

IPE @ WU NEWSLETTER

Institute for
International Political Economy

Winter 2022

Edited by: Matthias Kourek

Institute for International Political Economy
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WELCOME TO IPE-NEWS

Editorial by
MATTHIAS KOUREK
Administrative Assistant

DEAR COLLEAGUES AND
FRIENDS,

Welcome to IPE-NEWS. You are looking at a new issue of the Newsletter of the Institute for International Political Economy at the Vienna University of Economics and Business. We would like to present this issue to you with a unique design and packed with lots of news about our activities. Read through our section "Institute & People" and get to know the people that transform this Institute into a special place for research and work. Our head, Jonas Bunte, tells us on page 7 about his experiences and defining moments that made him take the decision to pursue an academic career.

In the "Teaching" section you can peek into one of the lecture halls on the WU campu and learn more about one of our courses, "Modern Societies I". In the upcoming summer semester, our colleagues Ashley Simpson and Sidan Raeskyesa will also hold two new courses. Find a brief summary of the contents on page 13.

On page 15 you will find a review of the very first edition of our new event series "Pizza, Politics & (Motion) Picture" that will continue with its second edition on the 19th of January. You will also find a report about Jonas Bunte representing WU Vienna at the General Assembly of the cooperation network "Africa-UniNet" in Kenya.

In the "Research" section you will find an extensive overview of current research activities, including reports about several scientific conferences.

Thank you for your interest in International Political Economy.

If you have any questions or suggestions, please do not hesitate to contact us at: ipe@wu.ac.at. We will be happy to get in touch with you.

Why should we care about a single bookstore closing?

A BOOKSTORE, POLITICS AND ECONOMY

Leading article by

D. G. SIDAN RAESKYESA, M.SC.

Teaching and research associate

What do trade barriers and religious freedom have in common? Nothing, you say? The realms of economics (think profits!) and religion (think spirituality) do not overlap, you say? Well, I disagree. I want to talk about the experience of a single bookstore – and how it might shape societal peace in Britain after Brexit.

Europe's largest bookseller of Middle Eastern literature, Al Saqi Books, will close its store on 31 December 2022. Lifelong friends André Gaspard and Mai Ghoussoub resettled in London following the Lebanese civil war and founded the Al Saqi bookstore in 1978. Their goal: bring the intellectual freedom of pre-war Beirut and the work of Middle Eastern and North African authors to England. Al Saqi quickly became a leading light of multicultural London during the 1980s, known for procuring books banned across the Arab world. For over three decades, the bookstore has provided writers and artists from around the world with a platform to release ground-breaking works, including *"The Crusades through Arab Eyes"* by Amin Maalouf, *"Beyond the Veil"* by Fatema Mernissi, *"Black Britain: A Photographic History"* by Paul Gilroy and *"The White Family"* by Maggie Gee.



D. G. Sidan Raeskyesa, M.Sc.
© WU Vienna, IPE

Al Saqi Books has had a profound impact on British society. Its efforts to promote diverse literature in the UK have been vital in removing cultural barriers that might otherwise reinforce political or social conflicts. Al Saqi's work in increasing cross-cultural communication has been recognized with several awards, including the IPG Diversity Award in 2013, the Arab British Culture and Society award in 2008, and the British Book Industry Award for Diversity in Literature in 2009.

Given Al Saqi's success, why is the store closing? The UK's resignation from the European Union (EU) led to a significant increase in trade barriers with its largest trading partner. This affected even small bookstores like Al Saqi. How?

Brexit increased the import prices of paper and printing services. Brexit also removed access to EU grants for translations and research, hurting publishers specializing in foreign-language books and academic presses. Further, publishing companies have lost their customers in the EU as customs duties lead to higher prices. Al Saqi Bookstore's director Salwa Gaspard has described this problem: "We used to sell many books to the EU, which is no longer feasible because of duties and such."

Continue on the next page ...

Continuing:

A BOOKSTORE, POLITICS AND ECONOMY

Often times, conversations about Brexit and its consequences focus on economic consequences. However, the closure of the Al Saqi bookstore is a concrete example of how Brexit might also increase social tensions and threatens the peaceful coexistence of people with varied backgrounds. It shows that the interactions between politics and economics must be analyzed not only in terms of their effects on profits, but also possible societal consequences.

