

Inequality

magazine

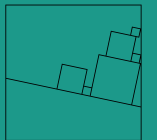
N°3

Universität
Konstanz



Global Perspectives on Inequality

Cluster of Excellence
The Politics of Inequality



In_equality magazine

Global Perspectives on Inequality

*Research Magazine of the
Cluster of Excellence
“The Politics of Inequality”
at the University of Konstanz*

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Claudia Diehl is Professor of Microsociology at the University of Konstanz and Co-Speaker of the Cluster.

Nils B. Weidmann is Professor of Comparative Politics of Non-Democratic States at the University of Konstanz and Co-Speaker of the Cluster.

Editorial

DEAR READERS

Inequality is a global problem. It manifests itself worldwide, for countless people, groups and regions, and in various forms. That is why, in this issue of our *In_equality magazine*, we want to highlight inequality from a global perspective and use ongoing Cluster research to illustrate our approach. By "global" we mean, on the one hand, studying inequality in regions and groups that rarely make the headlines in our daily news. But "global" also means that we look at trends in inequality around the world and how its perception changes over time and space, and what these changes may imply.

As with many things in academia, much of our research is "work in progress," and the articles in this issue are a case in point. Doing field research in the social sciences often means devoting a lot of time and energy to conceptualization and data collection, and this is true of our projects as well. These "tales from the lab" illustrate how project teams in the field navigate around difficulties and respond to unexpected situations until they can begin to analyze and publish their findings.

At the same time, methodological diversity in data collection is also one of our great strengths, especially for research in and about the "Global South." Collaboration with local organizations is key when conducting interviews and surveys. In other cases,

we draw on alternative data sources such as satellite imagery of night lights. Still other projects focus on digital sources and social media, using the internet to understand how inequality figures in the communication of political groups on the other side of the globe.

The collection of diverse and sometimes very large datasets is supported by our Methods and Data Hub. This is where initial data sets from Cluster research are made available to the public—in the spirit of our Open Science Policy—in a data repository set up specifically for this purpose. To this end we are working closely with the GESIS Leibniz Institute for the Social Sciences in Mannheim.

Moreover, we are filled with excitement and anticipation as we approach our largest scientific event to date: the 2022 *In_equality Conference*, to take place on 06–08 April. The response to our call for papers was overwhelming, making it extremely difficult to choose from 600 excellent submissions. Our program is attractive, featuring 60 scientific presentations, an opening lecture and panel discussion with Steffen Mau, and keynote lectures by Stefanie Stantcheva, Catherine de Vries and Jason Stanley. We hope to welcome many of our guests in person, but also offer a hybrid format to enable virtual participation in the full scientific program.

See you in April—preferably here at the lake, or at least online! /

Yours
MARIUS R. BUSEMEYER,
CLAUDIA DIEHL &
NILS B. WEIDMANN

Forming hypotheses before doing fieldwork is a necessity. When the situation on the ground turns out different than expected, however, this may result in entirely new and enticing directions for research.



Here, the authors tell the story of a *de- and reconstruction of a research project* in the field.

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TALES FROM THE LAB

From research to re-research: *A tale from the field*

(A. Asri, V. Asri, A. Hoeffler)

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In a large-scale field experiment in rural India in collaboration with a social enterprise, we planned to examine whether and how the presence of female “social entrepreneurs” can impact female empowerment, in terms of changing the behavior of women and the attitudes of members of society in the Indian rural context.

After literature reviews, secondary data analysis, project planning, and many online meetings with a partner organization, in October 2021 we were eager to start our field work and data collection in India. The research plan (following a qualitative research phase) was to examine quantitatively how women decide to work as social entrepreneurs who facilitate citizens’ access to social welfare schemes and hence can improve the financial situation of many households.

Building on this data, the idea was to use a large-scale field experiment to assess the impact of female social entrepreneurs on the prevailing rigid gender norms. The main idea was that by enhancing the living situation of members of their communities, the female social entrepreneurs would not only gain respect for themselves, but also inspire other women to take up more empowered roles and change how people think about women’s role in society.

Everything seemed to be interesting and convincing on paper. However, once we were in Delhi, our meetings with field staff and other organizations who had been working with social entrepreneurs in the previous years informed us that the ground realities did not match our expectations. Many of the successful female social entrepreneurs had already been empowered when they started working as social entrepreneurs. So they did not “get empowered” while working as social entrepreneurs. Also, our expectation that they become aware of the opportunity, reflect on it and then decide to work as social entrepreneurs did not match what happened in most cases on the ground. Instead, many women who became social entrepreneurs were suggested by local leaders such as village heads or local government members. They were already known for being available for this type of work—and because they were on the radar of local leaders, they were already empowered.

We encountered another discrepancy between our expectations and the situation in the field. Women who were partly recruited through other channels, such as self-help groups or NGOs, struggled with the task of a social entrepreneur for various reasons. Due to prevailing rigid gender norms, they might be → re-

↓ Not the norm in rural areas of India: employed women



In many parts of the world, rigid gender norms constrain women’s choices, in terms of not pursuing preferred career objectives and not taking up economic opportunities. This contributes to gender-based economic and social inequalities. The United Nations have identified this obstacle to achieving equality and development. The UN’s High Level Panel on Women’s Economic Development has called for “tackling adverse norms and promoting positive role models” as one of seven “drivers of transformation.” When women start bending dominant gender norms and act as role models, they can inspire other women in their communities to take up opportunities and contribute to changing people’s views on women’s role in society.



Ankush Asri is a postdoctoral researcher at the Department of Economics at the University of Konstanz and at the Thurgau Institute of Economics (TWI).



Viola Asri is a postdoctoral researcher at the Department of Economics at the University of Konstanz and at the Thurgau Institute of Economics (TWI), and a PI at the Cluster.



Anke Hoeffler is Professor of Development Research at the University of Konstanz and a PI at the Cluster.

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stricted in their mobility, and it might be difficult for them to interact with many different households they do not know. And when they supported extremely poor households or people close to them, it was difficult for them to charge what they were supposed to charge. This reduced even further the already low compensation received by the social entrepreneurs. Even if households could pay the fee, they might lack trust in this new model of receiving support from a social entrepreneur and were hesitant to pay even a small fee in advance for an uncertain outcome.

As we gained these insights into the realities on the ground, studying self-selection into working as a social entrepreneur became less interesting and less relevant. Further, we needed to reconsider to what extent the larger field experiment would make sense if successful social entrepreneurs either seemed to be already known for being more empowered, or only did the social entrepreneur work for a short time due to the challenges described above.

In this situation, while being demotivated after all the preparation put into the project, we had to face the fact: things did not work out as planned. Nevertheless, we were determined to continue our work on female empowerment and agents of social change. In numerous meetings with different stakeholders we discovered potential agents of social change in many other spheres. Examples range from successful working women who can inspire adolescent girls to pursue their objectives to adolescents who promote gender equality in their communities. Last but not least, there are men who support women's agency actively, for instance by expressing a preference for working wives in the Indian marriage market which partly takes place online as families post profiles online to arrange marriages.

While revising our research plans we continue working with agents of social change such as these. The main idea is to either expose others directly to the change agents, or to promote existing ones. We are currently developing one part of the project in which we are asking whether exposing secondary school students to successful working women can increase their aspirations, motivate them to continue their education, and finally help them to pursue their professional objectives. In a second part of the project we are going to work on adolescent peer leaders who promote gender equality in their communities. We will try to understand how to

↓ The next generation could see a slow transformation of gender norms.



nudge more adolescents (both male and female) to become peer leaders, keep them engaged, and increase the effectiveness of their work. In a third project we examine the role of India's arranged marriage market potentially influencing female labor force participation. The social norm has been that women are solely responsible for household chores and childcare, and it has been shown that the online market for arranged marriages punishes women who signal that they want to work after marriage. But we will examine to what extent women in the marriage market respond to men signaling their wishes for or against a working spouse. It may be that individual men who support their wives in pursuing professional careers will yet contribute to slowly changing the gender norms.

Our female empowerment projects have undergone many changes—stay tuned for further updates! /

WIDE ANGLE

Progress and stagnation.

Regional changes in ethnic inequality

(N. Bormann)

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Nils-Christian Bormann opens up multiple aspects of ethnic inequality within states. Together with colleagues from Germany and Switzerland, he is looking for *regional differences in ethnic inequalities, and how they can be accounted for.*

Differences in economic wellbeing or discriminating treatment by state officials based on linguistic, religious, or racial characteristics are all too common across the globe. The systemic racism against African Americans in the United States has probably gained most headlines over the last two years. Less reported developments, like the attempts to disenfranchise Muslims in India, or the diverging economic fortunes between the Tonga and Shona speakers in Mozambique, are among the vast number of cases in which ethnic groups suffer from political underrepresentation and lower average income. These types of inequality contribute to various harmful outcomes, such as economic underdevelopment, democratic breakdown, and bad governance—as well as ethnic civil war. They not only undermine the normative ideal of an equality of opportunity, but in the long run threaten the stability of states and even entire regions.

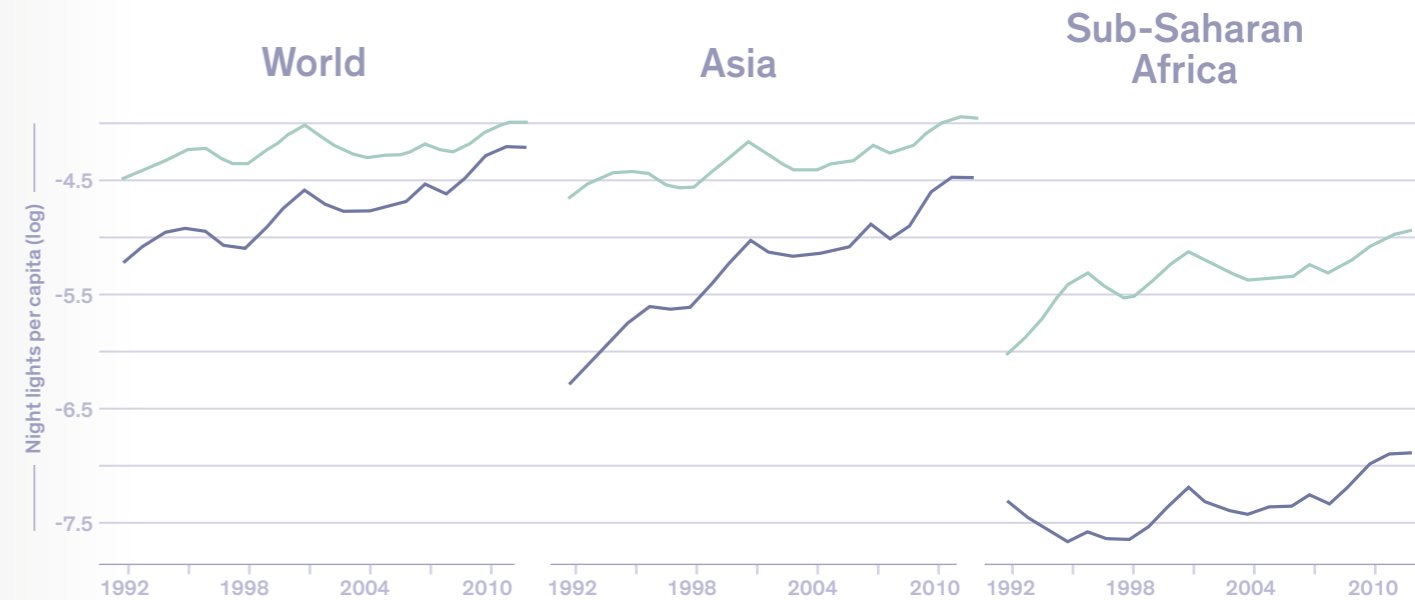


Figure 1: Ethnic inequality by region
Wealth inequality, as measured by night light emissions, between politically included and politically excluded ethnic groups

