Editor’s Remarks

This 16th edition of the research newsletter focuses on the numerous research-related activities that SOAS researchers undertake but which often go without much acknowledgement. These time-intensive activities are comprised of presentations, dialogues, bridge-building and knowledge exchange, which are necessary preludes to the production of more formal outputs such as articles, chapters in an edited volume or edited volumes. Arguably, the type of research that is conducted at SOAS is particularly reliant on these activities because the knowledge we seek to generate and disseminate resides in people. We cannot rely on libraries and online data alone if we hope to truly penetrate the research problems for which we seek to find solutions. And yet, on the ground collaboration is also important because it provides diverse perspectives that enrich the production of knowledge by forcing us to view issues from divergent, often first-hand perspectives. I’m convinced that these activities are the means by which SOAS researchers can and do distinguish themselves as a truly global law school capable of producing impactful research. And so, I call on all of you to join with me in celebrating SOAS’s culture of research collaboration and knowledge dissemination activities, many of which I have not been able to bring to light in this edition.

Finally, I’d like to highlight the important contributions that our emeritus professors, Werner Menski and Michael Palmer, make to the SOAS School of Law. Despite their apparent retirement, their knowledge production proceeds full steam ahead, generating considerable influence and prestige for our law school. We owe them our gratitude.
Publications

Peer Reviewed Journal Articles

Ms Sara Bertotti


Professor Philippe Cullet


Dr Makeen Makeen


Emeritus Professor Werner Menski


Dr Lutz Oette


Dr Emilia Omneya


Dr Melek Saral (EU Marie-Sklodowska Curie Fellow)


Edited Volumes

Professor Philippe Cullet

Philippe Cullet, Lovleen Bhullar & Sujith Koonan (eds), Right to Sanitation in India – Critical Perspectives (Oxford University Press, 2019).

Dr Lutz Oette


Emeritus Professor Michael Palmer


Dr Lutz Oette


Chapters in Edited Volumes

Dr Samia Bano


Professor Philippe Cullet


Emeritus Professor Werner Menski


Media

Professor Philippe Cullet


‘Meghalaya: National Politics in a Small, Tribal, North-East State’ *South Asia Notes – SOAS South Asia Institute* (23 April 2019).

Dr Lutz Oette


‘Britain’s Flawed Dialogue with Sudan Regime’, *Guardian* (Letters, 10 March 2019).

‘Sudanese Protests and al-Bashir’s Removal from Power’, *France 24, Eye on Africa* (Live Interview, 11 April 2019).
Conferences, Workshops & Presentations

**Dr Samia Bano**

‘Muslim Women and Gender Segregation Debates in Britain’, Workshop: Gender Segregation and Deconstruction in the UK (University of Sussex, 22 January 2019).

‘Decolonising the University: Knowledge, Power and ‘Legal Diversity’, Staff Seminar Series: Centre for Global Politics, Economy and Society and the Department of Politics and International Relations (Oxford Brookes University, 14 Feb 2019).


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**Ms Sara Bertotti**


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**Dr Jonathan Ercanbrack**


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**Dr Werner Menski**

‘Pragmatic Legal Pluralism as a Growth Engine and Stabiliser for Development in Asia and Africa’, Juris Diversitas 6th General Conference: Law, Roots & Space (Keynote Lecture, Faculty of Law, North-West University, Potchefstroom, South Africa and the Southern African Society for Legal Historians, 15 April 2019).

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**Dr Emilia Omneya**


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**Dr Lutz Oette**

‘Editorial Committee & Primary Drafters Meeting on the Istanbul Protocol’, Physicians for Human Rights, the International Rehabilitation Council for Torture Victims, the Human Rights Foundation of Turkey, and REDRESS; UN Committee against Torture, UN Subcommittee for the Prevention of Torture, UN Special Rapporteur on Torture and the UN Voluntary Fund for Victims of Torture, supported by Dignity - Danish Institute against Torture (Copenhagen, Denmark, 12-13 March 2019).


‘Istanbul Protocol: Medico-Legal Documentation of Torture and Ill-Treatment’, IRCT and Council of Europe (Pristina, Kosovo, 8-10 April 2019).
Emeritus Professor Michael Palmer

‘Modes of Dispute Response: Reconnecting the Range’, Conference: Advances in Comparative and Transnational ADR: Research into Practice (University of Hong Kong (HKU), 8–9 March 2019).