With their strong commitment to freedom of thought and expression and as cultural diversity, the Al Saqi bookstore connects readers in the United Kingdom and other regions in Europe with diverse ideas. This is an essential factor in promoting cooperation and shared understanding between societies, especially in connection with Middle East countries. We can learn two things from this unfortunate event: First, we need spaces for interaction and exchange of ideas among individuals with very different backgrounds. Second, we need to combine economic and political perspectives in any analysis to better understand societal consequences of decisions like Brexit. The Institute for International Political Economy at the WU Wien aspires to do both. **Join us in these efforts.**



Al Saqi bookstore in London
© flickr.com / Kake (CC BY-NC-SA 2.0)

This is the Institute for International Political Economy



*F.l.t.r.: Nikolett Somogyi, Matthias Kourek, Theresa Turecek, Marie Diernhofer, Haoyu Wu, Dewa Gede Sidan Raeskyesa, Ashley Blair Simpson, Jonas Bunte
© IPE / Kirsten Hillbrand*

2022

The Institute was founded on 1 March, 2022

8

Staff members on the permanent team

6

Research Assistants

4

Courses offered in the winter semester 2022/23

At Vienna's University for Economics and Business, the work of the Institute for International Political Economy is particularly connected to issues related to "Politics & Money." We deal with questions of how economics shape politics and how politics shape economics in an international context. Our main topics include the relations between foreign direct investment and inequality as well as between sovereign and land transactions.

Our research and teaching are committed to the rigorous analysis of empirical questions, e.g. "Why did Ecuador accept credit offers from China while Peru rejected them?" We seek to guide our students to evaluate competing hypotheses and to decide between them. We firmly believe that it is not enough to just teach facts - the key is the ability to reason.

Meet Our Head

PROF. JONAS B. BUNTE

Prof. Jonas B. Bunte, Ph.D., is the Head of the Institute for International Political Economy. Learn what experiences and defining moments shaped his decision to pursue an academic career path.

I am privileged to be a professor at an university such as WU. One question I often receive is: Why did you pursue a career in academia? Several defining moments pivoted my life towards becoming an academic; however, some of my earliest professional experiences were the most influential.

I was in the fortunate position to have secured two internships. One offer was for a role in a German ministry's strategy department, and the other was for a non-profit organization - both of which shall remain unnamed. I was excited to peek behind the scenes of the policymaking process, both from the supply side (the government) and the demand side (civil society). I expected my experience in both settings to be fundamentally different because of their, at times, antagonistic positions.

However, after my service to both organizations had ended, I came to a surprising conclusion: The experiences I had with the policy processes in both settings were remarkably similar. Moreover, they were equally frustrating. In both settings, the central decision-makers had decided on a guideline or goal, and I was given the task of finding evidence that would support the party line.

This approach to policymaking struck me as entirely undesirable. Instead of basing decisions on evidence - also known as "evidence-based policy-making" -- I was asked to engage in "policy-based evidence-making." As I realized this, it was clear to me that I sought a work environment characterized the freedom to come to whichever conclusions seem plausible, irrespective of organizational objectives.

I am privileged to have found my current position and will staunchly defend academic freedom. In the meantime, however, I also realize that 20 years have passed. I know that much has changed in governmental policymaking and civil society organizing. It seems that the value of conducting research before choosing policy has become more common. I hope my current work, based on analyzing policy-relevant questions, can contribute to this trend in both circles by providing meaningful insights.

Learn more about Prof. Jonas Bunte on the website of our Institute:

www.wu.ac.at/en/ipe.

You can also browse through his publications and current research projects in the research database of WU Vienna:

research.wu.ac.at/en.



Prof. Jonas B. Bunte, PhD
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Jonas Bunte on
Research



We Are Hiring

TEACHING AND RESEARCH ASSOCIATE (PRE-DOC)

The Institute for International Political Economy is looking for a **Teaching and Research Associate (Pre-Doc)**. The position is advertised for a working time of **30 hours/week** and is to be filled from **1st March, 2023**, limited to a period of **6 (six)** years.

- **What to expect:**

1. Development of a PhD project in the field of International Political Economy under the supervision of Prof. Bunte.
2. Participation in the English-taught PhD program at the Department of Socioeconomics.
3. Writing of a dissertation.
4. Participation in research projects and support of publication activities of the Institute.
5. Planning, preparation and teaching of courses in the field of International Political Economy. Supporting and conducting exams.

- **What you have to offer:**

1. (Nearly completed) Master's degree with a focus on social sciences (preferably economics or political science) that qualifies you for doctoral studies at WU Vienna. (Upcoming) Graduation with excellent grades.
2. Proven qualifications in collecting, processing and analysing large data sets (preferably with "Stata" or "R"). Advanced knowledge of quantitative methods is an advantage.
3. Excellent knowledge of English. Knowledge of German is not required at the beginning - as a non-German speaker, however, you will need to acquire knowledge of German in the course of your employment.

