



REVISITING THE GLOBAL IMAGINARY

THEORIES, IDEOLOGIES,
SUBJECTIVITIES: ESSAYS
IN HONOR OF
MANFRED STEGER

EDITED BY CHRIS HUDSON
AND ERIN K. WILSON



Revisiting the Global Imaginary

Chris Hudson • Erin K. Wilson
Editors

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Theories, Ideologies, Subjectivities: Essays
in Honor of Manfred Steger

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PREFACE

In the last few decades Global Studies has emerged as an important field of inquiry. It has generated a great deal of academic interest and insight as well as a huge volume of publications. While there have been a number of distinguished academics and scholars who have deepened our understanding, enlarged the body of knowledge, and helped disseminate ideas about our changed consciousness in the global era, Manfred Steger's extensive body of work has made him one of the most significant and influential scholars working in this field today.

As an eminent global intellectual, he has been instrumental in shaping the consciousness of a generation of scholars and students and orienting them toward critical thinking on questions of globalization and what it means for social life in the twenty-first century. As a polymath, Steger has absorbed influences from a wide range of sources. Notable among them are Roland Robertson's assertion that globalization is a revolution in consciousness, and Charles Taylor's study of social imaginaries. Steger's account of the rise of the global imaginary is a masterpiece of original thinking that has enriched intellectual lives across all continents. As a seminal work, it is an essential reading for any student of globalization, globalism, or the global era.

Steger's contribution to the humanities and social sciences should not be underestimated. To mark his 30-year career as a teacher, researcher, and mentor, and to celebrate his instrumental role in the development of Global Studies as a field of academic inquiry, we offer these essays as a *festschrift*. The essays demonstrate through subject matter, methodology or epistemological foundations, their debt to Manfred Steger's research or

acknowledgment of his influence. They investigate the theoretical implications of Steger's work using a variety of approaches, and, by locating sites where the global imaginary might be observed, examine the manifestations of a global consciousness in mediated and actual spaces, symbolic regimes, political action, and ideologies.

The volume begins with an introduction by Daniel E. Esser and James H. Mittelman outlining the transition from International Studies to Global Studies and ends with an Afterword by Terrell Carver that provides a summary of Steger's contribution to the field in light of the essays presented.

The volume is divided into two parts:

Part I: *Manfred Steger and the Theorizing of Globalization* introduces the theoretical framework of Global Studies and positions Steger's global imaginary in the field by considering its evolution, ontological foundations and significance, global methodologies, and its transdisciplinary framework.

Part II: *Manfred Steger's Global Imaginary and Everyday Life* locates the global imaginary in specific spaces where the global and the local may be observed in a complex arrangement of layering. It offers an investigation of the practices associated with the reproduction of the global imaginary in such diverse sites as mobile money, Irish pubs, cyber-capitalism, the globalization of urban space, music in post-apartheid South Africa, global political movements, and national histories, among others.

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PART I

Manfred Steger and the Theorizing
of Globalization



Blazing Scholarly Ground: From International Studies to Global Studies

Daniel E. Esser and James H. Mittelman

Containing multiple perspectives and methodological approaches, GS [global studies] both draws on and departs from traditional International Relations (IR) analysis of the post-World War II period, which was largely organized around the two opposing ‘schools’ of realism and idealism. Still, the differences between IR and GS clearly outweigh their similarities. (Steger 2015, 4)

Manfred Steger has become one of the leading scholars of globalization research and helped shape the field of global studies. His *métier* is defining the nexus of ideas and politics in a turbulent era. Steger dares his audiences to contemplate the construct of the world as bounded into discrete compartments of sovereign nation-states aspiring for modernity and development. He asks, ‘Why view them through disciplinary and interdisciplinary prisms?’ Better, Steger postulates, to reimagine multiple categories and modes of analysis. He lays the groundwork by probing two imaginaries. One celebrates the virtues of positivism, which purports to offer value-free inquiry and universal propositions. Another proclaims the virtues of a liberal, capitalist order—a hegemonic system rather than myriad hierarchies of power and wealth. Unlike this West-driven, liberal internationalism

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characteristic of certain currents in the revival of Kantian reformism (e.g., Held 2005), Steger refocuses the lens to allow for epistemologies and cosmologies from below. Going further, Steger also explores how these imaginaries are objectified as popular narratives.

Rich in insights, his work is an important corrective to practices that silence the exclusion of dissident voices and marginalization of subaltern peoples. He calls for reexamining the fundamental assumptions of the global knowledge structure, especially at universities, and decentering thinking. As the above quotation illustrates, Steger's scope is vast: the canvas encompasses theory and methodology, which, in turn, beg deep ontological and epistemological issues. To trace how Steger has blazed this trail, this introductory essay is intended as a baseline for mapping his analyses of the global. It is also an overview of the chapters that follow, each one interrogating his conceptualization of 'the global.'

