategic rivalry between the major powers – which drives the current race to present all manner of connectivity strategies – into a healthy competition of sustainable investments for broad socioeconomic development of under-connected and less-developed regions and countries. In short, how can we capitalise on the "connectivity contest" to reshape globalisation?

### **We need more genuine engagement - and long-term partnerships**

To get it right this time, and not simply allow market forces to set the pace and direction of globalisation, the current discussions about building infrastructural connectivity require more intense engagement from the host countries and recipients of these investments. The rhetorical commitments by the major powers to invest in connectivity in regions and countries where they are vying for influence must be translated into genuine engagement with these regions and countries for their own merit – and not simply as pawns in the chess game played by the great powers. This requires building comprehensive and long-term partnerships – starting with building connections with its people and institutions.

Unfettered hyper-globalisation under the neoliberal economic model led to rising inequality, environmental degradation and increased political polarisation in many societies and economies. The new connectivity agenda needs to confront these issues head-on, while navigating the geopolitical and geoeconomic tensions. In this regard, the EU in my view has an important role to play.

The strategic rivalry between the US and China has reached all areas, including control over infrastructure and especially over tech-

nologies and supply chains. While the EU is also caught in the game, as a regulatory power and champion of a rules-based multilateral order, the EU can and should help steer the connectivity contest to one that emphasises norms and standards, transparency and accountability. While cooperation and collaboration amongst major powers to mobilise both public and private resources to invest in connectivity where it is needed would be the ideal approach, "Realpolitik" and the lack of strategic trust may mean taking a more pragmatic approach of working within a competitive framework that includes a set of minimal rules and guidelines.

The EU has been ahead in the game of "connectivity partnerships". In addition to rolling out its own strategy embodied in the Global Gateway document, the EU signed a "Partnership on Sustainable Connectivity and Quality Infrastructure" with Japan in 2019. In 2021, the EU and India also concluded a Connectivity Partnership agreement that called for transparent, inclusive, rules-based connectivity between the EU and India, and with third countries and regions including Africa, Central Asia and the Indo-Pacific.

Alongside these connectivity strategies and partnerships, the EU has shown that it is serious about addressing the sustainability and climate challenge of globalisation by launching the European Green Deal.

Immediate security challenges such as the Russian invasion of Ukraine and rising tensions between the US and China should not take the EU's attention away from the longer-term challenge of reshaping globalisation for a sustainable and more just and inclusive future. The EU must work with like-minded partners to lower the temperature of geostrategic rivalry and not look at all issues through the security lens of the Russian threat. Far more is at stake. We need to engage the 80 per cent of people who live outside the Western world to bring about inclusive growth and sustainable development.

→ Yeo Lay Hwee is Director of the EU Centre in Singapore and Senior Fellow at the Singapore Institute of International Affairs.



What does it take to make global markets serve the common good?



**"We need to find ways to communicate about global trade that makes policy making more relatable to a broader public. When I speak to people outside the "trade bubble", they quickly zone out. Yet global rules on trade affect all of us.**

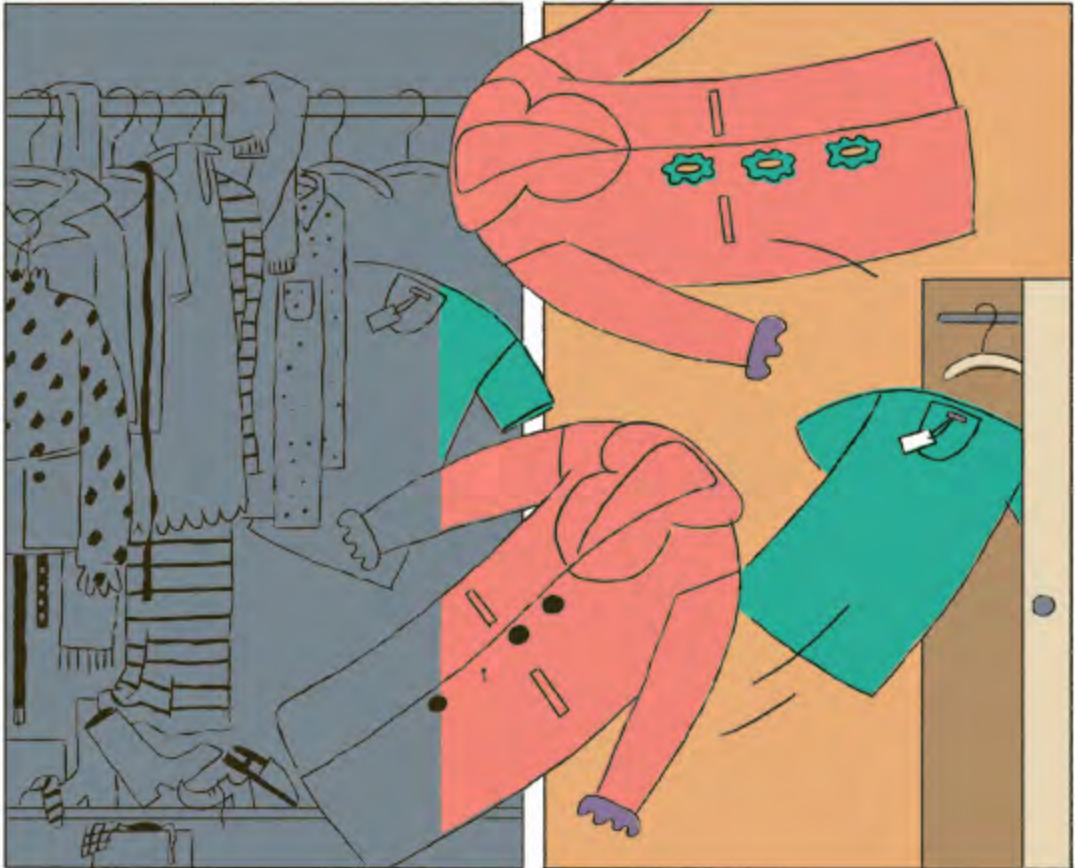
**A less technical, more human-centred narrative could showcase the common ground at stake. When people see how markets can serve societal goals, they can start pushing for this."**

CHECK OUT THE DIGITAL EXHIBITION "FACES OF TRADE DIPLOMACY. HUMAN PERCEPTIONS, MEMORIES AND HOPES AROUND TRADE MULTILATERALISM" BY CLARA WEINHARDT: [↘](#)



Clara Weinhardt (@claraweinhardt) is Assistant Professor in International Relations in the Department of Political Science at Maastricht University, Netherlands.

By keeping resources at their peak value for longer, a circular economy – such as for textiles – offers huge potential for local business. But it needs consumer demand to thrive! We need to make fast-fashion alternatives more attractive to consumers by showcasing the local, diverse landscape of repair and reuse services – in turn driving the transition to sustainable fashion consumption.



## REVALUE YOUR CLOTHES – IMPLEMENTING A CIRCULAR TEXTILE ECONOMY

TEXT: SARAH KELLER, EDITED BY LUCY BOWEN

Our fashion consumption habits mostly follow a linear pattern of take, make, waste. Clothing today is sold so cheaply, exploiting nature and people, that it has become far cheaper to buy a new garment than to maintain one we already own. This "planned obsolescence" is perpetuated by global fashion giants, leading to a decline in our perceived value of clothing. It is rare that modern consumers hold a strong emotional attachment to their textiles, which means practices such as repair or care to extend the life of garments fall by the wayside. At Circular Berlin, we aim to extend the lifespan of textile resources and keep them circulating at a local level. To achieve this goal, we need to transform clothing and textile consumption, particularly in urban areas where most textile waste accumulates. In partnership with LoopLook, we therefore launched the "A-GAIN Guide" – a digital platform that shows users the most convenient ways to repair, reuse and upcycle clothes in Berlin. Thanks to its open-source code and Creative Commons licences, the guide is fully replicable for other cities.

### **Making Berlin a zero-waste city by extending the lifespan of textiles**

The volume of discarded textiles in Berlin is enormous. Around 31,670 tonnes of textiles are disposed of in household waste in the city every year, with a further 36,274 tonnes of textiles collected at clothing collection points. 61 per cent of these are reused by being sold within Europe (~50 per cent) or in Asia and Africa (~50 per cent). The rest are mostly down-cycled or incinerated (Vogt & Harju 2021). In addition, 40 per cent of all wearable clothes in the wardrobes of German households sit unused (Groth & Wahnbaeck 2015).

Berlin thus offers us a wealth of textiles for reuse. But their value is currently forfeited as a result of premature disposal, mishandling or non-use. A circular economy on a local scale would preserve the value of these textiles and, at the same time, create value for local businesses. On top of the economic benefits, extending the lifespan of textiles provides ecological benefits by reducing textile waste and CO<sub>2</sub> emissions. We are therefore also making a significant contribution towards

achieving Berlin's climate goal of becoming a zero-waste city by 2030 and climate-neutral by 2045.

The EU Waste Framework (Directive 2008/98/EC) which obliges all European cities and municipalities to collect used textiles separately from 2025, also requires local B2B infrastructure for secondary material flows to be upgraded (Umweltbundesamt 2022). The database at the heart of the "A-GAIN Guide" is thus crucial for collecting and analysing relevant data that can help the city develop key infrastructure and measures to promote a circular textile economy. Our analysis of the data generated by the platform will fill information gaps on textile waste streams, helping the city invest in new infrastructure and technologies.

The "A-GAIN Guide" aims to promote the creation of local textile loops by connecting consumers with Berlin-based services that support the reuse of textiles such as alteration tailors, upcycling designers, second-hand shops and charity organisations. The consumption of fast fashion undermines these businesses, as a fair price for repair often exceeds the new purchase price of fast fashion. Moreover, the poor quality of fast fashion makes it difficult to get hold of wearable, quality clothing. It is becoming increasingly impossible for repair and reuse businesses to add value locally, as they can only lose out in competition with global fashion companies. Global market mechanisms are displacing repair services, as selling new clothes is more profitable than looking after existing garments.

### **We need consumer participation to transition to a circular textile system**

Consumer demand determines the industry's supply and influences the future development of the fashion industry. An attitudinal shift from consumption to care is therefore necessary. In order to promote this change, we analysed the behavioural patterns of urban consumers when dealing with textiles. The fashion market is increasingly online and the majority of urban consumers are familiar with the use of digital tools to find the services they need. The digital visibility of local businesses is therefore very important for reaching the majority of Berlin-based consumers.

However, digital services are often lacking: many small businesses do not have a website, social media presence or even an email address. "A-GAIN Guide" closes the digital gap between these "offline" providers and their target group. A mapping tool makes it easy for users to find their local textile repair shops, alteration tailors and upcycling services. If we succeed in establishing a direct link between consumption and care, we will have taken a big step forward. A successful repair cannot only strengthen our emotional connection to that garment, it can also transform the way we deal with textiles.

We also help companies to gain digital visibility in the highly competitive fashion market. There are now about 1250 validated players – and counting – in the "A-GAIN Guide". Partners can become part of the map via a simple registration form on our website.

Digital visibility alone is not enough to strengthen local businesses economically and make them attractive places to go for fashionistas, or even ordinary fashion consumers. While we have already reached and inspired many Berliners with the "A-GAIN Guide", true social change will take more than personal initiative. The transition must be systemically strengthened and supported by economic policy.

### A role for government legislation

When it comes to strengthening the local circular economy, we also need tax relief and subsidies that shift the global market mechanisms towards care, rather than cheap new purchases. Value-added tax reductions on services provided by local repair and reuse services can lead to a rebalancing of new purchases vs. repair options. In Sweden, for example, VAT on the sale of repaired goods has been reduced from 25 per cent to 12 per cent (Gözet & Wilts 2022). We also support the idea of a repair bonus in Berlin, under which half of the repair costs are covered by the state, in order to create incentives for better behaviour.

France is already showing us how these kinds of tools can be financed. By introducing Extended Producer Responsibility for new products, tax revenues are generated, of which approximately five per cent are passed on to social reuse organisations. Strengthening the

textile socioeconomy in terms of economic policy promotes the circulation of textiles in local areas (Rama 2020). We also call for strong "Right to Repair" legislation that obliges companies to make durable and repairable products and embed repair in everyday society. Only by working closely together can politicians, consumers and businesses strengthen the local economy and close textile loops. By building these bridges with the "A-GAIN Guide", we hope to inspire other regions and cities and enable them to follow suit by drawing on our open source framework.

- Sarah Keller is a Designer and Consultant for Sustainable and Circular Fashion. As member of the Circular Berlin Textiles Team, she supports the "A-GAIN Guide" as Project Manager

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START NOW! USE THE MAP OF THE A-GAIN GUIDE TO FIND REPAIR SHOPS, SECOND HAND STORES, UPCYCLING WORKSHOPS AND DESIGNERS IN BERLIN: ↵

What does it take to make global markets serve the common good?

**"People and the environment can only thrive if we have a rules-based multilateral trading system.**

**On top of this, we need to build sustainable partnerships with reliable partners.**

**Both sides in a trade agreement need to benefit from its outcomes, such as by ensuring that our partners benefit from trade in the critical minerals they own.**

**We need to stand out and create an alternative to other powers in the world."**



Bernd Lange (@berndlange) is Member of the European Parliament and Chairman of its Committee on International Trade.

# Five Questions

ANSWERED BY  
NIELS ANNEN



Niels Annen is Parliamentary State Secretary to the Federal Minister for Economic Cooperation and Development and has served as member of the Bundestag since 2013. He is a Deputy Member of the Board of Trustees of the Bundeskanzler-Helmut-Schmidt-Stiftung (BKHS).

1. What does "remaking globalisation" mean to you?

Through globalization, we have achieved a lot, such as, the significant reduction of extreme poverty. However, it is true that not all have benefited. Therefore, "Remaking globalization" means to me the we must work for a benefit and equitable globalization based on solidarity.

2. How do you seek to remake globalisation in your current role at the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development?

Development cooperation plays a critical role. The modern policy we pursue is partnership-based and addresses economic, social and ecological matters. Furthermore, together with partners we aim to modernize institutions like the World Bank.

3. How can a feminist development policy contribute to remaking globalisation?

"Remaking globalization" must mean that all people can benefit. We will only be able to achieve this if we promote the rights, representation, and resources of women and strengthen diversity. And that is exactly what we are doing through our feminist development policy.

4. How can we reshape globalisation amidst global power rivalries and a shifting global order?

As Chancellor Scholz said the world is facing a "global Zitterbewende". The major powers are understandably demanding a greater say. What we must aim for is good and fair cooperation based on human rights. Decoupling and deglobalisation are not a viable path.

5. What are your three wishes for a better future?

First, I wish that, in this new era of multipolarity, the 'international community' will put int. law and cooperation above zero-sum logic. Second, I wish that we all do what it takes to address the climate crisis. And third, I truly wish that we can make progress in achieving the SDGs!



What does it take to make global markets serve the common good?



**"Markets are created by people. If we want them to serve the common good, they need to be designed accordingly. Today's markets are not. They are designed to sustain the current economic order and serve footloose capital. Changing this starts with transparency about who owns what — a global wealth registry. Property should come with responsibility. It does not as long as global markets act as a cloak of invisibility."**

Philippa Sigl-Glöckner (@PhilippaSigl) is Co-Founder and Managing Director of "Dezernat Zukunft".



# COMMON PROSPERITY AS COMMON INTEREST: HOW GREAT POWERS CAN COOPERATE TO PROMOTE DEVELOPMENT

The transformation of China from aid recipient to a major development donor has challenged existing development regimes. Traditional donors are increasingly realigning their development finance to serve strategic purposes against the backdrop of geopolitical rivalries, while debt restructuring is one of the most pressing challenges for developing countries. G20 partners should establish clear timelines for the debt relief process and massively scale up development finance.

TEXT: YUNNAN CHEN

China's transition from a recipient of aid and financial support to a provider of aid and finance to lower-income countries has partly been a consequence of its own economic boom. By the year 2020, China had become a significant bilateral creditor to lower-income countries, with over half of its aid budget directed towards Africa. Commodity-exporting countries on the continent had become crucial resources for Chinese industries (State Council 2021).

However, this official finance goes beyond aid and extends to substantial lending and investment, usually long-term loans from Chinese banks. In Africa alone, Chinese contractors and Chinese policy bank lending provided over 150 billion US dollars in loan commitments from 2000 to 2020. Much of this was targeted towards infrastructure investment in the energy and transport sectors, which was often constructed in collaboration with Chinese contractors or suppliers. The loans support the export of Chinese technologies, help state-owned enterprises to win large infrastructure contracts and enter new markets.

