

# The multiplex age: pluralism and connectivity beyond multipolarity

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## Call for Papers

The concept of “multiplexity”<sup>1</sup> has garnered attention as a lens onto complex and cross-cutting, if not necessarily competing, international orders and globalisms. Multiplexity shifts the terms of analysis away from Eurocentric—and great power-centric—models of multipolarity, as well as Western-centric notions of “liberal international order.” The frame, as such, helps to decenter while simultaneously anchoring a cogent conversation between analysts with diverse expertise.<sup>2</sup> The goal: relational learning across multiple but interconnected perspectives.<sup>3</sup>

Against traditional models of unipolarity, bipolarity, and multipolarity, multiplexity alerts us to the plurality of actors and forces in the contemporary world. These include but are not limited to regional and international institutions; workers, banks and corporations; activists and social movements; criminals and terrorist networks. These actors’ interactions and impacts are transforming our world in an age of transformative technologies and climate change, where our collective stakes as humanity arguably have never been as high. Yet, our ability to communicate and empathize across perspectives is at a rather dismal low. In other words, proliferating empirical instances of multiplexity demand a systematic examination of the concept’s analytic possibilities and limitations. By assessing the ontological, epistemological, ethical, and methodological potential of multiplexity, we aim to gather papers for an edited collection that will serve as a key reference point for students of planetary politics, international relations, and global development, helping to assess these fields’ evolution and trajectory.

We ask workshop contributors to consider the following or related questions:

- Ontologically/epistemologically, what does multiplexity tell us about outstanding developments in arenas like global and regional governance, international relations and foreign policy, economic (inter-)dependence and (post-)development? In what ways does its usage shift our understanding vis-à-vis more traditional notions of polarity and ordering?
- What methodological tools can we channel or innovate towards capturing multiplexity at work? How does the use of such tools shift our understanding vis-à-vis more traditional approaches? With what implications for scholarly and applied practices?

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<sup>1</sup> Acharya, Amitav. "After Liberal Hegemony: The Advent of a Multiplex World Order." *Ethics & International Affairs* 31, no. 3 (2017): 271-285.

<sup>2</sup> Fisher-Onar Nora and Kalypso Nicolaïdis. "The Decentering Agenda: Europe as a post-colonial power." *Cooperation and Conflict* 48, no. 2 (2013): 283-303.

<sup>3</sup> Fisher-Onar, Nora, and Emilian Kavalski. "From Trans-Atlantic Order to Afro-Eur-Asian Worlds? Reimagining International Relations as Interlocking Regional Worlds." *Global Studies Quarterly* 2, no. 4 (2022): ksac080.

- What ethical considerations attend to operationalizing analysis via a multiplex lens? How do these compare with the normative thrust of more traditional notions of polarity or ordering? With what implications for scholarly and applied practices?
- What can we learn by reading regional dynamics through a multiplex lens? How does a multiplex approach impact our understanding of putatively “non-Western” regions like Africa, Asia, Latin America, the Middle East and Oceania, their relationships, and their constitutive force in global dynamics? Of global North- and South-hood? Of Euro- among other forms of centrism?