

Report on the official launch of UN Studies Working Group

and

Panel Workshop on Future UN Studies at ACUNS 2007 Annual Meeting

I. Launch of working group on UN Studies

Meeting Venue&Time:

Wednesday June 6, 2007
Ralph Bunch Institute, CUNY, NYC
4:30 – 5:30pm EST

Organizers: Henrike Paepcke, Julia Harfensteller

Attendees:

- | | | |
|-------------------------------|---------------------|-------------------|
| 1. John Mathiason (by phone) | 2. Bill Miller | 3. Natalie Hudson |
| 4. Sylvia Karlsson (by phone) | 5. Stefan Oeltsch | 6. Peter Hoffman |
| 7. Christer Jönsson | 8. Susanah Stoessel | 9. Maria Ivanova |
| 10. Luise Druke | | |

Notes: Julia Harfensteller

Summary & results

Who is interested in UN Studies, and why? 10 ACUNS members attended the launching event and discussed their vision and ideas about UN studies. They offered a variety of backgrounds and interests - ranging from teaching and learning methods to interdisciplinary research; from UN reform to all kinds of governance issues (including internet, humanitarian and environmental governance).

What defines UN Studies? In general, participants agreed that UN Studies should neither focus on UN institutions alone nor on specific issue areas. They stated the need for a broader understanding of the term “UN Studies” as an interdisciplinary field of study and research. Some highlighted the potential synergies between the UN and the topic of global governance. Others pointed out the importance of an orientation towards the future, i.e., the younger generation.

What do we wish to accomplish within our working group? The group agreed to develop a common vision to better integrate the various project ideas to be implemented within the next year.

What kind of projects could help us achieve our targets? Several ideas for concrete activities, based on the perceived shortcomings, were discussed:

- EU and UN studies, global governance
- PhD students' projects
- state-of-the-art of UN-related programs
- history of UNEP
- textbook using new approaches and methods
- wiki and online portal

Next steps: agenda, goals and projects. An online conference meeting is scheduled for early July to 1) further specify the common normative framework (Why UN Studies, and for whom?) and 2) decide on concrete projects to be tackled within the coming year, how to best organize our work.

1. Welcome and purpose of the meeting

Henrike welcomed all attendees and thanked them for participating in the official launch and discussion of the UN Studies Working Group. She particularly acknowledged John and Sylvia, calling in from overseas (Switzerland and Finland). She explained that one of main goals of the meeting was to fill the term “UN studies” with more life. As organizers of this group, Julia and she wished to provide food for thought for the discussion on the proposed goals and agenda; tackling pertinent questions such as:

Why a working group on UN Studies? What defines UN Studies? Who needs UN Studies? What kind of projects could help us achieve our targets? What is our timeframe, and what tools and methods would be useful for us?

2. Introduction round

The meeting started with an introduction round. Participants were asked to report about their background, interest in and expectations about this working group as well as to pinpoint problems they have encountered and that they wished to resolve with the help of this group.

Henrike Paepcke

- dissertation on the multiple facets of the SG's office, incl. personality + communication styles
- interest in connecting people, disciplines, issues; as senior fellow of a German think tank, she found that students are mostly interested in employment or internship opportunities at IOs and seek advice on how to do research on the UN
- interest in working group: develop common vision to promote the UN as a primary subject for research and studies – with spotlight on the younger generation
- project idea: how can new technologies (social software) foster new forms of collaboration, communication, interaction -> set up online portal for innovation and creativity in research and teaching about the UN

Julia Harfensteller

- PhD at University Bremen/ Technical University Berlin, writing her doctoral thesis on the development of the UN concept of peace; currently, she is a visiting research fellow at the Ralph Bunche Institute for international studies, The Graduate Center, City University.
- criticises that research and education about the UN foster highly isolated knowledge and perceptions about the international institution
- engagement within the working group aims at discussing and working out theoretical, interdisciplinary approaches on the UN to bridge the gap between disciplinary facilitated islands of knowledge

Luise Druke

- has been working for 30 years at UN / Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)
- currently teaching at Hannover focusing on UN and humanitarian governance, looking at post conflict problems, emerging norms, accountability, responsibility to prevent
- in her view, UN Studies are missing in Germany

Christer Jönsson

- interested in UN's role in particular policy fields
- together with Roger Coats cooperation on UN Aids
- how does UN fit in various modes of global governance

Kirsten Haack

- main position: learning enhancement, pedagogy on IOs, UN
- teaching on UN is the most confused of all disciplines
- states overlap between EU/UN studies which is not covered by current teaching

