

Opening the World of International Law Education

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Earlier this month, the book [Public International Law: A Multi-Perspective Approach](#) was published. It is the first-ever openly accessible and collectively written textbook from different perspectives with digital pedagogical materials. The book concept is also in line with the [CoLabIL Project](#),* which the interviewers of this article (Yota Negishi and Miharu Hirano) are working on to create co-education of international law across disciplines, national borders, and generations. The interviewers were fortunate to have the opportunity to interview the editors of the book (Raffaela Kunz, Max Milas, and Sué González Hauck) and ask them about the background and significance of the book, which is characterized by Multiperspectivity, Open Access, and Digitality. We hope that this interview will open up new possibilities for international law education.

Multiperspectivity: Diversifying Voices in International Law Education

Negishi: What inspired the decision to take a multi-perspective approach in this textbook, and how do you think it enhances the understanding of public international law?

Kunz: For us, it has been important to understand Open Access in a broad and encompassing way. Openness for us not only means that the book can be downloaded and read freely. Rather, our aim really was to open international legal scholarships to a variety of new approaches with authors from all around the world. Most existing textbooks have been authored by individuals from the West, particularly from the Global North. Therefore, it was crucial to represent a diversity of voices, both geographically and in terms of gender. Another important objective was to incorporate different perspectives and approaches to international law. I believe that all of this is encapsulated in the concept of a multi-perspective approach. It's about finding diverse ways to open up the field.

Milas: Our decision to embrace diverse perspectives reflects a deliberate effort to incorporate alternative and non-traditional approaches within the discourse of public international law. These perspectives are not treated as mere addendums but are seamlessly integrated throughout the fabric of our textbook. By providing transparency regarding the specific approach adopted in each chapter and acknowledging alternative viewpoints, we instill in students an appreciation for the plurality inherent within international law, aligning with the title of the textbook.

González Hauck: On a personal note, I was sorely missing being introduced to the plurality and contingency of not only international law but all legal knowledge when I was a student. Unlearning what I had learned in my extremely rigid and conservative

legal education took a lot of time, effort, and, frankly, money. I hope that students whose first encounter with international law is mediated through the kaleidoscopic lens of this textbook will have an easier time finding their own voice. Additionally, I think it's important to add that the multi-perspective approach was also a result of the collective approach we took to conceiving the whole book. We, as editors, did not impose a table of contents, for example. It was developed collectively in a process involving shared online boards, documents, and video conferences. So, the different voices are not only reflected in how the individual authors approached their own chapters but in the very structure of the book.

Negishi: I think the most important part of the book is the inclusion of Approaches and Methods in Part I. But, I guess, these abstract issues would be tough for the beginners of international law. So, why did you decide to include them at the beginning of the textbook?

Milas: Integrating a comprehensive exploration of all existing theories and approaches alongside foundational concepts and specialized fields within a single textbook is undoubtedly ambitious. Therefore, we have curated a selection that we deem essential for laying the groundwork necessary to comprehend subsequent chapters. Placing these chapters at the outset allows students to first engage with these fundamental approaches before delving deeper into the later sections.

González Hauck: Including these chapters at the beginning of the book also reflects a decision to cause what we call 'calculated confusion'.

Kunz: We acknowledge, and are very aware of the fact, that it is probably difficult for students to start with theories that first shake them up a little and perhaps also question what they have previously learned. But the idea was also, to some extent, to unlearn precisely what we recognize as the conventional perspective. We left it to the authors to choose the approaches they wanted to employ in their chapters. However, that's also why we felt it was still important to have an overarching introduction to different approaches at the beginning, to better guide students.

Open Accessibility: Born amid Pandemic and for All People

Hirano: I want to ask you a very basic question about your motivation for writing a textbook as an early-career scholar.

Kunz: Like you, the three editors are also starting to teach. We are at the beginning of our teaching careers and had to consider our syllabi and teaching methods. Thus, the conception of the book came about organically. It is also worth mentioning that the birth of the book coincided with the beginning of the pandemic. I do think this shift to digitality made us all rethink our teaching approaches to some extent.

González Hauck: Finding community through a collective project like this was a truly healing experience, especially during the pandemic. And the beauty of engaging in collective work is that you don't have to rely on individual status.

Milas: Our initiative stems from a desire to challenge conventional hierarchies within academia. We believe that scholarly contribution is not contingent upon age or seniority. By anchoring our efforts under the umbrella of [Open Rewi – Open Legal Science](#), the publication of our textbook in open access format assumes greater significance, particularly within a field of study that holds global importance. Moreover, drawing from our experiences in both studying and teaching, we are attuned to the needs and expectations of students, positioning us to address their demands.

Hirano: Who do you envision as the readers of the textbook? Did you have specific categories of students for a broader audience in mind?

Kunz: We really had undergraduate students in mind; basically, students who are encountering the field for the very first time. However, we also strive to offer content for more advanced students—those who wish to deepen their knowledge. I believe that, with all the theoretical parts and various approaches, we indeed provide material that differs from the standard offerings, even for more advanced students.