First, we will mine features of Steger's biography. The second section delimits major themes in his corpus of publications. The third task is to identify strengths in the ways in which he reframes our field. Four, we note the challenges he presents to other thinkers. Lastly, our synopsis of the chapters ahead looks at how contributors to this volume attempt to meet them, pose related questions, and formulate their propositions. We close with suggestions on how to continue the quest for global studies in ways that build on Steger's work.

GAINING COSMOPOLITAN PERSPECTIVE

What sparked Steger's creativity and prompted him to tilt against the mainstream, albeit without discarding standard concerns such as the need for methodological rigor? What are the hallmarks of his intellectual formation? Although there is no pat formula for how to develop a cosmopolitan perspective and become a global citizen, much can be derived from an individual's story. An important tool, bio-ethnographies of reflexive scholars cast light on the ways that a researcher works and seeks nuanced understanding (see, e.g., Geertz 1995). While entanglement between the self and our calling in the academy is intricate and cannot be cleanly divided, a bio-ethnography offers a window on innovation and potential for parametric transformation. Hardly anecdotal or matters of curiosity, the personal story is melded to professional changes in international studies and, at the same time, reveals the sources of sensibilities.

Years of study and experience outside the university led to Steger's pioneering scholarship. For him, this early period as a practitioner in the Austrian banking system is marked by breadth of learning, ways of knowing the inner self, and empathy for the plight of others. In his country of origin, Steger earned a graduate certificate in banking and finance at the First Austrian Bank Business College, Vienna, Austria. Subsequently, he worked for six years as an investment and loan officer at the First Austrian Bank in Vienna. From that standpoint, Steger observed the ideas in action and policy framework of national and global capitalism. He learned how money culture, with its rationalist thinking, can erode other forms of reasoning, as in the fine arts, music, and philosophy, not only in Austria but also the European region of the global arena. (This is not to overlook corporate funding for museums, symphonies, and humanistic studies—market-state hybrids in philanthropic capitalism that effectively shrink the public sphere.) Eventually, Steger chose to become a refugee from the world of investment and finance, where he had a bird's-eye view of the dynamics of financial globalization.

Steeped in an intellectual environment of European philosophy and social theory, he turned to theorists cognizant of the power of intersubjectivity. The oeuvres of Friedrich Nietzsche (1964, 20–21; 1968, 156–63) maintain that social institutions gravitate toward isomorphism and lament that education can breed an unhealthy conformism. Karl Mannheim (1936) chronicles the history of the term ideology and argues that ideologies afford insight into the basis of societies. Moreover, Carl Schmitt (1932, 1950) attracts attention from the intellectual left and the right for his distinction between 'friends' and 'enemies,' his concept of the sovereign, and the 'state of exception,' as today when laws are suspended for the treatment of suspected terrorists and for certain groups of immigrants. These thinkers threw light on the power of ideas. And Steger pursued this avenue of inquiry by tracking the role of the knowing class, those who produce ideologies, disseminate them, and objectify them. He found this route largely through self-reflectivity.

While searching for transcendent meaning in his own life and various belief systems, Steger explored myriad cultural forms and religions. After training in Zen Buddhism, he taught Zen in Honolulu and Princeton. With his wife, the popular writer Perle Besserman, he co-authored books on how to make this spiritual practice accessible in the Western world (Besserman and Steger 1991; Steger and Besserman 2001). These texts

reflect Steger's inquisitive habits of mind and an appreciation for the value of tolerance.

Other long-term interests are the writings of early socialist thinkers, resulting in volumes in German and English on Engels, Marx, and Eduard Bernstein (Steger and Carver 1999; Steger 1996). Meanwhile, Steger's range spanned studies of violence and non-violence, especially Gandhian ethics (Steger and Lind 1999, plus several journal articles on this philosophy), as well as indigenous knowledge and local experiences.

Steger is also a seasoned university administrator, an inspiring teacher admired by droves of pupils, and an esteemed colleague. He has logged time as dean (head) of the School of Global, Urban and Social Studies at Australia's Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology University, as well as director of its Globalism Research Centre, and as senior advisor on international education and globalization in the College of Social Sciences, University of Hawai'i-Mānoa. The recipient of excellence in teaching awards, he has distinguished himself in the classroom. Chapters in this volume authored by his former students, some of them his coauthors, attest to how Steger's pedagogical skills have opened the gates of learning. He has equipped these cosmopolitan citizens with the abilities to make a better world.