- The deadline for applications is the **18 January, 2023** (ID 1609).

The salary is minimum **EUR 2,293.95 gross per month** (14x per year, adjustments possible based on prior work experience).

For further information, please go to our website at: www.wu.ac.at/en/ipe.

Applications are possible through the Job Center of WU Vienna: **Job Advertisement December 2022**.



The People of IPE - Prof. Ralf Leiteritz

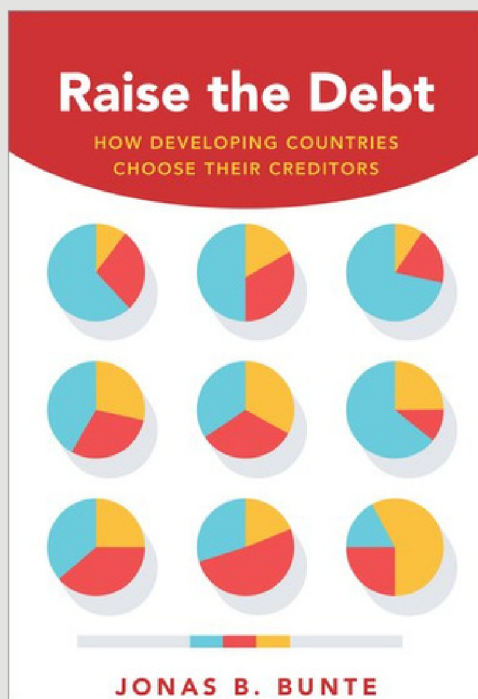
MEETING FRIENDS IN VIENNA

Prof. Jonas Bunte commenting on a meeting with Prof. Ralf Leiteritz in Vienna

Ralf has been a Professor of International Relations, specifically International Political Economy, at the Universidad del Rosario in Bogotá, Colombia, since 2011. His research focuses on the politics of global financial relations, with a particular interest in the political and economic ties between China and Latin America.



F.l.t.r.: Prof. Jonas Bunte, Prof. Ralf Leiteritz, Matthias Kourek
© WU Vienna, IPE / Jonas Bunte



Jonas Bunte's book "Raise the Debt"
© Oxford Academic

It was great meeting him for two reasons, one related to the past and the other to the future. In 2011, I conducted fieldwork in Colombia. I wanted to understand why Colombia had explicitly rejected Chinese loan offers while neighboring Ecuador had gladly accepted such offers. (If you are interested in the answer, my book "Raise the Debt", published by Oxford University Press in 2019, describes my research and findings). In this process, Ralf helped me immensely. He served as a door-opener by introducing me to several interviewees and providing insightful suggestions for interviewing them. For this reason, it was a true pleasure to meet him in Vienna more than ten years later – and to properly thank him for small gestures that had wonderful impacts.

What is more, Ralf's generosity has helped not only me, but also one of my team members. When Ralf learned that Matthias Kourek's master's thesis involves qualitative research in Colombia, he offered similar advice and guidance to Matthias. Watching their interaction, I could not help but marvel at the generosity of academics who truly help advance science.

The People of IPE - Prof. Paul Vaaler

MEETING FRIENDS IN VIENNA

Review of an unexpected meeting with Prof. Paul Vaaler

I obtained my Ph.D. at the University of Minnesota in the United States but now teach in Austria. Given the distance between these places, I was thoroughly surprised to walk into Paul Vaaler at the WU campus in June. Paul was here to teach a course at the Executive Academy, drawing on his rich background as a Professor of Strategic Management and Entrepreneurship. Paul has unique expertise as he is both an economist and a lawyer, which is why his research and teaching interests lie at the intersection of business, law, and politics.



*Prof. Jonas Bunte (l.) and Prof. Paul Vaaler (r.)
© WU Vienna, IPE / Jonas Bunte*

Importantly, Paul was part of my dissertation committee. I learned much from his research on political business cycles and remittances. However, what impressed me the most was how he lives his life as a professor: He is always – and I mean always – full of enthusiasm and curiosity. As such, he taught me much about the positive energy I can ignite and create as a professor, and I will cherish this insight for the remainder of my career. Naturally, when he saw me, he threw up his arms with a big smile on his face and exclaimed, “Jonas! So good to see you!”