● included
● excluded

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Ethnic economic inequality

Most research so far has been pessimistic about the alleviation of group-based inequalities; group-based economic inequalities are seen as persistent and closely connected to racism dating back centuries. However, a joint investigation with scholars from the University of Konstanz, ETH Zürich, and Witten/Herdecke University yields some hopeful insights. Using satellite images measuring night light emissions as a proxy for economic activity (for more information, see G. Theunissen, N. B. Weidmann: “Examined by Light,” *In_equality magazine* 02, pages 16–21) we analyzed group inequality on a global scale and over time, from 1992 to 2012. Our particular interest lay in inequality in the settlement territories of different ethnic groups within the same state.

Going through all our data, we were surprised to find that, globally speaking, ethnic inequality seems to be on the decline—with

the marked exception of Sub-Saharan Africa, where it is increasing (see Figure 1).

When looking for answers to why inequality trends in Asian and African states differ so much, we believe one has to look at the capacity of states in redistributing gains from (globalized) trade. Globalization resulted in welfare gains for millions of people that were lifted out of poverty. Yet these gains from trade were unequally distributed. In some states, they were distributed only to groups closely associated with government leaders, whereas in other countries all groups benefitted, sometimes especially the economically backward ones. State capacity explains this difference. Strong institutions can curb the worst excesses of ethnic favoritism—i.e. the redistribution of resources to coethnics—, and allow governments to aid ethnic minorities living in economically backward regions. Institutions in Asian states have been more capable to do so than in Sub-Saharan Africa. →

Ethnic political inequality

Another important consideration was whether ethnic groups were included or excluded from central government institutions, an important area of research for political scientists. Differences in representation affect economic group inequality, but they also have direct negative consequences: they inhibit democratization and increase the risk of civil war.

Political scientists have long discussed institutional interventions such as reserved seats for minorities in parliaments, electoral redistricting that disproportionately benefits minorities, and even guaranteed cabinet representation with veto rights over sensitive policy areas as a remedy to political inequalities between ethnic groups. Yet such rules have not always lived up to their promises. More generally, democratic institutions hardly have a better track record than authoritarian regimes in addressing power differentials between ethnic groups.

Yet similar to economic trends, political inequality in the form of government representation of ethnic minorities has declined since the end of the Cold War. Different measures of ethnic political inequality all point in the same direction. Figure 2 displays the frequency of multiethnic coalitions (dark bars) as well as the frequency of years in which

countries have been ruled by representatives of more than one ethnic groups (light bars) during and after the Cold War. Both measures show clear improvements in ethnic representation before and after 1990. The greatest strides towards equality have been made in Sub-Saharan Africa, where many governments became far less exclusive after the end of the Cold War. In contrast, governments in Northern Africa and the Middle East have hardly improved on their high levels of ethnic exclusion and discrimination since 1990.

Two explanations account for this dynamic towards greater political equality after the Cold War. The more benign telling highlights how the end of superpower rivalry lifted the stalemate in the United Nations Security Council (UNSC). As a result, the UNSC dispatched many peacekeeping missions, especially in Sub-Saharan Africa. These missions ended ongoing violent conflicts, prevented some new ones, and established more inclusive governments. As power-sharing agreements backed by UN peacekeepers spread, political inequality between ethnic groups declined. An alternative perspective is based on power politics: the end of the Cold War cut off superpower military and financial support of highly exclusive governments. Without the resources to defend themselves against domestic opposition groups, these governments had to broaden their popular base by including leaders from other ethnic groups into their ruling coalitions. Rather than risk being overthrown in elections or violent conflicts, leaders form larger coalitions to ensure their own survival in office.

Whether the global trend towards more ethnic equality holds remains to be seen. Renewed global competition for influence between a rising China and the United States might reverse the development. /

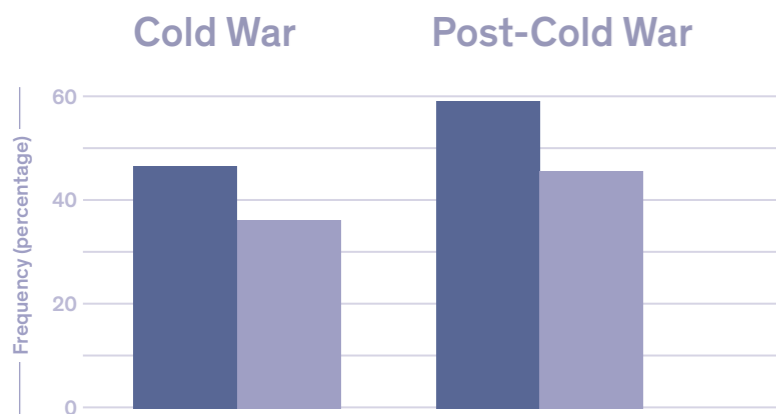


Figure 2: How often do different ethnic groups engage in a coalition?

- coalitions
- coalition-years



Nils-Christian Bormann is Professor of International Political Studies at Witten-Herdecke University. He was External Senior Fellow at the Cluster in 2021.

TALES FROM THE LAB

Mentors showing the way: *Setting up an educational experiment in Colombia*

(S. Fehrer, U. Fischbacher, A. Hochleitner, G. Schwerdt)

The coronavirus pandemic has opened some avenues of research to social scientists, while others have been much delayed. Undeterred by being among the latter, the authors have finally implemented a program to investigate whether *individual mentoring by university students* can better the educational and career prospects of disadvantaged youths in Bogotá, Colombia.

In many low- and middle-income countries, children from less wealthy families struggle with the transition from school to employment in the formal sector. This is a major cause of economic inequality over the life course. One such country is Colombia. In Bogotá, Colombia's largest city and capital, almost half of the working-age population are employed in the informal sector, with most of them living in the poorer parts of the city. Students from public schools in these neighborhoods may often lack parental help with school work—but, and this is equally importantly, they also lack role models to inspire and assist them to escape poverty through higher educational and work aspirations.

What can be done to alleviate family disadvantages for adolescent Colombians? Recent evidence for developed countries shows that disadvantaged students benefit greatly from the participation in one-to-one mentoring programs in terms of skill development and labor market orientation. Arguably, mentoring programs might be even more beneficial in the context of a developing country with a substantial share of high school graduates transitioning to jobs in the informal sector. But so far there is no evidence on the effectiveness of mentoring programs in developing countries in general, and in Colombia in particular. →

From the initial idea into the field

There is a large variety of projects that target children and adolescents in Colombia. However, they typically do not include a one-to-one mentoring component. Inspired by existing programs in Germany and the U.S., we decided to start our own. To this end, we teamed up with researchers from Colombia. Together we developed the idea of building up a mentoring program for disadvantaged adolescents in Bogotá, called “MÁS ALLÁ DE ONCE” (“Beyond 11th Grade”).

The idea of our program is simple: through the program, disadvantaged adolescents establish regular contact to a university student who takes over the role of a mentor. This way, the program broadens the social network of the mentees. The goal is to establish a relationship based on trust, and to offer program members support in setting goals for their life beyond high school—as well as in defining the necessary steps to achieve those goals. For this purpose, mentors and mentees are supposed to meet regularly on a one-to-one basis for about a year during a crucial phase of the mentee’s life: the year before the centralized Colombian high school exit exam, the SABER 11 test.

The program will be accompanied by a scientific evaluation of its effectiveness. The key to identify causal effects is randomized admission to the program. To this end, we follow common practice and allocate places in our oversubscribed

program based on an admission lottery. In total, we aim for around 600 students across three cohorts of high school graduates. Students in our study will either be admitted or not admitted to the program. Because of the random allocation of places in the program, we can directly evaluate its effectiveness by comparing average future outcomes in the admitted and non-admitted groups. Our main outcome variables to assess the program’s effectiveness are the student’s SABER 11 scores, aspirations, psychological well-being, and soft skills. We also look into several medium-term outcomes, such as tertiary education choices.

Preparations for the program started in spring 2018. The first crucial step was to establish relationships with local partners. Several months and many meetings later, we successfully started a collaboration with Fe y Alegría (Faith and Joy), a partner organization of Caritas Switzerland that administers several public schools in Bogotá. They not only allowed us to advertise the program in their schools, but also became a crucial partner for the whole project. Importantly, one of their school pedagogues agreed to support us by organizing trainings and accompanying mentors throughout the program.

Refinements and practical challenges

While designing our own program allowed us to tailor it to our scientific interests and needs, it also meant that we were facing big practical challenges. How to recruit mentors and mentees? What type of training would be required? How to make sure that we provide a safe environment for mentors and mentees? Answering these questions was a continuous process and would not have been possible without our local partners. We also tested and improved our program with insights from a small pilot study that we conducted with 11 mentor-mentee couples in October 2018. Insights from the pilot showed us the need to improve communication with schools and parents, and adjust the structure of our training and group meetings.

In autumn 2019, we were finally ready to roll out the program on a larger scale. However, as may be imagined, the timing was unfortunate. Like many research projects, we were surprised by the outbreak of the coronavirus pandemic. The rising numbers of COVID-19 cases in Colombia forced us to interrupt the program and postpone meetings for months. In addition, school closures and the Colombian government’s decision to postpone the final high school exam prevented a full rollout of our survey. We adapted by treating the eleventh graders of 2019 as an additional pilot study cohort. Despite the cohort not finishing the program, we gained additional insights into data collection and recruitment. We also learned a lot about keeping mentors and mentees motivated in a context where most interactions are virtual.

