Chapter 10

Sites and Demonstrations in STAIR Scholarship

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The space that STAIR creates for scholars is an exciting, challenging and liberating one. There is something fascinating about people who have worked in other disciplines (medicine, technology, the arts, big pharma etc) and, from that perspective, have developed an understanding of the implications of diverse practices, theoretical standpoints, assumptions and systems of international relations. That is not to suggest that IR scholars do not look out to other disciplines and make interesting linkages – of course they do. But there is something unique and compelling about someone who sees those international relations implications *before* they engage with the discipline itself. Some STAIR members were drawn to study international relations because there seemed to be so much of it at play in what they did previously - in the lab, in the office, in the studio. This section features work from a musician, a former medical sales representative and a filmmaker – all of whom have turned their attention to the international political dimensions of the fields in which they have previously been working. The capacity for STAIR to offer an intellectual 'home base' for those curious enough to look out to developments in other disciplines is one of its strengths. Its openness to scholars who are coming from those disciplines, bringing a wealth of knowledge and experience and crucially *different worldviews* is another.

It is not surprising that worldviews are changing and that those changes can be linked to science, technology and arts. Although it has perhaps not been explicitly articulated in IR scholarship, these dimensions have long played a role in how states relate, compete, and cooperate (Acuto, Caltofen and Carr, forthcoming 2017). The elevation of science in the Enlightenment provided a new platform for meritocracy in Europe but it also justified an expansionist and colonizing foreign policy for many states. Industrial revolutions reshaped the world as societies transitioned from sustainable living to a largely urbanized and highly inter-dependent existence (see Acuto's chapter and extensive work on this). Creative expression has not only provided an outlet for political views but it has provided a record of those views – in the arts, the music, and the theatre that emerged from societies undergoing both change and continuity. Most significantly for STAIR scholars, these dimensions of science, technology and arts not only intersect with and interact with one another – they fundamentally shape and are shaped by international relations.

In many ways, this inter-connectedness is the context of the times we live in and comment upon. It is the soil that we're planted in, the paper on which we are written. Connections define us, constrain us and liberate us. In a sense, the work of an IR scholar (especially those of the STAIR ilk) is seeking out and analyzing connections and intersections in order to make sense of the world of international relations – in all of its forms and on all of its levels. We have long acknowledged that IR is more than the state, but STAIR scholars look to some diverse and illuminating quarters to identify where and how this happens. Actors, power dynamics and spheres of influence are connected, and becoming ever more so. The fourth

industrial revolution characterized by the Internet of Things is the era in which we now travel and it is becoming clear that approaches developed largely in the context of the first and second industrial revolutions (or before) are no longer able to capture the breadth and depth of what IR means today. [1]

This section of the book turns to explicit examples of the intersection between science, technology and art in IR – we refer to them here as 'sites'. Sites are interactions; junctures, places, practices, mini-ecosystems – where IR happens. Through a number of carefully mapped out case studies, the following chapters build upon the theoretical scaffolding of the previous section. They pull out specific interactions to highlight some of the obscured power relations, spheres of influence and the diverse range of actors that shape international relations – or are in turn, shaped by them. They illustrate why it is useful to look at IR through these lenses – and what they can reveal that was missing before.

One of the most interesting aspects of reading these chapters together is the way that the authors argue so deftly and eloquently for a more expansive approach to what international relations *interactions* are. They fundamentally challenge orthodox ideas about the shape and space of the international. Michele Acuto's analogy of a *mille-feuille* is one intriguing example and Camellia Webb-Gannon's *artscape* is another.

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[1] The first involved the mechanization of the textile industry in the late 1700s. The second industrial saw the advent of the steel age and also electricity in the latter half of the 1800s. Both of these brought about the complete re-organisation of societies from self-sufficient, largely agrarian communities into urbanized, interdependent communities. The third industrial revolution is the digital age – the invention of the Internet and the web.

The work of these authors is, you will find, anything but conventional. Individually and collectively, they offer fresh and unexpected perspectives on the intersections of science, technology and the arts with IR. Their willingness to think beyond long-held parameters of our discipline is exciting and incredibly valuable. The purpose of this introductory chapter however, is to coherently link their work back to the discipline for readers new to this emerging body of work. Why does Michele Acuto ask us to consider microbes as actors in IR? How can Christina Hellmich draw on cardio-pulmonary anatomy to explain misconceptions about the state? And what does a tiny, stuffed bird have to do with the forces of colonization? Camellia Webb-Gannon will explain.