This model has been a defining feature of the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), which was announced in 2013 and absorbed many pre-existing projects. The BRI can be seen as a "grand strategy" and has been portrayed as China's contribution to global public goods, but it was also a means to offshore domestic capacity in heavy industries. In the period following the global financial crisis, it was also a way to channel Chinese capital towards more productive uses overseas and build international influence.

In addition to supporting projects through bilateral finance, China sought to increase its contributions to multilateral development banks (MDBs) which eventually culminated in the creation of the BRICS New Development Bank and the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB). China aims to increase its influence in these institutions. However, in the World Bank and across the MDB landscape, the shareholding held by China remain far below its economic size (Humphrey & Chen 2021).

“Developing countries will require an annual investment of 1.7 trillion US dollars to support climate infrastructure investments.”

### The geopoliticisation of development finance and debt

The rise of Chinese finance in the developing world has been a challenge to the institutions established under the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). Over the last 50 years, the OECD has established deep-seated norms governing concessional finance, aid for poverty reduction and developmental purposes and export credits used to promote national exports. China’s lending model, meanwhile, is a hybrid of both, bypassing these regimes. Maintaining its status as a developing country, China has not joined the OECD Development Assistance Committee or the Paris Club, which governs and coordinates donors and official creditors in development finance and debt restructuring.

As geopolitical tensions with China have deepened, traditional donors are realigning their development finance to serve strategic and developmental purposes to compete with China’s influence in the developing world. This can be seen in the restructuring of the US’ and UK’s national development finance institutions, and in the launch of new infrastructure initiatives under the G7 and the EU’s Global Gateway, which implicitly serve as a counter-offer to China’s BRI (Chen 2022). Western criticism of China’s BRI has also coalesced around the narrative of China’s “debt-traps” and the use of opaque lending terms to indebt and gain leverage over sovereign governments. Despite the debunking of many of these “debt-trap” cases (Brautigam 2020), China’s contribution to sovereign

debt burdens of lower income countries has been an escalating point of contention in the wake of COVID-19 pandemic, which has tipped 60 per cent of low-income countries—most in Africa—into a high risk of debt distress.

The arena of debt relief cooperation within the G20 Common Framework has been significantly impacted by geopolitical tensions between the US and China, with Zambia a prime casualty. The US has accused China of hindering debt relief efforts, while China has countered by demanding the inclusion of MDBs in debt relief. This last point is a product of China’s previous gripes around representation in these institutions, but enacting it would undercut China’s preferred creditor status that underpins the development banks. Following several major diplomatic and multilateral efforts, including a Global Sovereign Debt Roundtable in April and a June Paris summit on a “New Global Financial Pact”, an agreement has finally been reached for Zambia.

## Reforming the debt architecture

Debt restructuring is one of the most pressing challenges for developing countries that grapple with ensuring economic recovery after the COVID-19 pandemic, Russia's war in Ukraine and the challenges of climate change. Significant investment for energy transitions and adaptation against future climate shocks are needed. Facilitating this will be challenging in a high-interest rate environment and amid fiscal constraints of repaying costly external debts.

Donors, creditors and borrowers alike, have a common interest in a predictable and equitable debt regime. There are still many technical and coordination challenges facing all creditors, but making the Common Framework work better should be a priority. As part of this, G20 partners should first establish clear timelines for the debt relief process. The creditors' committee, in good faith, should also establish clarity around transparency and data-sharing between creditors — even if on a limited basis — and cooperate to establish technical agreement with respect to the World Bank-IMF debt sustainability analyses.

Beyond immediate debt restructuring needs there is also a need for a massive boost to development finance: developing countries will require an annual investment of 1.7 trillion US dollars to support climate infrastructure investments (UNCTAD 2023). Current commitments and the new G7 and EU initiatives come nowhere close to this. Development partners from north and south should support the ongoing reforms of the MDBs that will expand their capacity to provide this finance and recapitalise them. Global development and climate-aligned development cooperation is not only a common interest. It can also be a "safe space" for collaboration, despite the frays of geopolitical rivalry.

→ Yunnan Chen (@yunnanchen) is a Research Fellow in Development and Public Finance at the Overseas Development Institute (ODI) in London, where she works on China's outward development finance.

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# TOURISTS





# VS. REFUGEEES

PHOTOGRAPHED BY JÖRG BRÜGGEMANN





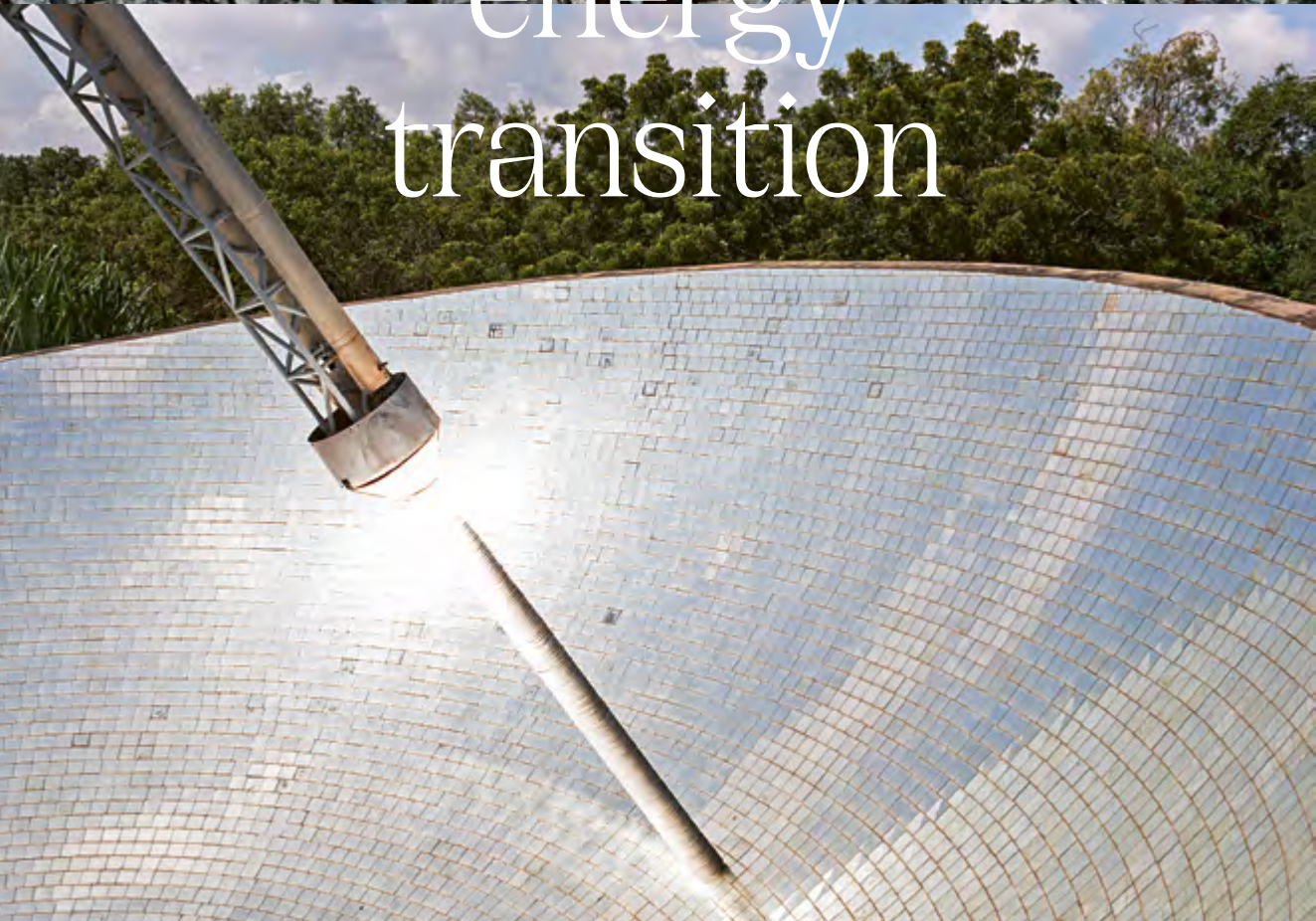
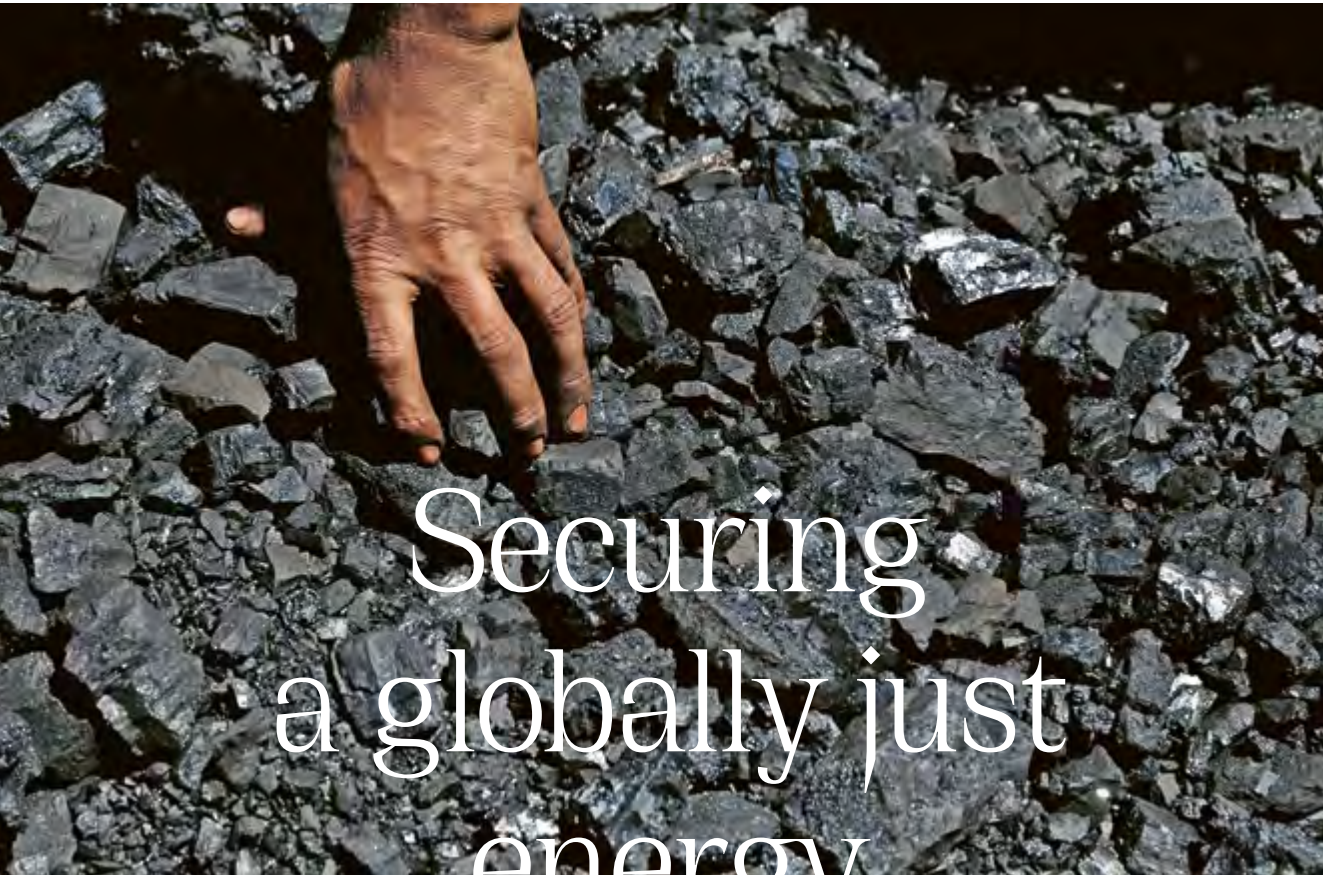












Securing  
a globally just  
energy  
transition

When implementing a globally just energy transition we need to seriously rethink global and regional patterns of energy production and consumption to prevent it from turning into “just an energy addition”, instead of a “just energy transition”. Central to this process is the realisation of energy sovereignty and the involvement of pluralist perspectives.

TEXT: BROTOTI ROY

An energy transition away from fossil fuels can only be meaningful if it considers socio-environmental justice and equity across the globe. This is unfortunately not the case right now and the two main reasons for this will be elaborated in the following paragraphs. My underlying assumption is that we must first be aware of the pitfalls of the current system to then improve it and usher in a just energy transition.

The first major cause of concern is that the current energy transition could be called an energy “addition”, with more energy simply being added to the mix instead of a genuine switch. Researchers have demonstrated this both at a global scale (York & Bell 2019) and at a national level, such as in the case of India (Roy & Schaffartzik 2021). To counter this, we must be aware of the need to reduce society’s current level of material throughput and energy, particularly in countries of the Global North.

It is common knowledge that infinite growth in a finite planet is neither desirable, nor possible. A just energy transition that shifts away from fossil fuels would thus also require much lower consumption of energy. Academics have already been analysing these ideas and plans of action for different countries, such as in Germany (Rommel et al. 2018). Securing a globally just energy transition means actively rethinking energy consumption across different geographies.

Moreover, a just energy transition must also include “energy sovereignty”. The notion of energy sovereignty consists of multifaceted values, drawing inspiration from the concept of food sovereignty. Timmermann and Noboa (2022) identify the core values as (I) energy access for all, (II) effective participation in governance, (III) management of renewable systems for ensuring sustainability, (IV) self-sufficiency, (V) resilience to withstand socioeconomic, political and environmental shocks, (VI) non-involvement of hostile relations, (VII) transparency and (VIII) gender justice.

### Rising socioenvironmental conflicts

Energy sovereignty has the potential to address the second major cause of concern, namely that currently renewable energy projects are creating socioenvironmental conflicts. From the violation of indigenous rights driven by the use of communal land in Mexico for wind energy projects (Avila-Calero 2017), to the dispossession of peasants for solar park development in India (Stock 2022), socioenvironmental conflicts are rising. Meanwhile, large-scale renewable energy projects are being called "green grabbing" (Fairhead et al 2012). The mining of critical minerals required for the energy transition is another major source of dispute. A study conducted using the Environmental Justice Atlas concluded that both fossil fuel projects and low-carbon energy projects resulted in intense socioenvironmental conflicts (Temper et al. 2020). This evidence from across the globe makes it clear that ideas of justice must be a key component in the ongoing energy transition. The concept of energy justice provides the necessary tool to ensure that the existing power relations in the global energy scenario are carefully examined.

### Pluralising energy justice

Recent years have also seen a much-needed push for "pluralising" the concept of energy justice by including anti-racist, feminist, indigenous and postcolonial approaches (Sovacool et al 2023). This, for instance, implies ensuring diverse voices in the decision-making processes for a just energy transition. This is particularly relevant because the proposals for Green New Deals in the last few years have shown neo-colonial patterns. As an example, EU policies influencing the green transition globally can be seen as "green gaslighting" that effectively fail to acknowledge the role of the Global North in the current ecological crises, but rather continue to provide false solutions of green growth based on techno-optimism without accounting for the actual raw material constraints (Almeida et al 2023). What we need instead is a "People's Green New Deal", as Max Ajl (2021) points out. This would mean local democratic economies, including local control over renewables.

Ultimately, to secure a globally just energy transition, pluralistic energy justice and energy sovereignty must be at the forefront, to ensure socio-ecological justice and equity, along with rethinking energy consumption to prevent it from turning into just an energy addition, instead of a just energy transition.

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“It is common knowledge that infinite growth in a finite planet is neither desirable, nor possible.”



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# “Securing a globally just energy transition means actively rethinking energy consumption across different geographies.”

→ Brototi Roy (@Brototi) is a Postdoctoral Researcher based at the Central European University, Austria and Autonomous University of Barcelona, Spain.

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Have you  
had your  
“buongiornismo”  
this  
morning?

Mememes and  
global digital  
culture

Digital platforms and messaging apps connect people around the world. Memes are a major form of virtual communication, often going viral on a global scale and linking different cultures that would have otherwise never met. We asked memes and digital culture researcher Idil Galip to curate a collection of global memes for us.

#### Kilroy:



Kilroy is an early example of a “global” meme, spreading during (and as a result of) World War II. As soldiers travelled across fronts in different countries, they also left traces of “memetic” or “viral” insider culture on surfaces, tanks, walls and even ammunition. The easy-to-draw “Kilroy” character was remixed with a variety of humorous phrases, akin to modern internet memes. While the exact origin of the meme is elusive, one explanation links it to the shipyard inspector James J. Kilroy, who would inscribe “Kilroy was here” to monitor the work he examined. Kilroy’s enduring popularity in movies, songs and other cultural elements highlights its impact. Kilroy as a character amused soldiers across borders, embodying an early form of globalised cultural exchange as well as an “insider” meme.