Dr Melek Saral


‘Human Rights in the MENA Region: Challenges and Opportunities’, Panel Discussion (Convener and Panelist, Centre of African Studies, London Middle East Institute and SOAS School of Law, 5 March 2019).

‘Human Rights in the Mena Region after the Uprisings’, (Invited Lecturer, Department of Political Science, LUISS, Rome, 13 March 2019).


‘Human Rights in North Africa after the Arab Uprisings: Challenges and Prospects’, (Invited Speaker, GIGA (German Institute of Global and Area Studies) Hamburg, 10 April 2019).


Highlight

Dr Catherine Jenkins has accepted a prestigious invitation from Cambridge University to speak at its ‘Festival of Ideas’ in Cambridge in October, on the subject of Truth, Reconciliation and Peacebuilding. According to the published description, ‘The Cambridge Festival of Ideas was established in 2008 with the aim of encouraging the public to explore the arts, humanities and social sciences, meet academics and students, and engage with the University via a thought-provoking and creative series of mostly free events.’
Research Centre Activities

Centre for Human Rights Law

Chair: Dr Lutz Oette


Endorsement of Human Rights Report: The UK’s Implementation of the UN Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, Civil Society Alternative Report (Redress, March 2019) (endorsed by 74 NGOs, civil society groups and individuals, including: Nick Hardwick, Royal Holloway University of London; Lutz Oette, Centre for Human Rights Law, SOAS, University of London; Par Engstrom, the UCL Institute of the Americas; Tom Pegram, UCL Global Governance Institute, as convenors of the UK Prohibition of Torture Network’s 2019 workshop: The UK Prison System: Compliance with International Human Rights Law).

Centre for Islamic and Middle Eastern Law (CIMEL)

Chair: Dr Jonathan Ercanbrack

The Centre for Islamic and Middle Eastern Law hosted a public lecture and international workshop on Islamic finance on the 13th and 14th of February, respectively. The workshop brought together a select group of leaders and pioneers of the Islamic finance industry to engage in discussions based on Chatham House Rules and open and honest dialogue concerning key issues facing the industry. The events were jointly hosted by the SOAS Centre for Islamic and Middle Eastern Law (CIMEL) and the Qatar Financial Centre (QFC) Authority in academic partnership with the College of Islamic Studies (CIS), Hamad Bin Khalifa University (HBKU) and ISRA (International Islamic Research Academy) of Malaysia.

The lead theme for this year was “Responsible Investment, Value-Based Intermediation and the Future of Islamic Finance” which was prompted by the new value-based intermediation (VBI) initiative proposed by the Shariah Advisory Council of the Central Bank of Malaysia, Bank Negara Malaysia (BNM). According to BNM, the VBI initiative “aims to deliver the intended outcomes of Shariah through practices, conduct and offerings that generate positive and sustainable impact to the economy, community and environment, consistent with the shareholders’ sustainable returns and long-term interests.” The initiative aims to widen the scope of Islamic financial intermediation from mere...
legalistic compliance with the Shariah towards addressing broader and longer-term issues related to the public interest.

The workshop was preceded by the SOAS-QFC Public Lecture on Islamic Finance, which was delivered this year by CIMB Islamic Group CEO Rafe Haneef. The public lecture was chaired by Sir William Blair, an English High Court judge and Professor of Financial Law and Ethics at Queen Mary University of London, who previously served as a Queen’s Counsel specialising in domestic and international banking and finance law. The audience were welcomed by Dr Jonathan Ercanbrack, Lecturer in the Law of Islamic Finance at SOAS and Chair of CIMEL and principal organiser of the events. In his lecture, Rafe Haneef introduced CIMB’s ground breaking initiatives as one of the largest Islamic banks in Malaysia for adopting a more responsible corporate strategy, which entails reviewing not only the Shariah compliance of a transaction but also the impact profile of the activity being financed. Rafe, who is a recognised leader in the Islamic finance industry, shared the ways in which CIMB are incentivising clients to take more sustainable actions by offering more competitive rates, for example, for the purchase of a hybrid car or an eco-friendly home.

The subsequent expert workshop was held under the moderation of Professor Frank E Vogel, Founding Director of the Islamic Legal Studies Program at Harvard Law School. Participants of the workshop reviewed and considered the VBI initiative in light of other global programmes, such as the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the UN Principles of Responsible Investment and the upcoming UN Principles of Responsible Banking, which all take into account environmental, social and governance (ESG) considerations.
Standing from left to right are: Datuk Mohd Daud Bakar, Dr Jonathan Ercanbrack and Mr Nick Foster on the occasion of Dr Bakar’s public seminar at SOAS.