We sincerely congratulate Nikolett Somogyi

SUCCESSFUL PHD GRADUATION

Research introduction by
NIKOLETT SOMOGYI, PHD
Project staff member

The team of the Institute for International Political Economy is very proud to announce that our colleague Nikolett Somogyi successfully defended her PhD on the 5th of December, 2022, at the University of Antwerp in Belgium.

Imagine working when you are depressed. Would you be productive? Probably not. Economic output suffers if depression prevents you from thinking straight. It is even more pronounced when you are a parent and depressed. How can policymakers help realise the economic potentials of parents given the increasing mental strain in today's society? Before we can answer this question, we need to know what the data shows. This is what I have been working on over the past 4 years.



Nikolett Somogyi with the Jury of the PhD examination in Antwerp
© Nikolett Somogyi / University of Antwerp

One key finding is the following: Parents have better mental well-being when they have enough time to spend with their children besides work. Interestingly, this finding persists irrespective of governments offering high quality childcare via appropriate family policies, or when such childcare is unavailable due to a global pandemic.



Nikolett Somogyi, PhD
© WU Vienna, IPE

That, in itself, is a depressing finding (no pun intended). How can we make government policy more effective? Based on my findings, I would strive to enable parents to find the right balance between work and care-giving by supporting work flexibility in a gender equal way. Governments should also provide care options instead of expecting families to do it all.

Peeking into the lecture halls

TEACHING IPE

Teaching description by
PROF. JONAS B. BUNTE, PHD
Head of the Institute

Modern Societies I: Genesis, Dynamics, Cybernetics

BSc Business, Economics and Social Sciences

Why does the state of the economy at election time influence voters' decisions in the ballot box in some countries but not others? Why do some politicians attempt to stimulate the economy just before an election to increase their chances for re-election, while other politicians abstain from such measures? Why do some societies restrict politicians' control over monetary policy while others allow politicians to fiddle with interest rates?

To do so, we study ideas such as Economic Voting, one example of an argument outlining how economics might shape politics. Conversely, we examine theories explaining how politics shapes economics, such as Political Business Cycles. We review each theory critically. After all, these hypotheses are merely potential explanations with internal logic that may be plausible and empirically accurate in some cases but not others. Checking for blind spots helps us to evaluate the explanatory value of each theory.

Besides analyzing theories, students also apply these potential explanations to real-world cases. For example, students this semester created podcasts exploring why Turkey's President Erdogan fired several central bankers, why Russian President Putin suddenly increased social service payments before sham elections, and why politicians in Italy redistribute wealth differently than politicians in France. If you are interested in learning more about these issues, some of these podcasts will be posted on our website soon.

Long story short, this course is designed for students who do not want to merely memorize facts but critically examine the explanatory value of possible hypotheses for real-world phenomena. It's an opportunity to shape your skills, both in terms of how you make sense of messy data given some theoretical concept and the communication competencies required to explain your arguments to diverse audiences. If you have any questions about this course, please feel free to reach out.

You want to learn more about our courses and our teaching philosophy? Visit our website:

www.wu.ac.at/en/ipe/teaching

Preview

SUMMER SEMESTER 2023

Investment and Social Development

BSc Business, Economics and Social Sciences

Course series Zukunftsfähiges Wirtschaften / Sustainable Economics



D. G. Sidan Raeskyesa, M.Sc.
© WU Vienna, IPE

Held by: **Dewa Gede Sidan Raeskyesa, M.Sc.**

Why do some countries receive more foreign direct investment (FDI) than others? Why do workers in some countries welcome foreign investors with open arms, while protests erupt in others? Why does FDI sometimes have positive effects on economic development while it appears exploitative in other contexts?

This course seeks to answer such questions by analyzing both the causes of FDI flows as well as their economic, political, and social consequences. Specifically, this course examines the interplay of how politics shapes FDI, and in turn how FDI affects politics.

As we work our way through these issues, we will touch upon larger sustainable development issues such as foreign investment and inequality, multinational corporations and food security, the impact of FDI policies on human development, as well as the power between firms and workers.

Financial Systems and Government Regulation

BSc Business, Economics and Social Sciences

Course series Zukunftsfähiges Wirtschaften / Sustainable Economics

Held by: **Ashley B. Simpson, M.Sc.**

Why do some governments bail out banks in a crisis while others do not? Why can popular movements and elections affect stock market prices? Why might Financial Technologies (FinTech) increase financial inclusion and reduce economic inequality?

This course seeks to answer such questions by analyzing three issue areas: Banks, Stock Markets, and FinTech. Specifically, this course examines the interplay of how politics affects finance and how finance shapes politics.