Next steps

With schools re-opening, we finally launched the first full cohort of our program in October 2021. 84 students participate in the group. We were also able to expand our network—we are currently offering the program in 12 public schools in Bogotá. As a reaction to the regulations quickly changing, meetings can now take place both in person and online. We are very excited to see how the program will develop over the next 12 months. With a little bit of luck, we will be able to collect data for a first evaluation in the fall of this year. /



Sebastian Febrler is Professor of Economics at the University of Bremen, SOCIUM—Research Center on Inequality and Social Policy, and a former PI at the Cluster.



Urs Fischbacher is Professor of Applied Research in Economics at the University of Konstanz and a PI at the Cluster.



Anna Hochleitner is a doctoral researcher at the University of Nottingham, School of Economics.



Guido Schwerdt is Professor of Public Economics at the University of Konstanz and a PI at the Cluster.

IN_EQUALITY *Professor Koos, how do you feel about switching from political science to sociology?*

SEBASTIAN KOOS It's not really a switch, let alone a new beginning. I have been combining methods from sociology, political science and management since my time as an undergraduate student. My doctoral work was in sociology, drawing on organizational research. At the Department of Politics and Public Administration at Constance, I was fortunate to be given a lot of freedom; my work has always been interdisciplinary. So when I suddenly said something about protest movements as a Professor of Corporate Social Responsibility, I'm sure I raised some eyebrows occasionally (*laughs*). But that was a great time.

But it also feels great to return to sociology now. I still feel a little more at home here with respect to the issues and discussions. Now the sociological perspective is back, the breadth of sociological issues, and to be inspired by my peers in this discipline is fantastic. →

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INTERVIEW

Society in motion.

Sebastian Koos on

18 *protest, solidarity*

and taking action

(Interview: P. Töbelmann)

To political science and back: in 2021, sociologist Sebastian Koos left the Department of Politics and Public Administration to take up the Cluster Junior Professorship with Tenure Track on Sociology with a Focus on Social Movements. In this interview he talks about his *fascination with social movements* and his understanding of the *role of solidarity in times of crisis*.

↓ Sebastian Koos



“The issue of social inequality is one of tremendous importance to our present age.”

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What do you do as a Professor of Sociology with a Focus on Social Movements?

I think it's important that it's not “only” about social movements. The nature of the topic makes it very interdisciplinary. I want to develop a sociological perspective on protest and social movements. Above all, I want to better understand where different types of protest come from and under what conditions they arise. I'm interested in the whole issue on a very large and a very small scale, as it were: I want to work comparatively and look at different countries. But I also believe the individual level is just as essential: what are the social processes that make people take to the streets, considering their respective biographies?

But social movements are more than protest. My previous work, for example, was on how social movements influence companies and retail chains. Movement research was a fitting approach for that, even though it was about economic actors and the whole thing took place in markets: normative pressure from movements on markets.

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So what does the upcoming research program look like, what lies ahead in the next few years?

I have two major building blocks and one idea that I hope to find time for. The first building block concerns solidarity in society—that's a core question for sociologists, after all: what holds society together? I want to examine what constitutes solidarity and what processes make people willing to help others without expecting profits or a quid pro quo. This can be observed particularly well in times of crisis, whether it's a financial, refugee, or coronavirus crisis.

For the second topic, the Cluster agenda comes heavily into play. It is about how inequalities translate into protest, with a special focus on climate change as an issue of social movements. I have already worked on movements that address climate change in Western Europe. Going forward, I want to look more closely at the countries of the Global South, and there's a project I'm working on with Gabriele Spilker, the Professor of International Politics and Global Inequality at the Cluster. In that project,

we aim to investigate movements among those most heavily hit by climate change. Our main question is: do people who suffer from climate change have the opportunity to make their voices heard through social movements as a constructive means of addressing their situation?

The third idea—but that's still a long way off—is to investigate the individual biographical consequences of participating in social movements. This would involve concepts of how individuals become politicized, and possibly radicalized.

What role does the Cluster play in your work?

Above all, the Cluster has created incredible opportunities. It enabled me to launch larger and riskier research projects than would otherwise have been possible, including the interdisciplinary

project “Integration at Work,” and of course the new project on climate change.

What is more, the Cluster's resources allow for more short-term reactions to current developments, such as the survey program on the coronavirus crisis, which was launched at lightning speed at the beginning of the pandemic. This enables us to add our findings to ongoing debates in society. The issue of social inequality is one of tremendous importance to our present age. I believe the Cluster can make important contributions here and also help facilitate a good, informed debate based on facts. At the same time, we as researchers benefit tremendously from this kind of dialogue as well, of course. /

PUBLICATIONS

*Selected publications by Cluster researchers
(published October 2021—March 2022)*

**Ariane Bertogg, Tiziana Nazio,
Susanne Strauß** (2021)

Work-Family Balance in the Second Half of Life: Caregivers' Decisions Regarding Retirement and Working Time Reduction in Europe. *Social Policy and Administration* 55 (3): 485–500. <https://doi.org/10.1111/spol.12662>



Marius R. Busemeyer
← (2021)

Financing the Welfare State in Times of Extreme Crisis: Public Support for Health Care Spending During the COVID-19 Pandemic in Germany. *Journal of European Public Policy* 29 (3). <https://doi.org/10.1080/13501763.2021.1977375>

Claudia Diehl, Christian Hunkler (2022)
Vaccination-Related Attitudes and Behavior Across Birth Cohorts: Evidence From Germany. *PLOS ONE* 17 (2). <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0263871>

Aina Gallego, Thomas Kurer (2022)
Automation, Digitalization, and Artificial Intelligence in the Workplace: Implications for Political Behavior. *Annual Review of Political Science* 25. <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-polisci-051120-104535>

**Elena Gerdiken, Max Reinwald,
Florian Kunze** (2021)
Outcomes of Technostress at Work: A Meta-Analysis. *Academy of Management Proceedings* 2021 (1): 11807. <https://doi.org/10.5465/AMBPP.2021.11807abstract>

Katharina Hecht (2021)

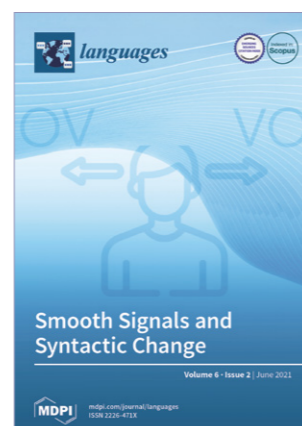
'It's the Value That We Bring': Performance Pay and Top Income Earners' Perceptions of Inequality. *Socio-Economic Review*. <https://doi.org/10.1093/ser/mwab044>

**Philip J. Howe, Edina Szöcsik,
Christina I. Zuber** (2021) →
Nationalism, Class, and Status: How Nationalists Use Policy Offers and Group Appeals to Attract a New Electorate. *Comparative Political Studies*, August. <https://doi.org/10.1177/00104140211036033>



**Pooyan Khashabi, Tobias Kretschmer,
Nick Zubanov, Matthias Heinz,
Guido Friebel** (2021)

Market Competition and the Effectiveness of Performance Pay. *Organization Science* 32 (2): 334–51. <https://doi.org/10.1287/orsc.2020.1392>



← **Tanja Kupisch,
Nadine Kolb,
Yulia Rodina,
Olga Urek** (2021)

Foreign Accent in Pre- and Primary School Heritage Bilinguals. *Languages* 6 (2): 96. <https://doi.org/10.3390/languages6020096>

**Thomas Kurer,
Briitta van Staalduinen** (2022)

Disappointed Expectations: Downward Mobility and Electoral Change. *American Political Science Review*, 1-17. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0003055422000077>



← **Max Reinwald,
Johannes Zaia,
Florian Kunze**

(2022, in press)
Shine Bright Like a Diamond: When Signaling Creates Glass Cliffs for Female Executives. *Journal of Management*.

**Katrin Schmelz,
Samuel Bowles** (2022, in press)
Opposition to Voluntary and Mandated COVID-19 Vaccination as a Dynamic Process: Evidence and Policy Implications of Changing Beliefs. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America* (PNAS) 119.

**Nils B. Weidmann,
Gerlinde Theunissen** (2021)
Estimating Local Inequality from Nighttime Lights. *Remote Sensing* 13 (22). <https://doi.org/10.3390/rs13224624>

**Felix Wolter,
Andreas Diekmann** (2021)
False Positives and the 'More-is-Better' Assumption in Sensitive Question Research: New Evidence on the Crosswise Model and the Item Count Technique. *Public Opinion Quarterly* 85(3): 836–863. <https://doi.org/10.1093/poq/nfab043>



Susanne Garritzmann
"Education Systems and Political Inequality—How Educational Institutions Shape Turnout Gaps." February 2021, *University of Konstanz*.



Nona Bledow
"Labor Unions in the Contemporary Welfare State: Preferences, Salience, Positions." September 2021, *University of Konstanz*.



Nadja Wehl
"Unemployment and Labour Market Policy Attitudes. Political Predispositions, Economic Self-Interest, and Questions of Causality." November 2021, *University of Bamberg*.

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Managing Director

Jessica Haase

University of Konstanz Cluster of Excellence “The Politics of Inequality”

Universitätsstraße 10
D-78464 Konstanz
T +49 7531 88-5772
cluster.inequality@uni-konstanz.de

Editors

Dr. Paul Stoop
Dr. Paul Töbelmann
Prof. Dr. Nils B. Weidmann

Copy Editing

Paul Stoop
Paul Töbelmann

Proofreading

Susanne Darabas

Translation

Carsten Bösel

Design

yella park, Aachen

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The Cluster of Excellence “The Politics of Inequality. Perceptions, Participation and Policies”

is an interdisciplinary Cluster of Excellence at the University of Konstanz within the framework of the Excellence Strategy of the federal and state governments. The gap separating the poor from the rich, the worldwide rise of populism, the division of burdens in the fight against climate change, unfairly distributed access to education—many current debates are as much about inequality as they are about other issues. These topics pose highly complex questions, yet scientifically grounded answers are still few and far between. This is where we come in to investigate “The Politics of Inequality”: the political causes and consequences of inequality.

The Cluster of Excellence is grateful to the University of Konstanz and the German Research Foundation for their funding and support.

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In_equality Conference 2022

In April 2022, we invite you to join us at Lake Constance for the international, interdisciplinary *In_equality Conference 2022*.

Concerns about growing inequalities play a fundamental role in current debates: which inequalities are perceived as a problem, what can governments do? How do perceptions of inequality influence patterns of political participation? To what extent are structural inequalities affected by policies?

We will discuss these and similar questions at the *In_equality Conference 2022*.

