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# The Routledge Handbook on Responsibility in International Relations

Edited by Hannes Hansen-Magnusson and  
Antje Vetterlein

# THE ROUTLEDGE HANDBOOK ON RESPONSIBILITY IN INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

What does responsibility mean in International Relations (IR)? This handbook brings together cutting-edge research on the critical debates about responsibility that are currently being undertaken in IR theory.

This handbook both reflects upon an emerging field based on an engagement in the most crucial theoretical debates and serves as a foundational text by showing how deeply a discussion of responsibility is embedded in broader questions of IR theory and practice. Contributions cover the way in which responsibility is theorized across different approaches in IR and relevant neighboring disciplines and demonstrate how responsibility matters in different policy fields of global governance. Chapters with an empirical focus zoom in on particular actor constellations of (emerging) states, international organizations, political movements, or corporations, or address how responsibility matters in structuring the politics of global commons, such as oceans, resources, or the Internet.

Providing a comprehensive overview of IR scholarship on responsibility, this accessible and interdisciplinary text will be a valuable resource for scholars and students in many fields including IR, international law, political theory, global ethics, science and technology, area studies, development studies, business ethics, and environmental and security governance.

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*Edited by*  
*Hannes Hansen-Magnusson*  
*and Antje Vetterlein*



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Responsibility is a cross-cutting concept which raises questions at multiple levels of analysis. It is also increasingly invoked in political debates as many challenges of our time are characterized by insecurities when responsibilities cannot easily be attributed. The questions of who should be responsible and what for are embedded in a broader normative context that points towards issues of authority and legitimacy, which in turn can have legal, social and/or material dimensions. Similarly, those who invoke responsibility in the first place can also become subject to analytic scrutiny. With so many dimensions simultaneously at play, addressing the different analytical questions around responsibility requires a calibrated compass and an up-to-date map in order not to get lost. The objective to provide such compass is expressed in the artwork we selected for the cover of this handbook. In characterizing her work, the artist Angela Dwyer writes, “While in my previous work I was looking for an abstract way to make visible the conflicts between man and nature [...] the new series I call ‘Solid Shapes’ is looking for a more manifest representation of where we are – in this particular place, in this particular moment. [...] This period of general insecurity and the impact of changes in human interaction has created a strong need to hold on to our core values, while at the same time there is a shift in priorities. I refer, among other things, to a line from the poem ‘The Second Coming’ by W.B. Yeats: ‘the centre will not hold’ or to the thoughts of Levi-Strauss/Lacan on the myth of the individual as a basis of subjective structure.” We considered this characterization a fitting description for our undertaking in two ways. First, this Handbook originated from the desire to provide guidance and orientation to the growing community of scholars whose work engages with some or all of the different analytical levels that the concept of responsibility entails. Second, politically it might also be a time of insecurities which requires rethinking our values and reconsidering our priorities.

Initially, we had sketched some of these dimensions that informed the Handbook during a brainstorming coffee break with Antje Wiener at the 2014 ISA conference in Toronto. Beginning to work on some issues around responsibility for a different book project at an ISA Venture Workshop in New Orleans in 2015, we recognized the wealth of work on responsibility and thus the need for a more comprehensive compendium on that topic. We hence set out to develop a proposal to map and discuss the various strands of research on responsibility in International Relations as well as neighboring disciplines. Helpful feedback was provided by Peter Hall, John Ruggie, and Kathryn Sikkink when Antje was Visiting Fellow for one year at the Minda de Gunzburg Center for European Studies at Harvard University in 2015/2016. Our intention was



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to deliver clarifications and a comprehensive overview across the various ways in which responsibility has come to matter as a core concept of world politics in the discipline of International Relations. While responsibility is being discussed in neighboring disciplines such as philosophy or legal theory, the Handbook seeks to complement and connect to these debates through contributions from the vantage point of International Relations, broadly perceived.

Our initial question of “what is IR-responsibility?” opened a number of avenues for inquiry – and puns – which we discussed at a workshop in Münster in May 2019. This event was generously supported by the Fritz-Thyssen-Foundation and the University of Münster. In addition, the invitation by the City of Münster to a reception at the town hall – birthplace of the Westphalian Peace – and to signing the city’s guestbook made this a truly memorable occasion. The workshop was tremendously well organized by Kate Backhaus and Julian Ermann. The event greatly benefitted from papers and contributions to the discussion from Mathias Albert, Sam Barkin, Steven Bernstein, Jelena Cupać, Joachim Delventhal, Beth DeSombre, Stephan Engelkamp, Doris Fuchs, Tobias Gumbert, Patrick Jackson, David Karp, Sebastian Knecht, Markus Kornprobst, Susan Park, Tobias Schmidtke, Tomer Shadmy, Mitja Sienknecht, Pete Sutch, and Antje Wiener.

Contributions to that workshop form the core of this Handbook. In addition, we solicited further chapters through an open call across our networks which we had previously established by organizing sections and panels at international conferences hosted by the European International Studies Association, the International Studies Association, the European Consortium for Political Research, and the British International Studies Association. We are grateful for the numerous papers presented at these events and the stimulating discussions we have had with colleagues from across the world and a diverse range of IR subdisciplines. They provided us with valuable ideas for our own theorizing and empirical work, as well as plans for the structure of this Handbook. About half of the chapters in this volume were presented previously as conference papers and this volume greatly benefitted from all our encounters as they helped sharpen the overall conceptual focus. Likewise, the anonymous feedback we received for single chapters and the Handbook’s structure was extremely supportive of our project and we would like to convey our thanks to Rob Sorsby at Routledge for setting up the process of producing this Handbook.

Providing a map for others based on a project of this size is no easy feat. The editors themselves are not immune against losing sight of the track, especially if there is no beaten path to follow, while administrative burdens and all sorts of organizational obstacles emanating from the COVID-19 crisis needed to be overcome. We would therefore like to thank Julian Ermann for editorial help with this text. We are ever so grateful for the patience our authors have shown with the publication process. Not least, we are thankful to our families to recalibrate our focus from time to time. We would like to dedicate this book to Selma, Eni, Piet, and Jonna.

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# ABBREVIATIONS

<b>AAC</b>	Arctic Athabaskan Council
<b>ABNJ</b>	areas beyond national jurisdiction
<b>ADB</b>	Asian Development Bank
<b>AfDB</b>	African Development Bank
<b>AI</b>	artificial intelligence
<b>AIA</b>	Aleut International Association
<b>ATLAS</b>	Advanced Targeting and Lethality Automated System program
<b>ATS</b>	Antarctic Treaty System
<b>AU</b>	African Union
<b>BASIC</b>	British American Security Information Council
<b>BBNJ</b>	biodiversity in areas beyond national jurisdiction
<b>BIMSTEC</b>	Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation
<b>BRICS</b>	so-called rising powers Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa
<b>CAO</b>	Compliance Advisor/Ombudsman
<b>CAOF Agreement</b>	Agreement to Prevent Unregulated High Seas Fisheries in the Central Arctic Ocean
<b>CAS</b>	Conference Committee on the Application of Standards
<b>CBDR</b>	Common but Differentiated Responsibilities
<b>CCAMLR</b>	Convention for the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources
<b>CCW</b>	UN Convention on Conventional Weapons
<b>CEACR</b>	Committee of Experts on the Application of Conventions and Recommendations
<b>CEO</b>	Chief Executive Officer
<b>CFO</b>	Chief Financial Officer
<b>CLS</b>	core labor standards
<b>CSR</b>	Corporate Social Responsibility
<b>DNS</b>	Domain Name System
<b>DoD</b>	US Department of Defence
<b>DWA</b>	Decent Work Agenda
<b>EBRD</b>	European Bank for Reconstruction and Development

## *Abbreviations*

<b>ECOWAS</b>	Economic Community of West African States
<b>EEZ</b>	exclusive economic zone
<b>EPR</b>	extended producer responsibility
<b>ES</b>	English School
<b>EU</b>	European Union
<b>FAO</b>	Food and Agriculture Organization
<b>FCIC</b>	Financial Crisis Inquiry Commission
<b>FOC</b>	Freedom Online Coalition
<b>FPRW</b>	Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work
<b>FSA</b>	Fish Stock Agreement
<b>GAC</b>	Global Advisory Committee
<b>GATT</b>	Global Agreement on Trade and Tariffs
<b>GCA</b>	grocery code adjudicator
<b>GCI</b>	Gwich'in Council International
<b>GDPR</b>	General Data Protection Regulation
<b>HINW</b>	Humanitarian Initiative on Nuclear Weapons
<b>IAEA</b>	International Atomic Energy Agency
<b>IAMs</b>	Independent Accountability Mechanisms
<b>IANA</b>	Internet Assigned Number Authority
<b>IBRD</b>	International Bank for Reconstruction and Development
<b>ICAN</b>	International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons
<b>ICANN</b>	Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers
<b>ICISS</b>	International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty
<b>ICRW</b>	International Convention for the Regulation of Whaling
<b>ICSID</b>	International Centre for Settlement of Investment Disputes
<b>ICT</b>	Internet communication technology
<b>IFC</b>	International Finance Corporation
<b>IHL</b>	International Humanitarian Law
<b>IHRL</b>	international humanitarian rights law
<b>ILC</b>	International Labour Conference
<b>ILO</b>	International Labour Organization
<b>IMF</b>	International Monetary Fund
<b>IMO</b>	International Maritime Organization
<b>IONS</b>	Indian Ocean Naval Symposium
<b>IOs</b>	international organizations
<b>IP</b>	Internet Protocol
<b>IPT</b>	International Political Theory
<b>ISA</b>	International Seabed Authority
<b>ITU</b>	International Telecommunication Union
<b>ITUC</b>	International Trade Union Confederation
<b>IUU</b>	illegal, unregulated and unreported fishing
<b>KDP</b>	Kurdistan Democratic Party
<b>KLA</b>	Kosovo Liberation Army
<b>KRG</b>	Kurdish Regional Government
<b>LAWS</b>	lethal autonomous weapons systems
<b>LTTE</b>	Liberian Tigers of Tamil Eelam