During our discussion, we will touch upon larger sustainable development issues, such as how financial development affects inequality and inclusive economic growth and how government regulation impacts fairness and innovation.



Ashley B. Simpson, M.Sc.
© WU Vienna, IPE

NEW DEGREE "ECONOMY, ENVIRONMENT, POLITICS"

The Institute for International Political Economy has become an essential part of teaching at the Vienna University of Economics and Business. We continue to actively contribute to the constant development of WU's study programmes.

Starting in the academic year 2023/24, the new curriculum for the Bachelor's degree programme in Economics and Social Sciences with five majors will come into effect. The branch "Economy - Environment - Politics" will deal specifically with major societal challenges such as global inequality, social cohesion and climate change. With a basic understanding of business administration, economics and law, students will acquire an interdisciplinary understanding of societal conflicts.



Teaching at WU Vienna / © WU Vienna

The Institute for International Political Economy was intensively involved in the development of the new curriculum. It will offer a specialisation labelled "Politics & Money" within the major that will comprise four courses: "Politics of Trade", "Politics of Investment", "Politics of Debt", and "Politics of Banks and Stock Markets". Another new course will deal with the application of qualitative methods in research. Additionally, the Institute will also offer an in-depth lecture in the course series "Zukunftsfähiges Wirtschaften / Sustainable Economics" that will be part of the so-called "Common Body of Knowledge (CBK)". The courses included in the CBK have to be taken by all students enrolled in the Bachelor's programme before choosing one of the majors.



WU Vienna Audimax / © WU Vienna

Proudly presenting: PIZZA, POLITICS & (MOTION) PICTURE



Participants at the first edition of PPP
© IPE / Matthias Kourek

On the 10th of November, 2022, more than 30 students, colleagues and friends of the Institute gathered for the very first edition of "Pizza, Politics & (Motion) Picture," the Institute's new event series. The core idea is to watch a movie together and discuss relevant contents from the perspective of political economy. The choice of the movie for the first edition might have taken some people by surprise: The 1990's classic "Fight Club," directed by David Fincher, premiered PPP. The Institute provided free pizza for all participants.

In the lively discussion round after the screening, held in a pub quiz format, the participating groups discussed themes of masculinity, consumerism, capitalism, and social belonging. Discussion inputs included thoughts and opinions about movie quotes - but the groups also discussed about how anti-capitalistic the movie is or is meant to be and how this could be substantiated.

We would like to thank all participants for coming and taking part in the discussion.

What movie would you love to watch and discuss with fellow colleagues? Leave us your comments in this form: [PPP Movie Suggestion](#)



Save
THE
Date

PPP will continue - see you again on
19th January, 2023

Africa-UniNet General Assembly

IPE ABROAD IN KENYA

Conference report by

PROF. JONAS B. BUNTE, PHD

Head of the Institute

What can Austria and African countries learn from each other? On first impression, not much – because their worlds rarely overlap. There is little trade between Austria and Africa, few commercial ties, almost no migration in either direction, and infrequent intellectual exchange. We need to change this.

In today's world, it is increasingly important for people from different parts of the world to understand each other. For this reason, WU should facilitate student exchanges that offer Austrian students the opportunity to learn about business, economics, and politics in African contexts. At the same time, WU must offer African students the opportunity to gain insights into business, economics, and politics in the European context. Against the background of intensifying globalization and complicated political dynamics, student exchanges between Austria and Africa will help students become more equipped to solve global problems.



Entrance to Egerton University Campus / © Jonas Bunte

Besides facilitating face-to-face interactions, universities like WU must also engage with African scholarship. While the socio-economic realities of Europe and Africa seem vastly different at first sight, similarities do exist. Like Austria, many African countries have small domestic markets that depend on economic partners much stronger than themselves, face challenges with rapidly changing population dynamics and societal norms, and undergo political scandals involving money and influence. Why not study these (and other) issues together, learn from each other's experiences, and collaborate on theoretical conceptualizations and empirical approaches?

Continue on the next page ...