More information

→ www.inequality-conference.de

In_equality Colloquium in Summer Term 2022

Tuesdays,
11:45 AM – 1:15 PM
(online)

26/04/
Viola Asri
University of Konstanz

31/05/
Merlin Schaeffer
University of Copenhagen

03/05/
**Christina Felfe
de Ormeño**
University of Würzburg

07/06/
**Michael Becher /
Irene Menéndez
González**
IE University Madrid

10/05/
Cornelia Kristen
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28/06/
Stanislav Markus
University of South Carolina

17/05/
Mara Yerkes
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University of Iowa

19/07/
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*For the full program and information
on how to participate in the Cluster
Colloquium, see → [https://inequality.
uni.kn/cluster-colloquium/](https://inequality.uni.kn/cluster-colloquium/)*

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2022**

Gabriele Spilker
Inaugural Lecture as
Professor of Interna-
tional Politics—Global
Inequality

**14/05/
2022**

**Lange Nacht
der Wissenschaft**

**20–23/
07/2022**

Essen
Summer Academy “Challenging Inequalities”
in collaboration with the doctoral program
“Political Economy of Inequality” at the
Institute for Socio-Economics, University of
Duisburg-Essen, and the Cluster of Exce-
llence “Contestations of the Liberal Script”
(SCRIPTS), Berlin

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The Cluster &
its members
in the media

News

Prof. Dr. Gabriele Spilker has taken up the Cluster Professorship for International Politics—Global Inequality in October 2021. She focuses on political economy and looks at the topic of inequality from different angles: she studies consequences of climate change in developing countries and its potential to trigger migration and increase inequalities. She also investigates public opinion on international trade and migration, and analyzes the consequences of different designs of international cooperation efforts.

Prof. Dr. Sebastian Koos was named Cluster Junior Professor (with Tenure Track) of Sociology with a focus on social movements in November 2021. Inequality and its potential to generate social movements, especially protest movements, is central to his work. To this end, he pays particular attention to movements that have formed around the issue of climate change. An overarching theme of this professorship's research will also be social cohesion and solidarity, especially in times of crisis.

Two new professorships were filled at the Cluster in 2021.

New Cluster members and PIs (September 2021—January 2022)

ARRIVALS

New Cluster members and PIs (September 2021—January 2022)

Viktoria Jansesberger

Doctoral Researcher, Cluster Project “International Politics—Global Inequality”

Duangkamol Srismith

Postdoctoral Researcher, Cluster Project “Perceptions of Political Charisma in Low-Status Speakers”

Daniel Schröder

Managing Office, IT Support and Digitalization Management

Thomas Soehl

McGill University
External Senior Fellow

Walter Haeusl

Scuola Normale Superiore
Visiting Researcher

Davy-Kim Lascombes

University of Geneva
Visiting Researcher

Adrian Rinscheid

University of St. Gallen
Visiting Researcher

Alexander Trubowitz

Yale University
Visiting Researcher

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TALES FROM THE LAB

“Go out and vote!”

Linguistic aspects of political appeals

(M. Butt, W. Siskou)

„Go to the ballots this Sunday!” or “Every vote counts!”—linguists Miriam Butt and Wassiliki Siskou investigate such *subtle differences in language intended for political mobilization*. They use methods from computational linguistics to automate text analysis of examples from Latin America.

In an interdisciplinary project involving linguistics and political science, we ask how exactly people can be mobilized politically. A great deal of communication and organization nowadays takes place via social media. But what strategies do organizers use to actually get people to the polls or even out on the streets? A key means, of course, is linguistic communication, and this raises the question as to what exactly linguistic means are used. What strategies are used in calls to action to transform moods and events into a comprehensive narrative, that is, to frame them? Is it possible to discover such calls to action automatically, using methods from computational linguistics? And how often do they occur in the first place?

In the current research project entitled “Mobilizing Inequalities” we linguists collaborate with a number of colleagues in political science who share a special interest in the mobilization strategies of ethnic organizations (see the articles by Lea Haiges and Christina Zuber, as well as Frederik Gremler in this issue). Our main interest is in regions not yet sufficiently covered by previous research. With elections looming in several Latin American countries in 2021, it made sense to take a closer look at them and perform a word-by-word analysis of social media posts by politicians. Specifically, the project examines posts from Ecuador, Peru and Bolivia.

The political scientists in our project compiled a dataset of texts consisting of approximately 30,000 Facebook and Twitter posts. All posts were published by individuals and groups that might be of interest from a political science perspective, including not

only politicians and political parties but also non-governmental organizations, journalists, political activists, think tanks and the like.

Before we could get down to the actual linguistic analysis, we first had to come up with a precise definition of what constitutes a call to action. Strictly speaking, a writer asking readers to click on a particular link or follow a channel is a type of call to action, but it does not yet imply mobilization. We decided to limit our analysis to sentences that aim to get people to take action, for instance to go to the polls or to participate in protests and gatherings.

Applying linguistic analysis, we then set out to determine what these calls to action look like and what patterns and frames they may have in common. For a human reader, it is relatively easy to decide whether a sentence falls into this category or not, but for machines, the task remains challenging even after many years of research. Humans can “see behind the curtain” of words. They recognize the meanings of individual words, string them together (to put it simply), and then decide based on the context whether a sentence is a call to action or not.

But such semantic and pragmatic interpretation still poses a major challenge to machine language processing. To the computer, texts are merely characters without any further meaning. Today’s algorithms have developed amazing abilities to recognize superficial patterns, but their meaning remains elusive to them. For the machine to learn to “understand” this meaning, humans currently have to take the first step and produce an initial manual analysis. Sentences from a portion of the data set are first assigned to one of two categories: call to action →



↓ Going to the ballots in Quito, Ecuador, 2021



or no call to action. The next step is to scrutinize each word and its linguistic properties. This micro-level analysis is subsequently used to develop rules and patterns that are crucial for assigning sentences to the categories to be studied. This manual analysis produces patterns, which are finally fed into a rule-based program, allowing us to add relevant annotations to the text units. This involves working step by step from the word level to the sentence level until the program has added meta information to each sentence. In computer science and computational linguistics, these sequential tasks are called a pipeline.

What has been summarized here in a few sentences is in fact a lengthy process. The Spanish language as spoken in the three Latin American countries we are studying has been particularly challenging for us. The varieties of Spanish common in Bolivia, Peru and Ecuador differ significantly from European Spanish; even more problematically, they also differ from each other in vocabulary and grammar. All this must be considered when developing a pipeline in order to provide reliable, correct analyses.

When performing the manual analysis, we already noticed that, from a linguistic perspective, calls to action occur in two different

subcategories: direct and indirect calls to action. Whereas direct calls to action are usually worded as imperative clauses, that is, as orders and commands, there are also sentences here and there that, at least superficially, do not order people to act. Consider these two sentences, translated from Spanish: “It is time to put an end to decades of more of the same. The time is ripe for the people.” Whatever it is exactly that the writer wants to tell readers here, we do get the feeling that staying on the couch would not be enough. For computers, such implicit calls to action are particularly difficult to recognize—not least because they are rare. Accordingly, the required linguistic rules must be defined very precisely.

Generally, however, our analysis has shown that most calls to action are indeed worded as imperatives, often including words that appeal to citizens’ sense of duty to vote. Interestingly, even though they are commands grammatically, many calls to action are deliberately worded in a polite manner. Indirect calls to action, by comparison, occur less frequently and furthermore are particularly difficult to capture by machines. From a computational linguistics point of view, this obstacle is an interesting question which we expect to pursue further to advance the state of research in computational linguistics.

In summary, calls to action may vary widely. A major share is conveyed as direct calls to action, whereas a few are implicit and only become apparent through context. The more data we collect about this, the more successfully automatic classification through machine learning can be applied in the future. In addition, our research can contribute a lot to our understanding of political and communicative processes. This also applies to events that are far more dramatic than general elections in democracies, such as the storming of the Capitol in Washington, D.C., in January 2021. Analyzing social media communications around this event, for example, may shed light on how Trump’s call to march towards Capitol Hill resonated with the posts of thousands of his supporters, who then did take action. The automatic identification of calls to action remains a task worth solving. /



Miriam Butt is Professor of General and Computational Linguistics at the University of Konstanz and a PI at the Cluster.



Wassiliki Siskou is a doctoral researcher at the Cluster project “Mobilizing Inequalities: From Grievances to Conflict.”

OPEN DATA

Words inciting violence?

How ethnic organizations communicate online (F. Gremler)

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Ethnic inequality can result in violence, especially when actors such as ethnic organizations fan the flames with their rhetoric. Understanding how such organizations communicate is therefore *key to understanding many ethnic conflicts*. Here Frederik Gremler presents a new database, collecting relevant examples of online communication from all over the world.



Frederik Gremler is a doctoral researcher at the Cluster project “Mobilizing Inequalities: From Grievances to Conflict.”

When government troops and fighters of the Tigray People’s Liberation Front (TPLF) clash in Ethiopia, political inequality is one reason for the eruption of violence. Until 2018, TPLF officials were still an integral part of the political power structure, but they increasingly lost influence after the new prime minister Abiy Ahmed took over. Following their retreat to their ethnic home region of Tigray, the clash with the government in Addis Ababa exploded not long ago. The bloody conflict was accompanied by prejudiced agitation and mutual accusations of ethnic cleansing.

An extreme case, to be sure. But economic or political imbalances between a country’s ethnic groups are often at the root of violent conflicts, in Ethiopia and elsewhere. And yet, not all kinds of inequality lead to violence. That is why in the project “Mobilizing Inequalities: From Grievances to Conflict,” headed by Nils B. Weidmann, Christina Zuber and Miriam Butt, we are investigating when and how inequality does provoke violence and what leads political actors to emphasize inequality in the first place. In this effort, Nils B. Weidmann and I focus on the statistical analysis of this relationship using a global sample.

Our work draws on a large-scale database on ethnic organizations and their social media activities. The organizations whose data we collect range from estab-

lished political parties like the Scottish National Party to violent rebel groups like Yemen’s Houthi movement. Since early 2020, we have studied more than 80 countries from Spain to Equatorial Guinea with the help of student assistants. Our main interest is in identifying the organizations that use violent means, demand political participation, or emphasize economic inequality.

Once we have identified an ethnic organization, we download content from its online channels—its websites and social media profiles on Twitter, for example—using software we have programmed specifically for this purpose. We now have more than 1.5 million posts and tweets stored on our servers, as well as data from nearly 2,000 websites. The process of data collection is thus largely complete.

We are now using this data to better understand the relationship between political violence and inequality. We are especially interested in how ethnic organizations target their communications to specific audiences. Preliminary findings point in a surprising direction: neither political nor economic inequality figure as prominently as expected in the organizations’ rhetoric! Instead, parties share information about events or campaign rallies. Calls for protests or even violence tend to be the exception—another important finding. In some cases, parties that only re-

present specific groups in a country even call for national solidarity and harmony.