#### Pepe memes:



Pepe the Frog, initially a simple character from artist Matt Furie’s comic series “Boys Club” underwent divergent interpretations across cultures throughout the early to mid-2010s. In the US, it was appropriated by the alt-right as a symbol of hate and antagonism and was most popularly associated with Donald Trump’s “meme army”. However, during the pro-democracy protests in Hong Kong in 2019, Pepe took on an anti-authoritarian turn, representing resistance for the protestors. This striking duality underscores the complex interplay between local contexts and global meme diffusion. It highlights how a meme’s meaning can be radically transformed in different cultural and political landscapes, underscoring the necessity to consider these contextual nuances to grasp how cultures (both within and across borders) take on and transform memes.

### Institutional critique memes:



For decades, workers have used humorous memes to anonymously critique institutions and structures they have to navigate as part of their daily lives. In the 1970s and 1980s, office workers created anonymous cartoons about the drudgery of work, before reproducing and circulating them using new technologies in their workplaces, such as photocopiers and fax machines. These drawings are now referred to as “Xeroxlore” or “faxlore”. Similarly, the art worker behind the popular Instagram page “@freeze\_magazine” makes and distributes memes that critique and comment on the global art world and its norms. For example, this meme from “@freeze\_magazine” critiques the apathetic response of the majority of the global art world to the devastating earthquakes in Turkey and Syria in 2023. In the same breath, the creator also calls the page’s 140 thousand followers to action, providing links and resources to donate to earthquake fundraisers.

### Affirmations:



In new age spirituality, an affirmation refers to a positive statement or declaration that aims to foster a more optimistic and empowered mindset. By repeating affirmations regularly, individuals aim to rewire their thought patterns to focus on constructive beliefs and intentions. The Instagram meme account “@affirmations” takes on this idea and subverts it through a Dadaist and absurdist lens. The outcome is apparent social commentary on the culture of self-optimisation and capitalistic spirituality practices often found on Instagram. This genre of ironic, self-defeating and satirical “affirmations” has had an expansive influence across cultures, with similar accounts proliferating in many corners of the internet. This example comes from the “@desi.affirmations” Instagram page, which mobilises irony and pop-cultural touch points from South Asian communities for memetic play and critique.



### Good morning memes:

Do your aunts and uncles ever forward you colourful and exuberant images on WhatsApp that wish you a “blessed morning and a happy Monday”? Those vivid and enthusiastic greeting messages are a staple of instant messaging around the world, especially amongst older generations. In Italian, the term for the practice of sending “good morning” images such as these is “buongiornismo” or “good-morningism”. In Latin America, they are satirised as “tia” or “aunt memes”, while in China and Taiwan they are called “auntie” and “elder memes” (大妈表情包 and 長輩圖 respectively). Not all memes have to be funny. In this example, we see the “memetic circulation” of earnest greetings across digital platforms and cultures.

### Wholesome memes:



Internet memes can often be cynical, dry and nihilistic in tone and message. Low-resolution aesthetics, morbid humour, grotesque images and a general disdain for earnestness and “cringe” can make for an entertaining, yet darkly realistic or even depressing digital experience. Wholesome memes are an antidote to the misanthropy that meme cultures can sometimes engender. The messaging in wholesome memes seeks to establish an emotional connection between people, even if it is an ephemeral and anonymous one on a digital platform. Images of cute animals are common and help to create a sense of cosiness, positivity, sincerity and mundanity. When analysed against the “affirmations” meme genre, we can see that there is a great degree of ambivalence in global meme cultures, as memes oscillate between cynicism and sincerity, pessimism and optimism, critique and acceptance – sometimes even embodying all of these perspectives within themselves. This example comes from the Instagram creator “@frogwitch”.

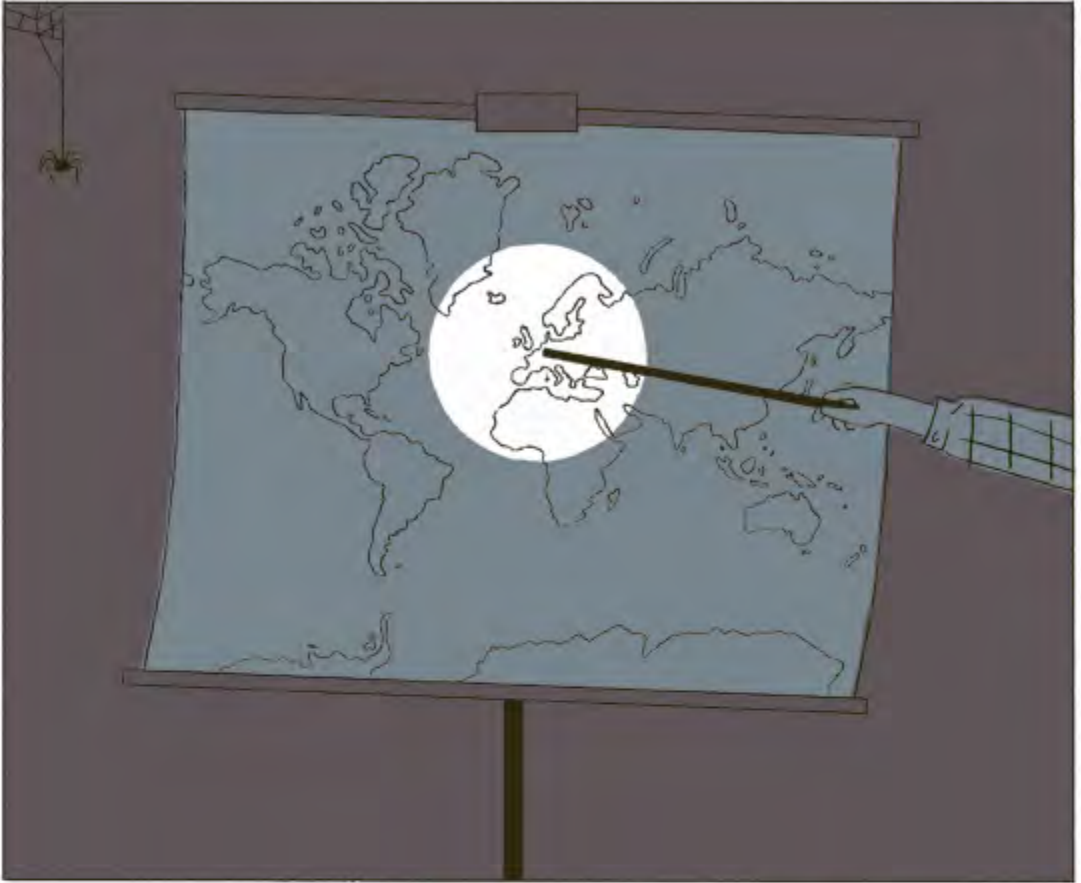
→ Idil Galip (@idilgalip) is Lecturer in New Media and Digital Culture at the University of Amsterdam, Netherlands. She studies internet memes and runs the Meme Studies Research Network.

In order to drive necessary change and to move towards a more equitable global economic system, we need to decolonise economics education. Decolonising economics is not an end in itself, but an ongoing process that aims to reshape the discipline of economics; a collective struggle to address the legacy of colonisation and end contemporary forms of colonisation in the post-colonial era. Let's start by overhauling the curriculum and reforming teaching and learning practices.

# Decolonise the discipline of economics!

TEXT: THOMSON SILOMBA

Most countries in the Global South achieved political independence in the early 1960s. However, this independence has largely remained limited to politics, as these countries have faced significant economic challenges. Many such states have suffered due to the inherent inequality present in the international economic system and in the teaching and practice of mainstream economics. These systems often favour developed economies and perpetuate economic disparities, leaving many nations in the Global South in worse situation. Obstacles including severe disparities in the distribution of resources, the existence of informal and non-monetised sectors, unfair trade practices and the unequal distribution of wealth have prevented a focus on strategies that would completely overhaul economic stagnation in these nations.



As a result, many Global South countries continue to endure environmental degradation, a severe climate crisis, scars of pandemics, poverty, unemployment and underdevelopment – despite their political independence. Addressing these economic disparities and working towards a fairer, reflective economic narrative, a realistic, decolonised, pluralistic approach and an equitable global economic system are crucial for fostering sustainable development and reducing inequality among nations.

Most of these economic policies and structures were forced upon countries in the Global South during the colonial period in a “one-size fits all” approach. Characteristics of this included a dependency on raw material exports and poor manufacturing sectors. These policies served Western interests at the expense of Global South economies and societies. Tragically, the legacy of colonialism lives on today, in both the practice and teaching of economics. Neoclassical economics dominates policy and academia. Its narrow focus on profit-driven solutions and individual benefits fails to address pressing issues such as inequality, the ecological crisis and global health emergencies. Most importantly, it fails to embed its theories and assumptions within the economies and societies that it claims to serve.

### **Challenging dominant perspectives and power structures**

Decolonising economics represents an ongoing effort to reshape the field and overcome the historical and ongoing impacts of colonisation. It is not a standalone objective, but rather a collective struggle to address the legacy of colonisation and question existing forms of colonialism in the post-colonial era. The process involves challenging the dominant perspectives and power structures within the discipline, promoting inclusivity and diversity and advocating for social justice. It also entails broadening the scope of economic analysis by incorporating marginalised groups, indigenous and non-monetised perspectives to create a more inclusive and comprehensive understanding of economic phenomena. The ultimate goal is to transform the discipline of economics and create a more equitable and just economic framework that recognizes and rectifies the imbalances created by colonisation.

To this end, there are three integral aspects of decolonising economics. First, we need to recognise that colonial legacies exist within the economy of both the coloniser and colonised countries. The extreme disparities in consumption patterns, wealth and resource allocation mean that the “one size fits all” approach taken by mainstream economics is implicitly neocolonial. Acts of redistribution, such as restitution and reparations, are necessary for more inclusive, realistic, equitable and reflective economic systems (Anievas & Nisancioglu 2015).

Second, there is a need to reform the academic discipline of economics so that it is critical, grounded in the real world and includes a wide range of perspectives. The assumptions, theories and methodologies of mainstream economics have been influenced by colonial ideologies and practices. As a result, mainstream economics ignores the cultural, historical, social and environmental contexts of the Global South that shape its countries’ economies (Ghosh 2017).

To reform the discipline, Western centrism in economics and its claim to universality and neutrality must be challenged and replaced with a discipline that incorporates the critical insights of Global South scholars, indigenous communities and social justice activists who all have diverse experiences that can add value into the discipline (Fanon 2004).



Third, we need to embrace and implement new economic narratives that are socially responsible, environmentally sustainable and which prioritise people and the planet over profit. These will differ across contexts, but can include solutions that value work that is currently unpaid, such as care work, and which respect the sovereignty and self-determination of indigenous knowledge and promote environmental justice. One of the concepts that aligns with decolonial economics is degrowth. It challenges the supposed necessity of ever-increasing output growth in developed economies and advocates for reduced consumption while improving wellbeing of people and ecological sustainability.

### Engaging the next generation

Decolonising economics is crucial to reimagining a more just, sustainable, reflective and diverse economic system. I believe that decolonising economics education is a necessary step in facilitating decolonial policy change: how can we expect decolonial economic policy without teaching decolonial thinkers at our higher education institutions? Decolonising economics education requires an overhaul of the curriculum, alongside reforming teaching and learning practices.

As a member of “Rethinking Economics”, a global movement, I am dedicated to promoting decolonised economics education that prioritises the well-being of people and the planet. I firmly believe in the power of students to drive the necessary change in our economic systems. By actively engaging and harnessing their collective power, students can play a crucial role in reshaping economics to be more inclusive, just and sustainable. This involves questioning the dominant Western-centric perspectives, promoting alternative approaches and centring the needs of diverse societies. Only through this collaborative process of reframing and reimagining can we build economic systems that truly serve the collective well-being and contribute to a more equitable and sustainable future for all.

→ Thomson Silomba (@thomson\_silomba) is Elected Members’ Council Officer for Rethinking Economics International and founding member of Rethinking Economics Zambia.

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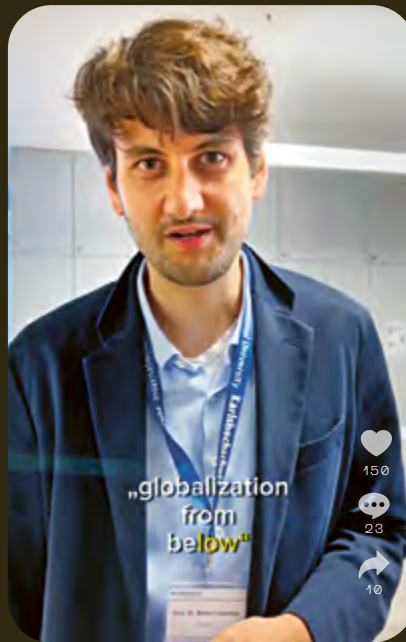
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INTERESTED IN RECLAIMING ECONOMICS FOR THE FUTURE? CHECK OUT RETHINKING ECONOMICS, AN INTERNATIONAL NETWORK TO MODERNISE ECONOMICS EDUCATION: [κ](#)

# #students getting #transformation done



TEXT AND TIKTOK: ROBERT LEPENIES

In this TikTok, I outline a way to look at globalisation from a radically different angle: literally from the ground up, focusing on “Globalisation from Below”. Traditional globalisation studies tend to exclusively focus on, and thereby privilege, powerful incumbent actors. By employing interpretivist methodologies and qualitative analyses, including ethnographic research, “Globalisation from Below” dissects the complex dynamics of globalisation by highlighting narratives of marginalised communities and everyday experiences. This is at least what we try to do in the degree programmes at our university. In the video, I offer an insight into our “Master in Social Transformation: Politics, Philosophy and Economics” and show how we try to bring these approaches to life in our courses.

→ Robert Lepenies (TikTok: @thetiktokscientist) is the President of the Karlshochschule International University, Germany and Professor for Pluralist and Heterodox Economics.



What does it take to make global markets serve the common good?

**"For too long, global markets have been an end unto themselves, disregarding questions of whether more trade or what kinds of trade actually benefit our societies and people. Using transparent and democratic processes, we need to redesign global economic rules and institutions to prioritise human rights and worker, consumer and environmental protections above multinational corporate profits."**



Melinda St. Louis (@MelindaPubCit) is Director of the Public Citizen's Global Trade Watch.

From Ukraine to Ethiopia, international crisis management and peacemaking efforts appear to be falling apart. But organisations like the United Nations still have a role to play in maintaining international security in an era of global friction and fragmentation.

# DEFENDING INTERNATIONAL SECURITY COOPERATION IN AN ERA OF DEGLOBALISATION

TEXT: RICHARD GOWAN



Trade experts currently talk a great deal about “deglobalisation” and “decoupling”, as the world’s biggest economies have started to set limits on free trade. It is tempting to argue that there has been a parallel trend towards deglobalisation in the field of international peacemaking and peacebuilding. After the Cold War, the US and other major powers invested in building up multilateral institutions such as the United Nations (UN), introducing a new era of international security cooperation. These institutions have come under growing pressure in recent years.

Mounting tensions between Russia and the Western powers meant that the UN could do little to halt the war in Syria. The UN Security Council has been paralysed over Moscow’s aggression against Ukraine. Russia and the US have pulled out of post-Cold War security frameworks like the Open Skies Treaty and curtailed cooperation on nuclear arms control.

Many governments outside the West appear to want to limit the ability of multilateral institutions to interfere in their neighbourhoods. After Myanmar’s military overthrew the country’s civilian government in 2021, South-East Asian nations insisted that they – rather than the UN – should mediate a solution. African states and regional organisations have also claimed that they should lead peace efforts in countries such as Ethiopia and Sudan. In many crises, the Security Council has been able to do little more than issue toothless statements of concern.

### Too early to write off the UN

With geopolitical tensions still rising, many commentators have predicted that great power tensions will further marginalise the UN. In this scenario, regional powers and coalitions of states could play a greater role in managing conflicts, in an ad hoc and uncoordinated fashion. Yet it is too early to write off the UN and international cooperation, for at least three reasons.

The first is that the geopolitical crisis over Ukraine has not derailed multilateralism entirely. Despite huge tensions over Ukraine, Russia and the West have continued to cooperate through the Security Council on other issues, such as humanitarian assistance to Afghanistan. China has been active behind the scenes urging other powers not to halt all UN diplomacy. In many conflicts, the UN is only able to mitigate ongoing violence through aid operations or peacekeeping missions. But the big powers still see a useful space for limited deal-making.