Jonas Bunte (l.) and Kanigula Mubagwa (r.) from the Université Catholique de Bukavu in the D.R. Congo

© Jonas Bunte



Jonas Bunte (l.) and Constancio Machanguana (r.) from the Universidata Zambeze in Mozambique

© Jonas Bunte

Continuing:

IPE ABROAD IN KENYA

To work towards such exchanges, I represented the WU Wien at the Africa-UniNet General Assembly, an initiative offering a framework for Austrian and African Universities to interact. The meeting took place at Kenya's Egerton University in October. My objectives were two-fold. First, I wanted to explore whether WU Wien could establish new student-exchange programs. Consequently, I met with potential partners at universities in Lesotho, Mozambique, Kenya, Nigeria, Ethiopia, Uganda, and Morocco, among others.

afriCauninet

Logo Africa-Uninet / © OeAD

In addition to connecting students, Africa UniNet encourages scholarly collaboration. The network creates a space for international partnerships between European and African academics by financing joint research projects. While UniNet does not restrict the thematic scope of the projects, the general goal of the network is to advance the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Therefore, my second objective was to provide potential African collaborators with insights into the research happening at WU Wien with the hopes of finding mutual interests which might lead to joint funding applications. While the call for this year's Africa UniNet Research Initiative has closed, please do not hesitate to contact me if you are looking for partners at the WU for a future project.

In the end, the conference in Kenya was a rewarding experience. I was overwhelmed by the sincerity of the exchanges and the shared vision among us, despite our heterogenous backgrounds. After all, as sustainable development issues affect people everywhere, our fates will be increasingly connected. We better get ready.

If you have any questions or suggestions, please feel free to reach out to Prof. Bunte at jonas.bunte@wu.ac.at.



© Jonas Bunte

What our team is working on

ECA'S AND GENDER EQUALITY

Meet Ashley Simpson, a research and teaching assistant and PhD-candidate at our Institute. She joined the team in August 2022. After nearly half a year, Ashley and her research have become integral parts of the Institute's work. Find out here what she is currently working on.

Gender inequality matters. It is not only morally unacceptable (because this inequality is unfair), but also economically harmful (given the wasted potential). Some issues concerning gender inequality are well known: Think of the gender pay gap or the lack of women on company boards. However, what about women and finance? For example, the export sector is still dominated by men. Might this be because women-owned businesses do not have access to finance?

Some of the best research comes from linking different fields and perspectives to develop creative questions and solutions to real-world problems. This fall, I am particularly excited about one of my projects that combines Prof. Bunte's expertise in export credit agencies (ECAs) and my research interests in gender equality to analyze how different countries approach financing women-owned businesses.

ECAs are public institutions that help domestic businesses find foreign markets. Specifically, ECAs provide trade finance to allow foreign buyers purchase domestic goods. Most ECAs have a similar goal to promote exports and employment at home. However, some countries' institutions take an extra step in addressing gender inequality. The U.S. ExIm Bank and Bancoldex (Colombia), for example, recognize women's difficulties in obtaining financing and have created special tools and/or outreach programs to address this issue. In contrast, U.K. Export Finance or the Mexican ECA have not, even though they are extremely similar to their U.S. and Colombian counterparts.

Why do some ECAs specifically focus on women's entrepreneurship while others do not? We aim to explain the differences between ECAs' approaches to promoting women-owned businesses and, thus, gender equality in the economy. To answer this question, we have been conducting interviews with ECA employees. The insights from these interviews have been encouraging, and I hope our research project will help policymakers improve gender equality by increasing women's access to export finance.

Research introduction by

ASHLEY B. SIMPSON, M.SC.

Teaching and research associate



Ashley B. Simpson, M.Sc.
© WU Vienna, IPE



Current Research

SELLING SOVEREIGNTY

International Coercion, Debt Relief, and Land Transfers

Project overview by
 NIKOLETT SOMOGYI, PHD
Project staff member

Funded by	<u>National Science Foundation</u>
Project funds	EUR 360,000.-
Project period	January 2020 - September 2023
In collaboration with	Patrick Shea Senior Lecturer University of Glasgow

Over the last decades, more and more land transfers have taken place, mostly between developing countries and emerging economies (e.g. China, Brazil, etc.). These deals could pose serious geopolitical problems in the international arena as well as domestically. Therefore, policymakers require systematic information on how to evaluate such deals. After all, if such information is not available, policy makers might make serious mistakes by signing (or not signing) such contracts.

However, currently policymakers currently cannot obtain such analyses. Why? There is no data available; neither on the full list of all land deals that ever transpired, nor the details of the cases that are known. This is what I have been working on in the past year. Together with an army of research assistants, who systematically went through and coded hundreds of thousands of primary data sources, we are building a dataset that collects land transfers in African and South American countries.