Datuk Dr. Mohd Daud Bakar is the Founder and Executive Chairman of Amanie Group. He currently serves as the Chairman of the Shariah Advisory Council at the Central Bank of Malaysia, the Securities Commission of Malaysia, the Labuan Financial Services Authority, the First Abu Dhabi Bank, and Permodalan Nasional Berhad.

Research Snapshots

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Dr Melek Saral

Dr Saral is a Marie-Sklodowska Curie Fellow and is working on a project on ‘Human Rights in Post-Uprisings Middle East: Emerging Discourses and Practices in Egypt and Tunisia’. The research project aims at interrogating the human rights discourses and practices in the MENA region undergoing transition through the course of the so-called Arab Spring by conducting a comparative analysis of two key countries — Egypt and Tunisia.

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Dr Tonye Clinton Jaja

Dr Jaja has been a Post-Doctoral Research Associate from November 2018 to June 2019 under the supervision of Prof. Mashood Baderin of the SOAS School of Law. Prof. Baderin was Dr Jaja’s former doctoral supervisor, which he received in 2013. Dr Jaja’s research is entitled: ‘Procedures/Styles of Legislative Drafting and Statutory Interpretation: A Comparative Study of the Africa’s Legal Systems’. It is the first work of its kind in Africa, the only similar work in Europe is William Dale’s “Legislative Drafting: A Comparative Study of Methods in France, Belgium, Germany, United Kingdom, Sweden and Netherlands” published in the year 1977.

A modified and enlarged version of this Research Report has recently been accepted for publication by Lexis Nexis. Professor Kevin Aquilina, Dean, Faculty of Laws, University of Malta, has written a foreword.

Law, Environment and Development Centre (LEDC)
Chair: Professor Philippe Cullet

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<td>Prof. Carlos María Correa (Executive Director of the South Centre, Geneva)</td>
<td>'Towards an International Regime on the Conservation and Sustainable Use of Marine Biological Diversity – Will the International Community Succeed in Developing a Fair Regime?'</td>
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<td>‘Land Titling &amp; Social Embeddedness: Gender, Property and Formalisation in Mexico’s Informal Settlements’.</td>
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<td>Tim Edwards (Bhopal Rights Activist)</td>
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<td>11 / 10 / 2018</td>
<td>Emily Unwin (Client Earth)</td>
<td>‘Using the Law to Improve Forest Governance - Case Studies from Central &amp; West Africa and the EU’.</td>
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During a coffee break in the new open air cafeteria of Bahir Dar University’s law campus, two of this year’s postgraduate research students tell me how eager they are to obtain a PhD and put it to good use in their future work. They are part of what is by all means a pioneering effort in Ethiopia, that is to establish a PhD programme in law. Ethiopia’s higher education policy sets out as one of its main goals the strengthening of teaching and postgraduate research. Academic staff at Ethiopia’s University law schools often have no PhDs or even LLM, and postgraduate courses may be run by recent LLM graduates. At Bahir Dar University’s School of Law (BDUSoL), only two of the staff hold a PhD (from abroad), and some not even an LLM. Legal research and publication is increasingly encouraged but remains comparatively weak, due to a combination of factors, including limited resources and the absence of a well developed legal research culture. There are three main law journals in Ethiopia, the Journal of Ethiopian Law, at Addis Ababa University; Mizan Law Review, Centre for Law in Sustainable Development, Addis Ababa; and the Bahir Dar University Journal of Law, which provide fora to discuss pertinent legal issues in the Ethiopian context. Ethiopian scholars have also submitted an increasing number of manuscripts to the Journal of African Law, of which I am a co-editor, but only few of them are of a quality that makes them potential candidates for publication. It is against this background that two universities decided to establish a PhD in law programme. Addis Ababa University Law School was the first in 2017, followed suit by BDUSoL in the same year. Bahir Dar, the capital of the Amhara Regional State, is a city in north-western Ethiopia. BDU is among the largest in Ethiopia with more than 50,000 students in its 70 Bachelor, 131 Masters and 30 doctoral programmes. Its School of Law was established in 2001. It now runs an LLB programme, a BA in Governance and Development Studies, and three specialised LLM programmes in Criminal Justice and Human Rights, Environment and Land Law, and Business and Corporate Law, with a total of over 600 students enrolled in 2019.