## *Abbreviations*

<b>MARPOL</b>	International Convention for the Protection of Marine Pollution from Ships
<b>MDBs</b>	Multilateral Development Banks
<b>MDGs</b>	Millennium Development Goals
<b>MIGA</b>	Multilateral Investment Guarantee Agency
<b>MRM</b>	Monitoring and Reporting Mechanism
<b>NATO</b>	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
<b>NGOs</b>	non-governmental organizations
<b>NIEO</b>	New International Economic Order
<b>NNWS</b>	Non-nuclear Weapon States
<b>NPT</b>	Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, or Non-Proliferation Treaty
<b>NTIA</b>	National Telecommunications and Information Administration
<b>OECD</b>	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
<b>OEWG</b>	UN Open-ended Working Group
<b>OPRC</b>	International Convention on Oil Pollution Preparedness, Response and Co-Operation
<b>R2P</b>	Responsibility to Protect
<b>RAIPON</b>	Russian Association of Indigenous Peoples of the North
<b>RCO</b>	responsible corporate officer
<b>RFMO</b>	Regional Fisheries Management Organization
<b>RtoP</b>	Responsibility to Protect
<b>RwP</b>	Responsibility while Protecting
<b>SALW</b>	small arms and light weapons
<b>SC</b>	Saami Council
<b>SCAR</b>	Science Committee on Antarctic Research
<b>SDGs</b>	Sustainable Development Goals
<b>SFDRR</b>	Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction of the UN
<b>SNM</b>	Somali National Movement
<b>SOLAS</b>	International Convention for the Safety of Life at Sea
<b>SRI</b>	socially responsible investment
<b>TFAMC</b>	Task Force on Arctic Marine Cooperation
<b>TNC</b>	transnational corporation
<b>TPNW</b>	Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons
<b>UDHR</b>	Universal Declaration of Human Rights
<b>UN</b>	United Nations
<b>UNCLOS</b>	United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea
<b>UNDP</b>	UN Development Program
<b>UNDRO</b>	United Nations Disaster Relief Office
<b>UNESCO</b>	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
<b>UNFCCC</b>	UN Framework Convention on Climate Change
<b>UNGA</b>	UN General Assembly
<b>UNGGE</b>	UN Group of Governmental Experts
<b>UNGPs</b>	UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights
<b>UNHCR</b>	UN High Commissioner for Refugees
<b>UNSC</b>	UN Security Council
<b>WGIG</b>	World Group on Internet Governance

## *Abbreviations*

<b>WPS</b>	UN resolution on Women, Peace, and Security
<b>WSIS</b>	World Summit on the Information Society
<b>WSOD</b>	World Summit Outcome Document
<b>WTO</b>	World Trade Organization

# 1

## RESPONSIBILITY IN INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS THEORY AND PRACTICE

### Introducing the handbook

*Hannes Hansen-Magnusson and Antje Vetterlein*

#### **Introduction**

Why do we need a handbook on the concept of responsibility in International Relations (IR)? We claim that many of the most pressing political challenges of our time, such as climate change, humanitarian crises, migration, financial crises, the implications of artificial intelligence or advances in science and technology to mention but a few, evoke questions of responsibility. They present us with political problems that do not lend themselves to simple and clear-cut answers regarding the identification of whose fault it is and who should take action. Many current challenges cannot easily be solved through a reallocation of resources, enforcing existing regulations or designing new ones. Debates around these challenges rather seem to get stuck and end in political conflicts about who is responsible, for what or to whom and on what basis. Thus, we seem to observe an increased moralization in negotiating political problems. The recent EU migration pact is a case in question where most actors agree that something needs to be done with regard to the migrants and refugees at the EU external borders and states who have the economic and political capacity should lead the way. Yet, others argue that for states the responsibility towards their own people comes first, signified by domestic resistance framed not only in the language of distributional conflict and justice but also increasingly related to argumentations of values and identities. Often, such initiatives end in declarations of intent from a few actors but lead to no action as actors cannot agree on one strategy. If one cannot solve political problems through compensating, sanctioning or finding consensus for new binding regulation, all what is left, it seems, is calling on the morality of actors to behave responsibly.

The observation of increased references to responsibility in political discourse (see Hansen-Magnusson and Vetterlein 2020) has prompted us to consider it more closely as a concept to be studied in IR theory and its relations to other key concepts, such as authority, power, accountability and legitimacy, and how these play out in practice. Two interlinked developments are of importance with regard to the rise of responsibility: first, the changes in the role of the nation-state and the nature of the relationship between state, market and society, and second, at the same time the shifting reference frame of rights towards a global scale, in particular with regard to human rights. Specifically, the changing system of global governance, in particular since the 1990s (Zürn 2018), has impacted actor constellations, their power relations and practices of responsibility and accountability, and the nature of broader questions of justice and legitimacy



in world politics (Vetterlein 2018). Global governance comes about with a different allocation of authority and responsibilities across an increased variety of actors and with new modes of governing that go beyond the democratic mechanisms of participation and delegation. As a consequence, we observe new questions and challenges with regard to organizing relations at the individual, organizational, national, regional and international level, often related to a lack of appropriate regulation and/or a lack of legitimate actors willing and/or able to adopt and enforce appropriate regulation. Some scholars perceive global governance as exposing ‘regulatory gaps’ (Doh 2005; Palazzo and Scherer 2006). At the same time, it is not possible or even desirable to regulate everything (Ruggie 2004). What we observe empirically then is an increase in calls for more responsibility, and, as we argue, an emerging new system of negotiated governance (Vetterlein 2018). References to responsibility resemble semantic struggles which revolve around normative expectations about who should be doing what and to whose benefit. They manifest as responsibilized governance practices across a number of policy areas.

IR scholarship has begun to pick up on such observations, and an increasing amount of research and commentary has emerged that investigates responsibility more explicitly. Yet, since the concept of responsibility is a cross-cutting theme, the scholarship is far from being united and work is mainly scattered across disciplines and policy fields. Many empirical studies exist, in particular on explicit policy tools such as the responsibility to protect or corporate responsibility (Carroll 1999; Bellamy 2006; Rajamani 2006; Wheeler 2006; Honkonen 2009; Brunnée and Toope 2010) or on the responsibility of specific powerful states and institutions (Lang 1999; Lebow 2003; Erskine 2008; Bukovansky, Clark et al. 2012; Gaskarth 2017). At the same time, theoretical work has appeared that takes up crucial dimensions that the concept of responsibility evokes such as the possibility and limitations of moral agency, the location of moral agency as well as questions of community for which moral values are valid or the link between responsibility and accountability and processes of constitutionalization of political spheres (Campbell 1996; Grant and Keohane 2005; Ainley 2008; Vetterlein and Wiener 2013). These brief considerations show how deeply a discussion of responsibility is embedded in broader questions of IR theory. At the same time, they also signify the interdisciplinarity of the topic as questions of responsibility in world politics relate to political theory and global ethical studies, international law as well as area/development studies, let alone the many existing sub-fields such as governance or welfare state studies, among others (Daase, Junk et al. 2017; Debiel, Finkenbusch et al. 2018; Bazargan-Forward and Tollefsen 2020).

Given the multidimensionality of the concept, it is not possible to offer a text that would be able to claim coherence and consistency across all chapters in using the precise same understandings of responsibility and related terms such as duty, obligation or accountability as there are disciplinary differences and differential theoretical approaches. Nor was this the objective of the Handbook. Rather to the contrary, what we offer here is a broad overview of research on responsibility across a variety of subfields in IR, zooming in on specific angles of responsibility relations, levels of analysis and policy fields.<sup>1</sup> Nevertheless, there is an overall structure to this Handbook because what all responsibility research has in common is to focus on one of the following elements of established responsibility relations more specifically, these are the subject of responsibility or who should take responsibility, the object of responsibility or who/what for should responsibility be taken, and finally based on what normative framework are claims of responsibility being invoked. Taking on or ascribing responsibility between a subject and an object referring to agreed-upon norms and regulations we argue is a contextualized and political activity, which we refer to as ‘responsibilization’.

We understand responsibilization as a political and normative struggle taking place in specific policy fields with the attempt to negotiate who is responsible for what. The Handbook’s structure follows this conceptualization and after the introduction and [Part I](#), which introduces theoretical approaches to responsibility in IR, [Part II](#) sheds special light on specific policy fields with

the aim to show how responsibility came to matter with regard to a specific policy and to map the emergence of responsibility relations between key actors (subject and object) and how they position themselves in that particular field. [Part III](#) then turns to relations between responsibility stakeholders, which are ‘subject’, ‘object’ and ‘speaker’, to capture the contestation of responsibility statements, claims and social practices. We have identified different actors, individual and collective, whose relations instantiate responsibility and who have core stakes in global governance policies. These actors range from individual states (e.g., China, see [Chapter 18](#)) to international organizations such as regional development banks ([Chapter 21](#)) or private sector actors ([Chapter 24](#)). [Part IV](#) then turns to the objects of stakeholders’ engagement. Here, the focus is on global commons which more or less explicitly form part of the common heritage of humankind and how their meaning and significance has changed over time. [Part V](#) closes the volume with an overview of different normative discussions and debates of how responsibility ‘works’ or should be made to work in world politics.

With such a broad ambition, a handbook on responsibility in International Relations provides an extraordinary opportunity to present an encompassing and cross-disciplinary discussion of the concept itself as well as its impact in various governance areas. Three objectives guide this Handbook. First of all, it brings together scholarship and maps work on responsibility that is currently undertaken in International Relations as well as in the above-mentioned neighbouring disciplines. The Handbook thus offers a way to shed light on different theoretical approaches towards responsibility, to bridge disciplinary divides and to show how responsibility matters in different policy fields of global governance. Existing work is diverse and covers several policy-fields without a coherent link and without the opportunity to compare fields side by side – the proposed handbook stands to correct this shortcoming.

Second, the Handbook thereby offers the opportunity to reflect on current scholarship on the topic by engaging with the most crucial theoretical debates in the field and state-of-the-art research in policy areas in which responsibility has become an institutionalized part of normative order. It aims to make existing knowledge accessible in a comprehensive manner. Third, the Handbook is the first of its kind that provides a comprehensive overview of IR scholarship on responsibility and thus will serve as the foundational text for this interdisciplinary and multi-policy field. By doing so, the volume not only provides a state-of-the-art text on research on responsibility in world politics that brings together existing knowledge in an encompassing manner. As a consequence, it also advances the field since such a mapping provides the opportunity to open up a dialogue among theoretical approaches, disciplines and policy fields that in turn allows for comparison and synergies.

In what follows, we will first outline the rise of the responsibility concept in global politics in order to show the need for a deeper engagement with this topic. In a second step, we outline relations among political actors that arise when actors invoke responsibility. In particular, we address the subject and object of responsibility, the normative basis and questions of authority that responsabilization raises, as well as the speaker who initiates the process of responsabilization in the first place. This sets the readers up for the structure of this Handbook and the many different ways in which our authors approach responsibility, which we detail in the brief overview of the Handbook in the final section.