Even though we are still in the midst of data collection, one thing is already clear: There are many more of these deals than what we had thought in advance. For example, as some countries (e.g. Bahrain, Qatar, South Korea) do not have enough farmlands, with an intention to secure more available agricultural lands and products to their populations, they signed long-term leases with the war-torn Sudan for the use of its land. In another example, the leaser country used the transferred property for military operations. In 2015, the United Arab Emirates leased the Assab port from Eritrea and the country's airspace and territorial waters for 30 years. Due to the ports strategical location, the UAE used it in its armed conflict with Yemen.

The above two examples are just a couple of many that prove that land transfers are an interesting and important topic that needs thorough further investigation. Once the data collection is complete, the next task is to explain why some countries engage in such deals while others do not. What might be the domestic or international political factors explaining this divergence?

IPE meets the real world

POLITICAL SCIENCE DAY IN GRAZ

Conference report by

PROF. JONAS B. BUNTE, PHD

Head of the Institute

As someone who moved to Austria from the USA, visiting the city of Graz is a puzzling experience: It is the only city in Austria (and probably in all of western Europe) with a Communist government. The Austrian Communist Party won the municipal election in 2021 in Austria's second-largest city, and Mayor Elke Kahr assumed office shortly thereafter.

I traveled to Graz in November to participate in the annual meeting of the Austrian Political Science Association (ÖGPW) hosted by the University of Graz. As part of the conference, the organizers put together a panel discussion to explain the Communist Party's success in this city. As a political scientist and a new resident in this country, it was interesting to learn about three possible explanations for this success.

First, there seems to be a strong alignment between what citizens in Graz want and what the Communist Party in Graz focuses on. For instance, their campaign emphasized housing and climate change. In the context of rising prices and reduced snow cover of the surrounding mountains, these issues resonate with the local population. It remains puzzling, however, why the Social Democratic Party and the Green Party do not attempt to reclaim these issues.

Second, from my understanding, the Communist Party in Graz is a grassroots organization through and through. It places a high degree of importance on being available to anyone. For example, they established telephone hotlines attended to by the party bigwigs themselves. One woman noted that she called the number and was surprised to talk with the mayor herself. Experiences like these make the party personable and set them apart from the competition.

Third, the Communist Party has managed to generate credibility. In a country known for political scandals surrounding money and politics, two of the party's characteristics deserve attention. On the one hand, all Communist politicians on the government payroll – including the mayor – are donating part of their income. In fact, any income above 2,000 euros is given away. On the other hand, given the lack of a Communist Party at the national level, local Communist politicians do not have the opportunity to rise up the ranks of Austrian politics. Combined with the substantial day-to-day time commitments that come with the grassroots approach outlined above, this attracts only a very particular type of person to become a politician. It is not the career politicians but individuals who genuinely care, or at least are perceived as caring, who run for office in the Communist Party.

If these three factors indeed underpin the success of the Communist Party in Graz, it will be difficult to replicate by other parties – unless they are willing to invest similar time and legwork. Also, in my opinion, this model might work well on the local level but is unlikely to be scalable to the national level. After all, if the option of rising through the ranks to national politics would be an option, it might undermine the third point outlined above. Speaking as an academic, this calls for further study – and maybe a comparison: Frank Zeidler served as the communist mayor in Milwaukee, WI, from 1948 to 1960. He was re-elected twice and thus served three terms. Will Mayor Elke Kahr be similarly successful? We are interested in your thoughts on this issue (also, let us know if you want to write a Bachelor's Thesis on this – or related – topics).

You have an idea for your BA thesis?

Get in touch!

ipe@wu.ac.at



IPE meets the real world

THREE COUNTRIES TOGETHER

Conference report by

PROF. JONAS B. BUNTE, PHD

Head of the Institute



Conference Venue in Burghausen, Germany
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International Political Economy (IPE) should be, by definition, international. For this reason, my friends Amy Pond, Timm Betz and Tim Bütke organized an IPE conference for academics working in Switzerland, Austria, and Germany. About 100 scholars came together in Burghausen – right at the border between Germany and Austria – in June. The G7 meeting in Schloss Elmau was happening at the same time, and I was surprised to be stopped (for the first time ever) by the border control at a within-EU border. The global politics underway at the G7 meeting were a fitting background for interesting discussions about political economy.

Moreover, the conference was unique as it merged past with present. A keynote lecture on the 16th-century European salt trade examined how differing Austrian, German, and Swiss political interests complicated cross-country trade. It exemplified how the current tools of International Political Economy are useful in a wide range of settings. Further, the conference took place at the TUM Conference Center Raitenhaslach, which used to be a Cistercian monastery. While natural science has a long history within these religious walls (think gardening and biology), it was a fun experience practicing social science research in baroque rooms.