Second, Russia’s war on Ukraine has made governments worldwide recognise that they cannot “decouple” themselves from conflicts in other regions. The food and fuel shocks associated with Russia’s aggression and Western sanctions severely exacerbated global economic turbulence in 2022. The US and EU turned to bodies including the G7, G20 and UN to help ease a global spike in food prices. This year a growing number of non-Western

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“Rather than witnessing a total fragmentation of international security cooperation, we may be entering a period in which bodies like the UN have a reduced but still significant role to play in resolving and managing conflicts.”

countries – including Brazil, China and a coalition of African states – have attempted to mediate an end to the war. Their efforts have been ineffectual to date. But the war has demonstrated that Western and non-Western states alike need to plan to tackle the global fall-out of regional wars, just as they need to cooperate on shocks linked to phenomena like the COVID-19 pandemic.

Third, even regional powers and organisations that want to assert greater autonomy over peace and security issues still see advantages in working with a global body like the UN. The members of the African Union (AU) have, for example, recently argued that it is necessary to launch African-led peace enforcement operations to quash terrorist threats in regions such as the Sahel. In their view, existing UN-led peacekeeping missions are not up to this job. But the AU has also argued that the Security Council should establish a new funding mechanism that would allow the UN to provide predictable financial support to African-led deployments.

### **The UN's future role may be different but is still significant**

Rather than witnessing a total fragmentation of international security cooperation, we may be entering a period in which bodies like the UN have a reduced but still significant role to play in resolving and managing conflicts. Based on the trends above, this could encompass:

- Offering frameworks for the major powers to maintain case-by-case cooperation on crises where they still have common interests, despite wider strategic competition.
- Acting as a platform for governments to cooperate to mitigate the global economic ripple effects of wars and natural disasters such as pandemics.
- Providing frameworks for international support – including financial and diplomatic assistance – to regionally-led security initiatives by bodies such as the AU.

Multilateral forums may also play a helpful role in providing frameworks for governments to discuss new and evolving challenges such as the security implications of Artificial Intelligence and new biotechnologies. In the current period of international competition, it is unlikely that the US, China and other major powers will sign on to strong, binding treaties to control these technologies. But diplomats and technical experts can use multilateral processes in centres such as Geneva, Vienna and New York to exchange information and search for common understandings about how to use and place some restraints on these new tools in conflict.

Many governments would also like to use UN-led processes to talk about how climate change – and processes such as desertification and sea-level rise – affect nations' security. While Russia vetoed a Security Council resolution tabled by Ireland and Niger calling for the UN to focus more on climate security in 2021, there have been increasing discussions of this issue both in the Security Council and at UN climate change conferences. If, as many experts predict, climate change leads to high levels of mass displacement and increased conflict risks in the decades ahead, multilateral consultations how to manage these risks are likely to intensify further.

There is no guarantee that the UN or other multilateral forums will be able to find common answers to complex problems of technological change and climate-related conflict. In a worst-case scenario, these forces could create further friction and fragmentation in the international system. But global multilateral institutions, however flawed, remain an important safeguard against the prospect of a more total breakdown of security cooperation.

→ Richard Gowan (@RichardGowan1) is UN Director for the International Crisis Group.

What does it take to make global markets serve the common good?



**"In order to serve the common good, global markets need to be embedded in a proper system of institutionalised multilateral cooperation that ensures the protection of some core values such as sustainable development and international justice. None of this will be a spontaneous outcome. Rather, it will be the consequence of strong, multi-layered commitments around the world."**

Julieta Zelicovich (@jujizel) is Lecturer in International Relations in the Faculty of Political Science and International Relations at the National University of Rosario, Argentina.

Here is a playlist of songs for a better world. Their calls include everything from beating back corruption and listening to younger generations, to questioning who remains excluded from the West's promises. And some of them give a gentle kick in our own direction, calling on us to make a change ourselves. Turn up the volume!

# TURN UP THE VOLUME — AND MAKE A CHANGE!

TEXT: MERLE STRUNK

Issues of injustice and inequality are closely linked to who we listen to. That's true for politics – and it's just as true for music. If you turn on the radio (and it's not a cheesy love song that's playing) you can be sure that the lyrics will be addressing these themes in one way or another. Political, economic and social inequality are universal subjects that are addressed by

artists all over the world, throughout the decades. Music is a way to attract attention, to be heard – and with its incredible and sometimes even global reach, it remains one of the best methods to do so.

→ Merle Strunk is Education and Knowledge Transfer Officer at BKHS.





DEPECHE MODE

... The grabbing hands grab  
all they can

All for themselves – after all  
It's a competitive world  
Everything counts in large  
amounts ...

DEPECHE MODE – “EVERYTHING  
COUNTS” (1983)

This song by the world famous new wave band criticises the corruption and greed of big companies in the band's home country, the United Kingdom. It does not hold back with colourful, figurative language: “The grabbing hands grab all they can” is just one example. Although the song is now forty years old, its themes remain relevant today – perhaps more than ever. After all, large corporations continue to exploit workers and the environment, despite the global climate crisis and growing inequality. But as Depeche Mode points out, “Everything counts in large amounts”, which includes our efforts to beat back corruption, injustice and exploitation. Of course, goodwill alone is not enough. We need strong laws, reliable politicians and brave activists. But if we sometimes feel discouraged on a personal level, we should not forget that many small actions also add up. Everything counts!

DEINE FREUNDE – "FRÜHER WAR ALLES BESSER" (2019)

Globalisation means that what happens in our world and how we shape it is everyone's business. That also includes children, who not only have a right to live in a just world, but also have a strong interest in actively helping to shape it. They want to be involved and they have a well-calibrated sense for detecting when adults do not trust them to participate, instead preferring that they stick to older generations' ideas of what the world should look like.

The Hamburg-based band Deine Freunde ("Your Friends") makes music for young listeners. One song takes its name from a sentence that every young person has heard many times and probably cursed at least as often: "Früher war alles besser" ("Everything was better in the old days"). The song revolves around the old world of adults, in which - obviously! - not everything was better. The simple but important message of the song? Traditions and values are not set in stone. They can and must change, because, in the words of Deine Freunde: "Doch wenn ich ewig nur nach hinten blick', dann tut der Hals mir ganz schön weh" ("But if I keep looking backwards for so long, my neck will really hurt a lot"). Do you want to change something? Deine Freunde will tell you: just go ahead, now is the time. The song is a great listen for all generations. The message is clear: if you want to make the world a better place and do not know where to begin, start listening to young people.



DEINE FREUNDE

... 陽光降臨這裡  
 群山再連結起  
 流沙砌成堡壘  
 雪地會融化 百木會再生 ...



EKO FRESH

... Sie sagen „Damals war’ne gut Zeit“  
 Wohnen im Haus der Nostalgie  
 Aber, dass früher alles besser war  
 Alter, das glaubst du bitte nie ...

#### EKO FRESH – “60 GASTARBEITER BARS” (2021)

The so-called “Gastarbeiter” (“guest workers”) who came to Germany from Southern and South-Eastern Europe in the 1950s and 1960s not only carried their hopes and ambitions, they also brought their own music. While some musicians were incredibly successful among the hundreds of thousands of Gastarbeiter, to date their music has made few inroads into the German mainstream. But many Gastarbeiter stayed in the country – and so did their influence on culture and music. In the 1990s, musicians who were third-generation immigrants achieved commercial success. Successes included music with Turkish influences, especially rap and hip-hop. The Cologne rapper Eko Fresh, himself the grandson of a Turkish migrant, is one of the best-known examples. His music is known for its socially critical lyrics and for dealing with topics such as ancestry and integration. Eko Fresh dedicated the song “60 Gastarbeiter Bars” to the 60th anniversary of the German-Turkish recruitment agreement that was in force until 1973. In the song, he addresses difficulties in the history of immigration, mentioning prejudice and racism. Overall, however, the song finds a positive balance and leaves no doubt as to whether the Gastarbeiter or their descendants are part of Germany or not.

DENISE HO



#### DENISE HO – “POLAR” (2018)

Denise Ho is a canto-pop singer who became a face of the pro-democracy “umbrella movement” in Hong Kong in 2014. She stood in the front row with protesters and was even arrested, which earned her great respect from the people of Hong Kong. As punishment for her political involvement, the openly lesbian artist and activist was blacklisted by the government. Her songs disappeared from all streaming platforms in China and she lost her record label and sponsors. But the harassment did not stop her from continuing to produce her own music and to step up her political activism. In 2019, for example, she addressed the United Nations Human Rights Council session, speaking about the concerns of Hong Kong protesters. On the surface, her song “Polar” is perhaps not a political song at all. It’s about a group of people who, after a long dark night, see the first light again. But during a performance at a TED Talk in 2020, Denise Ho dedicated this hopeful song to all freedom fighters in Hong Kong and around the world.

... You got a fast car  
 I got a plan to get us otta here  
 I been working at the convenience store  
 Managed to save just a litte bit on money

♦♦♦

TRACY CHAPMAN – “FAST CAR”  
 (1988)

In the 20th century, few things embodied the “American way of life” as impressively as the car. It was seen as a promise of prosperity, a reward for hard work and a symbol of personal freedom. It is therefore not surprising that a 1980s song that tells the story of a young American woman who desperately wants a better life and to escape poverty uses the description of a ride in a fast car to express her hopes and dreams. Singer-songwriter Tracy Chapman became instantly famous with this song when she performed it at the “Nelson Mandela 70th Birthday Tribute Concert” at a sold-out Wembley Stadium in 1988. The setup was just her and her guitar. Around the world, 600 million people watched her performance on their television screens in prime time. Chapman, who had performed in the afternoon, filled a gap in the programme when Stevie Wonder had technical problems with his show. The history of this song makes you think both about the Western world’s promises of liberty, meritocracy, equal opportunities and upward mobility (notwithstanding the utopian nature of this dream, especially for marginalised groups), but also about which unknown voices should be given the stage to shed light on pressing issues.



TRACY CHAPMAN

LISTEN TO OUR PLAYLIST ↘



What does it take to make global markets serve the common good?

**"Rent theft is a core problem of global markets. The experiences of migrants illustrate the problem.**

**The so-called migration crisis is an expression of a political-economic system in which socially created value is privately appropriated by a privileged few.**

**These individuals use institutions such as land and property rights, race, ethnicity, class and gender to keep others in their place, as I demonstrate in my book, "Global Migration Beyond Limits".**

**Socialising land rents and giving labour its due represent major steps towards making global markets serve the common good."**



Franklin Obeng-Odoom (@obeng\_odoom) is Professor of Global Development Studies at the University of Helsinki, Finland.

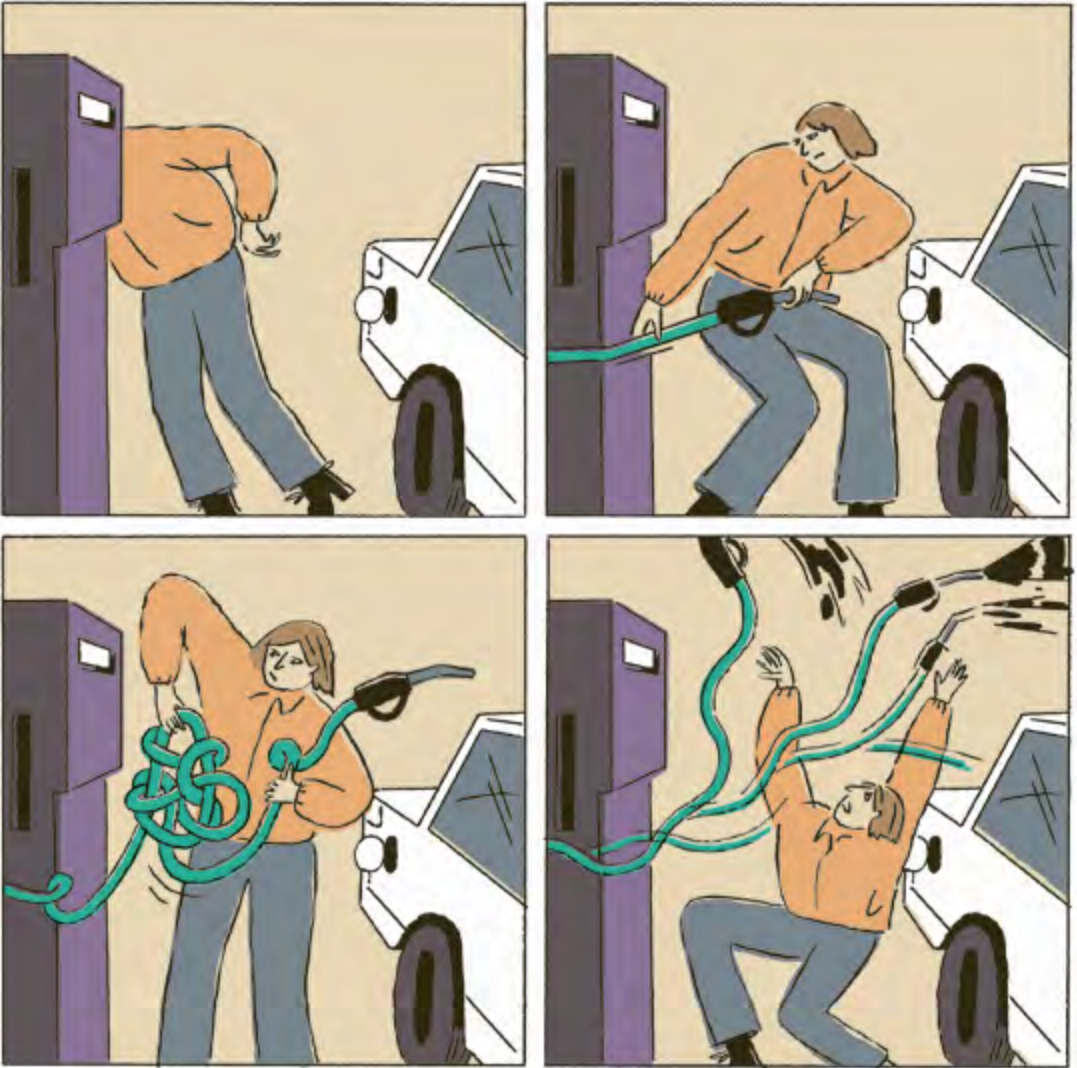
Sanctions have regained importance as a foreign policy tool, driven by new developments in the application of external pressure, and increasingly by Russia's invasion of Ukraine and the great power rivalry between the US and China. Countries use sanctions and other geoeconomic instruments to change the target's behaviour, but also to pursue national interests and exercise power – which are helping to remake the nature of globalisation in the 21st century.

# How sanctions change globalisation

TEXT: CHRISTIAN VON SOEST

Russia's invasion of Ukraine has seen major interstate war return to Europe. The war of aggression that began on 24 February 2022 was the second-most deadly conflict in the world in 2022 (after the Tigray crisis in Ethiopia), but its consequences go beyond even the incredible suffering of those who have already been killed, wounded and traumatised. The conflict has shaken the foundations of peaceful co-existence and cooperation that developed on the European continent after the end of the Cold War.

It is therefore no surprise that the EU, US and their partners responded with unprecedented economic sanctions against Russia. Their coercive measures mark the preliminary climax of what is often called “economic statecraft”. Since the beginning of the 2000s, sanctions – economic and diplomatic restrictions to achieve a political goal – are often used in Western capitals. They are now a go-to foreign policy tool to respond to international aggression and domestic repression abroad.



### Sanctions on Russia are unprecedented

While sanctions have been used elsewhere, the action taken against Russia's war of aggression might prove to be a "Zeitenwende", a pivotal moment, for Western sanctions policy. In turn, this could also transform the face of globalisation. What makes the Russia sanctions special?

First, there are the resources of the sanctions target. As the largest territorial state on earth, Russia is an atypical sanctions target. The threshold for the imposition of harsh sanctions was extremely high. As a permanent member of the UN Security Council, the Russian Federation can block any resolution of the body and possesses the largest number of nuclear warheads in the world. Russia's economic weight is also (still) considerable. Not only does the country have the eleventh-largest economy in the world, as consumers in Germany and Europe well know, Russia exports large quantities of oil, gas and other strategically important natural resources.

“Without any doubt, the severe sanctions against Russia are justified to send a clear signal, constrain its war of aggression and, perhaps, at some point contribute to a policy change.”

Second, the speed of the sanctions has been unprecedented. Even one day before Russia's full invasion began, European states imposed economic restrictions against the country. They did so in response to President Putin's formal recognition of the so-called Donetsk and Luhansk People's Republics on Ukraine's territory. Within a week, the EU imposed three comprehensive sanctions packages and by July 2023, eleven packages against Russia were in force. The Europeans are coordinating their sanctions decisions more closely than ever before with the US and other partners. In total, at least 44 countries stand by Ukraine and have imposed punitive measures (Ukraine included). In addition to traditional partners, South Korea and, for the first time in more than 40 years, Singapore have also imposed sanctions without a UN mandate.