### **The rise of responsibility in world politics**

The concept of responsibility, as we use it today, with its moral and ethical implications has only been introduced to philosophical debates in the 19th century (Bayertz 1995). It received increased attention in a variety of academic disciplines after World War II. Some authors emphasize that it

is traditionally an individualist concept (Loh 2017, 40), as it relies on three preconditions which are predominantly characteristics of individual actors; these are causality, freedom and rationality (Nida-Rümelin, 2011). Actors can be perceived as responsible if they have had the chance to intervene in situations and change the outcome of an event (causality), had the freedom to decide which intervention they would like to choose and had the rationality to reason about this decision. Hence, people usually can take responsibility or be made responsible for their actions, based on socially defined criteria, which usually involve criteria of age, soundness of mind and competency. This perspective paves the way for inquiries into the relations between an individual and his/her social context and also opens up debates for political theory concerning the responsibility of individuals in the setting of a particular community. This latter approach was taken by Hannah Arendt (1958), for example, who held that individuals are responsible for the doings of the community or society of which they are a part. In contrast to such individualist approaches, other authors investigate the role of collective or corporate moral agency (Erskine 2003), shared responsibility (Nollkaemper 2018) as well as systemic or global responsibility (Loh 2017, 40), for instance with regard to the responsibility for particular weather phenomena triggered by climate change, and the impact of these on communities.

References to responsibility have increased in political discourses and this is not only the case for policy fields where the term responsibility already found its way into specific policy norms, such as corporate responsibility or the responsibility to protect. We argue here that this has to do with changes in the institutional and normative structure of world politics (Weiss 2013; Zürn 2018). On the one hand, global governance is characterized as an exercise of authority across a variety of actors whose power relations and accountability practices vary significantly according to the specific context. Over the past three decades, new institutional modes of governance have developed, such as soft law arrangements, public–private partnerships or the like, which do not only shift around power positions across actors but also open up new answers to questions of who is responsible for specific outcomes/events, for what and on what basis. On the other hand, and tied to this first point, we can observe an increased pluralism in interests and values; and with an accompanying discourse on rights, this leads to an increase in situations of equally correct, yet opposing fundamental values. This in turn means that not every problem can be solved by designing and implementing the ‘correct’ regulation but that we can expect increased contestation and negotiation when it comes to asserting one value over the other. Here, responsibility comes into play, as it is often attributed but also taken by actors in political debates when force or sanctions are not possible. The references to responsibility that different actors make may be difficult to reconcile as the semantic engagements may rest on normative foundations that are not easily commensurable. Responsible corporate behaviour is one example where the decrease of state control over corporations is countered by calling on their ethics to *voluntarily* step up for this institutional void (Ruggie 2011). What corporate responsibility, however, is supposed to mean is often left open and subject for debate. One could therefore argue that the rise of responsibility in public debates signifies a move towards a global governance system characterized by negotiation and debate (Vetterlein 2018).

Over the past few decades, the literature on global governance has provided us with excellent descriptive as well as analytical work regarding the institutional changes of global political structures with increased globalization processes (amongst many, Dingwerth and Pattberg 2006; Mattli and Woods 2009; Karns and Mingst 2010; Ougaard and Leander 2010; de Burca, Keohane et al. 2013; Abbott 2014; Weiss and Wilkinson 2018; Zürn 2018). Not only do we observe a pluralization of governance actors and their influence in political processes at a global scale but also shifts in political processes and modes of governance towards more hybridity (Biermann, Pattberg et al. 2009; Armitage, de Loë et al. 2012; Leander 2012). Governance is not just

governing without government. Zürn (2018, 4) for instance distinguishes between governance by government, governance with governments or governance without governments. The focus in this literature has been on questions regarding which actor has the legitimate authority and capacity to regulate specific issue areas according to consented norms and rules and beyond national borders. Regulatory gaps (Doh 2005; Palazzo and Scherer 2006) or ‘unregulated spaces’ (Clunan and Trinkunas 2010) have been identified which open up room for contestation in which rules, regulations and norms are being negotiated and where arguments and justifications are brought forward in form of responsibility claims, based on conflicting interests as well as different sets of values about how social, political and economic relations should be organized.

The degree of contestation over the meaning of responsibility claims, however, varies according to the nature of the problem in question, that is, the degree of an existing regulatory context, the presence of a legitimate actor with the capacity to regulate, and the level of value pluralism. We might for instance face situations where rules and regulations do exist but are contested based on different interests involved. Examples could be distributional conflicts in welfare states regarding social benefits where some people would call on the state as the responsible actor to intervene while others would argue for more self-responsibility. A second type of situation can be described as cases where regulation exists but is not enforced by the responsible actor(s). Tax breaks for big corporations can be an example, or the Diesel scandal around Volkswagen and some other automobile companies can serve as a case in question. Such situations are often perceived as unfair and thus can cause a significant amount of criticism and resistance. A third situation is cases in which regulatory spaces are fragmented. Take the example of multinational corporations (MNCs) for instance that have their headquarters in one country and are active in others. Legally, the subsidiaries of an MNC fall under the jurisdiction of the country in which the company has invested. If that country cannot or will not punish the company for its wrong-doings, the home country has no legal power beyond political/moral pressure.

In contrast to these situations that highlight the limits or shortcomings of law and regulation are instances that describe conflicts where value-based arguments might become more prominent. The fourth case is a situation where we face outcomes that are legal but not legitimate. Most of the financial practices of bankers and other financial experts leading up to the last financial crisis was legal but their legitimacy can be questioned. The same goes for MNC investment in countries that do not abide to human rights. A last prominent example is UNSC resolutions not to intervene in potential cases of genocide (see Rwanda). The question here is whether a number of actors (states) who do have the capacity to intervene would have the moral responsibility to do so despite the outcome of a legal procedure, i.e. non-intervention (Erskine 2014). This last case also serves as an example for the fifth scenario, that is, a situation of opposing regulations and/or fundamental values. In the example of the responsibility to protect specific groups of people from harm caused by their own government or because that government cannot protect them, the rivaling principles are those of state sovereignty versus individual human rights. Finally, we also observe unregulated spaces, that is, global challenges that are characterized by complexity where it is difficult to identify responsible actors and hold them accountable or problems that refer to outcomes lying in the future and thus require prospective action and positive responsibility. Environmental issues such as climate change serve as an example. Responsibility here is about more general goals to be reached in the future where exact action cannot necessarily be defined *a priori*.

These institutional changes that have led to an increase in references to responsibility are accompanied by normative changes too. Elsewhere we argue that the rise of the human rights discourse has enabled a turn to responsibility (Vetterlein and Hansen-Magnusson, 2020). Researchers have long since shown how human rights came to matter within particular countries

(Risse, Ropp et al. 1999) following the establishment of specific rights such as the provision covered by the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights as well as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. In this regard, we argue that the link to human rights provides argumentative clout for global actors to hold others to account or to shame/blame them into engaging in particular behaviour, while it also provides enabling conditions. In other words, because human rights are well established as a normative principle, speaking of responsibilities of someone and for something commands attention and seems to be key in the attempt to induce a sense of appropriateness.

Human rights have enjoyed a special legal status over the past decades (D'Amato 1982). In many policy fields, they have changed normative contexts with the consequence that the allocation of responsibilities has been shifted around. The argumentative push to consider security in terms of *human* security rather than from a national point of view is a famous example. Specifically, the human dimension and the well-being of individuals or groups stand in direct opposition to the value of state sovereignty. Here, the concept of responsibility, as in the responsibility to protect (R2P), was introduced as a compromise to reconcile individual rights and state sovereignty as it is demanding responsible behaviour, yet open enough to allow for non-intervention (de Carvalho 2020). Other examples can be found with regard to climate change, for instance. The fact that a German court accepted to hear a case of a Peruvian farmer against the energy company RWE for its responsibility of the impact of climate change is writing legal history. While RWE is not active in Peru, Saul Luciano Lluyia sued the company for contributing to a melting glacier in the Andes Mountains because of its carbon emissions which in turn increases the likelihood of flooding the city of Huaraz, the farmer's home (Wang 2017). UN Special Rapporteur on Human Rights and the Environment John H. Knox says that '[t]his case is part of a growing trend to try to hold corporations responsible in their home jurisdictions for human rights abuses and environmental harm that they cause elsewhere. There are difficult legal and factual issues to overcome, of course'.<sup>2</sup> Also, the OHCHR has established that climate change affects the full set of human rights, that is, a right to life, adequate food and housing, health and self-determination. But still, courts have rejected holding states accountable for their contribution to global warming, such as attempted by the Circumpolar Conference in front of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights regarding the United States' role.<sup>3</sup>

The link to human rights made it much more explicit what it is that an actor is responsible for and who such an actor might be in the first place. We can further observe an increased formalization of responsibility across different policy fields (Vetterlein and Hansen-Magnusson 2020). On the one hand, once it has become clear that people have rights to clean water or air, those whose activities impact on it have a moral as well as a legal obligation to ensure its provision. Human rights are increasingly embraced by MNCs (Favotto and Kollman 2020) because they are interested in leaving a positive imprint of their doings by engaging with local communities and in philanthropy (Thompson 2020). These activities signal a growing sense of obligation towards providing the communities in which they operate with access to resources, education, etc., which can be viewed as strengthening the human rights provisions entailed in both the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. On the other hand, R2P for instance was fully enacted for the first time in combination with Chapter VII of the UN Charter in UN Security Council Resolution 1973 in 2011. However, while formalized, the actual application remains contested following the way the mandate was enacted. Brazil for instance has proposed its own understanding of the role of the international community in this constellation as 'Responsibility while Protecting'. This signals disagreement on the legal side of responsibility regarding accountability and obligation while in principle acknowledging the ethical dimension. In fact, the debate over the

formal constitutionalization of R2P is on-going (Welsh and Banda 2010). Tomer Shadmy (2018), however, shows how formalizing responsibility works positively for the case of business and human rights. Human rights norms increasingly conceptualize obligations as responsibilities, which indicate the voluntary character of such action. Yet, she argues that these developments indicate the emergence of a new jurisprudential order, opening up for new forms of non-democratic authority and power, signifying new ways of theorizing global governance.

Overall, this combination of institutional and normative changes in the structure of global governance leads to a situation where responsibility is referred to as a compromise solution in order to tackle regulatory gaps. To be more precise, a pluralization of actors in the global sphere combined with new modes of governance results in changes in the allocation of power and legitimacy of actors. We witness situations where regulation reaches its limits mainly due to conflicting or sometimes even incommensurable rights (see sovereignty versus human rights in the case of R2P). Given an additional increase in fundamental rights that actors can refer to in order to justify responsibility claims we observe an increase in value pluralism, that is, currently resolved through the introduction of the vague concept of responsibility. While we also note an increased formalization of responsibility in world politics in guidelines, treaties and laws over the course of the last decades starting with the 1987 Brundtland Report (Vetterlein and Hansen-Magnusson 2020), responsibility often remains a deliberately ambiguous concept, legally non-binding and open for interpretation and debate. This is not to say that we end up in weak governance regimes. Yet, the strength of the evocation of responsibility varies and depends on different constellations between the subject, object, addressee, authority and normative basis of responsibility.

