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Morgan Brigg

Culture, 'Relationality', and Global Cooperation

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Contents

Abstract

What is the relationship between cultural difference and global cooperation, and what challenges and opportunities does this relationship pose for cooperation research? This paper examines how culture is a potential resource for global cooperation while grappling with its enigmas and ambiguities. It explores the paradoxes of culture to argue that the partly unknowable character of the concept 'culture' may be an advantage for cooperation research rather than a problem to be solved. The paper casts culture and cultures as examples of a wider class of 'relational' phenomena that arise through interaction and that rely upon this interaction for their standing. This proposition foregrounds relations over entities, becoming over being, and dynamism over fixity in line with a range of contemporary philosophical developments and the burgeoning of interest in relationality. Thinking of culture in relational terms offers a way of modulating culture; of simultaneously respecting cultural difference and allowing that difference is a shared human resource. Relationality can be deployed to help facilitate cooperation by re-opening interaction within political, social, economic, and institutional arrangements, including through processes for generating relational and cooperative effects have been developed in the field of conflict resolution. However, doing so requires that the fields most obviously related to global cooperation (political science, international relations, and global governance) engage relational approaches at the limits of the precise sciences and through philosophy, religion, and non-western cultural traditions.

Keywords

Author

Morgan Brigg is a Senior Lecturer at the School of Political Science and International Studies, The University of Queensland, Australia. As a Senior Fellows he conducted research at the Käte Hamburger Kolleg / Centre for Global Cooperation Research in Research Unit 2 'Global Cultural Conflicts and Transcultural Cooperation' from March to November 2013.

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Morgan Brigg

Introduction

Increased globalisation and the emergence of large-scale cooperation dilemmas such as those posed by climate change are challenging human capacities to collaborate as never before. In response, many attempts to find new and improved forms of global cooperation are characterised by efforts to unite humanity by emphasising commonalities or sameness. Current efforts draw, for instance, on abstract reasoning, the evolutionary basis for human cooperation, or the development of a global cosmopolitan ethic. No doubt these are valuable endeavors that may be more or less fruitful. But such approaches also raise fundamental questions: Can we manage the scale and depth of our contemporary cooperation challenges primarily through the pursuit of sameness? Can we cooperate *without* the assistance of that which makes us different from each other? These questions in turn speak to questions about what type of knowledge is appropriate to the task. To be sure, we want to *know more* about ourselves, our relationships with each other and with the planet, and understandably so. But should we invest so directly and heavily only in well–worn ways of knowing and managing, applying primarily the forms of reasoning that have become commonplace in western scholarship? Or might these ways of knowing also risk blinding us to other ways of knowing that may be underappreciated resources for global cooperation?

Culture occupies an apparently ambiguous position in relation to the phenomenon of cooperation and the foregoing issues. All humans exhibit what we have come to call 'culture', and gene–culture co–evolution seems to affirm that culture is crucial to our very existence.[2] Most accept that culture distinguishes humans from other species. It would thus seem that culture speaks to humanity as a whole. However, culture also differentiates, creating 'them' and 'us', layers of in–groups and out–groups and, potentially, friends and enemies. Culture clearly helps us to cooperate *within* groups, but perhaps not *across* them. A seemingly commonsense formulation, then, is that culture is a source of sameness and

[2] Through the idea that information acquired from other members of the species through social means is essential for human evolution.

shared-ness—of values, beliefs and so on—within groups but, as the source of expressions of difference, it is necessarily is a source of conflict among them. Culture, in this straightforward formulation, helps us to cooperate with friends but leads us to fight with enemies.

However, this formulation almost immediately founders. It falls foul, for instance, of the ways culture is deployed in intercultural exchange, where cultural difference among peoples is *precisely* the basis for cooperation among them. In such situations, different cultural expressions (dance, art, rituals), along with different languages, beliefs and so on, become the focus and vehicle for sharing and togetherness. At least to some extent, then, culture appears ambidextrous: able to help humans both articulate their differences *and* to come together, including across difference. Culture would therefore seem to be a potentially valuable resource for cooperation; a resource that allows humans not only to cooperate through shared values and so on but also *through and across difference*. Nonetheless, culture is not a source that we regularly turn to our efforts to address challenges of global cooperation. Culture is, perhaps, underappreciated.