Third, Western powers have woven one of the most complex webs of coercive measures to constrain the Kremlin and its military machinery. They target the financial sector: Western central banks immediately froze Russia's foreign reserves of approximately 300 billion US dollars. The country has now almost no ability to borrow from international financial markets and banks such as Russia's largest financial institution, Sberbank, have been decoupled from the international banking messaging system SWIFT. Export bans have halted the export of aircraft parts, equipment for refineries and dual-use technology that Moscow could use for building weapons and precision ammunition. Western governments have also put computer chips, semiconductors and software on the list.

In addition, in a painful and politically contested process, Europe has significantly reduced its dependence on Russian gas and oil. The sanctioning powers have also designed an innovative price cap for Russian oil to limit Moscow's revenues while keeping world prices in check. Finally, individual sanctions are far-reaching. Entry bans and asset freezes now affect more than 1,500 individuals in Russia – President Putin, Duma deputies, members of the security apparatus, oligarchs and even presenters of Russian state broadcasters. The EU and US are also targeting over 150 organisations that support Russia's war or even wage it, such as the infamous Wagner Group. Last, but not least, more than 1,000 international companies have left the Russian market.

#### **The not so clear impact of sanctions**

Sanctions are about increasing the price for certain misbehaviour – be it Russia's military aggression, terror, the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, cyber-attacks or human rights violations. However, we should be realistic about what sanctions can possibly achieve. They are not a panacea.



Systematic comparative research suggests that in only one-third of cases is external pressure at least partially successful in forcing the sanctions target to change course. Obviously, the severe sanctions pressure against Russia has not (yet) changed President Putin's calculus. He has not stopped the military aggression and has not withdrawn Russian troops from Ukraine.

Yet this was an unrealistic expectation from the outset. More positively, the sanctions have sent a highly visible and costly signal about core norms of international politics - national sovereignty and territorial integrity. Economic indicators also show that the restrictions have slowed down Russia's economy. Despite the reporting about sanctions-busting and evidence that Western electronic parts can still be found in Russian missiles, the country is already paying an enormous economic price for its military aggression. Clearly, the massive sanctions wall will make Russia poorer in the future.

Yet while hard sanctions are, on average, more successful in changing behaviour than targeted ones, their side effects are substantial. Examples such as the UN embargo on Iraq at the beginning of the 2000s, or the restrictions imposed on Syria and Afghanistan demonstrate that poor citizens regularly suffer the most. In contrast, those in power such as Putin, Syria's Bashar al-Assad and Taliban leaders, who can actually change policy, hardly feel the pain. Without any doubt, the severe sanctions against Russia are justified to send a clear signal, constrain its war of aggression and, perhaps, at some point contribute to a policy change. Yet it is all the more important that Western sanctioners continuously monitor the impact of their restrictions.

#### **Sanctions are remaking the nature of globalisation**

As the Russia case demonstrates, sanctions are likely to remain an ever-more important foreign policy tool in responding to international aggression and domestic repression. They are remaking the nature of globalisation in the 21st century. It has become clear that globalisation is not only about international economic cooperation and increasing efficiency, but also involves loaded issues of political power. Sanctions are not - as is often claimed in the Russian context - a lever used by Western countries (and the UN) alone. In the great power rivalry between the US and China, both sides are also increasingly imposing sanctions and export controls to pursue their interests and exercise power. It is therefore essential for Western governments to use these means of coercion sparingly and with great care.

- Christian von Soest (@cvonsoest) is a Lead Research Fellow and Head of the Peace and Security Research Programme at the German Institute for Global and Area Studies (GIGA) in Hamburg. He is also an Honorary Professor at the University of Göttingen, Germany.

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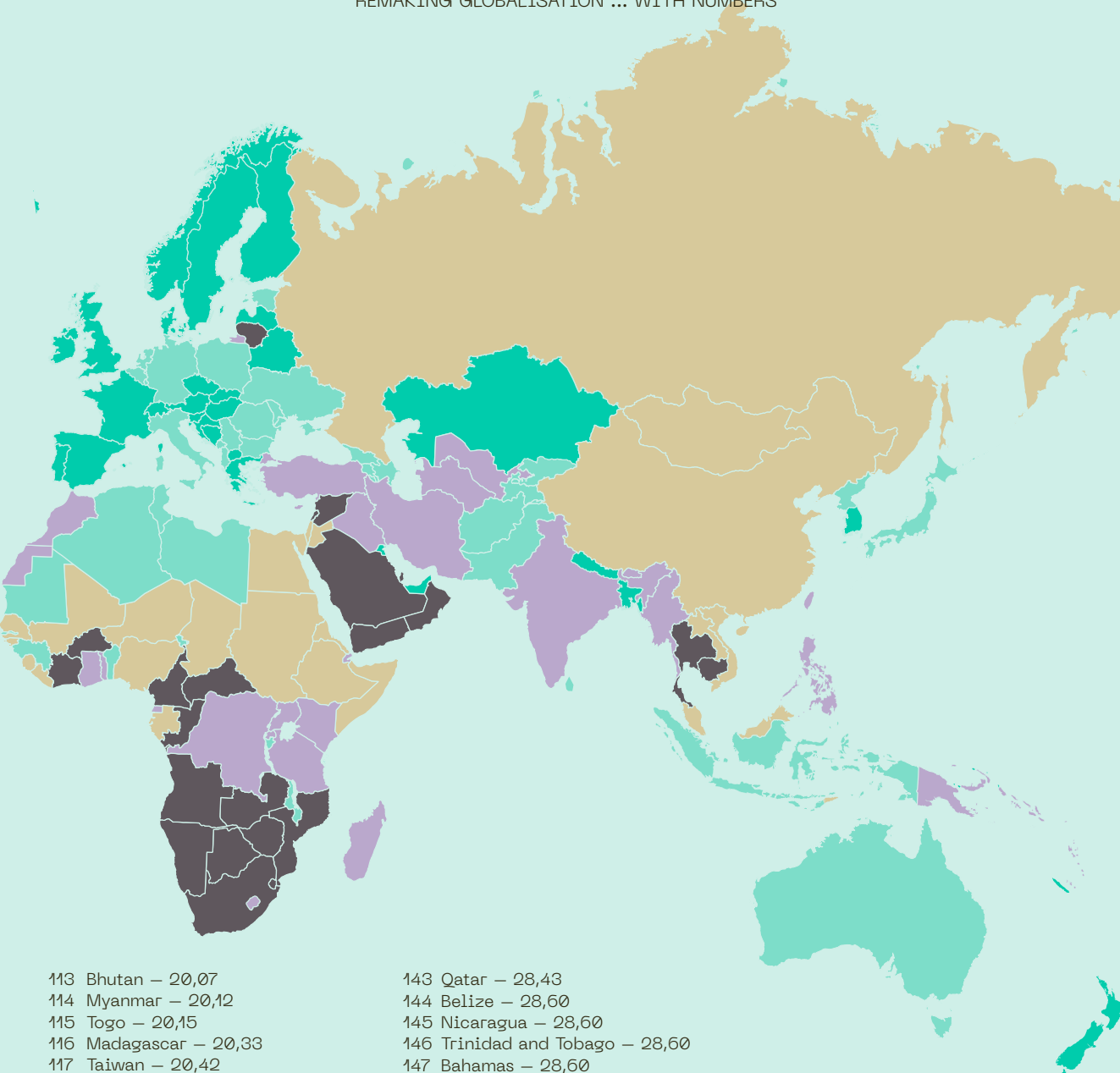
“It has become clear that globalisation is not only about international economic cooperation and increasing efficiency, but also involves loaded issues of political power.”

The top 10 per cent (T10) to bottom 50 per cent (B50) average income gap is the ratio between the income shares of the top 10 per cent and the bottom 50 per cent. This indicator summarises in a single metric how societies distribute incomes at both ends of the social ladder. The higher the ratio, the higher the inequality. Its interpretation is straightforward, as it answers a relatively basic question: "How many times more do the rich earn than the poorest half?"

# Income inequality worldwide

## Ranking with total score

1	Slovakia – 5,38	44	Guinea – 10,41	89	Niger – 17,11
2	Iceland – 5,74	45	North Korea – 10,42	90	Senegal – 17,12
3	Czech Republic – 5,81	46	Ukraine – 10,79	91	Malaysia – 17,17
4	Belarus – 5,95	47	Montenegro – 10,96	92	Burundi – 17,26
5	Norway – 5,95	48	Italy – 11,14	93	Armenia – 17,35
6	Netherlands – 6,46	49	Sao Tome and Principe – 11,25	94	Malawi – 17,38
7	Switzerland – 6,48	50	Serbia – 11,39	95	Timor-Leste – 17,63
8	Slovenia – 6,53	51	Estonia – 11,94	96	Cuba – 17,71
9	France – 6,73	52	Mauritania – 12,06	97	Hong Kong – 17,72
10	Sweden – 6,87	53	Canada – 12,21	98	Argentina – 17,97
11	Macao – 7,19	54	Afghanistan – 12,22	99	Israel – 18,14
12	Hungary – 7,22	55	Tunisia – 12,45	100	Turkey – 18,22
13	Singapore – 7,29	56	Indonesia – 12,53	101	Morocco – 18,23
14	North Macedonia – 7,33	57	Bulgaria – 12,56	102	Turkmenistan – 18,34
15	Greece – 7,37	58	Sri Lanka – 12,68	103	United Arab Emirates – 18,66
16	Nepal – 7,57	59	Japan – 13,16	104	Kenya – 18,72
17	Spain – 7,76	60	Romania – 13,33	105	Philippines – 18,93
18	Austria – 7,77	61	Libya – 13,48	106	Djibouti – 18,93
19	Belgium – 8,00	62	Kyrgyzstan – 13,51	107	DR Congo – 19,32
20	Denmark – 8,10	63	Pakistan – 13,52	108	Iran – 19,70
21	Finland – 8,17	64	Uruguay – 13,74	109	Iraq – 19,73
22	Korea – 8,18	65	Nigeria – 13,78	110	Cabo Verde – 19,83
23	Cyprus – 8,34	66	Liberia – 14,01	111	Tanzania – 19,84
24	Portugal – 8,68	67	Sudan – 14,28	112	Ghana – 20,03
25	New Zealand – 8,83	68	Guinea-Bissau – 14,28		
26	United Kingdom – 8,83	69	Eritrea – 14,36		
27	Malta – 8,85	70	Ethiopia – 14,36		
28	Ireland – 8,90	71	Azerbaijan – 14,46		
29	Croatia – 9,01	72	Somalia – 14,74		
30	Kazakhstan – 9,02	73	Gabon – 15,02		
31	Bangladesh – 9,14	74	Mali – 15,12		
32	Kosovo – 9,17	75	Gambia – 15,27		
33	Latvia – 9,18	76	Mongolia – 15,29		
34	Bosnia and Herzegovina – 9,32	77	Egypt – 15,42		
35	Luxembourg – 9,33	78	Georgia – 15,53		
36	Albania – 9,36	79	Sierra Leone – 15,68		
37	Australia – 9,60	80	China – 15,78		
38	Brunei Darussalam – 9,78	81	Lao PDR – 16,01		
39	Moldova – 9,81	82	Mauritius – 16,01		
40	Poland – 9,88	83	Russian Federation – 16,19		
41	Algeria – 10,01	84	Chad – 16,30		
42	Germany – 10,15	85	Viet Nam – 16,47		
43	Tajikistan – 10,39	86	USA – 16,50		
		87	Benin – 16,50		
		88	Jordan – 16,90		



113 Bhutan – 20,07  
 114 Myanmar – 20,12  
 115 Togo – 20,15  
 116 Madagascar – 20,33  
 117 Taiwan – 20,42  
 118 Uzbekistan – 20,47  
 119 Palestine – 20,48  
 120 South Sudan – 20,99  
 121 El Salvador – 21,41  
 122 Seychelles – 21,47  
 123 Uganda – 21,56  
 124 India – 21,76  
 125 Lesotho – 21,94  
 126 Comoros – 22,06  
 127 Equatorial Guinea – 22,10  
 128 Kuwait – 22,48  
 129 Rwanda – 22,78  
 130 Papua New Guinea – 23,04  
 131 Ecuador – 23,58  
 132 Cote d'Ivoire – 23,60  
 133 Cameroon – 24,47  
 134 Saudi Arabia – 25,19  
 135 Maldives – 25,38  
 136 Syrian Arab Republic – 25,75  
 137 Lebanon – 25,94  
 138 Burkina Faso – 26,48  
 139 Bahrain – 27,23  
 140 Congo – 28,20  
 141 Dominican Republic – 28,25  
 142 Lithuania – 28,25

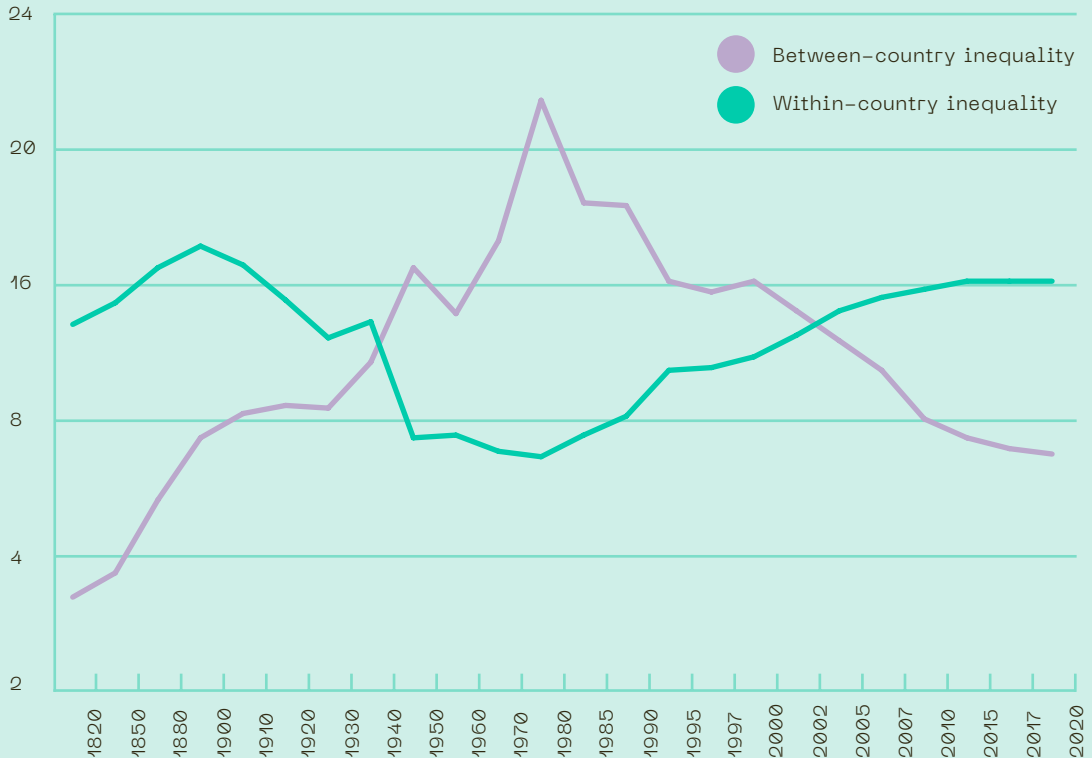
143 Qatar – 28,43  
 144 Belize – 28,60  
 145 Nicaragua – 28,60  
 146 Trinidad and Tobago – 28,60  
 147 Bahamas – 28,60  
 148 Bolivia – 28,60  
 149 Jamaica – 28,60  
 150 Panama – 28,60  
 151 Guatemala – 28,60  
 152 Guyana – 28,60  
 153 Haiti – 28,60  
 154 Honduras – 28,60  
 155 Paraguay – 28,60  
 156 Suriname – 28,60  
 157 Thailand – 28,98  
 158 Oman – 30,62  
 159 Yemen – 31,14  
 160 Cambodia – 31,75  
 161 Brazil – 31,81  
 162 Zimbabwe – 31,92  
 163 Angola – 32,09  
 164 Venezuela – 32,91  
 165 Botswana – 36,49  
 166 Swaziland – 38,11  
 167 Mozambique – 38,94  
 168 Colombia – 40,74  
 169 Central African Republic – 42,52  
 170 Zambia – 44,42  
 171 Costa Rica – 44,80  
 172 Chile – 44,80

173 Namibia – 49,03  
 174 Mexico – 52,03  
 175 Peru – 53,72  
 176 South Africa – 56,34

Top10/Bottom50 Ratio of National Income 2021



### Global income inequality, 1820-2020: between country vs. within-country inequality (ratio T10/B50)



Between-country inequality, as measured by the ratio T10/B50 between the average incomes of the top 10 per cent and the bottom 50 per cent (assuming everybody within a country has the same income), rose between 1820 and 1980. It has been declining since then. Within-country inequality, also measured by the ratio T10/B50 between the average incomes of the top 10 per cent and the bottom 50 per cent (assuming all countries have the same average income), rose slightly between 1820 and 1910, then declined between 1910 and 1980, but has been rising again since 1980.