### **Responsibility relations: the positioning of subject, object and speaker in policy fields**

Just as there is more than one way to skin a cat, there are numerous ways to define responsibility and approach it analytically. The semantic struggle over responsibility paves the way for a variety of possible different emphases on who should be responsible and what for, as does its instantiation in practice. Similarly, customary or legal understandings of responsibility create structural links between subjects and objects, thereby further differentiating the ways in which responsibility can be characterized.

While the historical development of the concept and its connection to agency were already noted, references to responsibility come with a range of – often – dichotomous characteristics related to the quality of the action itself. In this regard, responsibility can be future-oriented, or prospective (Cowley 2014; Heidbrink 2017), or oriented on past action, that is retrospective. This distinction partly overlaps with positive versus negative responsibility, yet with the difference that positive responsibility does not only refer to the time-dimension but also to an action that explicitly enhances the status quo of a situation, while negative responsibility connotes a passive take and refers to the avoidance of harm. Retrospective, or ‘ex post’, responsibility raises the question whether those who brought something about, and thereby have ‘causal responsibility’, should also deal with the results, which describes ‘remedial responsibility’. Other authors have found different ways to classify responsibility. Hart (1968) for instance distinguishes between four types of responsibility, these are causal responsibility concerning the question who has caused an outcome, role responsibility with regard to a specific task that needs to be addressed, capability in terms of who has the ability to take on responsibility and finally liability referring to legal responsibility. Other commentators perceive responsibility as a relation of an actor to his/her community/society, to a higher authority (such as the law, god or nature) and to his/herself (Baran 1990).

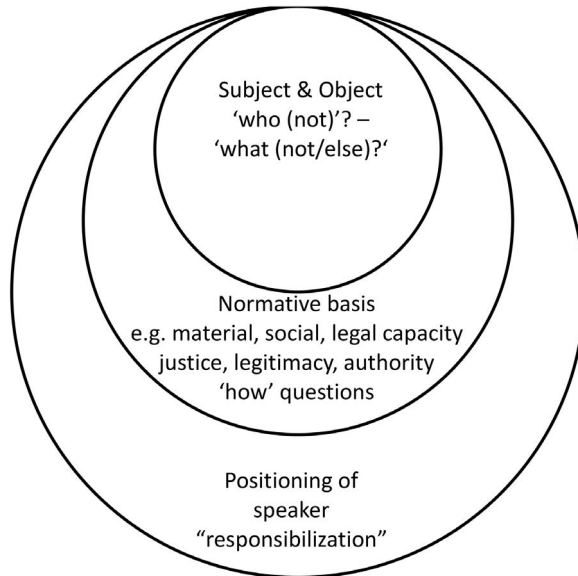


Figure 1.1 The field of responsabilization

Throughout this volume, authors will refer to one or more of these ways of defining and describing responsibility. Yet, the basic elements of responsibility are present in every situation of calling for or taking on responsibility: these are the responsibility subject (who), the responsibility object (who/what for), and the responsibility authority (against whom/based on what), which marks the normative basis of the relation between subject and object. Taking on or attributing responsibility is a contextualized and political activity, which we can refer to as ‘responsibilization’. Responsibilizing is a political struggle as well as a practical phenomenon, enacted by a speaker, which linguists may understand in terms of a constant tension between illocutionary and perlocutionary force, that is, the speaker’s intent and the effect of this speech act on the speaker or the audience, respectively. ‘Who’ may be responsible and ‘what’ they may be responsible for points to a broader set of normative foundations that underpin the arrangement, all of which may be subject to critique by others who may engage in countering claims. Responsibilization thereby gives rise to a set of questions which are related and can be represented in terms of different layers, as expressed in [Figure 1.1](#).

Responsibilizing creates a set of relations between actors – the subjects of responsibility – and that which they are responsible for – the objects of responsibility, invoked by a speaker, and thereby circumscribing a specific field of responsibility. Responsibilizing is not a neutral process as it contains assumptions about the basis upon which, or reasons why, someone is or should be responsible for something. In a similar manner, responsibilizing delineates the object of responsibility in particular ways by defining its boundaries and differentiating it from other objects that someone could be responsible for. Questions of ‘who is responsible?’, ‘what are they responsible for?’ and ‘how does this responsibility come about?’ are contextually embedded, as responsibilizing happens in relation to a – given or imagined – community that is somehow affected by this action. This setting gets further complicated if we, as researchers, step back from the scene: from an observer’s position we can also point at the political dimension of responsibilizing, because who attempts to define ‘who?’, ‘what?’ and ‘how?’ reveals actual or idealized constellations of a global society. This is to say that a speaker holding someone responsible or assigning responsibility

for something draws on or refers to normative understandings of how things should be, which may be quite different from the status quo.

This political character of responsabilizing becomes even more apparent if we pose the questions in the negative form of ‘who not?’ and ‘what not?’ and also inquire into who is able to and raises them in the first instance and who does not, which concerns questions of legitimacy and authority. As argued above, references to subjects and objects of responsibility do not necessarily come with an agreed set of norms, nor with a clearly demarcated field within which responsibility is taken or assigned, nor with a given locus of authority. These components are being (re-)arranged in the practices of responsabilizing. Looking at the four issues of (1) ‘who?’, (2) ‘what?’, (3) the normative basis of responsabilizing as well as the (4) position of the speaker provides scholars with plenty of scope for analysis, which we will briefly discuss in the following paragraphs as our Handbook is structured around those.

### ***The subject of responsibility***

Who, the subject, is the central focus when responsibility is claimed or assigned. The subject designates the actor or actors that is or are tied in various ways to the object of responsibility. By virtue of this exposed status and the connection to the object, the subject is elevated into a privileged position in comparison to other (potential) subjects in the process of responsabilizing. The subject of responsibility need not necessarily be the speaker who raises the issue of responsibility.

There are two issues with regard to the subject, when taking responsibility to the realm of world politics: First, the default position in International Relations used to be that the state takes precedence over other actors, which can be explained by the vantage point of particular approaches, such as Realism. This is still the case when we approach responsibility through the angle of International Law, given that states occupy a central position in its making. However, recent years have seen a shift of responsibility towards non-state actors, such as MNCs, especially in the context of business and human rights (Karp 2014). Second, an important question in political theory is whether and to what extent collective actors, rather than individuals, are even able to or should be assigned responsibility (Erskine 2003; Bazargan-Forward and Tollefsen 2020). Besides states, there are therefore multiple foci of analysis, including individuals, civil society, corporations and international organizations.

This shift in or diversification of the subject of responsibility reveals that ‘who?’ is intimately connected to the empirical context and the ‘how?’ question that is at the heart of the normative basis of responsabilizations. An awareness of this shift brings to our attention that material capacities are only one of at least three ways identified by researchers in which subjects come to a position of responsibility. After all, some corporations command considerably more resources than some states and are therefore in a better position to take responsibility for the well-being, livelihood and life of their employees (O’Neill 2005). A similar focus on material capacity is advanced by English School scholars, who hold that so-termed ‘great powers’ hold special managerial responsibility for global affairs based on the resources they command (Bull 2002 (1977), 196). The discourse usually involves prospective responsibility such as ensuring particular working conditions or peace.

A second way in which ‘who?’ and ‘how?’ are connected becomes plain when we consider that, in practice, material capacity is contextually bound up with social expectations. Material capacity does not possess inherent qualities that give rise to responsibility. Rather, social expectations refer to the ways in which those who *can* command resources *should* put them to use (Nolan 2005; Heupel 2013), to either avoid harm or do good. In addition to the normative question of how



resources are or should be put into use, it is also crucial to see who is raising the issue in the first place. Both the *content* of social expectations in terms of negative and/or positive responsibility, and the *practice* of responsabilizing with a focus on actors and sites are likely to contain pointers towards what kind of global society the speaker envisages in the present and what they would like to move towards in the future. It is thus prime material for International Relations scholarship.

Next to material capacity and social expectations, legal settings mark a third way in which the ‘how?’ question is linked to the subject of responsibility.<sup>4</sup> Conventionally, legal structures give rise to expectations that a particular role entails responsibility for an object. Such role-related expectations can be investigated with a view to *ex ante* responsibility in either positive or negative variance. The question thus becomes, ‘what (not) should actor X do, given their role in a particular setting?’. In its purer form, the discussion of legal responsibility is often framed as ‘accountability’ (Slaughter 2004; Grant and Keohane 2005; Bovens, Goodin et al. 2014), but often at the detriment of the broader contextual vision (Vetterlein 2018): the answer to the question of who caused or did not prevent something is not necessarily the same as the answer to the question who should do something about it. In International Relations this has been discussed extensively in terms of the legality and legitimacy of actions of so-termed ‘coalitions of the willing’ and their responsibility for peace and security (Erskine 2014). Governance arrangements may rest on some kind of legal foundation, but they are subject to discussions of legitimacy that reach beyond purely legal aspects. These discussions are further complicated by the growing plurality of actors in world politics that we mentioned earlier.

Overall, we can see from the discussion that questions pertaining to the subject of responsibility cannot be conclusively answered without engaging a set of further questions that relate to the context in which responsibility is claimed or assigned, by whom and in what manner. In the process of responsabilizing, different aspects of the ‘how?’ issue overlap and form a dynamic, multi-layered web of responsibility (Hansen-Magnusson 2019) within which we can inquire retrospectively in terms of who brought something about and with what kinds of consequences for them or others, as well as prospectively in terms of what should happen in the future. Given that the discipline of International Relations neither needs to privilege the perspective and role of states nor addresses a unified global order, research concerning how responsibility matters in world politics can arrange the questions introduced above in various constellations of actors and contextual focus.

### ***The object of responsibility***

The object of responsibility can be understood not only as an action but also as a person, thing or event (Loh 2017). The object of responsibility is inseparable from the process of its emergence – it is not simply given but the product of the kinds of responsabilizing practices described above. This means that the object can be invoked by a subject of responsibility, who actively seeks responsibility for something with a view to past or future action, or a third party in the process of responsabilization (the speaker, see below), who ascribes responsibility for something – negative or positive, *ex post* or *ex ante* – to someone else. How objects of responsibility are framed and by whom usually has implications on the subject(s) involved and their roles concerning responsible action (Jasanoff 1999, 2005), which is even more true if the object is a person or group advocating being responsabilized. But regardless of whether the object is actively involved in the process, like the subject, it is embedded in a normative context.