We will soon know how reliable these initial findings are: among other things, we are using innovative machine learning techniques in collaboration with former Konstanz political scientist Karsten Donnay and Florian Eblenkamp at the University of Zurich to automatically identify the topics of individual posts or tweets. Given the sheer volume of data, this would hardly be possible otherwise. Linguists Miriam Butt and Wassiliki Siskou are part of our project team and work on closely related questions, investigating more generally how computational linguistics can help answer them. Thus, we hope to help further improve our understanding of the relationship between inequalities and ethnic conflicts in the near future. /

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INSIGHTS FROM OUR RESEARCH

Giving the disadvantaged a voice. *How indigenous organizations in Ecuador and Peru talk about injustice*

34 (L. Haiges, C. Zuber)

Social psychology tells us that when individuals feel that their group is unjustly deprived of resources or opportunities, they are motivated to take action to remedy the situation. As ONAMIAP (→) tells us, this is the case for the indigenous peoples of Peru. In the worst case, taking action can imply violent conflict, in particular when groups are defined and treated unequally along ethnic lines.

But how do individuals come to see their own destinies as tied to the destiny of an ethnic group? And why do they end up believing that their group is treated unjustly? Theories of ethnic conflict in political science expect that group elites and the communicative messages they send to group members play an important role in provoking such beliefs. Conflict researchers however have rarely studied empirically how ethnic elites communicate on the topic of inequality. We therefore do not know whether elite messages are really necessary for group members to feel aggrieved and actively seek justice. To gain a better understanding of the role of

“We the indigenous peoples, women in particular, are feeling the ever more forceful impact of economic policies that prioritize the extraction of natural resources in our territories, policies that affect our way of life, often forever, policies that impoverish us and force us to emigrate.”

Organization of Amazonian and Andean Indigenous Women of Peru, ONAMIAP, 2021



Lea Haiges is a doctoral researcher at the Cluster project "Mobilizing Inequalities: From Grievances to Conflict."



Christina Zuber is Professor of German Politics and Public Administration at the University of Konstanz and a PI at the Cluster.

elite discourse, we look at elites that give voice to indigenous peoples in Ecuador and Peru. These groups are affected by severe inequalities in major areas of life, such as health and education, income and wealth, as well as political power and influence.

Both countries share similar political systems, geographic locations and socio-economic problems. However, even though indigenous peoples remain disadvantaged in both cases, political, cultural, and socio-economic inequalities in Peru are more severe than in Ecuador. In Ecuador, only seven percent of the population identify as indigenous. Nevertheless, indigenous political influence is significant. Indigenous people regularly engage in protests and strikes, and even though the organizations behind these protests do not always share the same goals, most of them work together on the national level. Their continued collaboration led to the foundation of the indigenous party Pachakutik in the 1990s and helped improve the situation for the indigenous over the last decades; Pachakutik is a Quechua word and means change, rebirth, transformation, and the coming of a new era.

Peru hosts a larger share of indigenous people at 25 percent, but their political influence is weaker. Indigenous people face more severe discrimination, stigmatization and persisting socio-economic deprivation compared

In countries where ethnic diversity results in socio-economic inequality, ethnic organizations are often the ones to put such matters on the political agenda. Lea Haiges and Christina Zuber look into the role of the *grievances of indigenous groups in the communication* of ethnic organizations in Ecuador and Peru.

to Ecuador. One reason for this lies in the past: authoritarian president Alberto Fujimori, who governed Peru during the 1990s, targeted the indigenous population through forced sterilizations and oppression. Today, Peru's indigenous organizations mainly operate on the local level, are not as well connected as their Ecuadorian counterparts and wield more limited political influence. This could change with president Pedro Castillo, who was elected in April 2021 and supports indigenous interests.

To assess whether these real-world differences affect the rhetoric of ethnic organizations, we collected programmatic documents (party manifestoes, organizational statutes and speeches) issued →

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by indigenous parties and NGOs. We searched these for “grievance frames:” statements arguing that a group is suffering from unjust, relative deprivation of a particular resource or opportunity such as income or education. We made sure that our findings would not hinge on just one person’s subjective understanding and regularly checked whether team members converged in their interpretations of the texts.

Analyzing 34 documents issued between 2019 and 2021 showed that ethnic organizations talk more about injustice in Peru; the average Peruvian document contains four grievance frames, compared to two in Ecuador. This difference is in line with the real-world situation: indige-

nous peoples in Peru suffer more disadvantages than those in Ecuador. Most of the time the documents mention grievances of the indigenous. However, indigenous organizations also address specific grievances of certain sections of the population as a whole, like the lower classes or the rural population, and they give voice to women, the young, or the elderly.

In what areas of peoples’ lives do indigenous organizations detect injustice? Figure 1 displays the proportion of grievance frames referring to a particular issue area. Concerns about political-legal and socio-economic injustice play a comparable role in both countries. Security concerns are more pronounced in Ecuador and refer to both violence against women and violence against indigenous peoples and their territories. The share of cultural grievances is surprisingly low given that ethnic organizations are often portrayed as being narrowly concerned with identity and culture.

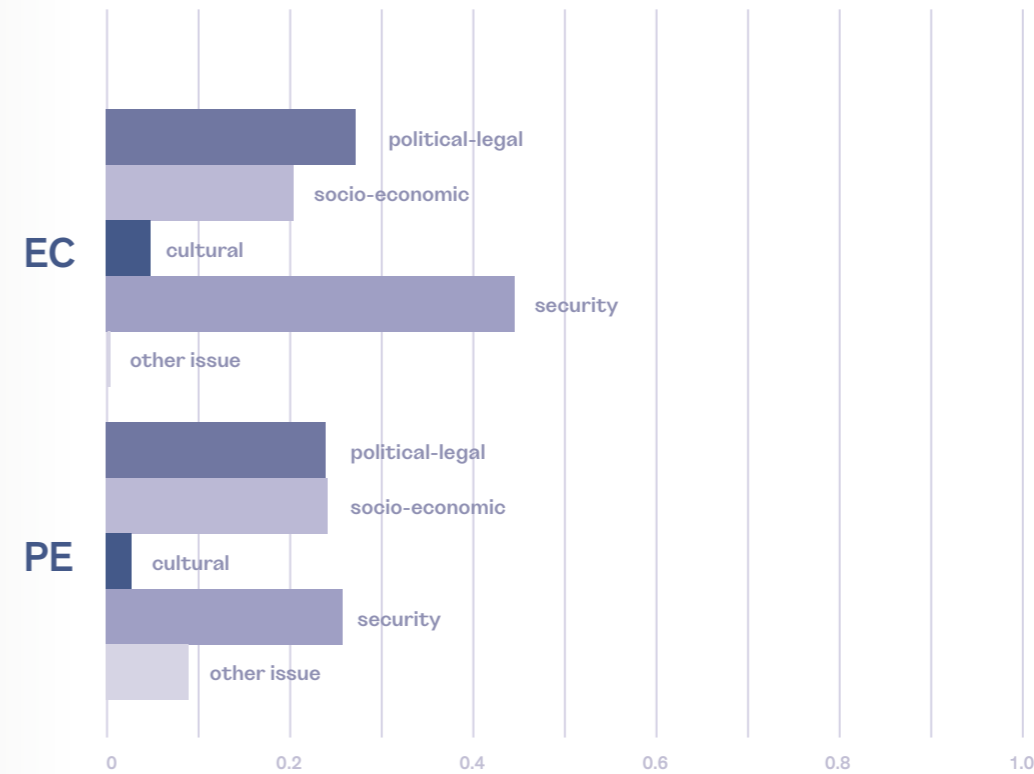


Figure 1: Relative impact of different kinds of grievances in indigenous organizations’ documents in Ecuador and Peru
Share of all grievances raised

Our efforts are part of the larger Cluster project “Mobilizing Inequalities—from Grievances to Conflict,” which is aiming at making global comparisons possible. To this end, political scientists Frederik Gremler and Nils B. Weidmann are building a database of ethnic organizations’ online communications (read more on page 32), while linguists Wassiliki Siskou and Miriam Butt are working on detecting grievance frames automatically (read more on page 28). /

The comparison across countries should not obscure important variation within each country: while some organizations frequently talk about injustice, others do not use grievance frames at all. The literature on ethnic conflict expects a rhetoric focusing on grievances to be a standard strategy of ethnic elites. Our findings show that this generalizing assumption needs to be revised. The logical next question is therefore: why do some organizations talk about injustice, while others do not, even as they address the same group in the same country? We plan to find out by interviewing representatives of indigenous organizations during the next year. We will also test whether the association between real-world inequalities and grievance rhetoric is a feature of other ethnic organizations across the world.



↑ Yaku Perez, indigenous candidate for the 2021 presidential elections in Ecuador

Polarizing crises. *How financial upheaval affects politics*

(G. Schneider, O. Shevchuk)

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In financial crises, societies are in danger of losing their common ground. Economists Gerald Schneider and Oleksandr Shevchuk look into the relations between *societal inequality, financial crisis, and political polarization*.

Similar to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, financial turmoil, be it in the form of banking, inflation, currency or sovereign debt crises, has considerable distributive effects. Dramatic examples are the Great Depression of the 1930s and, to a lesser extent, the Great Recession in the years following 2007 that were both triggered by major upheaval on financial markets. However, the impact of such shocks on income and wealth inequality depends on a number of factors, including the extent, the duration, and the type of crisis. While inflation and currency crises typically hurt the poor and low-income workers most, bank closures and stock market crashes reduce the income of capital owners and hence the wealthy—at least in the short-term.

In the light of these distributive consequences, financial crises should also influence the political competition and the extent to which a society loses its middle ground and becomes increasingly polarized. In collaboration with Almuth Scholl and Tim Hermann of the Department of Economics at the University of Konstanz, we examine how financial crises have affected left-right polarization in the OECD world and beyond since World War II.

The concept of ideological polarization can be conceived of as a political situation where the center loses more and more ground to the political extremes. In a society polarized in this way, political preferences are not centered in the middle, but tend towards two extreme poles on the left and the right of the political spectrum.

Historians have argued that political polarization was one of the root causes for the demise of the Weimar Republic. Political scientists have shown repeatedly that polarization and inequality have co-evolved in the United States during recent decades. Some studies also demonstrate that the collapse of Lehman Brothers in 2008 has further deepened the gulf between the rich and the poor, and that it has radicalized the Republican Party and—less dramatically—the Democrats in the U.S. Congress.

In our project, we ask three questions: have other countries experienced similar trends? Does the polarization of the political elite go hand in hand with a comparable development among the electorate? And do different types of crises have different effects on the political landscape?