Two years ago, Dr. Dadimos Haile, Associate Professor of Law and presently Coordinator of the Doctoral Programme, contacted me, expressing an interest in working with SOAS School of Law (SoL), due to our range of expertise in relevant subjects and regional focus. In July 2017, SoL and BDUSoL agreed on a memorandum of understanding. It set out terms for cooperation, consisting of exchange of experience, review of the PhD curriculum, joint supervision of doctoral students and the delivery of postgraduate courses and skills training for research students and staff. I first went to Bahir Dar in August of that year together with Professor Eva Brems, Ghent University, and Professor Pietro Toggia, Kutztown University, as external reviewers, joined by Dr. Abebaw Yirdaw of the Ethiopian Institute of Higher Education, Addis Ababa University. The ensuing discussions and programme evaluation assisted Dr. Haile in developing a full-fledged PhD programme that commenced in December 2017. In addition to first year courses on research methods, academic writing and skills, and advanced jurisprudence and contemporary legal issues, the programme offers several courses on thematic areas of interest, particularly human rights law and criminal justice, and international trade, investment and business transaction law.

Over the last two years, I have supervised one PhD student, and taught two one-week international human rights law courses. This year, the course was attended by three PhD students, together with two LLM students. Most of the PhD students, five out of seven in the first two years, have chosen topics in the field of human rights and criminal justice. Atikilt Fetene’s research focuses on the rights of persons with disabilities and their access to public buildings in Ethiopia. Addisu Gulilat is examining the question of counter-terrorism and human rights in the Ethiopian context whereas Molalign Asmare’s research centres on Ethiopia’s criminal law response to cybercrime. The topics

In July 2017, SoL and BDUSoL agreed on a memorandum of understanding.
provide a glimpse of the programme’s significant research potential, here revisiting topics of wider international interest and analysing them in the Ethiopian context. Land law, various aspects of environmental law, as well as investment law and investment dispute resolution are amongst the fields expected to feature prominently in years to come, considering their growing importance in Ethiopia and the region.

The PhD students have struggled, though, with developing proposals that reach beyond largely doctrinal compatibility studies. Limited emphasis on theory and a narrow approach to research methods, as well as lack of familiarity with wider debates in the field, are some of the key explanatory factors. Students have complained about the limited accessibility of legal literature. The library book holdings are not up-to-date, and access to online databases is very limited. While the development of a legal research culture will surely take time to take root, there is both inadequate funding and deep-seated structural factors that pose fundamental challenges to the future prospects of the PhD programme. A PhD carries social prestige in Ethiopia. Yet, it is neither a prerequisite for an academic post, nor even a professorship, nor does it entail any financial advantages, as PhD holders are not better paid than their colleagues. Academic pay is generally low across the University sector. Potential PhD students, including young academics, typically seek a move to the capital, into private practice, or ideally abroad to better their financial position. Attracting and retaining the best postgraduate research students therefore constitutes an ongoing struggle. Without changes in academic pay structure and rewards for PhD students, it is difficult to see how this will change. Yet, there are also encouraging signs that individual students are genuinely committed to establishing themselves as scholars and bringing their knowledge to bear in the local and national context. This is also reflected in the eagerness of the top LLM students who joined our class this year. Students and academics at BDUSoL emphasised the value of research and academic debate to address developments of concern. I was impressed by the level of engagement and critical analysis evident in the discussions on mob violence and human rights protection following a public lecture I gave on the subject at BDU on 16 May 2019.

There is good reason, and considerable scope for SoL members to engage in, and support BDUSoL’s PhD programme by supervising PhD students, delivering courses to LLM and PhD students, and, more broadly, undertaking joint research activities in fields of interest. SoL may also consider hosting PhD students on short term exchanges to provide them an opportunity to benefit first-hand from its research environment.

On a personal level, engaging with BDUSoL on the programme has taught me a lot about the conditions in which our Ethiopian colleagues work, their thinking, aspirations, and the challenges they face. It also provided me with some appreciation of the many topical legal issues in one of the largest countries on the continent. For these reasons, and the BDUSoL’s exceptional hospitality, it has been an enormous privilege, and pleasure, to be part of what is a trailblazing initiative in Ethiopia, and, hopefully, the beginning of a lasting relationship between the two law schools.
Staff Update
Emeritus Professor Michael Palmer


Other research work has mainly been focused on dispute resolution and on comparative family law. I am co-editing as well contributing a chapter (on issues of violence) to a collection of original essays for a research handbook entitled *Comparative Dispute Resolution*, to be published by Edward Elgar later this year or early next year. The MS for my CUP book (with Simon Roberts) Dispute Processes, has been accepted for publication as the 3rd Edition later this year or early next year.