So, too, Steger is known for his generous ways of relating to colleagues, such as writing numerous letters of recommendation, drafting copious comments on papers and dissertations, and refereeing for several journals. In outreach to the general public, Steger has been a consultant to a PBS television series and for government. His many books, some in the Rowman & Littlefield book series he co-edits with Terrell Carver, have won plaudits from reviewers, are written lucidly, and sell widely. They consistently challenge master narratives, everyday representations of a commodified and messy world, and taken-for-granted protocols in the academy. Inasmuch as ideas are powerful engines of historical transformation, as in the French, American, and Bolshevik revolutions, and with various nationalisms, he wades into controversies: among them, that the human condition may be understood in terms of the end of ideology, the end of history, and/or a flat world.

Steger's mentoring and writing awaken an awareness that subnational, national, and regional identities can be complementary to solidarities at a planetary level. Holding that compartmentalizing membership groups into 'we' and 'they,' 'us' and 'them,' and 'insiders' and 'outsiders' can be used as a form of domination masking multiple self-identities, he views

othering as a form of social control. Relatedly, Steger highlights the fluidity, uncertainty, and insecurity in daily life, and explicates the driving forces of modernity, mobility, and interconnectedness. In a word: globalization is understood as ‘the expansion and intensification of social relations across world-space and world-time’ (Steger 2008, 246).

THEMES

The persistent, most recurrent themes in Steger’s work are fourfold: identifying the limitations of disciplinary social science, rethinking the knowledge structure through transdisciplinarity, developing globalization research and global studies, and translating ideational constructs into action in the form of ‘justice globalism.’ Let us now consider each of these interconnected moves, beginning with how the Americanized disciplines emerged.

Disciplinary knowledge materialized at different times in multiple locations. Whereas Germany preceded the United States and the United Kingdom on this path, American higher education—to have worldwide influence—originated mainly as a hybrid of English and German forms, and gradually developed its own national features. From the 1870s, disciplinary specializations and new graduate programs were established. During the 1890–1910 period, disciplines, in the contemporary sense of academic units, demarcated the organization of knowledge in American universities. Departmental lines were constructed, though the timing of when they were drawn varied by discipline. The growth of universities and career mobility among them meant that the knowledge structure required internal order. Disciplinary networks were channeled according to a division of labor. The market supplied jobs for academics whose intellectual life was arranged in units of concentrated learning (passage adapted from Mittelman 2018, 101, which builds on Abbott 2001, 131–36). It is important to note that this shift was from general education to a disciplinary system. In the American knowledge structure, it blended the English residential college and Germany’s Humboldtian emphasis on research and graduate study (Mittelman 2018, 101).

The trouble is that broad world issues, such as climate change, criminal networks, migration, and pandemics, do not fit tidily within the boundaries dividing disciplines. Alert to the barriers between branches of knowledge, as well as ways in which the notion of territoriality can deflect attention from novel agglomerations of space and time spurred by

cross-border flows and extraterritoriality, Steger piloted a transdisciplinary perspective on globalizing processes.

Skeptical of institutionalized disciplines and overspecialization, he recognized knowledge hegemonies, ways of policing in the academy, and forms of gatekeeping in the professoriate. Preferring pluralism, he was ever alert to Euro-centric, top-down thinking. In that, departmental structures favor ideational cohesion, and transdisciplinarity offers a more variegated way to build theory and solve problems. Succinctly stated, it may be grasped as ‘that which is at once between disciplines, across the different disciplines, and beyond all discipline’ (Nicolescu 2010, 22). Rather than adopting a relativist view that anything goes in social research, transdisciplinarity calls for relaxing disciplinary borders and integrating knowledge sets. It conjoins cognate disciplines without dissolving them. In addition, transdisciplinarity can be deployed to encourage scholars to keep their sights on both rigor and creativity (see Esser and Mittelman, [forthcoming](#)).

Beyond underscoring the drawbacks to a territorial preoccupation embedded in state-centric thinking and methodological nationalism, Steger contends that global studies promises an opportunity to reframe ‘the national.’ Pulling together themes throughout his career, he designs a latticework of global studies that consists of four elements: globalization, transdisciplinarity, space and time, and critical thinking. His book with Amentahru Wahrab (2017) examines each one of these mainstays and, then, the integrative knowledge structure. The two authors detail the composition of these constitutive themes and what links them. Prior investigation is incorporated in their explanatory chapters. Especially important to this effort, Paul James and Steger’s exposition of the conceptual origins and genealogical lineages of ‘globalization’ is a building block (2015). Their empirical digging taps interviews with 12 pioneers of global studies. The diggers’ findings are imbued in the normative implications of Steger’s scholarship as it relates to political practice.

Steger and his collaborators home in on the intersection of ethics and policy. They posit that ‘market globalism’ dominates the political sphere, yet is subject to multiple crises, as in the realms of finance, food, and climate. Organic intellectuals, some of them scholar-activists, dialogically engage this process. Steger et al. (2013) point to ‘justice globalism’ as an alternative. As they demonstrate in theoretical terms and empirically, this imaginary connects global governance, specific sites, and social movements. It counters market ideology and projects visions. Neither utopian