Discussing objects of responsibility, rather than subjects, puts a different emphasis on the inquiry and is linked with other and additional sets of questions. These questions concern, first, not only the boundaries of the object as a general matter but also more specifically in terms of global

public goods. Second, they concern questions of retrospective and prospective responsibility. With regard to the first issue, it is for instance not always clear whether a policy issue of positive responsibility, such as investment in infrastructure, concerns aspects of human security or economic development. Responsibilizing an object may therefore resonate differently with different communities that are affected, raising the issue of underlying normative bases of responsibility claims and questions about the speaker (see below). At other times, the boundaries of the object may be fuzzy because a subject may need to handle competing responsibilities simultaneously, such as during war when responsibility for the well-being of one's soldiers (and citizens) needs to be reconciled with the responsibility to protect civilians in another state while also avoiding harm to them (Hansen-Magnusson 2019). In both instances, the debate over the boundary of the object is likely to touch on the role of a particular subject and their actions, especially whose concerns should prevail and how they should be handled. In a context of war, but also world politics more generally, there may be structural constraints for parties to address responsibility issues because a procedure of arbitration may not exist or may not be accessible.

Another question on the boundaries of objects of responsibility is addressed in discussions about the emergence and nature of global public goods, with which the object is associated (Zürn 2018). The benefit of taking or ascribing someone responsibility *ex ante* usually takes place within a discourse of benefits to humanity and human well-being which transcends national boundaries and interests (regardless of whether this is *de facto* the case). For instance, BRICS countries are demanding, by way of offering, to take on additional responsibility for global trade and finance (Narlikar 2011). But in consequence this may mean that neither human rights nor the norms of environmental governance are implemented in a universal manner.

With regard to the second issue, the question of 'what is the object of responsibility?' can be addressed both retrospectively as well as prospectively, while also requiring an engagement with normative discussions. Concerning the retrospective approach, it appears that the object already exists but it is not clear if a subject with causal responsibility should also bear remedial responsibility or whether this should be delegated to someone else. A case in point is the debate about climate change and whether the countries and corporations that caused climate change historically should engage in particular activities to mitigate further damage in the future, and whether present contributions and capabilities should be treated in a differentiated manner. Interesting for International Relations, this debate raises questions about present and future global order, possibilities and obligations of participation in institutions, and the normative foundations thereof institutions. Prospectively, an engagement with the object of responsibility is also embedded in such normative questions, because it concerns the direction of travel as a global community, who is part of it and in what ways. Institutionalizing responsibility with regard to the future is not without challenges, though, if we look at the institutionalization of responsibility for peace in the UN system, for example. What seemed to be a workable solution in the aftermath of World War II is not necessarily the right design for all times.

### ***Normative basis, authority and legitimacy***

These last examples show that the context of human activity changes over time and may thereby alter the boundaries of an object. We may investigate changes in discourses, such as in the emergence of a responsibility to protect to 'save strangers' (Wheeler 2002; Brunnée and Toope 2005; Bellamy 2006; Evans 2008; Welsh 2011), as well as material factors, such as climate change or the arrival of new technologies, be they nuclear energy or different means of communication, that influence life on the planet (Jonas 1984; Falkner 2007; Pal 2009; Manjikian 2010). Pressing issues for International Relations that arise from discursive and/or material changes are 'how and

in what ways should an object of responsibility be dealt with?', 'who is included or excluded in its definition as well as managerial and administrative practices?', and 'how can the set-up ensure sufficient flexibility to account for changes in the object's boundaries or the general context?' (Bernstein and Coleman 2009; Wiener 2018; Zürn 2018). The involvement of the 'how?' question with regard to subjects and objects of responsibility points to the normative basis upon which subject and object come into being as well as the ways in which world politics should work (differently), which touches on questions of authority and legitimacy.

In this regard, avenues for research are opened up by inquiring into the normative basis that responsabilization offers because the process of how responsibility is taken or assigned contains notions of justice and fairness, and the ways in which world politics *should* be organized more broadly. This aspect can be linked to questions of authority, such as who can or should make decisions, and to questions of legitimacy, such as how this decision-making process is or should be embedded in the wider structures of world politics. Philosophical debates have advanced the distinction between internal authority, which can denote one's moral consciousness, and external authority, such as a court, as the arbiter of the normative basis of responsibility (Loh 2017, 44). Yet the realities of world politics, in which the audience of responsibility claims is often diffuse as well as cross- or transnational, and in which legal accountability may be difficult to establish, are likely to escape such clarity. However, by drawing on political theory, researchers *can* inquire how the contours of an object of responsibility are shaped, what claims are made concerning the organization of a particular governance field, and whether there are consented norms underlying this process.

Christian Barry has identified four general normative principles that may be used to characterize responsabilization and help describe such a debate. The so-termed 'capacity principle', as has been discussed previously, holds that 'capacity to bring remedy to serious deprivations entails the responsibility to do so' (Barry 2003, 230). It resonates particularly well with positive responsibility, which sets it apart from the 'contribution principle', which is mostly about negative responsibility that is mainly causal and retrospective and holds agents responsible 'when, and to the extent that, they have contributed to bringing (...particular) situations about' (Ibid. 228). As a third type, he puts forward the 'beneficiary principle', which 'asserts that the strength of one's ethical reason to alleviate some hardship or unfair social rules depends on the extent to which one has benefited from its injustice' (Ibid. 229). This principle is also primarily backward-looking, as those who responsabilize interpret how a particular historical trajectory would have been different in the absence of a specific social arrangement. A well-known example in this context is the debate over the legacy of colonialism. Finally, the 'connectedness principle' (Ibid. 229) focuses on links between subject and object of responsibility, which may involve a shared history or institutions, but also membership in solidaristic communities or a social connection to the unjust action (see Young 2011). This principle expresses how closer ties of some kind allocate more responsibility to remedy a situation. Historically, sovereignty strongly linked a state and its citizens, but the debate over R2P since the beginning of the century has highlighted that this is no longer the case. And as the example of the Peruvian farmer's case against RWE shows, it may not necessarily require territorial proximity to express connectedness.<sup>5</sup>

These principles are ideal-types, which can appear in mixed form when we talk about responsibility. They designate the connections between subject and object in different ways and with different emphases on how authority and legitimacy are (supposedly) established. Heuristically, they inform research and reflection on responsibility, for if we perceive of world politics as a subject of International Relations that may defy boundaries and may work in multiple sites and at different scales, assumptions about actors and their characteristics as well as about actual and tentative loci of authority *may guide* inquiries, but they *should not prevent* debates about designs of institutions of global governance that are different to the ones established in the latter half of the 20th century (Rengger 2003).

### ***Position of speaker***

The speaker is the central agent in the process of responsabilizing because subject and object of responsibility, the ways in which they are connected, and the normative basis upon which the connection rests upon do not come into being on their own. The issue of who evokes responsibility may involve an actor who is part of an existing governance field, but also one who is not (yet), but may strive to be admitted to it, as in the above-mentioned case of BRICS states. But while the BRICS states speak from a position of strength, motivated by aspiration to become recognized as a leading power, speakers may invoke responsibility from a marginalized position, highlighting their own vulnerability.<sup>6</sup> Discursive interventions may reveal particular claims concerning authority and legitimacy as well as questions of inclusion and exclusion, which the speaker supports, would like to alter, or build from scratch. While the speakers may position themselves in an authoritative role that assigns responsibility, this need not be the case as they may merely advocate for particular institutional arrangements to be set up.

Statements about why particular institutional arrangements are necessary and should follow certain normative principles are likely to involve arguments of shared benefits of global goods (Zürn 2018), because foregrounding national interests has hardly been a successful strategy in building global institutions in the past. Yet, of course the question remains whether that is an honest intention or merely a disguise of interests. That the position of the speaker during responsabilization matters also with regard to particular audiences can be inferred from the observation that, in recent years, unilateral and national agendas score well with some domestic audiences. An example of this is the development of the United States' foreign policy since 2016.

In sum, it cannot be understated that the relation between subject and object of responsibility is one that is constantly evolving because responsabilization is embedded in normatively charged institutional structures. Not every academic discussion of responsibility in world politics will weigh questions of 'who?', 'what?' and 'how?' equally, nor will they necessarily balance issues such as causal vs. remedial responsibility, or retrospective and prospective views. But from the stock-taking of the status quo in different governance fields and by shedding light on the role of different actors, we can gain valuable insights into the workings of contemporary world politics. In addition, we can employ the range of theories of International Relations to pave the way for normative discussions about the ways in which world politics works better, fairer or more sustainable in the future.

### **Structure of the handbook**

The idea for this Handbook arose from the observation of an increased reference to responsibility in world politics. As this volume documents, there is also an enormous body of literature in International Relations that has captured this development. This scholarship is very diverse not only when it comes to the variety of policy fields and thematic issues for which investigations of responsibility relations are being conducted but also with regard to theoretical inclinations and the engagement with neighbouring disciplines as well as methodological approaches. The main objective of this volume was to display this diversity and by doing so to offer the first handbook that provides a comprehensive overview of IR scholarship on responsibility and thus will serve as the foundational text for this interdisciplinary and multi-policy field. As a consequence, the volume not only provides a state-of-the-art text on research on responsibility in world politics that brings together existing knowledge in an encompassing manner. In addition, it also advances the field since such a mapping provides the opportunity to open up a dialogue among theoretical approaches, disciplines and policy fields that in turn allows for comparison and synergies.

Despite this diversity, the previous section outlined the main elements all responsibility research is concerned with (see also [Figure 1.1](#)), these are who is responsible, what/whom for, on what normative basis and who invoked the responsibility claims. We described the process of responsabilization as taking place in specific policy fields in which the actors form responsibility relations and take on positions as subject(s) and speaker(s) of responsibility around specific responsibility objects. This understanding is resembled in the structure of this Handbook. [Part II](#) will provide a mapping of policy fields and the positionings different actors have assumed around a certain object. [Part III](#) then zooms in on those responsibility relations and captures the ways in which actors contest and argue about responsibility, ascribe it to others or also claim it for certain objects. Finally, part IV sheds light on some global commons, such as the ocean or the Arctic, as responsibility objects. The aim here is to follow the object and the emergence, contestation and transformation of responsibility around it. This core of the Handbook is bracketed by the first part on different theoretical approaches to responsibility and the final part which offers critical reflections and alternative debates currently ongoing in responsibility research. While the chapters each fit to their part, they are not meant to be read sequentially. Cross-references in the chapters will guide the reader to related themes and discussions elsewhere in the Handbook.

The first section provides an overview of theoretical perspectives when it comes to responsibility research. We have selected authors who have explicitly engaged with questions of responsibility covering different theoretical approaches and also disciplines. In different ways, they touch upon the issues of how responsibility became a point of conceptual discussion, how it is currently understood, and what other concepts responsibility relates to. Ilan Baron's chapter ([Chapter 2](#)) discusses responsibility in terms of its ontological and phenomenological dimensions, highlighting its contextual embeddedness. For him, responsibility is a form of activity, which means that our understanding of responsibility changes according to the different conditions we find ourselves in. He distinguishes five different accounts of responsibility, which echo throughout subsequent chapters in various forms and guises. The first relates to causality and liability, and treats responsibility as a combination of agency and accountability. The second explains how one is responsible because of membership in various but specific communities. The third account refers to what he terms the political responsibility of identity. The fourth one is ontological and frames responsibility as an ethical consequence of our being as opposed to our not-being. The fifth account unfolds political responsibility as political ethics.