In addition, the China Quarterly has accepted a proposal I submitted jointly for a Special Issue on ‘Higher Education in China’, with workshops held September 13-14, 2018, and April 29, 2019 at the Chinese University of Hong Kong, and with publication expected later this year or early next year. My own substantive essay is entitled ‘Lowering the Bar? Students with Disabilities in PRC Higher Education’. On March 9, I delivered a paper entitled ‘Modes of Dispute Response: Reconnecting the Range’ at a conference held at the University of Hong Kong (HKU) on ‘Advances in Comparative and Transnational ADR: Research into Practice’, 8, 9 March 2019. And on 27 April 2019 I co-convened (with He Xin) a workshop in ‘Chinese Family Law in Action’ at HKU to which I also presented a paper entitled ‘Planning and Contracting: Population Issues and Family Law Today and Yesterday in the mainland PRC’. It is intended that both conferences will lead to a book and journal publication.
Researcher Introduction
Dr Olivia Lwabukuna

Olivia is a pan-African lawyer and advocate of the High Court of Tanzania. She obtained her Bachelor of Laws from the University of Swaziland, Master of Laws from the University of Cape Town and a Doctor of Laws from the University of Pretoria, where she is currently an Extra-Ordinary Lecturer. Before coming to SOAS, Olivia had over a decade of professional and academic experience working in South Africa, Tanzania, Swaziland, Nigeria, Kenya and the United Kingdom within research, public policy, legal practice, development and educational institutions.

Olivia is currently a lecturer in the department of Law, SOAS, University of London where she teaches on a range of undergraduate and postgraduate modules related to Public International Law, Legal Systems of Asia and Africa, Law and Development in Africa and Foundations of Human Rights. She is also an associate editor of the Journal of African Law (Cambridge).

Olivia’s research interests lie in the area of law’s interaction with development and migration, specifically within an African regional and sub-regional context. In this respect, one particular aspect of her research concentrates on the interdisciplinary and evolving theme of law, governance and economic development. Olivia’s research interests have specifically been directed at engaging with the relationship between trade in natural resources, conflict and development. Her approaches include exploring the extractives industry in Africa (specifically the nascent oil and gas industry) and the evolving regional and domestic governance and regulation system related to it. Her research interrogates the relationship between extractives exploitation, conflict and underdevelopment and explores how law (through governance mechanisms and regulatory frameworks) can support and promote profitable, but also sustainable and inclusive natural resources exploitation in Africa, thus contributing to development in resource rich (fragile/transitioning) African countries.

The other strand of her research is on migration governance in Africa, specifically aspects of internal displacement. Her research specifically concentrates on the Great Lakes Region of Africa. Her interest is in engaging with the concept of displacement, how it is framed within the African context, and why that framing can sometimes be difficult, and create complexities in finding durable solutions to issues of displacement. This is closely linked to equally complex themes of ethnicity, identity, citizenship and statehood in post-colonial African countries, especially within the Great Lakes Region. Regional collaborative approaches to migration governance present a viable vehicle for engaging with displacement within this context. Thus, Olivia’s research also engages with the evolving regional and sub-regional norms and policies related to internal displacement, including their domestication and application within selected countries of the Great Lakes Region.

Olivia’s research is informed by principles and values such as participation, deliberation, consultation and inclusion, and is cognisant of, and aimed at creating impact in support of global and African continental development policies such as the Sustainable Development Goals and Agenda 2063.

Regions and countries of interest:
Africa-Mostly East and Southern Africa-Tanzania; Kenya; South Africa; Madagascar; Uganda; Swaziland; and West Africa (Ghana)

Countries of expertise:
Tanzania; Kenya; South Africa; and Swaziland.
Emeritus Professor Werner Menski

Jonathan asked me to explain one of my most recent kite flying adventures, and I am happy to provide this for the last Newsletter that he has kindly been editing. I was in Potchefstroom at the North-West University of South Africa, where the 6th General Conference of Juris Diversitas on ‘Law, Roots & Space’ was held from 15-17 April 2019, to deliver the Conference Keynote Lecture, on ‘Pragmatic Legal Pluralism as a Growth Engine and Stabiliser for Development in Asia and Africa’.