The chapters in this section can all be understood, to some degree or other, as reflections on three themes; power, actors and spheres of influence – the first two coming together to help define the third. Power, actors and spheres of influence together constitute a fairly conventional framework of analysis for IR. This is intentional here. I draw these together not to suggest that this is the authors' only or even primary purpose but to highlight some of the ways that this very creative and innovative work speaks back to and extends some of the central concerns of our discipline. This section allows the worldviews developed in the previous section to come to life in a material and empirical form.

Diverse Range of Actors

We can look back to the international relations literature of the 1970s to trace the growing awareness that actors other than states are important for international relations. The pivotal work of Nye and Keohane (1972, 1977) on transnational relations as well as the growth of international political economy set off a wave of scholarship that explored the roles of non-state actors. Much of this work initially focused on trade but increasingly expanded to include the role of NGOs, diaspora communities, and transnational terrorist movements.

The authors in this section push these boundaries further to expand our conception of what constitutes an actor in international relations. They introduce an incredibly diverse range of human and non-human actors that participate in and influence international relations. In doing so, I would argue that in a similar way to the IR scholars of the 1970s, these academics force open by another degree that lens that was once so narrowly focused on states. They allow us to think expansively about agency in IR and their work highlights once again, the sometimes very conventional approaches to where and how international relations happens.

Through an examination of the complex *assemblages* surrounding the Ebola outbreak in east Africa in 2015, Michele Acuto maps out the multitude of ways in which the mundane, the everyday, the *micro* form part of this thing we understand as international relations. Acuto takes us to extremes - into the world of the microbe as an actual actor, along the lines of Bruno Latour's 'missing masses' (Latour. 1992). This evolving approach to non-sentient beings as actors in IR is innovative and

important, especially as we enter into an age of artificial intelligence and machine learning. Acuto confronts us with questions about the extent to which non-human actors must be taken into account and he highlights the dimensions of IR that we miss when we overlook these actors. He also makes a deeply insightful contribution to very nascent thinking about what will define humanity both within and beyond IR in the 21st century.

In his chapter on the Mad Cow disease outbreak in the 1990s, David Hornsby points to the ways in which scientists influence multi-lateral trade policy negotiations. This is part of a renewed interest in 'science diplomacy' - an exploration of the way scientists (and, I would argue, the technical community) impact upon (or can even promote) diplomacy in international relations. In a world increasingly struggling to keep trade and public policy tethered to advances in science and technology, advice and input from these communities can have a profound impact on international negotiations and decisions. Scientists in this chapter are not on the outside of international relations; nor are they running in parallel to it. They are deeply embedded in IR. Consequently, Hornsby argues, it is important that we understand and acknowledge who these actors are, how their agendas and ambitions are formed, and on what basis they interact with and influence international relations.

Willow Williamson takes a self-reflexive approach by focusing on herself as an actor – as an IR scholar. She tells a personal story of collaboration – both through music composition and through developing software applications and she relates these experiences to her research. Williamson's worldview is one of intense personal

reflexivity that promotes awareness of context and of one's relationship to others as integral to the research process. Here, she deconstructs the elements of collaboration in terms of power and representation and she uses this experience to comment, not directly on IR itself, but on the practices and processes that she engages with in her own research. This is really about Williamson herself as an actor – and by extension, about all of us who work in this field. It is about collaborating with partners – and crucially, thinking creatively about how we might work across disciplines without that shared language that becomes so integral to communicating our research findings within a particular research community. This kind of reflexivity puts us, as IR scholars, back in the picture. It strips away objectivity to reveal our inner workings and external relations and in a world no longer satisfied with dominance of IR from a narrowly Western perspective. And it does so in a way that moves well beyond our theoretical, empirical or methodological proclivities.

These approaches to the diversity of actors worthy of scrutiny in IR or rather, the authors' awareness of them, are not only enlightening in themselves. They also serve to highlight just how much further we might extend the trajectory of that work initiated in the 1970s to develop a much more expansive understanding of who participates in IR and just how many (previously) invisible actors there are. In doing so, they open the conversation for rethinking who and what an actor in IR may be and this will be an essential move as we progress further into an age of automation and machine learning.