Over the past two decades, global inequalities between countries have declined, whereas inequality has increased within most countries of the world. This strong rise of inequalities within countries means that the world remains particularly unequal today, despite economic catching-up and strong growth in the developing world. It has also meant that inequalities within countries are now even larger than the stark inequalities that are observed between countries. From a historical perspective, it appears that global inequalities are about as large today as at the peak of Western imperialism in the early 20th century. Indeed, the share of income captured by the poorest half of the global population is about two times lower today than in 1820, before the great divergence between Western countries and their colonies. In other words, there is still a long way to go before we leave global economic inequalities behind that were inherited from the very unequal organisation of global production in the mid-19th century.

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Source: All data and text were retrieved from the World Inequality Database and its World Inequality Report 2022.

What does it take to make global markets serve the common good?



**"Global markets must do no harm and where they do, corrective action is required.**

**To take one example, many developing countries face a higher interest rate spread in financial markets where the premium on risk is often absurdly high. This situation not only compounds the debt problem. It also puts access to finance — including the investments required to support the clean energy transition — out of reach for some of these countries."**

David Luke (@DavidLukeTrade) is Professor in Practice and Strategic Director at the Firoz Lalji Institute for Africa at the London School of Economics and Political Science, UK.

# THE TRUTH BEHIND YOUR PLASTIC WASTE



In a bid to make largely unrecyclable plastic waste more circular, high-income countries have been exporting theirs to other countries, even though they have no guarantees it will not be dumped, burned or displace recycling capacity. This trade harms both the environment and human health. High-income country export bans on plastic waste are in line with relevant international obligations and will remake globalisation for the better.

TEXT: LAUREN WEIR

Plastic production has increased exponentially since the 1950s. Despite only having existed, at scale, for the equivalent of a single lifetime, the sheer ubiquity of production, design and chemical components means that toxic plastic pollution is everywhere. It is now found within every single environment and in a large percentage of fauna and flora – including in humans: plastics can be found in our breast milk, our placentas, our lungs, our blood and, most likely, our brains. Continued production levels pose a direct threat to planetary boundaries, driving petrochemical expansion and, as a consequence, climate change.

Of the 460 million tons of plastic we now produce every year, much of which is single-use, 77 per cent is categorised as waste each year and only ten per cent is recycled (OECD 2022, Minderoo 2023). Yet recycling, rather than reduction, repair or reuse, has been the primary focus to address poor design and the increase in plastic volumes. The response has therefore included domestic mandated recycling rates, recycled content targets, taxes – and the global plastic waste trade.

The plastic waste trade is underpinned by financial power dynamics. High-income countries invest in waste collection but not in adequate treatment infrastructure, instead exporting plastic elsewhere. This is not driven by the desire to attain the most environmentally sound outcome, but because it is economically convenient. For example, the current top exporters (and producers per capita) of plastic waste are the EU, the US, the UK and Japan. The top importers are located in Asia, especially South-East Asia, as well as in Turkey and, more recently, Latin America (Environmental Investigation Agency 2021).

But this process is causing irrevocable environmental and human health harm. This first became evident in the 1980s, when high-income countries exported hazardous waste, exploited the cheap disposal options in Eastern Europe and Africa.

### Harms are not being adequately addressed by those perpetuating them

Revelations about the hazardous waste trade resulted in the 1989 adoption of the Basel Convention (the global agreement controlling how waste is traded). Even so, agreeing and implementing international law takes time. The subsequently adopted Ban Amendment in 1994, which prohibits the export of hazardous waste from high-income countries to others, only came into force in 2019 (Basel Convention 2021a). Acknowledging the nature of the problem, the Basel Convention sets out important objectives to follow – such as self-sufficiency and proximity – and allows countries to impose additional requirements to better protect human health and the environment (Basel Convention 2019).

Current Basel Convention obligations do not provide all countries with the necessary protections from the plastic waste trade, so several countries have been introducing additional requirements. This started with China, the largest recipient of the world's exported plastic waste – receiving 73 per cent of it between 1992 and 2018 (Environmental Investigation Agency 2021). In 2018, it effectively prohibited imports, citing the protection of the environment and human health. High-income countries then found new destinations, which in turn put in place import bans or strict restrictions too. Between 2018 and 2021, these countries included Taiwan, India, Hong Kong, Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand, Vietnam and Turkey.

The Basel Convention then adopted plastic waste amendments in 2021 that required recipient country consent before exporting mixed and contaminated plastic waste (Basel Convention 2021b). Australia and the EU imposed further export obligations, somewhat reflecting receiving countries' regulatory trends.

As a consequence, recorded plastic waste exports decreased. Peaking in 2014 globally at around 16 million tonnes, the top ten global exporters shipped 6.75 million tonnes in 2017 and a much lower 3.75 million tonnes in 2021 (Basel Action Network 2021). Yet this is still equivalent to exporting 1,933 shipping containers every day for an entire year. Continued loopholes and the harms from these exports remain acute.

Current recipient countries such as Malaysia, Indonesia and Turkey are still facing problems such as the dumping or burning of plastic waste imports, the contamination of food with toxins and dangerous recycling facility working conditions. This in turn impacts the health of local communities and those working in the industry, which include children and refugees. Even when imported plastic waste is sorted and “decontaminated”, the microplastic and chemical pollution stemming from the recycling process can cause harm.

The problems are exacerbated because the waste trade lacks transparency and can be easily exploited. Exporting countries are failing to undertake effective monitoring of their shipments. This creates a burgeoning and lucrative illegal trade, especially for plastics.





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“These international agreements are examples of how globalisation can be used to protect everyone from the externalities resulting from the economics driving free trade.”



Even when plastic waste can be managed in an environmentally sound manner, recipient countries suffer from recycling capacity displacement. Plastic waste imports from high-income countries take up significant levels of domestic recycling capacity, providing fewer opportunities for them to recycle their own plastic waste (Environmental Investigation Agency 2023).

Moreover, when compared with other traded wastes, plastics pose unique issues. Unlike other major exported waste streams from high-income countries, plastic waste net exports are high. Plastic waste is also set to grow at a much higher rate (with a forecast tripling by 2060), yet has a much lower recycling rate. In addition, plastic is not infinitely recyclable and has the highest rate of recycling residuals and mismanagement. Indeed, shipments have as high a rate of illegality as certain internationally listed hazardous wastes, yet are not privy to similar levels of scrutiny or penalties if found to be illegal, despite also causing significant and long-standing harm.

In summary, high-income countries export plastic waste for convenience, not necessity. There are no guarantees that exported waste will not harm human health, be dumped, burnt or displace recycling capacity.

#### **High-income countries need to take responsibility for their waste**

In an echo of the Basel Convention, revelations over the extent of plastic pollution harm has resulted in another global agreement – the Global Plastics Treaty. This legally binding agreement is currently being negotiated by the UN

member states and is due to be finalised by the end of 2024[at time of writing negotiations were still ongoing]. It is hoped that the treaty will see countries agree to impose crucial plastic reduction measures, as well as restrictions on chemicals used in plastics. These international agreements are examples of how globalisation can be used to protect everyone from the externalities resulting from the economics driving free trade.

However, reduction measures will not necessarily result in lower volumes of waste exports from high-income countries. Current and potential future recipient countries remain alone, legislatively speaking, in trying to protect themselves. The introduction of bans on the export of plastic waste by high-income countries will help to address the issue. Such bans, which are in line with relevant international obligations, are entirely possible given these countries' financial resources.

In a response to the exposure of the realities behind the global plastic waste trade, some major high-income country exporters, particularly the EU, are currently considering such a measure. We will therefore soon see whether the EU will ban the export of its plastic waste - and help to remake globalisation for the better.

→ Lauren Weir (@\_\_LaurenWeir) is a Senior Campaigner working on the issue of plastic pollution at the Environmental Investigation Agency.

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# I swallowed an iron moon

我咽下一枚铁做的月亮

POEM: XU LIZHI TRANSLATION: ELEANOR GOODMAN

Xu Lizhi (1990 – 2014) was a Chinese poet and factory worker. Born into a farming family, Xu moved to Shenzhen to find a new life in the rapidly industrialising city. Soon after he started working for Foxconn assembling Apple products, Xu's poor working and living conditions became the subject of his poems. At the age of 24, Xu took his own life.

我咽下一枚铁做的月亮  
他们把它叫做螺丝

我咽下这工业的废水, 失业的订单  
那些低于机台的青春早早夭亡

我咽下奔波, 咽下流离失所  
咽下人行天桥, 咽下长满水锈的生活

我再咽不下了  
所有我曾经咽下的现在都从喉咙汹涌  
而出

在祖国的领土上铺成一首  
耻辱的诗

I swallowed an iron moon  
they called it a screw

I swallowed industrial wastewater and unemployment forms  
bent over machines, our youth died young

I swallowed labour, I swallowed poverty  
swallowed pedestrian bridges, swallowed this rusted-out life

I can't swallow any more  
everything I've swallowed roils up in my throat

I spread across my country  
a poem of shame

What does it take to make global markets serve the common good?

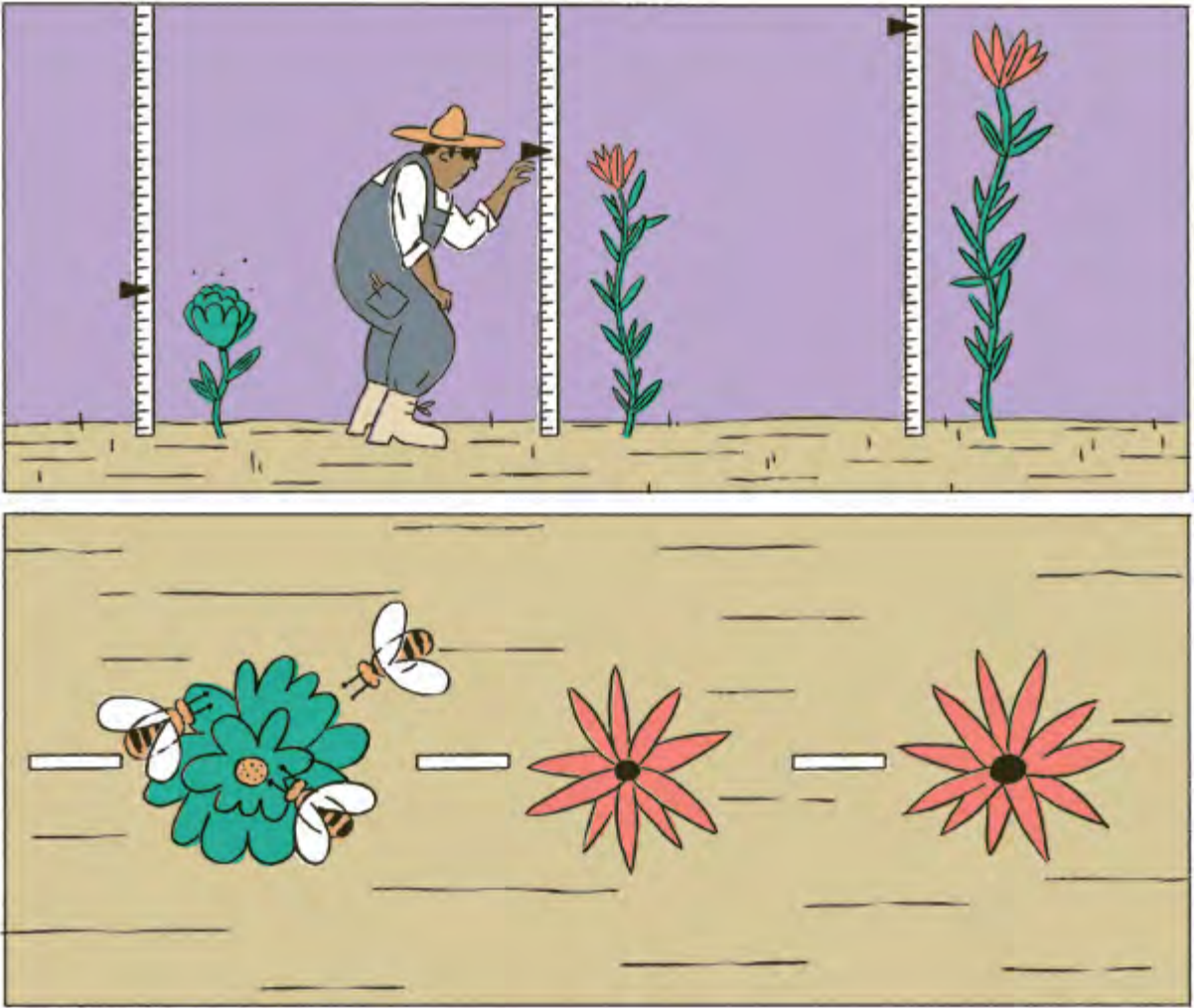


**“To ensure global markets serve the common good, we need a race to the top for labour standards, envi-**

**ronmental and climate protections, and resilient supply chains. We have seen that solely focusing on short-term efficiency and cost minimisation creates a high level of vulnerability to crisis, causing security risks and high economic and environmental costs.**

**When everyone thinks of themselves, it doesn't mean everyone has been thought of. That is why we're building equal partnerships that create value in the Global South as well.”**

Franziska Brantner (@fbrantner) is Member of the German Bundestag for the Green Party and Parliamentary State Secretary at the Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs and Climate Action.



WHAT COULD  
A MORE ETHICAL  
APPROACH TO  
GLOBAL METRICS  
LOOK LIKE?



In global governance, numbers are what count. But we need to adopt a more ethical approach to their use. This includes challenging colonial categories that shape global metrics and recognising value in non-numerical data that reveal what numbers overlook.

TEXT: HILARY F. MACDONOGH

Politicians and policy makers have long looked to numbers – statistical data represented by indicators in rankings and indices – to interpret situations, advise them on action and inform the public. Numbers are used to represent certain characteristics, relationships and issues in the world. They enable us to compare phenomena occurring in different places and times by turning “difference into quantity” (Espeland & Stevens 2008). Indicators and metrics are produced by global actors with specialist technical “know-how” and supporting infrastructure. They are deeply embedded in the work global governance networks do to measure and monitor global problems and coordinating intervention. Numbers make complex issues like global warming and social mobility comprehensible. Their enduring and visible use has shaped thinking about global issues like poverty and education.

#### **The sceptics' view: a hidden agenda?**

For proponents, numbers are used as an objective instrument to hold power accountable, provide closure to debate and coordinate action. Numbers translate complex phenomena into easy-to-understand representations that are comparable and precise. Yet, to sceptics, the presentation of numbers as objective, universal and neutral is merely a useful artifice, making them ideal instruments for silently exercising power. In their view, contests have already played out over the values behind global indicators before they are put to work. Before global poverty is measured, compared and monitored, for example, disputes have ensued about what it means to be poor. Does it mean lacking wealth or wellbeing?

Additionally, contests have been won and lost over which problems gain status as being “global”, as opposed to being merely domestic or local. In this rendition, the closure numbers provide is less a virtue than a vice, a power play to subordinate and efface opposing debates. Here, using numbers effectively centres less on using them to accurately measure reality than on defining problems and solutions through them – by deciding what is important to measure – and concealing these value-imbibed and contestable choices behind a façade of objectivity and neutrality. For example, when the World Bank asserts the hegemony of its own indicator sets to measure and monitor global “development”, it is vying to determine what development is and which interventions are appropriate for its realisation (Uribe 2015). As such, many social scientists claim that numbers are social artefacts; they are political and contingent.

## “Non-numerical representations are useful not just when the legitimacy of numbers fails, but as a rule of practice.”

### Getting the numbers right

Accepting the sceptics' view is not a binary choice. Even critics do not see numbers, *per se*, as the problem. Rather, issues usually involve the hidden power relations of deciding what “counts” and what is communicated through numbers as norms, standards and hierarchies. A better use of numbers in global governance, then, requires a more ethical approach to their production.

This can be achieved in three ways. First, numbers for global agendas should be produced in a participatory way where possible, opening spaces for them to be contested and negotiated. Second, persistent colonial categories that shape and are shaped by global metrics should be challenged and remade. Finally, non-numerical data should be used to recount perspectives that numerical representations of the world overlook. The following paragraphs elaborate on these three approaches.