When I retired from the SOAS Law School in September 2014, colleagues gave me a kite as a farewell present. This was a playful reference to the fact that the triangular model of law, presented in the ‘Blue Bible’, Comparative Law in a Global Context. The Legal Systems of Asia and Africa (Cambridge: CUP, 2006: 632), had turned into a kite of law, in which always four competing types of law, corners 1, 2, 3 and 4, each in turn composed of elements rooted in these four competing elements, require constant situation-specific balancing, in theory, but also in practice. Rather than retiring to a beach with my toy kite, I have continued to develop and fine-tune this model theoretically, as well as applying it and testing it in more and more law-related scenarios, especially now in global South-South comparisons.

The Juris Diversitas Conference of 2019 sought to explore the historical, socio-political and also spatial dimensions of multiple endeavours in different areas of law to find the right balance in using law as a tool of sustainable development. I traced briefly for the conference participants how the kite model had developed out of the earlier triangular structure that was built on the seminal earlier theorising of Professor Masaji Chiba from Japan, one of my academic heroes. I then explained how, once we realised that Chiba’s ‘legal postulates’ actually comprised both traditional values and ethics, including religion, as well as the modern ethics of human rights and internationalism, kite corners 1 and 4 as two sets of competing normative orders were now a major focus of any new conflict scenario that would arise, all over the globe. In other recent work, found in Kyriaki Topidi (Ed.) Normative Pluralism and Human Rights. Social Normativities in Conflict (London and New York: Routledge, 2018: 1-36), I had explored what this means for dispute resolution, in various efforts to secure what we commonly call ‘justice’. That piece of writing also highlighted the critical relevance of individuals as legal actors, often hiding behind some kind of institutional smokescreen, President Trump being only the most obvious present embodiment of such fuzzy boundaries between law, politics and psychology.

In the Keynote Lecture, I then focused on the highly contested powers of decision-making held by all humans as legal actors, mostly of course with much constraint, but ideally never devoid of a sense of alterity-focused responsibility. This desirable consciousness of responsibility not only for oneself (corner 1 of the kite), but for others around the legal actor in any socio-political and socio-economic space (kite corner 2) meant that identity markers such as Ubuntu became directly relevant in this context.
What kite are you?

1. Power-from-within
2. Power-Over
3. Power-Within-and-Over
4. Power-With-Others
However, more explicitly legal, responsible action and decision-making of any state-related actor (kite corner 3), often exercising huge discretion, also requires constant monitoring and surveillance in order to promote ethically good governance. And finally, in kite corner 4, ambitious ethical principles of human rights and international legal regulation and surveillance were also shown to be affected by huge conflicts over their ideological and cultural roots as well as their impacts on development, in the past, the present, but also with a view to the future and our responsibility for the welfare of future generations. It is obvious that such application of pragmatic legal pluralism to development contexts relates strongly to debates about environmental regulatory patterns, to which the conference programme had dedicated considerable space.

I am pleased to say that my efforts to combine theory and practice made sense to the conference participants, so much so that playful references to kite flying appeared in various panel sessions and in the concluding proceedings. The ongoing debates about South-South comparisons, in which comparative lawyers from SOAS ought to play a significant role, are currently gathering momentum and will be pursued in a number of conference projects all over the Global South. Such discussions concern not only family laws and the never-ending debates about legal uniformity versus ‘religious’ personal law structures, but more so various aspects of the transformative effects of constitutionalism and, as mentioned already, much new work on environmental laws and regulation, including environmental philosophy with a legal flavour. Interdisciplinarity and cross-jurisdictional comparative law engagement seem to be gaining ever more relevance. But my warning remains that without careful, cautious recognition of corners 1 and 2 of the kite of law, such comparative legal discourses lack pragmatic depth and credibility. Deliberate myopia in comparative law theorising risks choking the engines of good development worldwide or turns them into power tools for the benefit of certain dominant interest groups and stakeholders, even pompous individuals who glorify themselves so visibly as law-makers, while contributing to mayhem all over the planet.

These Research Newsletters will hopefully contain further pieces of law-related writing from me. My main academic activity in retirement, though, has increasingly become the editorship (since 2003) of South Asia Research, a SOAS Journal published by SAGE in New Delhi, which keeps me anchored in my main field of expertise apart from law, the vast field of South Asian Studies. This editorship involves much mentoring of young scholars, mainly from the Global South, seeking to publish their work in a top-rated journal. It is a very enjoyable activity, in which constant awareness of kite balancing methodology remains a great asset, too. I thank Jonathan for giving me this space and wish everyone much success in maintaining the excellence of the SOAS Law School.

Werner aka PM, 13 May 2019.