

UNCAGED Projects

Overview

Our project is interdisciplinary and has the aim of broad applicability and utility across a swathe of challenges facing regulation and governance. The following projects form part of or cross-inform UNCAGED.

(1) Systemic thinking

Why do we need to develop ways of understanding and intervening in complex adaptive systems that are more systemic and integrative, and less reductionist? How can we better achieve this goal in academia and policy making?

a. One of Anthea Roberts' key areas of interest is in how to understand the pushback against economic globalization in a more holistic way and why we need to take a more systemic perspective. She has written a book and two commentary pieces for Barron's that address how economic globalisation has been impacted by the complex challenges facing it from great power competition to climate change.

Anthea Roberts and Nicolas Lamp, [Six Faces of Globalization: Who Wins, Who Loses, and Why It Matters](#) (Harvard University Press, 2021)

An essential guide to the intractable public debates about the virtues and vices of economic globalisation, cutting through the complexity to reveal the fault lines that divide us and the points of agreement that might bring us together. Globalisation has lifted millions out of poverty. Globalisation is a weapon the rich use to exploit the poor. Globalisation builds bridges across national boundaries. Globalisation fuels the populism and great-power competition that is tearing the world apart. When it comes to the politics of free trade and open borders, the camps are dug in, producing a kaleidoscope of claims and counterclaims, unlikely alliances, and unexpected foes. But what exactly are we fighting about? And how might we approach these issues more productively? Anthea Roberts and Nicolas Lamp cut through the confusion with an indispensable survey of the interests, logics, and ideologies driving these intractable debates, which lie at the heart of so much political dispute and decision making. The authors expertly guide us through six competing narratives about the virtues and vices of globalisation. Instead of picking sides, *Six Faces of Globalization* provides a holistic framework for understanding current debates. In doing so, the authors showcase a more integrative way of thinking about complex problems.

[Anthea Roberts and Nicolas Lamp, \(15 March, 2020\), Is the virus killing globalization? There's no one answer. Barron's.](#)

Anthea and Nicolas put forth the case that it is time to develop mental models that will help us better understand the kaleidoscopic complexity of globalisation and to find ways to integrate the multiple storylines that people use to make sense of the world. Noting that 'no perspective is neutral', the authors argue that developing meta-narratives will be a more productive way for policymakers and the public to better integrate multiple perspectives about the myriad climate, finance, health and other complex challenges ahead of us.

[Anthea Roberts \(2 April, 2020\), How globalization came to the brink of collapse. Barron's.](#)

This article discusses economic globalisation as a complex system made up of many interacting parts and how alongside its benefits, such as increased connectivity and

interdependence, these advantages also give rise to systemic risks, such as shortfalls in supply chains during pandemics or rapid transmission of viral disease. By understanding economic globalization as a complex system that gives rise to systemic risks, the article explains that this allows us to think more systematically when searching for options to manage risk, particularly by increasing our resilience.

(2) Integrative complexity

How can we use bifocal, trifocal and multifocal approaches to differentiate competing perspectives and integrate them into more holistic frameworks from better understanding complex, multifaceted realities?

a. Miranda Forsyth: The Relational State Together with her colleague Gordon Peake, Miranda has been working on a project to better conceptualise how good governance and public service provision actually occurs in places where the state – as its commonly conceived of in the global North – is weak or non-existent.

We develop the argument that answering this question requires us to develop and integrate two different conceptions of statehood. The first is the 'Weberian' or 'bureaucratic state', one that pays the salaries, confers titles and provides the spectacle of administration (but often limited administrative functions). The second is what we term the 'relational state'. Despite having no official physical presence, it is responsible for the vast majority of the actual governance on the ground. It consists of bureaucrats leveraging their relational ties, histories, connections and affiliations to get stuff done. In many ways, street-level bureaucrats in the places we study actually construct the state through their wide-flung and deep networks of relationality. We argue that both concepts of the state are needed, as both point to true but partial understandings of governance and state-building. This approach also moves us beyond characterisations of the underperforming state as peopled with slothful deadbeats, and towards more meaningful engagement with the complex realities that public servants in many states daily navigate.