Maria Ivanova

- global environmental governance project at Yale Center for Environmental Law and Policy
- substantial interest in environmental governance, the role of UNEP: how can we have an effective global environmental system? how has the UN developed in the environmental field?
- working on a project on the environmental history of the UN; since UN History is missing
- wants to reform the UN; develop measures of how to assess development on UN; goal is 1. to contribute to the UN reform process and 2. to enhance teaching

Susanah Stoessel

- Graduate of the College of William and Mary with a bachelor's in American Studies
- Member of the Global Environmental Governance (GEG) Project at William and Mary
- With an interdisciplinary background, she is very interested in the interdisciplinarity of UN Studies and how this working group may help establish UN Studies as a discipline in its own right, affording it a wider and denser audience than it presently enjoys.

Stefan Oeltsch

- coordinator for European studies programme at University of Hannover

Natalie Hudson

- women's activism in the UN; teaches courses in International Organization and Law
- Ph.D. candidate at the University of Connecticut; tenure-track position, Political Science Department at the University of Dayton (starting in Fall)

- strong interest of humanitarian degree program on IO
- wants to integrate a component on UN

Sylvia Karlsson

- as a political scientist she is involved in a major research project global governance/legitimacy
- her interest for the working group focuses on multidisciplinary and research issues about UN
- problem: big leap between reform approaches

John Mathiason

- professor of IR, long-term member of UN Secretariat
- research interest: management of international public sector
- interests: 1. reform, results based management; how can the UN improve; 2. regime creation: does a lot with internet governance (motivation: training next generation of international public servants -> his goal coming back to academia after practical experiences in UN)

3. Discussion of agenda, goals and project ideas

Henrike then invited all participants to comment on and discuss the proposed agenda and goals of the working group.

The discussion evolved around the following aspects:

Shortcomings / problems of current research and teaching on the UN:

- Lack of scholarly interest in **relations between UN and EU** (Christer)
- **No mutual interest** between researchers / disciplinary fields of **EU/UN/Global Governance** (Christer)
- Syllabi are very broad and not focused on UN; there is **no specific UN syllabi** out there (John) *see Kirsten's overview of UN-focused study programs in the UK; Henrike's presentation, both posted to the IGLOO website's library*

On the concept / idea of UN Studies:

- UN Studies could be defined as **UN-focused field of research and studies** (all)
- UN studies should be settled at graduate level; it should **focus on UN**, but also encompass **different policies** (Luise)
- The concept of UN studies should **not be too narrow** since we are looking at a type of **governance structures** which have not existed before (John)
- UN Studies should be conceptualized as **interdisciplinary research and study field**, because the UN is a good focus for interdisciplinary cooperation (Christer)

Aims of the working group / expectations / project ideas:

- The working group should be a forum where one can get input from different interested parties, for example researchers or practitioners who work on specific areas of interest. It should facilitate the **exchange of different views on the UN** -> global governance, different issue areas; however, it should focus on **more than just issue areas** (Maria)
- We should develop a **state of the art of current UN-based study programs** and ask people who are related to that; the website of our online community should offer links to **syllabi** on UN-related studies and projects; we should refer to the ACUNS website (Luise)
- The group should ask **PhD students** what they are doing, what problems they have, and foster collaboration between them (Christer); we could draw on the ACUNS attendees list (Maria)

Working methods, activities:

- The group should work with **deadlines like the next ACUNS meeting** in Bonn or a summer academy; and in the meantime cooperate via online community (Luise)
- Our next steps should be to **coordinate our interests** in some way and to **frame our concept of UN Studies** (Maria)
- We could use the new **online community** for this purpose. In our upcoming online meeting, we could work on the IGLOO community's content and structure. We should **clarify questions like „who is our target audience? what is the next UN generation?“** (Henrike)

4. Next steps

Henrike and Julia will arrange for an **online conference in early July** so that we can continue our discussion on the agenda and projects of this working group. The outcome of this upcoming meeting will then be used to generate an overall **project plan** including deadlines / timetable and projects / tasks.