Taking a socio-legal approach, Tomer Shadmy discusses the emergence of responsibility as a global regulative concept ([Chapter 3](#)). The chapter recounts how over the last decades various human rights instruments have been established in order to bridge the transnational accountability gap and impose human rights norms on non-state actors and on extraterritorial relations. Many of these instruments describe transnational obligations as responsibilities. Shadmy argues in the chapter that the use of the term 'responsibility' implies an emergence of a new scheme of governance for regulation of transnational relationships and influences that traditional law fails to recognize. Her in-depth inquiry into the jurisprudential features of the responsibility-based scheme of governance finds that this scheme has many progressive elements that enable to oblige strong global entities to take into consideration the interests and voices of those affected by them. At the same time, Shadmy reveals that this scheme of governance could ultimately foster un-democratic modes of authority of those powerful entities.

The following chapter continues the sociological and legal perspective, and the potential ambiguity inherent in the use of 'responsibility', which it combines with a critical, normative approach. Drawing on the practice of human rights law, advocacy and struggles, Brooke Ackerley's chapter provides a grounded normative theory of global responsibility ([Chapter 4](#)). Recognizing the cognitive and other limitations to understanding the scope, dynamics and complexity of

global injustice, the author argues in the chapter that the basis for responsibility for injustice is not in conventional moral and legal notions of duty, but rather in political notions of human rights. The chapter distinguishes between rights as entitlement and rights as enjoyment in order to discuss how these two notions give rise to different kinds of struggle over responsibility and human rights. Ultimately, the chapter concludes, when making arguments for the political, social and economic transformations necessary to take on the structural aspects of injustice, the enjoyment approach to human rights is a better partner.

Turning towards global politics, Richard Beardsworth advances the concept of political responsibility to address the issue of fragmented objects, actors and practices (Chapter 5). He argues that at this current historical moment – structured politically by material and ideological decline of the West and the emergence of new powers, populism, and the sustainable development agenda – it is important to rehearse the idea of political responsibility towards global concerns, threats and challenges. The chapter focuses on the gap between these concerns and the state system, arguing that, in a globalized but fractured age, a Weberian and pragmatic understanding of political responsibility towards one's own citizenry may release most effectively practices of global responsibility.

This theme is discussed from different angles in the following two chapters. Peter Sutch holds that the relationship between moral responsibility and political/legal responsibility is a vital element of a general conception of responsibility in world politics (Chapter 6). Importantly, for him, this entails moving beyond an account of the moral failure of the international system to an exploration of how that system might become an agent of our moral responsibility. In the contemporary literature, this goal is pursued through an engagement with institutional concepts such as the Responsibility to Protect (R2P), the humanization of international law, common or community interest, and human rights that appear to share the moral foundations of cosmopolitanism. Here, his chapter argues, lies the problem. Appearances can be deceiving, and we need to reconsider the claim that a plausible account of moral responsibility, grounded in an accessible account of political/legal responsibility, can have cosmopolitan foundations.

This scepticism is shared by Mark Busser who examines ongoing debates about the 'remedial' obligations the world's more fortunate people might have to help the most vulnerable. In Chapter 7, he suggests that emergent social, cultural and political movements that explicitly reject cosmopolitanism should perhaps be understood as reactions to the prevalence of compelling arguments in favour of responsibility that make unwelcome practical demands. Busser explores the role of motivated moral reasoning in these movements in the context of longstanding academic and theoretical debates over the various principles governing international responsibility. Even prominent scholarly arguments about 'global responsibility', he holds, have sometimes conflated various facets of the power relations of obligation, answerability and accountability, as when obligations in a 'bystander' mode are emphasized at the expense of the demands that would come with acknowledging 'consequential' duties that flow from culpabilities. For Busser, connecting responsibility debates from international theory to their practical personal and political stakes raises questions about the role that motivated moral reasoning might play, not only in reactionary and conspiracist subcultures but also in the sober and high-minded theorizing of the academy.

Moving away from a discussion of principles and towards IR theorizing, Jelena Cupać and Michael Zürn use the expansion of responsibility and authority of international organizations to reflect on the relationship between these two concepts (Chapter 8). Their theoretical sketch of the relationship starts by discussing the concepts separately, thereby identifying their major differences. In a second step, they focus on their relationship. They observe that IO responsibility and authority are not co-constitutive: there are cases in which responsibility comes without authority and cases in which authority is exercised in the absence of responsibility. Cupać and

Zürn then move to a detailed discussion of two other possibilities: that responsibility precedes and is causally prior to authority, and that authority precedes and is causally prior to responsibility. They also discuss the possibility of IO authority and responsibility being withdrawn as a consequence of the vertical relationship between the two.

Continuing with IR theory, Viktor Friedman draws on English School concepts to show how responsibilities as moral and legal standards, norms or obligations are attached to specific actors as participants in the social realm of international politics and are defined in relation to various relevant moral communities – the nation, the society of states, humankind or even the planet (Chapter 9). Further, he argues how the English School regards responsibilities not as causes of behaviour but as standards of human conduct that actors draw on to make and justify situated decisions about how to apply general rules within the confines of specific contexts. To do this well, practitioners must exhibit responsibility as a set of political virtues. Finally, Friedman shows how in emphasizing conduct rather than behaviour, the English School rejects the separation between normative and empirical inquiry. This implies that responsible scholarship requires grounding normative theorizing in the empirical study of the rules and standards that constitute the practices of international and world politics.

Themes and issues discussed in these opening chapters are elaborated upon or put into perspective in the subsequent parts. In part II, the Handbook turns to policy fields. The authors of this section provide an overview of how responsibility plays out in practice. Some of them take a more historical approach, outlining since when and through which developments responsibility has come to matter in a particular policy field. Others primarily address the question of how responsibility is institutionalized in a particular field with regard to the main actors involved and their relations, practices of formalization as well as how the field operates as a whole. The six chapters thus map responsibility relations across policy fields either in terms of how the responsibility object started to matter or in terms of the actor constellations and their positionings in the field.

Steven Bernstein discusses the assigning and erosion of responsibility for the environment as international norms assign common responsibilities to states for environmental protection while carving out sovereign responsibility for use and protection of domestic resources, with some liability for external harms (Chapter 10). He shows how the 1970s/1980s saw attempts to create greater shared responsibility by applying notions such as the ‘common heritage of [hu]mankind’ to resources deemed part of the global commons to enshrine responsibilities for access, benefit sharing, and to limit harms like climate change. However, Bernstein argues, major economies resisted such notions and specific obligations they implied. Contestation over the appropriate distribution of responsibilities led to new norms such as ‘common but differentiated responsibility and respective capabilities’ as a guide. It too came under increasing strain as debates intensified over relative historical and current contributions to environmental harms, and principled debates over distributive and historical justice and liability. The result has been further erosion of common responsibility, viewing differentiation as more about capabilities than justice, the diffusion of responsibility among states and non-state (including corporate) actors and weakening of overall responsibility, and a shift from external to internal responsibility of states for addressing environmental problems. Bernstein closes on a more upbeat note, presenting proposals to counter these trends, which include building support for environmental rights and novel proposals such as for an environmental ‘responsibility to protect’ or transitional justice processes to address global environment concerns.

The differentiated nature of responsibility is a theme that is also addressed in the chapter by Tobias Gumbert and Doris Fuchs discussing the global agri-food system (Chapter 11). They speak of ‘moral geographies’ to describe varying responsible attitudes as the result of expectations that link geographical ordering with morally adequate behaviours. Their chapter details the



governance issue of food waste and explores the roles and responsibilities of transnationally operating retail companies within this particular field. The authors argue that the scrutiny of retailers' practices of responsibility reveals their spatial differentiation: sharing responsibility for the generation of food waste downstream on the distribution and consumption stage in European countries, while continuing to shift responsibilities for waste upstream to weaker producers and suppliers along food supply chains in Non-European contexts. Gumbert and Fuchs suggest that adopting a relational ontology as well as paying close attention to power differentials in the food system may help to generate a clearer picture of varying responsibility attitudes and attributions.

Turning to the high stakes of nuclear weapons, Laura Considine and James Souter outline prominent policy debates surrounding state nuclear responsibilities in [Chapter 12](#), identifying the standards of responsibility formalized in the 1968 Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty, which was recently challenged by the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons. The authors also provide an overview of different academic models of nuclear responsibility and their critics before moving on to examine some of the issues that nuclear weapons raise for normative political and International Relations theory. While a body of earlier theoretical work argued that practices of nuclear deterrence involve taking an immoral posture towards other states, some scholars have questioned the compatibility of nuclear weapons with the responsibilities of liberal democratic states, and others have understood the possession of nuclear weapons as generating moral conflicts between different state responsibilities. Considine and Souter also point to an emerging line of argument, inspired by republican political theory, which claims that nuclear deterrence irresponsibly dominates the world's population by subjecting it to arbitrary power, even if nuclear weapons are never used.

Staying with the theme of warfare, but moving into the 21st century, Elke Schwarz's chapter engages with the complexities of assigning and taking responsibility in the use of lethal autonomous weapons systems (LAWS) ([Chapter 13](#)). At stake in the debates is the issue of whether the human can exert adequate levels of meaningful human control over weapons systems that are capable of selecting and engaging targets autonomously. Schwarz shows how the advent of new complex and distributed technologies of autonomy, especially those that employ advanced modes of machine learning and deep neural networks, challenges conceptions of the human as knowledgeable and free moral agent, acting with intent in the conduct of warfare. This challenge to human agency and control has consequences not only for legal responsibility and accountability in war, she argues, but also changes parameters for taking moral responsibility for lethal acts in warfare. In consequence, characteristics of the technology itself pose a considerable challenge to conventional understandings of lines of responsibility for actions in the context of conflict warfare.

Erna Burai focuses on the Responsibility to Protect (RtoP) in the field of security as an eminent example where 'responsibility' became an institutionalized part of normative order, not only in practice but also in name ([Chapter 14](#)). In the chapter, she asks how the introduction of responsibility contributed to negotiating the protection of populations from war crimes, crimes against humanity, genocide and ethnic cleansing and what we can learn about responsibility in world politics through the case of RtoP. The chapter starts from the dilemmas of protecting populations as they arose by the end of the 1990s, and asks how introducing responsibility to the debate responded to these conundrums on four levels: the level of discourse, the level of institutionalization, the level of collective expectations and that of public justifications for state action. Burai argues that on all four levels responsibility facilitated negotiating protection, i.e. it led to a better specification of what protection is and who should carry it out. It did so by providing politically viable terms of the debate on the level of discourse, facilitating institutionalized knowledge on mass atrocities in policy-making and in practices such as peacekeeping. On the levels



of collective expectations and public justifications for action, R2P ignited debates on specific responsibilities and understandings of protection.