We have applied this framework to [understanding post-conflict Bougainville](#) and the [policing of sorcery accusation related violence in PNG](#).

b. One of Anthea Roberts's current projects concerns how to integrate thinking about risk, reward and resilience into a more holistic, Triple-R Framework. This is a work in progress.

In 2020, many states around the world faced a series of shocks to their societies and economies. The coronavirus swept through the world, infecting tens of millions and causing countries to shutter their economies and close their international borders. Wildfires raged through Australia and California, heightening anxieties about climate change-related extreme weather events. Geopolitical tensions spilled over into international trade and investment, with various countries engaging in campaigns of economic coercion (like China) or erecting barriers to investment in critical infrastructure, such as 5G (like the United States). These seemingly disparate shocks have catapulted concerns about how to strike a balance among risk, reward and resilience to the centre of public discussions and policy making. Yet the frameworks we have for thinking through these cross-cutting issues are often partial and fragmented, coming from risk management, security studies, business strategy, economics, climate change adaptation and disaster management. How might we be able to develop a more holistic Triple-R Framework that incorporates risk, reward and resilience and which could be applied across diverse domains?

(3) Innovation and change

How do identities and networks affect possibilities for innovation and change in complex systems? What role is played by border crossers (insider-outsiders)? How is incremental and transformative change achieved in complex systems?

a. Miranda Forsyth, Inside-Out Networked Change (forthcoming)

This forthcoming work draws upon multi-year empirical research undertaken in Papua New Guinea, focused on addressing sorcery accusation-related violence (SARV). It proposes and discusses two hypotheses, the first being that a 'networked response' is critical to both prevent the spread of sorcery narratives and their accompanying violent behavioural scripts, and also to respond to the impacts of SARV on an individual, family and community level. The second hypothesis focuses on the importance of the 'inside-out networked change', in that leadership and advocacy must come from within the community, and can then be networked more broadly, for it to become truly effective. We term this approach 'Inside-Out Networked Change'.

b. Anthea Roberts and Taylor St John have written about the role played by actors who come from outside of a particular policy field (outsiders) in developing more radical, transformative proposals for reform within that field than those who are already working within the self-same field (insiders).

Article: Anthea Roberts and Taylor St John, The Originality of Outsiders: Innovation in the Investment Treaty System (forthcoming)

In this paper we examine recent innovation in the investment treaty system with respect to investor-state arbitration and find a striking pattern. The more transformative proposals share a common background: they have been developed by government officials with no background in the arbitral community, individuals we call 'outsiders'. We also examine states proposing sustaining innovations in the investment treaty system and find these proposals also share a common background: they have been developed by government officials with extensive experience in the arbitral community, individuals we call 'insiders'. These findings fit with a wider cross-disciplinary literature on innovation, which turns up a recurring connection between outsiders and more disruptive, transformative innovation.

c. Miranda Forsyth, Sinclair Dinnen and Anthea Roberts have an ARC Discovery Project on Community rule-making in the Pacific Islands as regulatory innovation. They are using this to develop theories about governing in complexity with a focus on local and regional scales.

This Discovery Project study investigates the widespread phenomenon of 'community rule-making' in Pacific Island countries, in which local communities engage in deliberative processes oriented towards development of new normative orders. Community rule-making is widespread across Pacific Island countries, in both rural and urban areas, and often occurs without state sanctioning. Its purpose usually involves addressing social problems or contestations in need of resolving in ways that permit for ongoing relational harmony, particularly where the state seems either unwilling or unable to produce effective management outcomes. Our project focuses on the community-driven processes that produce written rules rather than on the written rules themselves, in an aim to truly uncover and understand what is taking place and how, in particular, the process of community by-law creation might be better supported in aid of reducing gender-based violence, increase local resilience and reduce domination.

The key aims of this project are:

- Developing the deliberative potential of community rule-making
- Making a theoretical contribution to regulation and governance literature through building a new analytical framework
- Policy outcomes informing reducing gender violence, observance of human rights and strengthening the rule of law
- Building theory around adaptive governance within the context of complex circumstances, where contestation and change are prevalent.