↓ Abandoned construction site in Greece: a relic of the real estate bubble bursting in 2009



To compare polarization across political systems, we mainly rely on a measure developed by two economists, Joan Esteban and Debraj Ray, and pair them up with similar indicators developed in political science. Our empirical analysis leans on a comprehensive list of financial crises that was originally collected by the respective chief economists of the World Bank and International Monetary Fund, Carmen Reinhart and Kenneth Rogoff. We also include analyses of other programs and the Eurobarometer surveys on left-right self-placement.

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Financial crises have become more prevalent in the OECD area during the past few decades. This is especially the case for the banking and currency crises. We also see confirmed that income inequality has been growing in the industrialized world in the timeframe we are interested in (see fig. 1, page 40). Similar trends can be observed for wealth inequality. Empirical models that we have run together with our former team member Frederike Rübsam (who is now employed at the Bundesbank) show that currency crises have a detrimental impact on the economic situation of the poor and the middle class: both suffer much more than the rich (although the richest U.S. citizens lost some of their wealth at the outset of the Great Recession). The evidence confirms that the developments in the U.S. are more dramatic than in most other countries covered, but that the overall trend of increasing inequality is a common feature well beyond the U.S.

The graphical evidence also suggests that electoral polarization—measured through the ideological →

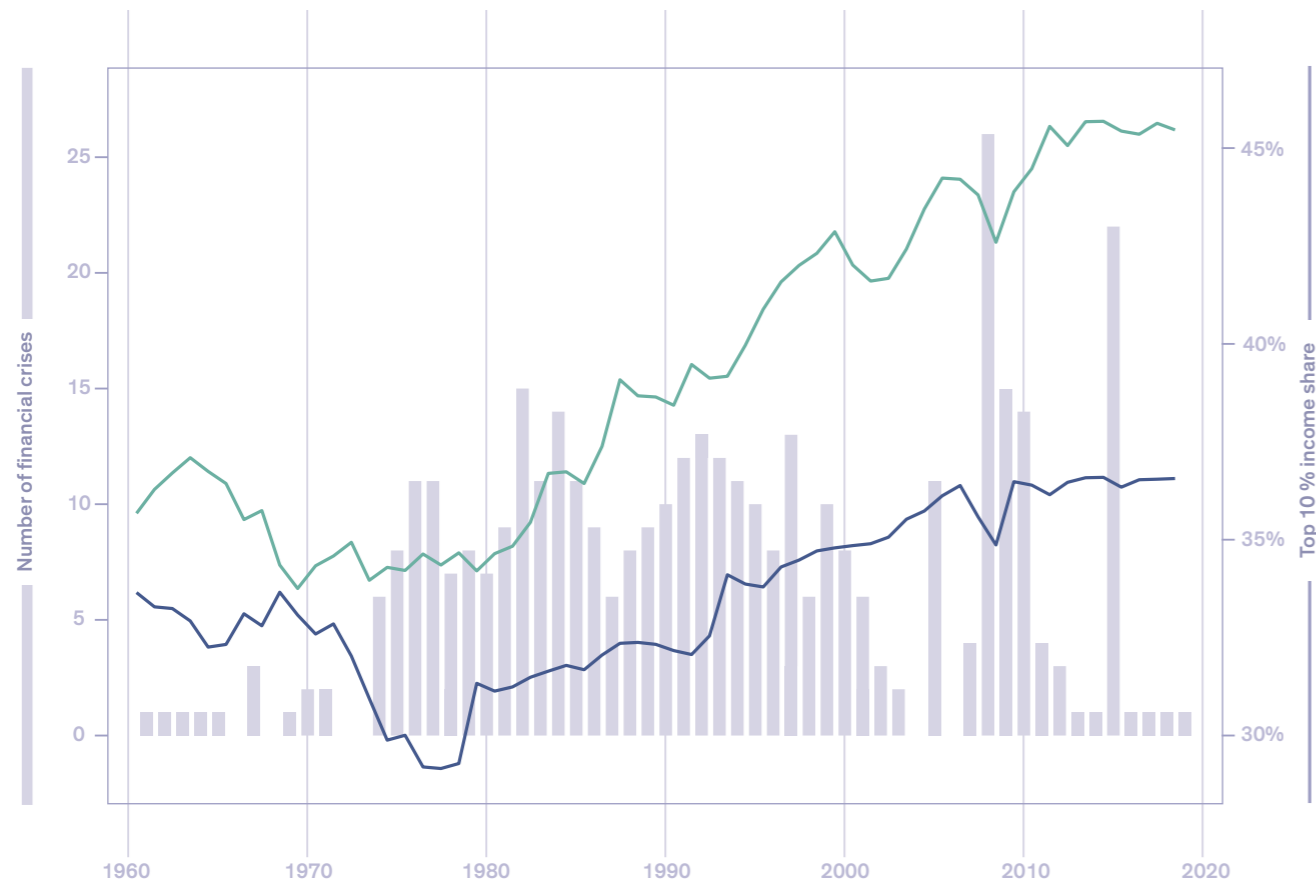


Figure 1: Financial crises and income inequality

The figure shows the total number of financial crises (bars, left scale) and the income share of the 10 percent top earners (lines, right scale) in the US and OECD.

— income share of top earners in the US
— income share of top earners in OECD countries (average)

self-placements in surveys—has been growing in the countries covered by our analysis, including the U.S. (see fig. 2). The statistical models indicate an average 3 percent growth of polarization after currency crises—this would already mean that a considerable share of the electorate move their allegiance to the far left and the far right, depleting the political centre of its influence. In reality, the impact has been much stronger in specific cases. The currency crisis that Greece experienced before joining the Eurozone (1999–2001) was accompanied by a growth in electoral polarization of no less than 20 percent, while parliamentary polarization—as measured by the positions taken by the major parties—almost tripled.

However, parliamentary polarization has been declining in many countries during the observation period. Cases such as the development in Greece after its 1999–2001 crisis are therefore exceptions. Another very prominent

exception is the rising polarization in the U.S. Congress. Some studies suggest that growing inequality and polarization are co-evolving in the United States, with rising economic inequities feeding the extremist stance of the Republican Party and with this radicalization also spurring the disparity between the rich and the poor. It is, however, not yet clear whether such trends can also be observed in other countries.

And Germany? The country has followed a path similar to most Western European societies—growing income inequality up to the 2010s, accelerating wealth inequality, and increasing electoral, (but decreasing parliamentary) polarization. These relatively timely developments might mirror the

absence of large economic shocks, with the exception of the unification. Given the experiences described here, it seems likely that rising inflation and sovereign debt will affect both inequality and political contestation inside and outside of the Bundestag in the years to come. /



Gerald Schneider is Professor of International Politics at the University of Konstanz and a PI at the Cluster.



Oleksandr Shevchuk is a doctoral researcher at the Cluster project “From Bad to Worse? Financial Crises, Polarization, and Inequality.”

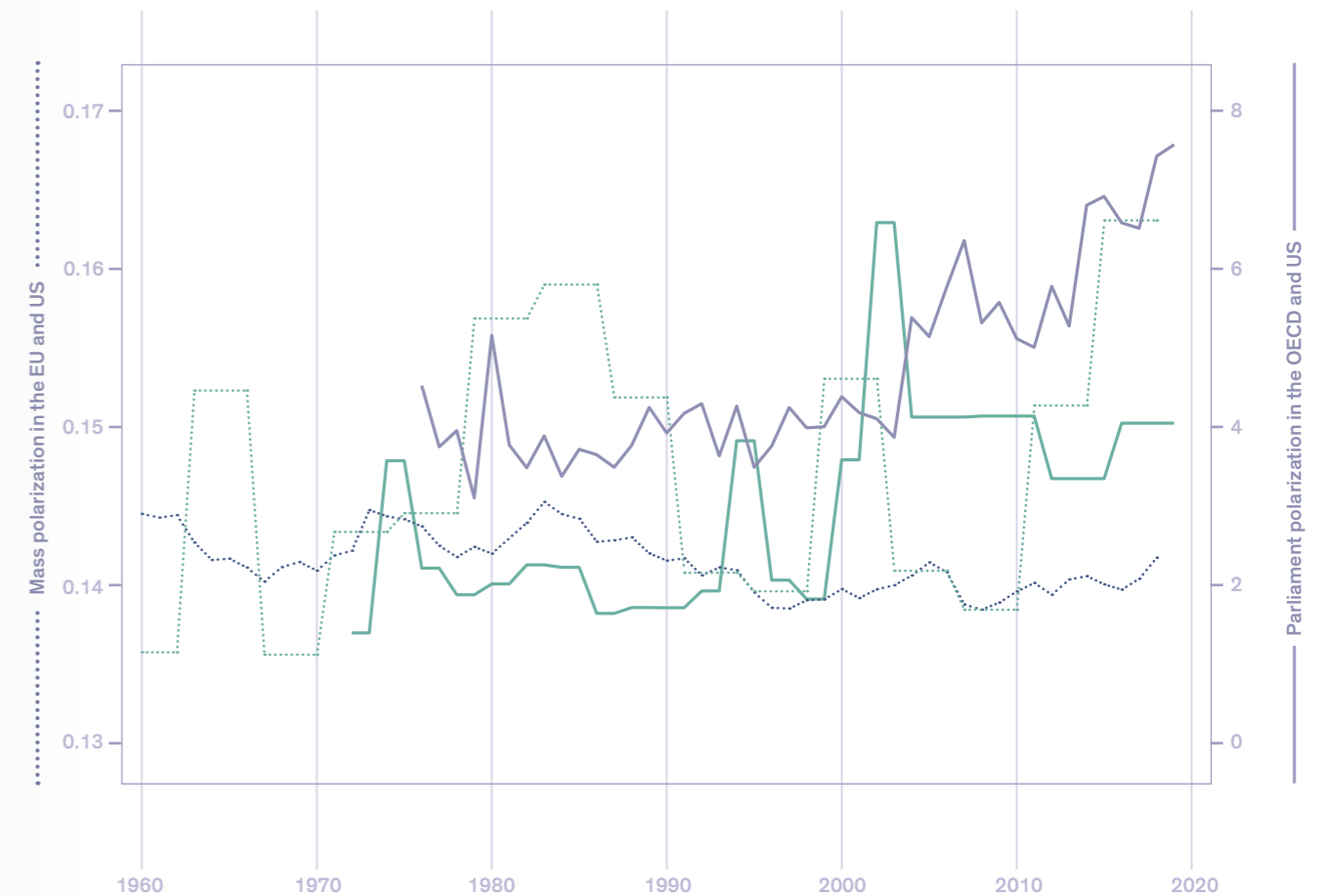


Figure 2: Polarization in the population and in parliaments

The figure shows polarization in the population at large (fat lines, left scale) in the US and EU, as well as polarization of parties in parliaments (thin lines, right scale) in the US and in the OECD.