Power Relations

In addition to highlighting the diversity of actors that we need to take into consideration in IR today, STAIR research also has important implications for our understandings of power in global politics. Again, like actors, power is a concept that has received sustained attention from our discipline and it is one that we have seen significantly reshaped over the latter half of the 20th century. From the hard power of realist dominated IR, to 'soft' and 'smart' power (Nye), the three faces of power (Lukes), knowledge/power and biopower (Foucault), a re-emphasis on Gramscian hegemonic power, - we have a rich vocabulary for this concept and it continues to develop and evolve. The chapters in this section engage with a range of approaches to power in order to locate and identify it in some unanticipated quarters with unexpected consequences.

Analogy and metaphor can be powerful tools for making sense of uncertainty – never has this been more apparent than in the information age when we are confronted with so many non-tangible and conceptual challenges to conventional approaches to IR. Hellmich engages with this particular form of discursive power by pointing out the tendency in IR to employ conceptual analogies that mix medicine and security. She offers examples such as referring to 'immunizing' against terrorism or to counterinsurgency warfare as 'triage' (and she could have added here, the entire computer 'virus' discourse). Hellmich simultaneously questions these metaphorical implications in medicine and in IR and by doing so, demonstrates the power of these accepted metaphors to promote the status quo. We no longer question the 'pumping function' of the heart, despite, as Hellmich shows, the many

reasons why we might. And by extension, she argues, we lack critical reflection on the notion that the state is the primary source of order in international relations.

Alison Howell employs the social construction of technology to detect interests and power in the application of medicine which, she argues, 'is never neutral'. Rather it is shaped by – and in turn shapes, international relations. Howell does so through the provision of three sites that illustrate this constitutive relationship: war, humanitarianism, and global governance/international cooperation. Howell draws some compelling lines of connection between IR and medicine in which she demonstrates the way that medicine has fundamentally shaped a European worldview. She suggests that rather than labeling medicine 'good' (curative) or 'bad' (employed in torture practices), we should be exploring questions about how medicine is used to pursue political power through war and/or national security and – conversely – how powerfully the requirements of state institutions like the military shape medical innovation. Ultimately, Howell argues for a new research agenda that seeks to understand how medicine and IR shape one another.

These chapters do not propose new approaches to power – not in the way that some chapters in this section propose new actors be considered. What they do though, is articulate a range of spaces and interactions in which power in IR is evident – though not previously acknowledged. Significantly, they highlight the fact that these power relations are often identified, for STAIR scholars, at the intersections of disciplines – a point I will return to in the conclusion of this chapter.

Spheres of Influence and Authority

A fundamental premise of many STAIR scholars is that IR happens in unusual and unexpected places. Some authors in this section also argue that its influence is felt and reflected back through a whole range of spheres that have traditionally been overlooked in our discipline. In a sense, although they do not explicitly engage with it, these chapters build upon the work of James Rosenau who wrote so eloquently about 'spheres of authority' (2007). One of the leading thinkers in the intersection of globalization and emerging technology, Rosenau developed this concept of decentralized, overlapping spheres of authority that leads to new forms of governance largely based on norms, informal rules and regimes. This concept is brought to light through the empirical analysis of several of our authors, often by drawing together their ideas about actors and power in these cases.

Howell applies her social constructivist lens to develop a fascinating argument linking IR and medicine in the development of a European worldview. By linking concerns about the threat of tropical diseases of the colonies to efforts to 'quarantine' Europe from these 'dangerous populations', Howell demonstrates how concepts of (exclusively) European 'cooperation' developed into Eurocentric concepts of global governance. This, she argues, has profound consequences for how we understand international cooperation as predominantly a product of Europe during the interwar and post WW2 years. This capacity for work like Howell's to disrupt or challenge predications upon which so much IR scholarship is currently based is a glimpse into the potential it has for reshaping and developing our discipline.