(4) Design and management

How can actors design better structures and governance approaches for managing complex, contested and evolving fields? What role might flexibility, adaptability and experimentation play in dealing with increasing uncertainty? What sort of meta-structures are required to deal with diversity of views and divided power?

a. Anthea Roberts and Taylor St John are working on a series of pieces concerned with how institutional design accounts for complexity. They are focusing on the concept of 'complex designers' and the important role they play within the context of UNCITRAL negotiations and global governance generally.

Article: Anthea Roberts and Taylor St John, Complex Designers and Emergent Design: Reforming the Investment Treaty System (forthcoming)

How do actors undertake institutional design in complex systems? Scholars recognize that many international regimes are becoming increasingly complex. Yet relatively little is known about how actors design or redesign institutions amid this complexity. As participant-observers in the UN negotiations on investment treaty reform, we have watched state officials and other participants grapple with this question for several years. How should we conceptualize these actors who seek to design and redesign while keenly aware that they operate within a complex and dynamic system? And what principles seem to guide their design inventions?

b. Miranda Forsyth is working on a series of papers that conceptualize the interplay between liquidity and solidity in regulation. This forms an example of polarity management in regulation.

Miranda Forsyth and Thomas Dick, Liquidity and Solidity in Regulation: The (Men's) Business of Women's Water Music? (forthcoming)

This forthcoming piece follows years of painstaking, dedicated research in which Miranda and Tom looked at how a form of Melanesian cultural property known as 'water music' reveals the possibilities of regulation through utilising notions of liquidity and solidity. The research reveals a trend towards using solid regulatory approaches when societies and communities are faced with uncertainty and contestation, but equally shows that more liquid alternatives to regulation not only exist but are actively pursued both at the same time as solid approaches, or in place thereof. The authors identify various liquid regulatory strategies that can be seen within both state and customary normative orders. They identify how combinations of both approaches within what is a complex adaptive system might be varied to achieve more desirable 'structured looseness or 'flexible tightness'.

UNCAGED Funding

The work being undertaken under or cross-informing UNCAGED is supported by funding from a diverse range of sources and projects. These include:

[Community Rule-Making in the Pacific Islands as Regulatory Innovation](#). Funded by the Australian Research Council, this study investigates the widespread phenomena of community rule-making in Pacific Island countries, in which local communities engage in deliberative processes oriented towards development of new normative orders. Occurring largely outside of state-sanctioned authority, such processes may address social problems such as gender based violence, crime and poverty, and frequently occur in the context of other locally-driven attempts at community regeneration. Through collaborative empirical research in PNG, Solomon Islands and Samoa, our project will build an evidence base to better understand the potential and the dangers of community rule-making, and develop responsive hybridisation as a new analytical framework to theorise about it.

UNCAGED Courses

[Complexity, Catastrophe and Resilience](#) (course taught by Anthea Roberts and Miranda Forsyth at the School of Regulation and Global Governance (RegNet), ANU). We live in a complex and highly interconnected world. In the 21st century, humanity is facing risks stemming from climate change, pandemics, rising inequality, and great power rivalry, which cannot be understood or managed from the perspective of a single discipline. Domains that were previously kept relatively separate, like economics, national security and the environment, are colliding. Governance regimes are multiplying, fragmenting, and overlapping in a bid to grapple with these challenges. This course considers approaches to governance in the face of complexity. It covers issues such as: what governance and regulatory approaches can we adopt to better understand complex problems? What frameworks can we develop to understand and manage opportunities and risks across domains? How does incremental and transformative change happen and what does it demand of us and our institutions? How can our societies develop more resilience in the face of catastrophic risks?

[Leadership, Risk and National Security Crisis Management](#) (course taught by Anthea Roberts, Dirk van der Kley and Mark Crossweller at the National Security College, ANU). Crises are endemic to national security policymaking. The modern era is punctuated by crises emanating from the natural and social worlds that threaten local, national and international security. This course considers this backdrop of threats alongside changing notions of 'threat', 'risk' and 'crisis' and challenges participants to determine how leadership and policymaking can reconcile the competing imperatives of national security and the public interest in the midst of crisis. This course introduces students to this important and challenging field through: (1) exploration of definitions and theories of national security and approaches to leadership, risk assessment/mitigation and crisis management; and (2) the application of this conceptual material to empirical cases of domestic, international and transnational crises ranging from COVID-19 to climate change to geoeconomic coercion. Conceptual approaches are complemented by insights from policy practitioners with extensive experience of crisis response.