Milas: Fundamentally, our textbook targets students encountering these subjects for the first time. However, each chapter also incorporates advanced content tailored to graduate students or those pursuing doctoral studies, at least introductory. Additionally, the inclusion of further readings in every chapter serves as a resource not only for students but also for teachers seeking supplementary materials for their courses.

Digitality: Pedagogical Features beyond Physical Textbook

Negishi: The book includes pedagogical features like QR codes and interactive exercises. How do you envision these tools enhancing the learning experience for students?

Milas: Our aim is to imbue the textbook with greater interactivity and utility while reimagining traditional forms of knowledge dissemination. The integration of interactive exercises serves to not only engage students more effectively but also to provide them with opportunities for self-assessment following class participation or textbook reading. Drawing from our collective experiences as teachers, and informed by student feedback, we recognize the value students place on such interactive elements.

Kunz: We wanted to push the boundaries of the traditional textbook concept. Given that we are not limited to hard copies or physical books anymore, the space of digitality offers us new possibilities. The QR codes are one aspect of this, but we also, for example, encouraged authors to include recommendations for podcasts or video recordings in all the chapters. In this way, we tried to play with digitality to open up the format a bit.

Hirano: Is it possible to change or add new questions or are they already finalized and cannot be fixed then unless a new edition of the book is issued?

Milas: One of the advantages of hosting these exercises online is the autonomy it affords us. Unlike traditional publishing models, where revisions are contingent upon external processes, we have the flexibility to modify or augment the exercises promptly. By employing open formats, we ensure that these exercises can be seamlessly integrated into new contexts or courses as needed.

Kunz: By the way that's valid for the entire book. We also have the wikibook in parallel right now. It's not updated, but the idea is that there everyone can add comments so that it becomes a living instrument in a way. So, there we try to overcome the static format and make textbooks more dynamic. We will have to see how we can then really implement in practice given that we have in parallel now the book and wikibooks but this was really the idea initially that everyone can actually contribute.

Negishi: What impact do you hope the textbook's open access will have on the accessibility and dissemination of knowledge in the field of public international law?

Kunz: For students, the cost of expensive textbooks can be a significant hurdle, as some simply cannot afford them. Therefore, we believe accessibility is important, but it is, of course, not enough to create a more just system of knowledge production in international law. It has been pointed out in the literature (see [here](#)) that Open Access could inadvertently become a neo-colonial endeavor if it simply makes knowledge produced in the Global North accessible worldwide. This is, of course, not our intention. We have tried to ensure openness to include many different voices, not just disseminating a single perspective.

González Hauck: We also hope that the book will inspire other similar initiatives—in different languages, focused on specialized fields of international law, and on different regions. Within the OpenRewi initiative, we have a structure in place where we share experiences, infrastructure, and resources across various projects. We are always open to welcoming new project teams who want to [participate](#) in this structure, and we would love to get in touch with other similar initiatives based in other regions – or stay in touch, for example, with the CoLabIL project.

Emerging Fields of International Law: Climate Change, Cyberspace, Migration

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Negishi: The book covers emerging fields such as international climate change law or the international law of cyberspace. How do you see these areas evolving, and what challenges do they pose for traditional international law frameworks?

Milas: Fields such as international climate change law and the international cyberspace law represent domains that are rapidly evolving in response to contemporary global challenges. Unlike traditional textbooks on international law, which often overlook these areas, our textbook recognizes their growing significance within the international legal landscape. The proliferation of regional and universal treaties regulating these spheres underscores their importance in shaping the future of global governance and underscores the need for international law frameworks to adapt accordingly.

Kunz: In some fields, such as cyberspace law, we do see that traditional international legal concepts remain very much present. Sovereignty, to give one example, is not entirely new or emerging. Many concepts actually persist or reemerge in new forms. It's truly an interesting interplay.

* CoLabIL Project promotes the creation of a space for the co-education of teachers of international law across disciplines, national borders, and generations. The project is funded by the Suenobu Foundation's Comparative and Foreign Law Research and Education Project 2023–2026.

Disclaimer: At Völkerrechtsblog, we strive to uphold the values of transparency, accessibility, and inclusivity. In line with these principles, we feel it necessary to provide context regarding two of the interviewees' roles and our decision to publish this interview. Sué González Hauck currently serves as co-editor-in-chief, while Raffaella Kunz is a former editor-in-chief of Völkerrechtsblog. Our decision to feature this interview despite the interviewees' close connection to the blog is rooted in our shared commitment to promoting open access resources within the legal community. This was also reflected in the conference we held in 2022 titled "[Opening Access – Closing the Knowledge Gap?](#)", where Max Milas presented the OpenRewi initiative as a way of opening up legal teaching. While we acknowledge the unique circumstances surrounding this interview, we remain steadfast in our dedication to fostering an open and inclusive dialogue within the field of international law. We hope that cooperations like these will inspire further discussion and action towards a more accessible and equitable academic landscape.