### Participation in number production

After some recipient states were dissatisfied with global monitoring agendas, some global networks opened spaces to incorporate processes of contestation and deliberation in number production. The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are a good example. In contrast with their forerunner, the Millennium Development Goals, for which international organisations led indicator production, the SDGs opened this process to negotiation from nations and civil society groups most impacted by the SDGs' global agenda. This approach has its critics. Negotiations over indicators did not always result in consensus. The outcomes sometimes diluted aspirations and favoured certain players. However, a participatory approach may have salvaged the agenda's faltering legitimacy and even enriched the processes of both measurement and political debate. Several scholars have explored this topic (Bandola-Gill et al. 2022). The achievements they note should be built upon, while still considering their limitations.

### The colonial past informing the present

Opening a space for participatory number production does not mean it will be a level one. Not all nations have the resources to negotiate on an equal footing. Moreover, negotiations over indicators are situated within theories of development and technologies of ranking and measuring that have created and been reinforced by taken-for-granted, colonial concepts. Examples include concepts that temporally and geographically rank people according to imaginings of the West or Global South or as being “modern”, “traditional”, “underdeveloped” or “lagging”. Dipesh Chakrabarty notably questions this thinking: “Can the designation of something or some group as non-or premodern ever be anything but a gesture of the powerful?” (Chakrabarty 2002).

These concepts and categories create and are created by decisions of what to measure and are given authority through numerical representation. The ideas can quietly persist when the availability of existing numbers shapes contemporary indicator production. A more ethical approach to using numbers requires challenging these concepts and categories, whilst finding novel approaches to theorise global relationships that deconstruct colonial hierarchies.

### Recounting global problems with various forms of representation

Finally, when numbers are insufficient, non-numerical data should be used to fill in the gaps. Using images and personal testimony to recount India's environmental degradation, a 1982 report by the Centre for Science and Environment in New Delhi challenged the World Resource Institute's (WRI) official statistics. These were felt to systematically ignore certain perspectives. In this case, non-numerical data, the authority of which derived from personal experience, powerfully rivalled WRI numbers that rested on claims to objectivity, universality and neutrality (Jasanoff 2017).

Non-numerical representations are useful not just when the legitimacy of numbers fails, but as a rule of practice. The totality of global relations and phenomena cannot be represented exclusively by numbers. Whilst numbers do serve a valuable role in global governance, they have limitations. Using them better requires taking a more ethical approach to their production. It also requires acknowledging the value of a variety of perspectives and forms of representation.

→ Hilary F MacDonogh (@HFMacDonogh) is a Doctoral Candidate and Researcher at the University of Edinburgh, UK.

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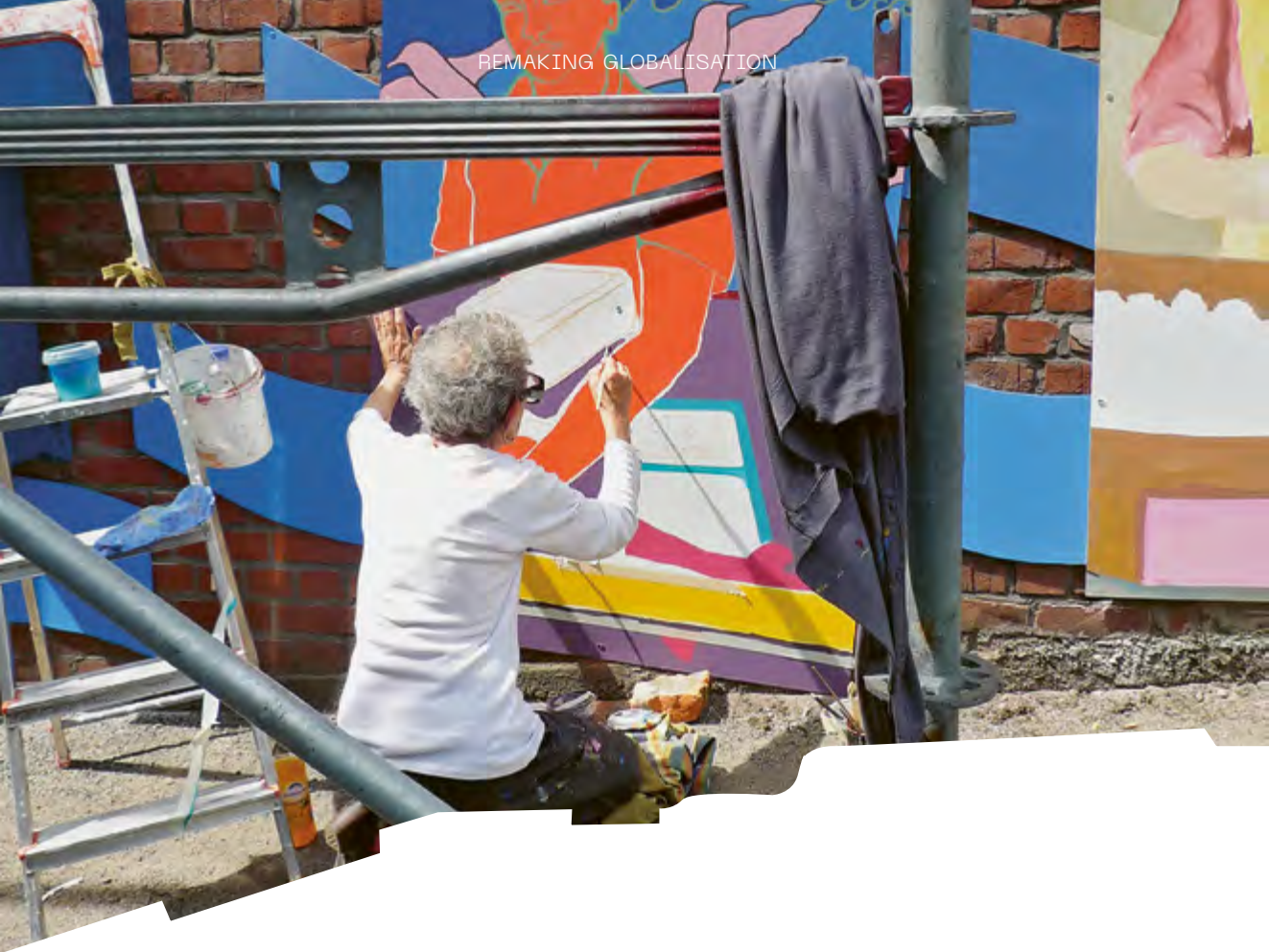
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# WOMEN WORKING AT THE PORT (1900–TODAY)

Take a walk along the FrauenFreiluftGalerie in Hamburg, the only open-air gallery in Germany that focuses on working women.



By showing how women have worked alongside men at the port for more than a century, the gallery challenges the still pervasive myth that ports are a man's world. Featuring works from a group of all-female artists, the exhibition traces the changing role of working women at the port of Hamburg from 1900 to the present day. The gallery is dedicated to all of the women who have worked both directly at the port in jobs such as fish filleting, logistics, cleaning and administration, as well as around the port as sex workers. It also sheds light on the working conditions of women in former colonies and the global inequalities that globalisation as we know it has created.

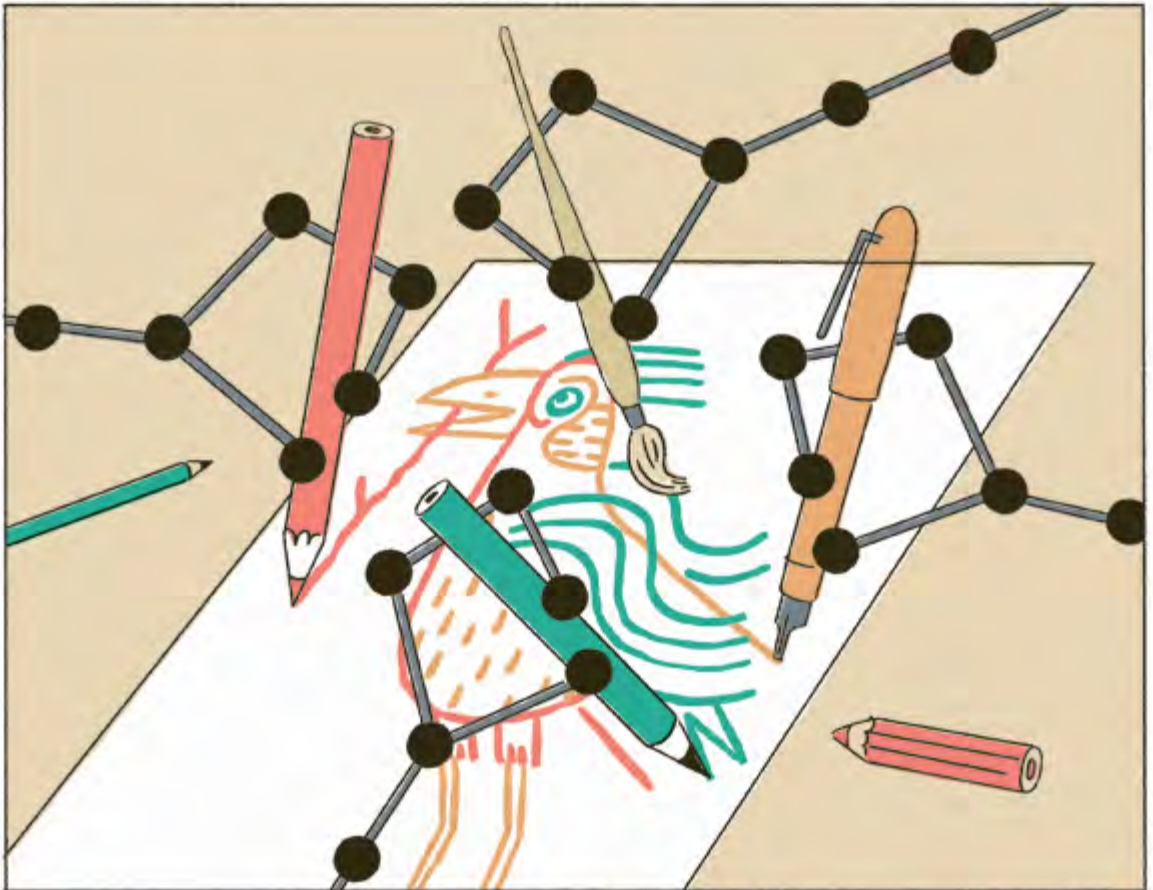
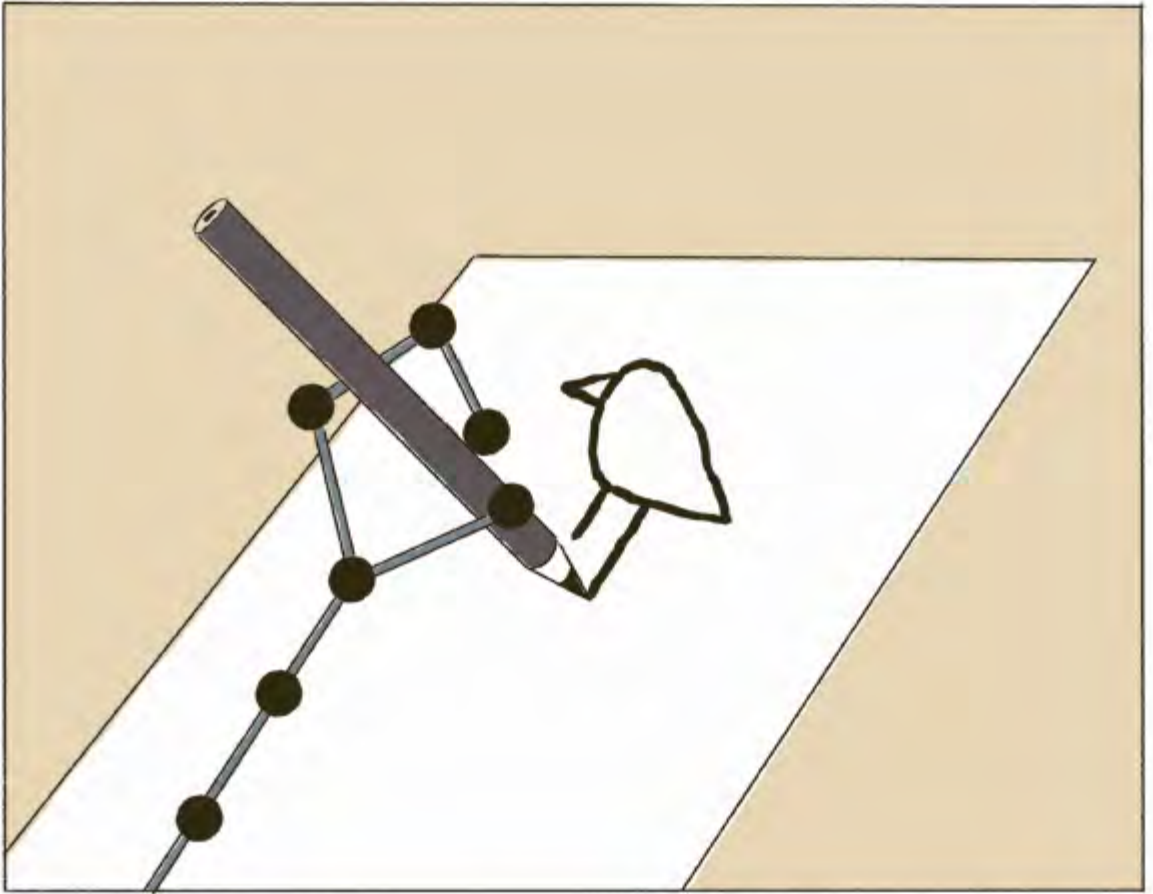
The FrauenFreiluftGalerie was established in 1994 and features 15 murals over a distance of around two kilometres along the north bank of Hamburg's Elbe river. The exhibition immerses visitors in an often-overlooked part of the port's history. As a critique of social inequalities, the gallery also serves as an important reminder to look behind stereotypes and acknowledge the "invisible", unrecognised and indispensable work of women that keeps the global economy running.



TAKE A WALK OR READ MORE ABOUT  
THE FRAUENFREILUFT-GALERIE AND ITS  
MURALS HERE: [κ](#)

LEFT: Mural: Strikers. Cecilia Herrero + Hildegund Schuster restoring the mural.

RIGHT: Mural: Hamburg – New York. On the scaffolding.



# WHY INTERSECTIONAL FEMINISM MATTERS FOR EQUAL GLOBAL DIGITALISATION

For equitable and sustainable digitalisation at a global scale, it is imperative to unravel the intricate relationship between technology, race and gender and to explore how Artificial Intelligence (AI) often perpetuates systems of exclusion and bias. If we want to promote inclusion, representation and accountability in our digital societies, we urgently need an intersectional feminist approach to AI development; we need to address the use of AI in sensitive sectors and to question the status quo.

TEXT: NETZFORMA\* E.V. –  
VEREIN FÜR FEMINISTISCHE NETZPOLITIK

## Technological fixes for a better future?

Technology, race and gender have always been intertwined. Technology can reinforce existing stereotypes, but it can also provide opportunities to break free from them. It's all about crucial feminist demands: access and action. Access is always dependent on material and immaterial resources. As is well known, these are unequally distributed, a fact which is starkly reflected in the infinitely small number of non-white non-cis men involved in the IT industry. This is particularly the case for in the development of "Artificial Intelligence" (AI). Moreover, AI applications to date have relied on learning datasets that under-represent women and marginalised groups. This means they are less about predicting the future and more about reinforcing the past and the structures of discrimination found in existing data. Acting or shaping from an intersectional feminist perspective therefore means questioning existing frameworks of action and envisioning a future that values diversity and plurality as cornerstones for societal development.

Technologies often perpetuate existing systems of exclusion, reinforcing gender stereotypes and biases. AI facial recognition, for instance, often fails with women of darker skin tones due to incomplete training datasets. Voice assistants further reinforce gender stereotypes, with female voices portraying submissive roles in daily interactions. In the US context, language recognition

systems work better for White Americans, with a much lower error rate than for Black Americans. This is no accident – it results from normative decision-making by those who write the code. Intersectional feminism therefore calls for inclusivity, addressing bias and discrimination, enhancing representation and fostering transparency and accountability in AI development.

AI and machine learning algorithms are also used outside the “consumer realm”, such as in government decisions. For example, in Austria, the labour market opportunity model has been used to decide which people should receive particular welfare benefits (the programme is currently on hold). In Germany, work is underway on a personalised, predictive policing tool to predict criminal offences. The Federal Office for Migration and Refugees in Germany uses a language analysis tool that claims it can detect a person’s citizenship by analysing a “dialect”. Moreover, at the Berlin Südkreuz railway station, the German Federal Police has tested facial recognition programmes for possible crime-fighting purposes. These have been widely criticised. Nevertheless, such systems have long been used at Europe’s external borders.