II. Workshop Panel: Tackling Future UN Studies: Views of the „Next UN Generation“

Meeting Venue&Time:

Friday June 8, 2007
The Graduate Center, CUNY, NYC
2:00 – 3:30 pm EST

Panel Chair: Swadesh Rana, Former Chief, Conventional Arms Branch, United Nations

Panelists:

Henrike Paepcke,
Duesseldorf Institute for Foreign and Security Policy

Julia Harfensteller,
University of Bremen, Technical University Berlin

Kirsten Haack,
The Glasgow School of Art

Christina Sookram,
University of Waterloo

Bill Miller,
Kentucky State University

Notes: Susanah Stoessel

1. Presentations

Henrike Paepcke: “Detecting Contents and Key Features of UN Studies” (*Vision on UN Studies*)

- Development of a framework for UN Studies; one that is encompassing and normative and that links people with the UN and the issues it is concerned with.
- We need UN Studies as a stand-alone field; so many issues/disciplines touch the UN, its concerns
- Example manifestations: 1) UN Studies Wikipedia; 2) Full marketplace portal online through which advice, expertise, publications, reviews, and comments can be shared and interpersonal connections can be made

Julia Harfensteller: “Interdisciplarity within UN Studies” (*Approach on UN Studies*)

- UN Studies must be interdisciplinary, it must be a process of cooperation and a form of collaboration among scholars and between scholars and practitioners; it should overcome disciplinary constraints and paradigms to develop a common language and a common method
- Academia delivers insufficient answer right now; UN Studies will provide us with new tools to tackle new challenges
- Global governance itself is a field made up of overlapping disciplines. We need a new educational framework for this integrated field that will frame the UN as a multi-dimensional institution and that will bridge current gaps in knowledge

Kirsten Haack: “Rediscovering the Wheel: the curriculum of UN studies, learning levels and Progression” (*Methodology in UN Studies*)

- We must first understand the issue at hand and the discipline it is located in; we must analyze, evaluate, and integrate info to make sense of it
- With regard to Intellectual Development, there is surface and deeper learning. The uni level is characterized by the performance of “identifying” and “describing.” The relational level is deeper and is characterized by the verbs “integrate, compare and contrast, apply.” The extended abstract level is deepest and is characterized by “theorize, generate, hypothesize, reflect.”
- “Curriculum,” here, means framework and what is communicated to the students
- Model UN often isn’t clearly linked to theoretical learning and is consequently seen as a “gimmick” rather than a deep learning tool; cognitive-active learning is more important than physically-active learning.
- SCQF – Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework

Christina Sookram: ‘New “rules of Engagement” for Teaching: Using Active Learning Methods for UN Studies in the Classroom’ (*Techniques in UN Studies*)

- Active learning techniques emphasize on students learning rather than on teacher teaching
- Constraints: teachers are being asked to engage students and also analyze current events
- Research, social, and negotiation skills are taught by having students present work to their peers and work in teams with their peers

- 2 possible exercises: 1) model UN simulation (UN Association of the US schedules model UN conferences), it is of paramount importance that students clearly see the activity's relevance to the course's objectives; 2) student-practitioner workshops: in the form of Q&A sessions, video conferences, or summer workshops – the idea is to give students direct access to the real world operation of the UN system
- Sharing knowledge and sharing information
- Sensitizing students to the complexities of the UN system may help the public to better understand why it fails at certain tasks and to curb criticism thereof.

Bill Miller: "Graduate Teaching at KSU The United Nations: Public Administration in the International Arena" (*Packaging / public side of UN Studies*)

- UN Association of the US – unausa.org
- The media does not cover the UN well – we need to help correct them (beginning locally, contact media source when you hear or read something that is incorrect)
- What can we do to help people learn about the UN? First, public administration students should learn about the international field, that opportunities for them also lie there.
- Help students recognize the UN as a resource and a research tool

2. Audience questions and comments

- Professor from West Texas (university) laments the fact that she cannot get any course with the word "UN" in the course title to pass the curriculum committee. She is getting ready to teach "Contemporary Global Issues" and wants any advice on teaching about the UN.
- It's possible to use computers for an elevated learning dimension
- How do you take students from ground zero to understanding? How do educators help them make the links they need to make without scaring them or causing them to shut down?
- What is compelling about the UN? Why should the young generation "give a damn?"
- Representative of the International Studies Association: how do we make sure tools and activities are not seen as "gimmicks?" There is a need for issues that will draw students in and the knowledge base and interactive tools to go deeper.
- Recommendation for UN Wiki: include access points with civil society as well as with business, create a world map of what the UN looks like (example of media content: oneworld.net)

3. Panel Chair's Comments

- “Go light on the past, accept the present, and project yourself into the future”
- Associate with and engage youth in developing countries, those whose problems will be the UN's concern
- Develop a global vision for UN Studies and then reduce it to something “doable”
- Think in terms of civil society as eternity: they've always been there and they always will be there.