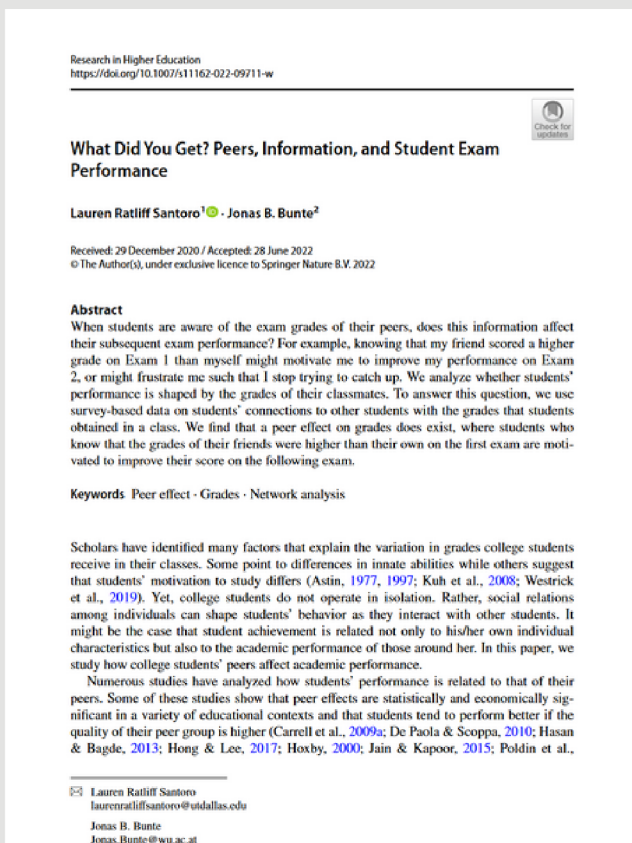
Conference Venue in Burghausen, Germany
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Research @ IPE

RECENT PUBLICATIONS

Ratliff Santoro, L., Bunte, J. (2022): What Did You Get? Peers, Information, and Student Exam Performance - In: Research In Higher Education (2022, ahead of print)

Students at university frequently obtain grades. However, when students are aware of the exam grades of their peers, does this information affect their subsequent exam performance? "We wanted to know how learning of other students' grades affects student's own performance," notes Prof. Jonas Bunte. "Specifically, we wanted to analyze whether knowing that my friend scored a higher grade on Exam 1 than myself might motivate me to improve my performance on Exam 2, or might frustrate me such that I stop trying to catch up." The resulting study was just published in *Research of Higher Education*, a top journal analyzing pedagogical issues at universities. Together with his colleague, Prof. Lauren Ratliff-Santoro at The University of Texas at Dallas, the research examines whether students' performance is shaped by the grades of their classmates. To answer this question, they used survey-based data on students' connections to other students and combined this with information on the grades that students obtained in a class. "The findings show that a peer effect on grades does exist," noted Prof. Ratliff-Santoro. "Students who know that the grades of their friends were higher than their own on the first exam are motivated to improve their score on the following exam."



Prof. Jonas B. Bunte, Ph.D.
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Jonas Bunte's recent publication
 © Research in Higher Education / Springer

Research @ IPE

RECENT PUBLICATIONS

Somogyi, N., Nagy, B., Geambașu, R., Gergely, O. (2022): 'The children, the family, the household, and myself, these made the quarantine up for me, and I was really happy with it' – positive evaluations of the first COVID-19 lockdown among middle-class Hungarian mothers - In: *Journal of Family Studies* (2022, ahead of print)

During the first COVID-19-related lockdown in the spring of 2020, working parents of young children were in a difficult situation, having to manage the multiple burdens. In the studied societies (Hungary and Hungarian minorities living in Romania), unpaid household tasks are considered to be primarily female responsibilities, intensive mothering ideals are widespread, and access to flexible-work arrangements is marginal. In present study, we demonstrate how the above characteristics created a context in which participants evaluated the first lockdown positively, despite the difficulties.



Cover of the *Journal of Family Studies*
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Nikolett Somogyi, PhD
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LOOKING AHEAD - IMPORTANT DATES

18th January 2023

Application Deadline

Teaching and Research Associate

19th January 2023

Pizza, Politics & (Motion) Picture

Second Edition

9th February - 14th February

Registration Open

for IPE courses in the summer semester



The last page

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Scientist's joke

Me: "I am terrified of the vertical axis."

Therapist: "Why?"

Me: *[screams]*