— US
— EU-countries (average)
..... OECD-countries (average)

Climate change poses an existential threat to future life on our planet. Current climate policies put us on track towards 3.5 degrees Celsius of warming by the end of this century. This projection by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) 2019 report implies, among other things, the loss of up to 70 percent of fauna and flora species, several meters of sea-level rise, and an epidemic spread of infectious diseases. Despite these grim predictions, today's societies are still lagging behind when it comes to climate action.

The reasons for this inaction are manifold, but the various inequalities inherent

in the politics of climate change are likely pivotal. Both climate change and most climate policies are accompanied by at least three types of inequalities: strong international inequalities imply that those who are responsible for most of the greenhouse gas emissions are not those who suffer the most dire consequences. In addition, climate change politics are hampered by strong intergenerational inequalities, as older generations are largely responsible for creating an enormous burden for younger and future generations. Finally, many climate change policies are accompanied by strong redistributive consequences, thereby potentially increasing intra-societal inequalities.

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INSIGHTS FROM OUR RESEARCH

Varieties of perspective. *Global media reporting on climate change* (G. Spilker)

Cluster professor Gabriele Spilker sees three types of inequality that will impact how societies worldwide deal with climate change. She investigates how print media report on and discuss climate change and the inequalities associated with it, and how this influences the public debate.

In a joint project, Lisa Lechner from the University of Innsbruck and I aim to investigate these three categories of inequality through the lens of one actor that we think plays a substantial role in framing these inequalities: the print media. While we do not doubt that other types of media, such as TV or online media, also play an important role, we decided to investigate the print media due to their diverse audience and great reach, and because by its text-based nature, it lends itself perfectly to in-depth text analysis. We assume that depending on how the media report on climate change and/or climate action, their reporting has the potential to increase or decrease the focus on inequalities. To some extent, this determines how readers perceive climate change and climate action.

Based on an automated text analysis of more than 30,000 newspaper articles, our project investigates variations in the quantity, but more importantly in the content of climate change reporting, including articles, opinion pieces etc., across 14 countries, over seven years (2013-2020) and different types of newspaper media (tabloid media such as Germany's BILD or UK's The Sun, and liberal outlets such as Germany's Süddeutsche Zeitung or Austria's Der Standard, as well as conservative quality press, for example the Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung in Germany, or the Neue Zürcher Zeitung in Switzerland). In this way we strive to contribute to a better understanding of all three types of inequality mentioned above.

Most existing studies on media reporting about climate change are rather Global North-centric, in that they tend to focus exclusively on major polluters. While we believe that understanding media reporting in the Global North is important, we also think that this narrow perspective misses parts of the

story, as the countries of the Global South will be suffering most from the consequences of climate change—the first type of inequality. Therefore, we include countries that belong to the category of the most vulnerable, for example Kenya, Vietnam, or Cambodia. Our findings support our initial rationale that it is important to expand our focus: it seems indeed that the reporting on climate change differs between countries in the Global North and South. For instance, many media outlets in countries of the Global South tend to much more frequently voice appeals to policy makers and the public to take stronger action on climate change. Outlets in the Global North seem more reluctant to do so.

Secondly, climate change politics are not only hampered by strong international or geographic inequalities, but also by strong intertemporal or intergenerational inequality: the

generations that run the world act slowly, at the expense of the current young generations and future generations, who will carry the dramatic costs of non-action. This type of inequality becomes apparent when reporting on climate change is analyzed over time. In particular, we observe a significant increase in the reporting on climate change over the last three years of the period under investigation: the topic of climate change in general has gained much more prominence. If we look more closely into the timing of this increase, we can see that it is to a large part an effect of the Fridays for Future (F4F) movement, starting in the summer of 2018. It took a protest movement based on the intergenerational inequality inherent in the politics of climate change to raise attention to a new level, potentially creating a new momentum for stronger climate action. Interestingly, all types of print media—both tabloid and quality press, but also both liberal and conservative newspapers—, in all the different countries we cover—in the Global North and in the Global South—, have strongly increased the coverage of climate change in reaction to the F4F protests. This has resulted in overall less skeptical reporting on climate change in most media outlets, but also in more pessimistic reporting on climate change: many newspapers tend to highlight the dreadful consequences of climate change and the difficult policy choices needed to combat it, which will most likely lead to changes in our standards of living. →

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Gabriele Spilker is Professor of International Politics—Global Inequality at the University of Konstanz and a PI at the Cluster.

It is exactly this last aspect that relates to the third type of inequality we are interested in, namely the intra-societal inequalities associated with climate change. Not only will climate change in general have strong (re-)distributive consequences. The same is true for any kind of policy addressing climate change. Some parts of society will be hit harder than others by policies such as a CO2 tax. After all, energy or gasoline costs encompass a larger share of the disposable income for poorer in contrast to richer segments of society. In extreme cases, some people may lose their jobs, such as those currently working in coal mining. Thus it seems paramount to combine the two: enacting strong climate change policies while at the same time compensating those who would suffer severely from the economic side effects of such policies. The French *gilets jaunes* protests were a prime example of how socio-economic and environmental aspects were played off against each other. Therefore, it seems indispensable that societal polarization be kept at bay while finding ways to enact ambitious climate action.

The media, in our view, have a crucial role to play with regard to this type of intra-societal inequality. On one hand, it is important that the media report and controversially discuss the (economic) consequences of both climate change and climate change policies. This includes discussing who will bear the costs and whether this is fair or unfair. On the other hand, a rather one-sided or very polarizing way of reporting on these topics has the potential to increase societal tensions: by intensifying the societal rift between people who support (necessary) stringent climate policies and those who might be on the losing end of these policies.

Our first results show evidence for both perspectives. Most quality newspapers in most countries tend to provide both: a discussion of the importance of enacting stricter climate policies as well as a discussion of the economic costs associated with such policies. They also ask for corollary compensatory measures as a safety net for those suffering losses. Many tabloid media, however, rather tend towards a more one-sided polarizing discussion of climate change policies. It is the latter that seems worrying from our perspective. Instead of moderating societal polarization, this reporting style might exacerbate the divide between a potential “green elite” and “the man on the street” who needs to pay for a purely “green” ideal. It is this kind of polarization that we should work against—both for societal reasons and to successfully combat climate change. /

INSIGHTS FROM OUR RESEARCH

The power of community: *Close relations boost social participation in Africa*

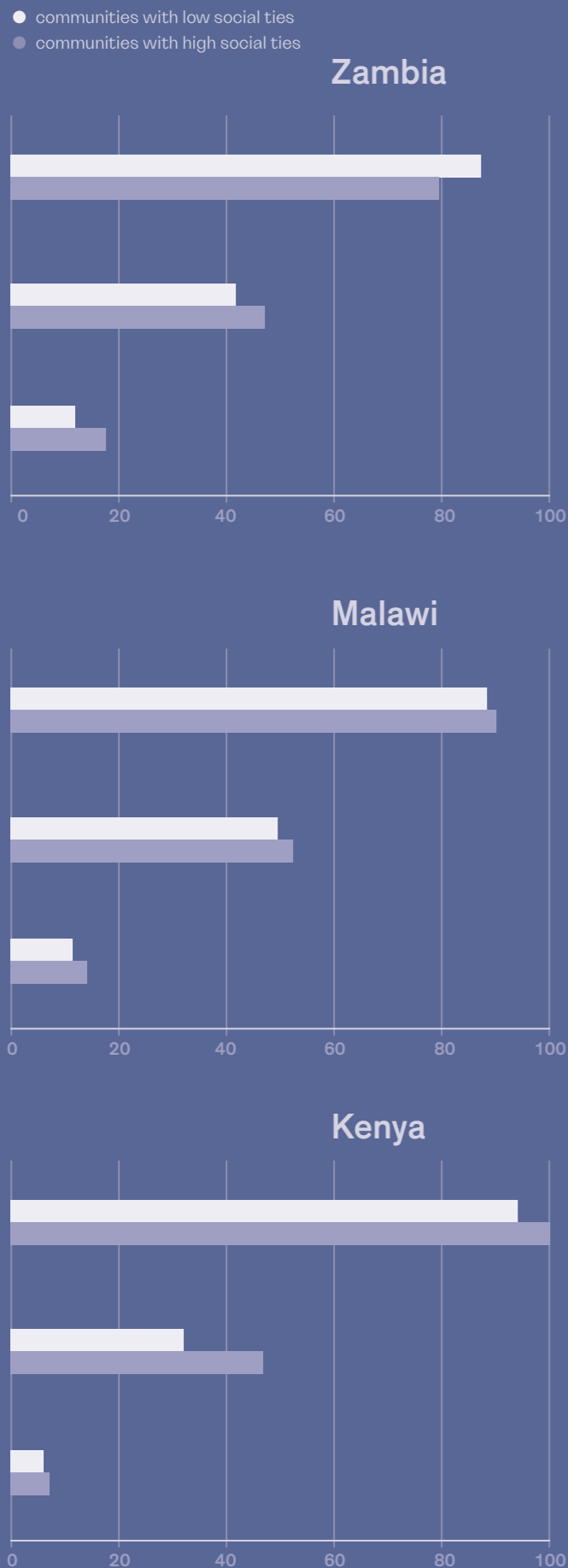
(P. Jöst, P. Töbelmann)

Prisca Jöst-Brenneis explores the *relation between inequality and participation*. Why do people in some communities engage more in social and political activities, and less in others? To better understand this, she examines the mechanisms of social mobilization through survey studies in several African countries.

Prisca Jöst-Brenneis had barely arrived in Konstanz from Gothenburg in mid-October 2021 when she hit the road again. “Four weeks in Tunisia—not for vacation, unfortunately!” she clarifies, laughing. The political scientist has always had to travel a lot for her research interests. “I want to find out how inequality and participation are linked in African countries. When and how do low-income people get involved politically? How does the local social context factor into this? What promotes participation among the poor—social networks or local leaders? And how do these different factors play out in combination?”