Related RegNet Projects

The importance of addressing complexity in the regulatory and governance sphere is of interest to other colleagues in RegNet as well. For example, we point to a related project by two colleagues, Sharon Friel and Melanie Pescud: *Addressing complexity in prevention research using systems approaches: systems case studies*

Related RegNet Publications

The following publications reflect the wide disciplinary range in which we have discussed, researched and explored the implications arising out of complexity, catastrophe and change in our regulatory and governance work. Further, we look at the ways in which adaptive governance, regulatory innovation and complex design approaches should or already do have a place in meeting the inherent challenges. The works cited below range across local to national to global levels.

Hybridity

Miranda Forsyth has written and contributed to various works on the concept of hybridity as one way to make sense of interactions between diverse norms, institutions, actors and discourses.

- Joanne Wallis, Lia Kent, Miranda Forsyth, Sinclair Dinnen and Srinjoy Bose, (2018), [*Hybridity on the Ground in Peacebuilding and Development: Critical Conversations*](#), ANU Press.

This book explores the now popular notion of hybridity, seeking to uncover both its possibilities and its pitfalls. Hybridity as a concept is a response to the social and institutional complexities of peacebuilding and development practice. It can help make sense of diverse interactions but care must be taken to avoid overlooking critical questions concerning power, history and scale. Drawing on in depth knowledge of peacebuilding and development contexts in different parts of Asia, the Pacific and Africa, the authors examine the messy and dynamic realities of hybridity 'on the ground'.

- Miranda Forsyth, Lia Kent, Sinclair Dinnen, Joanne Wallis & Srinjoy Bose, (2017), Hybridity in peacebuilding and development: a critical approach, *Third World Thematics: A TWQ Journal*, 2:4, 407-421, DOI: 10.1080/23802014.2017.1448717

This article discusses the value of hybridity as a concept and whether its shortcomings can be mitigated or overcome. The article explores the benefits of the concept and also provides suggestions for how scholars and practitioners can navigate the problematic areas that the concept raises. The pathway developed by the authors is termed 'critical hybridity', identifying eight approaches likely to open up a more reflexive, nuanced and informed engagement with the concept.

UNCAGED Presentations

- [*Critical Junctures: Reimagining regulatory governance. Webinar 4- 'Complexity'*](#), 27th October 2020, presented by Anthea Roberts, Gabriele Bammer, Virginia Marshall; chaired by Miranda Forsyth.

As a part of RegNet's annual Conversations series, Anthea and Miranda, along with Gabriele and Virginia, presented ideas about how social scientists should approach analysing complex 21st century problems. The panel showcased the interconnectedness of 21st century problems, discussing how this interconnectedness brings both advantages and risks that affect the kinds of solutions taken. The panel addressed what sort of adaptive governance approaches might guide our attempts to intervene in different systems, including complex and chaotic systems. The panel also discussed what we might have to learn from other ways of thinking, like Indigenous knowledge and ways of knowing, in order to take a more holistic and relational approach to these issues.

- [*Risk, Reward and Resilience*](#), presented by Anthea Roberts at RegNet. In 2020, many states around the world faced a series of shocks to their societies and economies. The coronavirus swept through the world, infecting tens of millions and causing countries to shutter their economies and close their international borders. Wildfires raged through Australia and California, heightening anxieties about climate change-related extreme weather events. Geopolitical tensions spilled over into international trade and investment, with various countries engaging in campaigns of economic coercion (like China) or erecting barriers to investment in critical infrastructure, such as 5G (like the United States). These seemingly disparate shocks have catapulted concerns about how to strike a balance among risk, reward and resilience to the centre of public discussions and policy making. Yet the frameworks we have for thinking through these cross-cutting issues are often partial and fragmented, coming from risk management, security studies, business strategy, economics, climate change adaptation and disaster

management. In this talk, Anthea provides a sketch of work-in-progress on bringing together a framework on risk, reward and resilience that could be applied across diverse domains.