With equal potential for renovating IR, Acuto aims his focus at the relationship between the micro and the macro in international relations. He builds on his concept of microbes as actors to argue that a 'scale-sensitive' worldview can supplement the emphasis in IR on the global level. For him, there is a world of possibilities in focusing our IR gaze on the everyday, the mundane, international relations in the home and on the street. These landscapes have been largely ignored in our discipline and are full of potential for understanding spheres of influence and authority that are most visible to us when we engage with other disciplines and rethink the 'global' scale of IR. Acuto's work engages with the 'new materialists', with Science and Technology Studies (STS) and significantly – well beyond the disciplinary and allied sub-disciplinary ecosystem to advocate for a highly inter-disciplinary approach to IR.

Camillia Webb-Gannon's chapter brings in art as a practice and a constitutive element of international relations. Like Williamson, Webb-Gannon is concerned with art as a creative practice and as a form of international communication but she is also engaging with art as an artifact. She sees all of these as a conduit through which international relations *happens* and a medium through which to examine colonial and neocolonial relations in Oceana. There is a clear power dimension here but Webb-Gannon's contribution goes further to propose an amendment to Arjun Appadarai's (1990) five 'scapes' for analyzing globalization – that of 'artscapes'. Webb-Gannon develops the concept and then uses it to illustrate how the Oceanic artscape had been externally controlled through colonial influence but may now be entering a new era of a 'sphere of authority' in Rosenau's language as it provides a

voice to the expression on indigenous peoples' view of IR and the place of Oceana in it.

Webb-Gannon's chapter intersects with both Acuto's and Howell's through her focus on the micro. Her account of the mundanity of the historical pathway of a bird collected last century and kept in the Smithsonian Museum resonates with Acuto's argument that international relations happens in the everyday, through interpersonal connections and through non-human actors and artifacts as well as through the macro scale state level of analysis. In addition, Webb-Gannon's focus on the co-constitution of art and IR brings us back to Howell's eloquent exploration of the worlds of medicine and IR that have, she argues, been shaping one another for centuries. Howell and Acuto both situate their enquiry at a level that unites human security and global security into a large and powerful system. Webb-Gannon does the same with patterns of political identity. In doing so, they all draw out spheres of influence and authority that serve to highlight the largely untapped potential in this relatively unexplored field to shine a new light on both disciplines.

Conclusion: Inter-disciplinarity and STAIR

Collectively, these chapters offer a small sample of the creative and insightful ways that STAIR scholars are broadening the scope of what international relations is, where it happens and what it means to study issues of global security, power, cooperation and order in the highly complex, interdependent and networked

landscape that we find ourselves in as we move through the second decade of the 21st century.

These expansive views and creative approaches are only possible because the authors have one intellectual foot in another discipline. Both the Hornsby and Hellmich chapters demonstrate the value of bringing science and IR into conversation with one another to look for synergies and areas of cooperation but also to challenge deeply entrenched disciplinary suppositions and assumptions. In doing so, they demonstrate that part of the value of multi-disciplinary – or trans-disciplinary work, is that it can reveal such weaknesses. Howell demonstrates how significantly medicine and IR co-constitute one another and why that matters. Webb-Gannon and Williamson both offer insight into the ways in which arts and music can be understood as expressions of and practices of IR.

Acuto speaks for all of them when he argues convincingly for a truly inter-disciplinary world view that allows IR scholars to meaningfully engage with others; health practitioners, biologists, transport workers, geographers – not simply to obtain information relevant to the core concerns of IR but to foster a 'humility and open-mindedness', a readiness to 'be taught' and a willingness to 'confront the multi-disciplinary complexity of a process like virus spread'. This, he argues, allows the IR scholar to retreat from the customary disciplinary anthropocentrism and it also allows for these important inter-disciplinary encounters which are increasingly recognized as central to understanding the shape of the coming century.

It is clear that science, technology and art have always had a more profound relationship to IR than has been widely recognized. Unpicking these impacts and constructions may reveal fissures or weaknesses in some principles and concepts to emerge from previous decades of scholarship and they may reinforce others. Either way, a stronger more engaged approach to IR – one that will help us navigate the fourth industrial revolution – will surely involve a much more integrated approach that works collaboratively across sectors, disciplines and theoretical fault lines. Essentially, this will involve opening up our discipline to exchange and learning from others and it will also involve a willingness to explain our own discipline to the rest of the world in a way that invited collaboration rather than segregation. These STAIR scholars have demonstrated multiple ways that this kind of innovation and creativity can be implemented and in doing so, they have articulated an agenda for future development that holds promise and depth.

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