These questions have preoccupied Prisca Jöst for years. In joint projects with Professor Ellen Lust (University of Gothenburg), she combined methods from political science and sociology to study voter turnout and participation in political events and campaigns, as well as numerous social community projects. After joining Ellen Lust’s group for a pilot study in Tunisia, Prisca Jöst was involved in projects in Malawi, Kenya and Zambia in 2019. They are all part of the Governance and Local Development (GLD) program led by Ellen Lust. Through the Local Governance Performance Index (LGPI) the program examines a key determinant of inequalities between different neighborhoods or between urban and rural areas, as observed around the world: local governance performance. →

Figure 1: What moves respondents to take part in a local communal school project? (percentage of respondents)



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In recent years, Prisca Jöst has been to both Tunisia and Zambia. To avoid distorted results, however, she is careful not to go into the field and conduct surveys herself. “With a Western researcher standing next to them, people will give different answers—it’s a sure way to invite a lot of bias into a survey,” she explains. But the local staff members who perform the surveys must be trained, and numerous logistic details must be sorted out as well. The GLD program has conducted more than 23,000 interviews in Kenya, Zambia and Malawi, mostly in poor communities that raise community funds for purposes such as funerals or school maintenance, for example. “One challenge in interviewing is the many languages and dialects spoken in these countries. So there I was, sitting at the PC completing our questionnaire and typing as fast as I could while local partners sat around me—talking at me from both sides telling me how to translate the sentence correctly into three different dialects,” the researcher recalls with a smile.

Their efforts paid off: Today, the GLD researchers can shed light on the mechanisms that are particularly conducive to promoting participation in local communities. For people in a community to get involved in political or social initiatives, they must be encouraged to do so by local leaders: district mayors, tribal chiefs, sometimes simply respected people from the neighborhood. “Without leaders, there is not much going on. But for them to be able to mobilize successfully, the social density of the community as a whole is crucial.

That’s a measure of the quantity of social ties in a community—roughly speaking, all the ties that actually exist divided by the number of ties that are theoretically possible,” Prisca Jöst explains. “With 1,200 neighborhoods surveyed in Zambia alone, we obviously can’t track all the ties. But the survey allows us to measure how well respondents know their neighborhood and how close the ties are.”

In high-social density neighborhoods individuals and families are under particular scrutiny. This means there are social incentives, including a good reputation or invitations to social events, for getting involved in community projects, such as a common fund for a neighborhood school. Those who do not participate, on the other hand, are likely to experience social sanctions. The higher the degree of social density, the stronger the social carrot-and-stick effect.

Jöst and Lust have the numbers to back up their findings. In Zambia, for example, more than 47 percent of respondents from tightly knit communities said they would expect rewards for their participation in a school project, compared with just under 42 percent in loose communities. Conversely, in tight-knit communities, some 17 percent feared social sanctions if they did not participate—compared to just under 12 percent in low-density communities. The same trend emerges in Malawi and Kenya. “Things aren’t that much different in other parts of the world, by the way,” adds Prisca Jöst. “In my doctoral thesis, I used various neighborhoods in the UK for comparison. There, too, I found that neighborhood relations and people’s subjective assessment of community expectations strongly influence social and political action—more so in poor communities than in rich ones, by the way.”

For her current project, Prisca Jöst is returning to Tunisia, a country that has piqued her interest for years. Besides, there have been good connections there since the LGPI pilot study. She is now concerned with how people are mobilized to participate in political protests and in community action. During her fall 2021 visit she worked with local partners to investigate how members of different neighborhoods got involved in an initiative to clean up beaches blighted by plastic waste. To collect data, local staff went from door to door in a wealthy neighborhood, a middle-class neighborhood, and a *quartier populaire* (working-class neighborhood), interviewing residents and inviting them to participate in the cleanup effort.

And have the beaches gotten cleaner? “For now, yes,” says Prisca Jöst. “But whether people will continue to go clean up remains to be seen. In Tunisia, there is great frustration about the

socio-economic situation. People are rather unwilling to get involved locally, even in small things that a neighborhood could manage quite well itself. But what really stuck in my mind was that participation was much stronger among young people than among the older ones. Kids and young people always play football on the beach, ride their bikes, meet friends, and they are so sick of the garbage problem. That’s why they were the ones who were happy to get something done together.” /



Prisca Jöst-Brenneis is a Postdoctoral Research Fellow at the Cluster and affiliated with the Program on Governance and Local Development (GLD) at Gotthenburg University.

Collecting garbage at a Tunisian beach



INSIGHTS FROM OUR RESEARCH

No solidarity without norm conformity.

Democratic backsliding 48 challenges European solidarity

(M. Heermann, S. Koos, D. Leuffen)

The EU is built on solidarity—and on the principle of the rule of law. What happens when the two come into conflict? Based on a survey analyzing European solidarity during the coronavirus crisis, the authors look for answers to this question.

Under the impact of the rampant pandemic, the European Union member states passed two revolutionary resolutions in the summer and fall of 2020. The 750 billion euro “Next Generation EU” reconstruction plan is designed to enable member states to overcome the economic turmoil caused by the pandemic. The plan thus addresses financial inequality between the states. The new “rule of law mechanism” is meant to condition the disbursement of EU funds to member states on national compliance with basic principles of the rule of law.

Hungary and Poland, both beneficiaries of European redistribution, felt they were the target of the new rule and promptly sued before the European Court of Justice. In his opinion of December 2021, the Advocate General of the Court of Justice stated that the rule of law mechanism is compatible with the EU treaties. A ruling is expected at some point in 2022. Yet there are very good reasons for linking European solidarity to compliance with fundamental EU norms.

After years of European austerity, “Next Generation EU” is an unexpected demonstration of European solidarity. Aside from loans, the reconstruction fund includes grants for EU countries particularly hit by the crisis, which do not have to be repaid. What seemed unthinkable during the European debt crisis in the early 2010s was achieved here: the member states agreed on common debt. Legally, “Next Generation EU” is a one-time instrument. Politicians such as former German Chancellor Angela Merkel, who previously opposed the so-called “Eurobonds,” now point to the special circumstances of the pandemic and the tempo-

rary nature of the reconstruction plan. Others see the plan as a first step toward more “fiscal integration,” a “Hamiltonian moment,” as Merkel’s successor in the chancellor’s office, Olaf Scholz, called it, alluding to the U.S. treasury secretary who in 1790 proposed that the federal government assumed the entire debt of the states.

According to numerous voices, especially from the southern member states, a stronger fiscal policy to consolidate the monetary union is long overdue. In times of recession, for example, a well-funded eurozone budget could help struggling member states by means of countercyclical economic stimulus programs and thus stabilize the entire currency area. However, the political hurdles on the path towards a genuine European fiscal union are high. One thing is clear: without the consent of the citizens, especially in the net donor countries, it is not going to happen.

The economic disparities—and the resulting conflicts—between northern and southern Europe often overshadow another crisis facing the EU, namely the erosion of democratic principles and the rule of law in some of its member states. This process of democratic backsliding is most advanced in Hungary and Poland. There, democratically elected governments are curtailing the independence of the judiciary and the freedom of the press in order to change the political system to their liking and minimize the opposition’s chance of winning elections. The V-Dem Institute at the University of Gothenburg now classifies Hungary as an “electoral autocracy”; Poland, too, is no longer considered a “liberal democracy.” →

The EU, founded as a community of democratic states governed by the rule of law, has so far failed to find effective means against the autocratization of Hungary and Poland. The rule of law mechanism is now intended to remedy the situation. In the future, the European Commission will have the power to refuse the disbursement of funds to member states if it thinks that respect for rule-of-law principles is not guaranteed in the countries in question. A qualified majority of all member states would then be needed to overturn such a Commission decision. Since Hungary and Poland are net recipients, hopes are high that an effective means of exerting pressure has now been found.

In normative terms, there are very good reasons to justify linking fiscal integration—that is,

combining existing pots of money to compensate for regional prosperity gaps—with compliance with fundamental EU norms. To say that democratic backsliding is incompatible with fiscal union is consistent with some state-related theories of justice, for example. Philosopher Thomas Nagel argues that “[j]ustice is something we owe through our shared institutions only to those with whom we stand in a strong political relation.” Solidarity in the EU thus requires a common understanding of shared norms and a willingness to help each other. This foundation does not exist if some member states choose to disregard democratic principles enshrined as fundamental values in the EU treaties.

In our study on people’s readiness to endorse redistribution during the coronavirus crisis, we



Max Heermann is a doctoral researcher at the Chair of Political Science with a Focus on International Politics at the University of Konstanz.



Sebastian Koos is Professor of Sociology with a Focus on Social Movements at the University of Konstanz and a PI at the Cluster.



Dirk Leuffen is Professor of Political Science and International Politics at the University of Konstanz and a PI at the Cluster.

show that European citizens do share such seemingly abstract ideas. In a survey funded by the Inequality Cluster, we investigated the conditions under which voters in Germany supported financial and medical aid to other states during the pandemic. We presented participants with different countries that would hypothetically receive such aid. Then we asked to what extent the respondents would support giving aid to these countries. Aside from considerations of costs incurred by Germany, we found that Germans are particularly sensitive to two issues: First, their willingness to help decreased when participants were informed that a potential recipient country was violating rule of law principles. Secondly, they called for reciprocity: their willingness to help a country that had not participated in a redistribution of refugees in the recent past decreased significantly. This shows that citizens see a violation of fairness criteria if states do not align themselves with the fundamental values they agreed to by joining the EU.

Our results show that more fiscal integration along the lines of “Next Generation EU” will only be possible if compliance with liberal democratic norms is guaranteed throughout the EU. The results suggest that the basic idea behind the rule of law mechanism will enjoy broad public support, at least in the Union’s net donor countries.

As a consequence, the EU’s future economic and budgetary policies on the one hand and the preservation of the rule of law and democracy on the other must no longer be debated separately. They are closely linked, both normatively and politically. The democratic legitimacy of a European Union based on solidarity and social commitment needs the support of European citizens. This requires compliance with core rules of the game. Of course, this is in the interest of all people in the EU, even if individual governments are currently still resisting this logic out of self-interest. /

↓ EU flag on a public transport vehicle in Warsaw: silent protest against the government’s anti-EU rhetoric





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Our Early Career Researchers



„Weil man diesen traumhaften Blick auf die Insel Mainau einfach immer wieder zeigen muss! Because we can't not share this wonderful view on the Isle of Mainau!“

Statement der Universität Konstanz:
„Wir sind in großer Sorge um die Menschen in der Ukraine, darunter viele Wissenschaftler*innen und Studierende aus unseren Partnerhochschulen. Unsere Solidarität gilt der ukrainischen Bevölkerung.“
Statement by the University of Konstanz: „We are very concerned about the people in Ukraine, including many academics and students from our partner universities. Our solidarity is with the Ukrainian people.“

Die Cluster-Gemeinschaft unterstützt durch persönliches Engagement und stellt Mittel aus dem Hardship-Fund für Forschende aus der Ukraine bereit. *The Cluster community lends personal support and funds from the Hardship Fund to researchers from Ukraine.*



PERSPEKTIVEN



Immer der beste Treffpunkt: das Cluster Café
Always the best place to meet up: the Cluster Café



Hier arbeiten wir: am Rand des Campus, direkt im Grünen
Where you can find us: on the campus outskirts, right next to nature

PERSPECTIVES

Unsere Principal Investigators
Our Principal Investigators