The final of this section provides a historical overview of responsibility for disaster management (Chapter 15). Marco Krüger and Friedrich Gabel identify the 1755 Lisbon earthquake as the point of origin of the debate. Much later, the increasing institutionalization of disaster management within the framework of the United Nations has spurred a more nuanced discussion of different aspects of responsibility. The authors draw from a multidimensional theoretical approach to trace the complexity of responsibility by distinguishing four dimensions. These are the subject, object, quality and the normative basis of responsibility. Through these dimensions, Krüger and Gabel demonstrate that the understanding of responsibility has changed in all four dimensions. First, the allocation of responsibility has become fuzzier. They argue that while the state has remained the main subject of responsibility, additional actors have been responsabilized. Second, the object of responsibility has shifted from the affected state to the affected individuals. Third, the enactment of responsibility has become proactive and moved from a narrative of protection to a resilience approach. Finally, the quality of responsibility has altered from protecting vulnerable groups to mitigating situational vulnerability. The authors close with a discussion of the question of how to assess the legitimacy of the distribution of responsibility.

Part III zooms in on the responsibility relations amongst the actors we have discussed above, subject, object and speaker. This approach allows contributions to highlight how these relations work in practice and thus to capture the contestation of responsibility. While chapters obviously talk about specific policies, the primary focus lies on different actors, individual and collective, whose relations instantiate responsibility and who have core stakes in global governance policies. Authors were asked to address whether there are specific ways in which an actor is engaged in global politics and whether there are particular historical trajectories through which they came to matter and shape world politics. Other issues addressed in this section concern what an actor is supposedly responsible for, and how the process of assigning or taking responsibility works, including how they negotiate, shape or adopt norms relating to specific policy problems or objects of responsibility.

Diplomats are a key type of actor in this regard as it is through them that the state's interest and position in the world is instantiated. In Chapter 16, Markus Kornprobst raises the question of what responsible diplomacy ought to be. He proceeds in four steps. First, he borrows the terms *raison d'état*, and *raison de système* from the literature on diplomacy and discusses to what extent they map onto related ones such as *Realpolitik* and *Idealpolitik*. Second, he identifies basic principles of public international law that help specify what *raison d'état* and *raison de système* ought to be. In a third step, he elaborates on the clues provided by the diplomacy literature and in international law, conceptualizing the *raison d'état* as wider national interests and the *raison de système* as diplomatic peace. Finally, he assembles the pieces from the previous steps, arguing that responsible diplomacy is about judgments that balance wider national interests and diplomatic peace.

The issue of balancing national interests and the wider interests of the global community is a recurring theme, of course, and an issue that comes to the fore whenever scholars address the changing world order. Accordingly, the responsibility of so-called rising powers is at the centre of Johannes Plagemann and Amrita Narlikar's chapter (Chapter 17). Throughout the 2000s, rising powers such as China and India have greatly increased their economic, military, and political capabilities as actors in the global realm. It is not surprising that these gains have gone hand in hand with calls by western leaders and International Relations scholars alike for those powers to take on more 'responsibility' in the provision of public goods and to contribute their 'fair share' to the solution of global and regional challenges such as climate change, global

health, piracy, and free trade. With particular reference to India, Plagemann and Narlikar's chapter reviews rising powers' trajectories since the advent of multipolarity in the early 2000s. They show how rising powers continuously redefine their roles and responsibilities. Often, established narratives of North-South conflict and post-colonialism are employed, as they provide well-developed reference points widely shared amongst both rising powers and developing countries. Moreover, the authors argue, rising powers tend to prioritize their regional environment over global engagements, especially when it comes to areas of high politics and when they are situated in zones of potential or actual conflict. Plagemann and Narlikar also see some important points of difference between the rising powers, contra the common tendency to lump them together as a group. Their chapter concludes by highlighting the different limits to rising powers' willingness – individually as well as collectively – to accept responsibility in global governance and its consequences for the resolution of collective action problems in a multipolar world.

The next chapter adds to this discussion but highlighting China's role as a hydro-hegemon in the Mekong region. In [Chapter 18](#), Yung-Yung Chang shows how the country pursues geopolitical aims albeit with a diplomatic and cooperative approach, which comes close to the English School's understanding of responsibility. Along the Mekong, riparian states have been engaging in various cooperations over the years, but it was not until China engaged more fully with neighbouring countries, following a withdrawal of the USA and Japan from earlier organizations, that these succeeded. The chapter provides a genealogy of projects and could be used as a framework for further investigation in other regions that might have a similar constellation in terms of power hierarchy between upstream and downstream states.

The primary location for solving such collective problems, of course, is the UN Security Council, which holds primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace. Holger Niemann works out the current predicament of this arrangement in [Chapter 19](#): for while the UNSC holds authority and power as a result of its special responsibility, there has been a profound shift in the meaning of responsibility since the 1990s. The UNSC has widened its remit from a traditional state-centred focus on country-level crises by claiming responsibility for a growing number of transnational topics, such as counter-terrorism and climate change. The Council has also claimed responsibility for groups of vulnerable people, such as civilians and children. Niemann argues that these processes of responsabilization have the effect of changing Council discourses and decision-making, arguing that responsabilization leads to new interpretations about practices and objects of Council responsibility. His chapter provides insights into the empirical developments of such new topics, objects and practices of Security Council responsibility. It also discusses their implications, most notable the segmentation of responsibility objects, the rise of routinized practices, the establishment of accountability mechanisms and the role of anticipation for evoking Security Council responsibility. As he argues, responsabilization expands the Security Council's authority, but also leads to entanglements and creates stakeholder expectations. Responsibilization, Niemann concludes, can be understood as a non-linear process pointing to the concurrence of traditional and non-traditional understandings of Security Council responsibility.

While the UNSC is arguably the prime site of state-led top-down politics, others aspire to be integrated into the system of global state politics. Mitja Sienknecht focuses on rebel groups that claim responsibility for ethnic groups in intrastate conflicts ([Chapter 20](#)). This move pitches them against a state's government that holds responsibility for citizens, her prime example being the struggle of the Kurds in a number of countries. Sienknecht's chapter thereby contributes to a nuanced understanding of different subjects of responsibility and their (conflictive) relations to each other. The Kurdish conflict over recognition and responsibility for their own people is embedded in a broader global context, of course, which is why Sienknecht further differentiates

between claims of responsibility internal to a particular polity, on the one hand, and external recognition of responsibility, on the other.

The array of actors and stakeholders in world politics is wider than states or aspiring state groups, which the remaining chapters in this section deal with. Susan Park raises the question whether international organizations are responsible given their general immunity under international law, and investigates the case of Multilateral Development Banks ([Chapter 21](#)). These have taken on ‘democratic’ norms like accountability, including establishing the Independent Accountability mechanisms (IAMs) that assess whether they have contributed to environmental and social harm. Her chapter distinguishes responsibility from accountability, where the former is part of accountability, but has been understood by IOs in a negative compliance sense. Park argues that the IAM process is delinked from positive understandings of responsibility, because IOs operate as bureaucracies with preferences for efficiency and meeting contractual obligations. The chapter provides an example of how a typical ‘mega-loan for a mega-project’, the IFC financed Pangue Dam in Chile, led protestors to make a claim to the World Bank Inspection Panel to demand accountability. Given the Inspection Panel had no remit over the IFC, this in turn led to the creation of the Compliance Advisor/Ombudsman (CAO). In this intriguing case, Park shows how the IFC’s CAO went beyond its mandate to take responsibility to provide redress for the people harmed by the project. The case demonstrates that IAMs can hold the IFC to account but that responsibility requires positive actions that go beyond bureaucratic incentives and contractual obligations.

The International Labour Organization (ILO) provides further ways to redress harm to people. While sixteen million people are affected by forced labour within the private economy for the purpose of exploiting their labour power, Julia Drubel focuses on the ILO as the competent international organization to realize decent work in a globalized economy ([Chapter 22](#)). It does so mainly via the formulation and monitoring of normative standards. While forced labour is prohibited by the respective ILO Conventions that are legally binding for ratifying states, labour is increasingly organized within transnational labour markets in which also abusive labour relations like forced labour and modern slavery are prevalent. Drubel shows how under these changed contexts the ILO and its members assign responsibilities with regard to forced labour, including states and corporations passing it on between them. Characterizing this development in terms of a topology of responsibility, the chapter demonstrates a mismatch between ILO regulations and the practical conditions under which forced labour is reproduced within a globalized economy.

Continuing with the theme, David Karp’s chapter situates contemporary developments in the policy and practice of business and human rights within a broader theorization of the concept of responsibility in world politics ([Chapter 23](#)). The chapter adopts a periodization that stretches back to the colonial era, thereby challenging common assumptions about what is truly new and/or ‘rising’ within this field of practice. To this end, Karp first develops a theoretical distinction between discretionary and non-discretionary responsibility; relates this distinction to questions of authority; and shows how responsibility can be viewed as simultaneously moral, political and legal. Second, he historicizes the practice of business and human rights across four governance models: colonial, sovereignty-based, neo-liberal and ‘global governance’. Third, the chapter uses the conclusions of the first two sections to analyze the most significant contemporary policy initiative in this field: the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights (UNGPs). Karp concludes that the UNGPs are consequentialist and assign responsibilities that are both legal and moral in nature, but they under-emphasize political responsibility.

The final chapter of the section focuses on the ongoing debate over the responsibility of public and private actors concerning common goods online where policies of content moderation have to balance the freedom of expression on the one hand, and the safety of users on the other hand. Gabi Schlag argues that being responsible and acting responsibly in the field of

social media is a shared enterprise ([Chapter 24](#)). Shared responsibility implies that not one but many actors hold responsibility. She argues that the flipside of shared responsibility, however, often results in diffusion where nobody seems to be in charge. As the Facebook case illustrates, the dualism of shared and diffused responsibility is not a contradiction but shows the negotiated and contested character of acting responsibly in social media. Therefore, Schlag's chapter has two main goals. First, it asks what it means to hold responsibility for the content uploaded and shared on social media platforms like Facebook. Second, it discusses how Facebook addresses challenges of responsibility, accountability and liability as the policies and practices of reviewing, moderating and deleting harmful content often remain opaque. Finally, Schlag shows that Facebook's approach to content regulations is shaped both by shared responsibility and its diffusion.

[Part IV](#) then discusses the objects of responsibility contestation. Here, the focus is on global commons, broadly understood. The main questions addressed in this section concern how responsibility is being defined in particular policy fields, and how boundaries around these fields are contested or demarcated, and whether the current responsibility arrangement is viable for the future.