#### Who is writing the code?

Bundled as Big Data, traditional systems of exclusion are implicitly translated into code. In addition, the commodities extracted under old colonial hierarchies – the raw materials from the Global South, some of which are extracted under inhumane conditions – reach the Global North cheaply for use in the tech industry. Politics and corporations are often tightly interconnected: the internet has almost been monopolised by prominent proprietary players in Silicon Valley. They naturally pursue their own interest in pushing their technologies into the Global South, instead of strengthening local initiatives to meet local needs.

ChatGPT, as a recent example, is no exception. The developers have taken great care to ensure it is a system that does not reproduce sexism or racism. However, this feature came at a high price. Low-paid employees in the Global South were required to manually report back to the system when it reproduced discriminatory or violent content. The workers did so by screening precisely this kind of harmful material. In simple terms: without training or support, these low-paid individuals spent all day looking at violent, racist and sexist suggestions from the system and then tagging those suggestions so that it would no longer reproduce them.

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**“Addressing bias and discrimination requires prioritising the evaluation of training data and implementing ethical decision-making processes.”**



Does the internet really have a “father”? It is often said that Vint Cerf gave life to the Internet – an almost biblical comparison. Hardly anyone talks about Ada Lovelace, the real “mother” of the Internet, if you will. And what about personalities such as Grace Hopper, Mary Allen Wilkes and Katherine Johnson? Don’t know them already? Go on, catch up, check them out!

### What we demand

Addressing bias and discrimination requires prioritising the evaluation of training data and implementing ethical decision-making processes. Enhancing representation means encouraging diversity in AI development teams and creating inclusive environments. In AI development, transparency and accountability are essential to understanding decision-making processes and to holding developers accountable for any adverse effects. Data Feminism also aims to challenge power dynamics within AI development and empower underrepresented groups by creating opportunities for their participation.

An intersectional feminist approach to AI development is, therefore, crucial for achieving equitable digitalisation globally. Policymakers, industry leaders and researchers must collaborate to ensure fair and ethical AI systems, bringing about a future where AI enhances lives and strengthens global digital equity.

Furthermore, there is a need for a broad social discourse that examines the use of AI, especially in sensitive areas of society such as law enforcement, the military and healthcare. Decisions should be made about the sectors in which AI should generally not be used because the risks are too high. The question of a comprehensible *modus operandi* for the application of AI must also be addressed. Should machines be the ones to make decisions? Or should they only provide recommendations to guide people? And does that work? Current studies indicate that the widely held trust in the “human in the loop” is misplaced, because humans rarely decide against the supposed omniscience of machines.

So, what might be a possible solution? How much power do we concede to machines without seriously understanding how decisions are actually made by them?

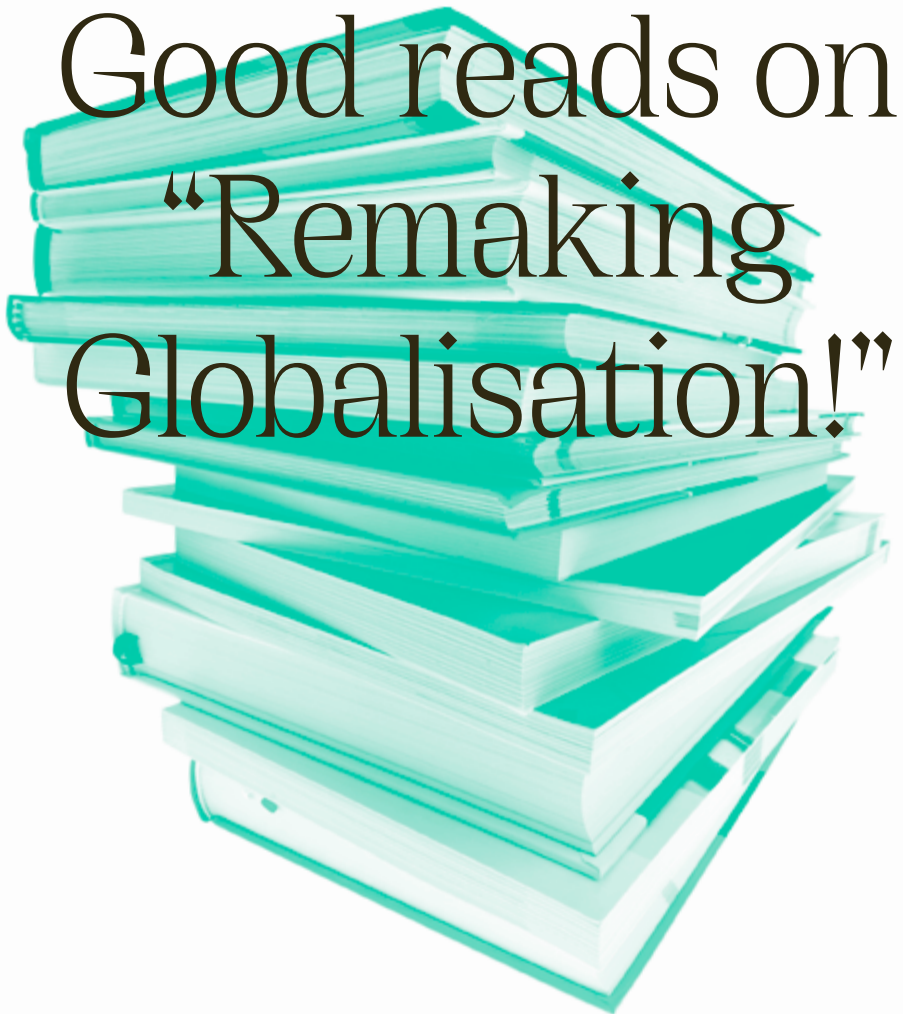
Technology alone will not solve the social challenges we encounter. Let’s look at systems of discrimination and exclusion that are also designed to reinforce existing power structures. What we need is a broad social discourse and the willingness to redistribute privileges and critically examine the status quo. This is the only way to initiate an equal and sustainable digital future.

→ netzforma\* e.V. – Verein für feministische Netzpolitik (@netzforma\_ev) puts its intersectional feminist focus on Internet policy issues such as access to and participation in the internet, Big Data, data protection, algorithms and artificial intelligence.

READ MORE ABOUT AI AND FEMINIST  
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# Good reads on “Remaking Globalisation!”



## RECOMMENDED BY BKHS STAFF

**AUTHOR:** Bernadine Evaristo  
**TITLE:** *Girl, woman, other*  
**Pages:** 464, **Published:** 2020,  
**Publisher:** Penguin Books Ltd

“*Girl, Woman, Other*” is a novel that explores the interconnected stories of twelve Black British women. The book celebrates the diverse experiences of Black women in Britain, challenging traditional notions of identity. One of the most impactful ideas conveyed is the power of community and solidarity. Many of the characters are isolated and marginalised, but they find strength and support in their connections with others. Evaristo thus emphasises the importance of building and maintaining meaningful relationships. All in all, “*Girl, Woman, Other*” is a thought-provoking and powerful novel that challenges readers to rethink their preconceptions about identity and community.



Uta works for the Communications and Media Department at BKHS.

**AUTHOR:** Robin Wall Kimmerer  
**TITLE:** Braiding sweetgrass: indigenous wisdom, scientific knowledge and the teachings of plants  
**Pages:** 408, **Published:** 2015,  
**Publisher:** Milkweed Editions

Scientific and indigenous ways of knowing are often presented as being mutually incompatible. But Robin Wall Kimmerer – a professor of environmental biology and member of the Citizen Potawatomi Nation, a Native American tribe – weaves together both scientific and indigenous knowledge as she challenges us to rethink the relationship between humans and the environment. In a collection of richly told essays about personal stories, the author illustrates what plants and other living beings can teach us. The book makes a plea to understand the earth as a gift, but above all serves as a reminder that our relationship with the rest of the living world is reciprocal. The book is a timely one, with the climate crisis threatening habitats and underlining that climate action can no longer be postponed.



**Kirsten** is a Research Assistant in the project “Global Expert Group on Conflict Resolution and Peacebuilding”, organised by BKHS and Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung.

**AUTHOR:** Philippe Sands  
**TITLE:** East west street. On the origins of genocide and crimes against humanity  
**Pages:** 464, **Published:** 2016,  
**Publisher:** Weidenfeld & Nicolson

East West Street is not a thriller – but the powerful book on the origins of international justice certainly reads like one. Sands tells the story of two Jewish lawyers, Hersch Lauterpacht and Raphael Lemkin, whose experience of the Holocaust led them to create the legal concepts of genocide and crimes against humanity in the lead-up to the Nuremberg trials. Their ideas have had global resonance and have led to the prosecution of crimes in Bosnia, Rwanda and Sudan. Russia’s brutal war against Ukraine and China’s human rights violations in Xinjiang today can make it feel like a new era of impunity is on the rise in which international law can be safely ignored. This makes Sands’ extraordinary book about how and why an international legal framework came into being in the first place all the more important.



**Julia** heads the “European and International Politics” Programme at BKHS and co-edits the BKHS Magazine.

**AUTHOR:** Pankaj Mishra  
**TITEL:** From the ruins of empire: the intellectuals who remade Asia  
**Pages:** 356, **Published:** 2012,  
**Publisher:** Farrar, Straus & Giroux, New York

By focusing on the new approaches taken by a range of less well-known Asian intellectuals, the Indian-born essayist and public intellectual Pankaj Mishra provides an insightful and controversial account of how China, India and Muslim countries are remaking the world. Mishra recounts how Asia experienced and responded to Western imperialism and offers an intriguing challenge to Eurocentric perspectives. The vivid description of the ferocities of the Opium Wars – in particular how the West used military force to coerce China into importing a highly addictive drug – is likely to remain with the reader for a long time.



**Eva** heads the “Democracy and Society” Programme at BKHS and is a Research Fellow at the University of Mainz in Germany. She co-edits the BKHS Magazine.

**AUTHOR:** Malcom X, Alex Haley  
**TITLE:** The autobiography of Malcom X  
**Pages:** 466, Published: 2015,  
**Publisher:** Ballantine Books

In his autobiography, Malcolm X recounts his experiences as minister and spokesman for the Nation of Islam, his relationship with its leader Elijah Muhammad and his advocacy for Black empowerment and separatism. The book provides a deeply personal account of Malcolm X's evolving political and ideological beliefs. As he experiences personal growth and expands his worldview, Malcolm X becomes critical of the Nation of Islam's teachings and shifts towards a more inclusive and humane understanding of race relations. He undertakes a transformative pilgrimage to Mecca that further broadens his perspectives on Islam and racial unity. Malcolm X had a significant impact on civil rights activism, Black consciousness and the broader discussions on race and social justice. He continues to inspire and provoke critical reflections on issues of racial identity, discrimination and the search for liberation.



Isra is a Student Assistant at BKHS and a Master's student in Governance and Human Rights.

**AUTHOR:** Stéphane Hessel  
**TITLE:** The power of indignation. The autobiography of the man who inspired the Arab Spring.  
**Pages:** 272, Published: 2012,  
**Publisher:** Skyhorse Publishing

Following his international bestseller "Indignez-vous!" (translated into English as "Time for Outrage!"), Stéphane Hessel uses his autobiography to offer us a glimpse into what drove him throughout his life. After escaping from the Buchenwald concentration camp, Hessel joined the French diplomatic service at the United Nations in New York, where he worked on the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the global development agenda. The book not only convincingly conveys the founding spirit and high hopes of the early years of the UN, it also illustrates Hessel's belief in the power of democratic order, his tireless commitment to the protection of human rights and the interpersonal relations that can make a difference. Amidst violent conflicts, rising global inequality and the demands for political action today, Hessel's book is a reminder that we should not lose hope.



Alisa manages the escape game "Unlock Europe", a joint project by BKHS and the Institute for Peace Research and Security Policy at the University of Hamburg.

**AUTHOR:** Johny Pitts  
**TITLE:** Afropean. Notes from Black Europe.  
**Pages:** 416, Published: 2020,  
**Publisher:** Penguin Books Ltd

Writer and photographer Johny Pitts takes the reader on a journey through the metropolises of Europe in search of an "Afropean" culture. Pitts illuminates Black Europe with individual stories about the forging of new identities that sit between belonging and rejection. What does it mean to be an Afropean for the different protagonists? The journey is also one relevant to the author's own identity and he shares his struggles, emotions and beliefs. Taking an approach that is inspiring, humane, curious and



Lisa is a Student Assistant at BKHS and a Master's student in Public History.

thoughtful, Pitts documents Blackness as an element that has always shaped Europe's identity, even though this fact has largely been ignored by the continent's white population. When we think of the future, we always have to rethink the present. This book reminded me that many answers and visions to questions about the future already exist. People in power need to learn to listen and remain silent to allow marginalised people to tell their story. Their struggles and visions shape our future.

**AUTHOR:** Rebecca Solnit

**TITLE:** *Orwell's roses*

**Pages:** 320, **Published:** 2022,

**Publisher:** Granta Publications, London

In "Orwell's Roses", Rebecca Solnit illustrates an aspect of George Orwell's life that has hitherto gone unnoticed - his passion for his natural surroundings and how it intertwined with his political thought. The book explores the refuge that we can find in nature, despite feelings of helplessness in a harrowing political reality. By drawing connections between the personal and the political, Solnit pays tribute to the mundane as a source of strength and resistance. Along with the brutalities of wars in the 20th century, the destruction caused by modern rose production and the erosion of personal freedoms present in Orwell's work, Solnit draws a picture of hope. She reminds us that we need to be vigilant about the challenges posed by globalisation and makes a compelling argument in favour of the importance of individual connections.



**Raja Albers** is a Student Assistant at BKHS and a Master's student in Human Security.

**AUTHOR:** Thomas Pogge

**TITLE:** *World Poverty and Human*

**Rights:** *Cosmopolitan Responsibilities and Reforms*, 2nd, expanded edition

**Pages:** 304, **Published:** 2008,

**Publisher:** Cambridge, Polity Press

When thinking of poverty, many people in the Global North become compassionate. They mourn the current situation or engage in charity. Only a very few people, however, think of severe poverty as a massive human rights violation that is perpetrated first and foremost by affluent countries that have a massive impact on the rules that shape our international order. Thomas Pogge's book makes a convincing argument for this viewpoint and outlines solutions to the problem. He argues for institutional reforms at the international level and proposes new tools such as a global resource dividend and a Health Impact Fund. This book proves people are wrong if they assume that philosophy can be neither compelling nor hands-on.



**Tobias** is a Research Assistant for the "Global Markets and Social Justice" Programme at BKHS. He is also writing his doctoral thesis on intellectual history.

# One wish for the future

TEXT: OÉCILE BUSCHE

A little food for thought on mindful globalisation:

When you see a bee, how do you react?

- A. You back off because you're scared.
- B. You thank her for being a superb pollinator.
- C. There are no bees.

When was the last time you felt the grass beneath the naked soles of your feet?

- A. You always wear shoes.
- B. This morning.
- C. There's no time.

How would you describe your relationship to nature?

- A. Nature must bend to your rules.
- B. You feel deeply connected.
- C. You don't care.

If you tend towards B, there is hope. Fear and indifference won't help to save our world. A different mindset is essential: a conscious approach to life.

My wish is for my children and children all over the world to treasure our planet, to question what they need and to share. I want them to teach their parents, CEOs, shareholders and policymakers that we humans are responsible for safeguarding our nature.

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The third issue of our *BKHS Magazine* presents concrete ideas for **remaking globalisation** for the better. With this ambitious goal in mind, we invited a wide range of contributors with expertise and experience in everything from academia, public policy and the media, through to activism and the arts. By bringing together different perspectives and approaches, the *BKHS Magazine* is supporting the transformation towards a more sustainable and equitable globalised world.

The Bundeskanzler-Helmut-Schmidt-Stiftung (BKHS) commemorates one of the most important 20th-century German statesmen. As a future-oriented think tank, it addresses issues that also interested Schmidt. Three overarching programmes are at the heart of the foundation's work programme: 1) European and International Politics, 2) Global Markets and Social Justice and 3) Democracy and Society.

Closely meshed with these programmes, the permanent exhibition "Schmidt! Living democracy" in Hamburg's city centre reflects almost half a century of German and international contemporary history. It places the achievements of its namesake in current and

historical context. In the Helmut Schmidt-Archiv in Hamburg's Langenhorn neighbourhood, the foundation makes the private documents of Schmidt and his wife Loki available to researchers and grants the public access to the Schmidts' former private home.

The foundation was established in 2017 by the German Bundestag as one of seven non-partisan foundations commemorating politicians. It is supported by the Federal Government Commissioner for Culture and the Media.

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