Samuel Barkin and Elizabeth DeSombre examine the development of what responsibility means in the context of the oceans as a global common ([Chapter 25](#)). Their focus lies primarily, but not exclusively on legal responsibility. Barkin and DeSombre's examination begins with a discussion of the common pool resource characteristics of ocean governance. It centres on the historical evolution of state responsibility in the management of that commons in the last century, in a context that worked to carve out sections of the formerly common areas of the ocean that states control, separating those from a newly evolving high norm of collective responsibility for resources on the high seas. The authors demonstrate how this norm has evolved in the context of management of marine living resources (e.g., fisheries), pollution, and minerals at the same time that a norm of responsibility for environmental effects of state behaviour was developing more generally in international environmental law. They argue that the limitations of this developing norm of responsibility in the context of the commons characteristics of the high seas form a counterpoint to this evolution; norms require matching mechanisms for implementation to have the intended effect on commons resources. Barkin and DeSombre conclude both by lauding the shift from norms of open access to those of responsible management, and by calling for better mechanisms of implementation to back up those norms.

Staying with the theme of oceans, the chapter by Rachel Tiller, Elizabeth Nyman, Elizabeth Mendenhall and Elizabeth De Santo focuses on so-called 'areas beyond national jurisdiction' (ABNJ) which make up more than half of the global ocean area ([Chapter 26](#)). Within these, there exists merely a patchwork of uncoordinated governance efforts that is subject to joint responsibility between states and non-state actors. Scientific discoveries have identified seamounts, hydro-thermal vents and cold-water corals in rare and vulnerable ecosystems, as well as the potentials of marine genetic resources that could be used in the biotechnology industry, which leads to a concern over contradictions in terms of sustainable development and conservation efforts to preserve the biodiversity that have been increasingly vocalized in global politics. To address such concerns the UNGA has called for an intergovernmental negotiation process towards a new multilateral treaty in Resolution 69/292, adopted in June 2015, on biodiversity in areas beyond national jurisdiction (BBNJ). The resultant treaty will act both as a conservation and governance mechanism, meant to establish methods to protect marine biodiversity and provide guidelines to regulate it in the ABNJ. The chapter discusses human interactions and explores the responsibility of actors within the context of biodiversity protection in areas with little or no governance, where unknown potentials for exploitation exist. In doing so, the authors ask questions about processes of regime formation, the design of effective regimes, and interaction with other regimes

and thereby analyze the institutional articulation humanity's responsibility towards biodiversity, within the framework of complex institutional dynamics, and how this could lead to adequate governance of our common heritage in this new frontier.

Although geographically on the margins of the planet, the polar regions play an important role in the global climate system. The Arctic is home to several million people whose culture and socio-economic well-being is closely intertwined with the environment. The chapter by Mathias Albert and Sebastian Knecht provides an overview over the institutional context for Arctic governance in order to lay the ground for discussing what (or who) could be, or in fact are, the subjects and objects of responsibility that play a role in the Arctic governance system and in the various discourses on the present and future development of the region (Chapter 27). In addition, the chapter scrutinizes the difficulties associated with Arctic issues that stem from the fact that 'the Arctic' cannot but be seen as a highly complex regional representation of many interlocked social and natural systems. For Albert and Knecht, this leads to the question of whether the 'bazaar governance', that has been identified as a peculiar feature of handling Arctic affairs, points to a somewhat 'deficient' mode of governance, or could not rather be seen as an appropriate form of governance under the conditions mentioned. In their conclusion, the authors discuss whether responsibilities in and towards the Arctic could be regarded as holding lessons for thinking about the future of responsibility in IR more broadly.

While the Arctic may appear abstract not least because of its remoteness, global financial markets as a responsibility object are often considered elusive as well, but arguably are of crucial systemic importance too. Michael Christopher Sardo and Erin Lockwood explore the deep relationships between global financial markets and responsibility, demonstrating both how ordinary financial practices are constituted and shaped by relationships of responsibility and how financial crises, and their severe distributional consequences, reveal the inadequacies of traditional conceptions of individual responsibility (Chapter 28). Sardo and Lockwood begin their chapter with an overview of how responsibility is traditionally conceived of, practiced, and institutionalized in financial markets, focusing on fiduciary responsibility and shareholder value, fraud regulation and the responsible corporate officer doctrine, as well as corporate social responsibility and socially responsible investing. They then turn to narratives of responsibility in the wake of the 2008 financial crisis, before showing how the structural dynamics of global finance undermine the onto-political assumptions underpinning traditional conceptions of responsibility. The authors conclude with a discussion of the conceptual and normative implications of this disconnect. Because traditional conceptions of individual and moral responsibility risk displacing and obscuring responsibility for the effects of global finance, Sardo and Lockwood outline the need for a fundamental rethinking of the concepts and practices of responsibility to move beyond the reliance on individualistic causal attribution.

The final chapter of this section addresses the internet as an object of responsibility. Given its transnational nature and impact on key aspects of our economy, politics and society worldwide, internet governance has become a critical issue in global politics. Andrea Calderaro demonstrates how negotiations on how to spread responsibilities among actors playing a crucial role in its functioning have emerged as one of the relevant challenges for global diplomacy (Chapter 29). The debate is characterized by the traditional contention between stakeholders' negotiation priorities, competencies and questions of accountability in governing a decentred issue area. Calderaro argues that if the industry is seen to be responsible for developing connectivity infrastructure and digital services, state actors play a critical role in creating regulations influencing citizens' access to the internet. His chapter unfolds this debate by looking at the evolution of the governance of the internet since its origins, characterized by the existing tensions among state actors, civil society and industry for the control of the internet domain name system, until till the

more recent increasing priority in international diplomacy agenda on cybersecurity with which, he concludes, we are witnessing to a return to the state.

**Part V** closes the volume with an overview of different normative discussions of how responsibility ‘works’ or should be made to work in world politics. Authors address conceptual questions, ask why and how IR scholarship should engage in questions of responsibility, and what issues should be raised concerning the institutional design of world politics and governance practices.

Antje Wiener addresses responsibility research from the vantage point of critical norms research (**Chapter 30**). Her chapter presents a framework based on the ethics of knowledge production as well as the contestedness of norms research in global society. For her, these two aspects account for the dynamics of reflexive theorizing as a process which involves value-based critical analysis of everyday practice in International Relations and its reflection in IR theory-building. After introducing the two central tools of the framework, the norm-typology and the cycle-grid model, the chapter turns to the use of the norm-typology with reference to the R2P norm. The final section of the chapter addresses the empirical mapping and staging of contestations with reference to the R2P norm. The summary argument holds that using the framework offers an interface for reflexive research engagement that helps avoiding responsibility researchers to talk past each other despite taking distinct and often mutually exclusive epistemological standpoints on responsibility.

Patrick Jackson’s chapter picks up themes that are discussed at various other parts of the Handbook, arguing that the question of academic responsibility is intimately linked with the question of what political responsibility is (**Chapter 31**). After all, he holds, the point of a responsible academic intervention in ongoing political contests would necessarily be the production of a more responsible political outcome. To him, this is especially significant in the case of an issue like human-induced climate change, which is well established as a scientific claim that is indisputable within the scientific community, yet how such a claim should figure in the political sphere is far from obvious. To explore this question, Jackson looks first to Max Weber’s treatment of a politics of responsibility, and then to John Dewey’s account of how publics are constituted and the role of academic knowledge in that process. He argues that the figure of the public intellectual, rather than the figure of the expert, provides an especially compelling route for bringing the results of scholarly inquiry into politics in a way that does not result in the politicization of factual claims.

The final two chapters discuss possibilities and limits of responsibility. Stephan Engelkamp’s contribution starts from the assumption that ‘acting responsibly’ towards others presents one with an impossible problem (**Chapter 32**). Given constrained time and resources, Engelkamp problematizes the questions to whom do ‘we’ respond and how? Which issues and who merit ‘our’ responsibility, and whose questions may (necessarily) be neglected? Based on Jacques Derrida’s writings on ethics and responsibility, Engelkamp’s chapter enquires the moral underpinnings of taking responsibility towards the other as an ethical and political concept. It critically engages ethical accounts of making a decision in International Relations and the moral implications of the concept of *aporia* for responsible politics. Following a theoretical discussion of the relationship between responsibility, decision and sacrifice, the chapter illustrates the specific *aporias* of responding to others through the example of European immigration policy. For Engelkamp, the German performative art group Center for Political Beauty highlights ethical dilemmas of making a responsible decision vis-à-vis the refugee crisis. While the artists’ performances aim at formulating a utopian alternative to neglecting the suffering of others, the chapter argues that they also demonstrate the limits of sustaining responsible politics. As he shows, this dilemma became visible in the actual German response to the so-called refugee crisis in 2015.



Similarly discussing the limits of responsibility, Sergio Dellavalle offers a historical account before turning to implications in practice (Chapter 33). He sets off by arguing that according to the individualistic paradigm of the Modern Ages, true knowledge and just action are exclusively based on the correct use of reason made by the individual agent. Against the background of the deficits deriving from the individualistic concept of the use of reason, Dellavalle holds that an alternative idea was developed, according to which action should essentially focus on considerations regarding the effects that action may have. This is the intellectual atmosphere in which the concept of responsibility was developed. Besides allowing to take the consequences of action into due account, the focus on responsibility had a further advantage. As he shows, by distinguishing between the subjects of obligations and the objects of obligations and by extending the range of the latter ensemble much farther than the former, the concept of responsibility makes it possible to concentrate on the impact of action on entities such as non-human animals, the biosphere, the global environment, as well as historically or aesthetically significant landscapes. However, Dellavalle holds, the problems that may arise from the substitution of the individualistic perspective on moral action with the focus on responsibility are at least as important as its possible advantages. Accordingly, his contribution explores the way in which the advantages that can be drawn from referring to responsibility could be maintained while preserving the main tenets of modern philosophy.

## Notes

- 1 We also do not claim exhaustion of policy topics or responsibility objects in this volume.
- 2 Source: <https://www.climatedocket.com/2017/11/30/germany-rwe-peru-farmer-saul-luciano-lliuya/> (accessed 21 July 2020).
- 3 See here: <https://www.inuitcircumpolar.com/press-releases/inuit-petition-inter-american-commission-on-human-rights-to-oppose-climate-change-caused-by-the-united-states-of-america/> (accessed 15 October 2020).
- 4 This dimension may overlap with social expectations, as legal philosophers have made abundantly clear, e.g. Hart (1968), Honoré (1999) and Miller (2007), but it is worth considering in its own right, if only as an ideal type.
- 5 <https://www.climatedocket.com/2017/11/30/germany-rwe-peru-farmer-saul-luciano-lliuya/> (accessed 21 July 2020).
- 6 This is the case when communities in the Pacific Ocean highlight the danger of their states drowning, see Munoz (2019).

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