If culture is a neglected phenomenon in the pursuit of global cooperation, this may be partly because it is particularly puzzling for conventional scholarly ways of knowing, and because it presents a challenge to dominant expectations about what knowledge should achieve. Culture is notoriously difficult to define, for instance. It is difficult to characterise or stabilise culture as a 'thing' in the way that social science usually does with ideas such as 'society' or 'state'. Culture evokes ineffable elements of the human condition that cannot be readily dissected and known in technical ways. It shapes who people are in varying ways—it 'makes' people, in some respects (and to some degree)—and it is certainly difficult to devise experiments that measure culture in ways that satisfy the precise sciences. Indeed, at times culture can be diaphanous, fluid, and insubstantial; cultural currents can apparently go underground, even if, at other times, these same currents might re-emerge in ways that lead people to lay down their lives for cultural recognition. Mainstream science, meanwhile, does not take kindly to phenomena that cannot be defined and at times appear insubstantial or periodically become subterranean.

Culture also causes western scholarship to confront its own limit by bringing it into contact with very different ways of knowing and systems for ordering the world (Foucault 1970: 373–374, 376–378). Scientists and scholars want to comprehend; we do not wish to be told that we do not and cannot know. Culture, in short, is perhaps some 'other' kind of phenomenon. To this extent it seems that our inability to fully know culture and its capacity to trouble conventional scholarship may be among its key qualities.

Culture presents, then, a twofold puzzle for cooperation research: Culture is a potential resource for global cooperation but coming to 'know' it appears somewhat out of reach of conventional social science. This paper embraces this puzzle through a theoretical inquiry that explores the paradoxes of culture while resisting the urge to fully know culture in orthodox terms. Instead, it considers both the prospects for turning to culture as a resource for global cooperation and the possibility that its apparently unknowable character may be an advantage in this endeavour rather than a problem to be solved. The paper develops an argument that culture is 'relational' and an example of a wider phenomenon of 'relationality', the theorising of which is valuable for thinking about and informing

efforts to progress global cooperation. In doing so I make a 'relational proposition', positing that the conceptualisation of cultures and culture as relational phenomena is a theoretical maneuvre that has potential for thinking about how culture might be a resource for global cooperation, and for extending our ways of thinking about global cooperation more generally. This proposition foregrounds relations over entities, becoming over being, and dynamism over fixity in line with a range of contemporary philosophical developments and the burgeoning of interest in relationality. Thinking of culture in relational terms, I propose, provides ways of respecting cultural difference and recognising that culture is a shared human resource for pursuing cooperation. Meanwhile, beyond the realm of culture, relationality is a theoretical and analytical resource that promises to extend our ways of thinking about global cooperation through a wide range of social and political interactions.

Culture as Unknowable Known

Culture is a challenging phenomenon for the social sciences, perhaps even disconcertingly so. One indicator of ongoing puzzlement is the continued currency of Raymond Williams' observation that culture is one of the 'two or three most complicated words in the English language' (1983: 87). Much serious engagement with culture in social science (eg, see Steinmetz 1999: 4) often begins by citing Williams, and indeed the picture that Williams paints is a challenging one. He sketches the term's etymology and changing historical usage – including contradictory usages – across a number of languages and fields (1983: 87–90). He finds that all the earliest usages of culture refer to the tending of a specific process, usually the cultivation of crops or animals. This meaning is subsequently applied metaphorically to general human processes such that culture becomes a frequent synonym for civility, civilization and civilizing processes, a connotation that is carried over into more contemporary distinctions between 'high' culture (theatre, classical music, opera) and 'mass' or popular culture. The use of culture as a general term is then challenged in the late 18th Century by Johann Herder. Arguing that culture cannot be universally applied to all nations and periods, Herder inaugurates the idea of 'cultures' in the plural (1983: 89), an approach that gathers greater numbers of adherents in 20th Century anthropology following the influence of Franz Boas.

Williams concludes his sketch by noting three broad active categories of usage: one that refers to general processes of 'intellectual, spiritual and aesthetic development'; one that 'indicates a particular way of life, whether of a people, a period, a group, or humanity in general'; and one which 'describes the works and practices of intellectual and especially artistic activity' (1983: 90). In the interests of synthesis and of stretching toward a commonly acceptable definition of sorts, we might distil Williams' formulation to say that culture refers to the ways in which humans give sense to their existence, with this often involving various practices for making meaning of the world and human relationships with it. To extend upon this we can say that culture involves semiotic and affective exchanges and links among people that generate patterned social meaning and effects. These sets of forces and relations charge and empower particular ways of being, variously sanctioning,

facilitating and limiting behaviors and sets of actions. These in turn become the source for social learning and both the perpetuation and change of culture. Culture, in this sense, is both a system of meaning and a practice (Sewell 1999).

Although the foregoing explication of culture might help to give a sense of this complex term, the very complication which Williams refers to might also give us reason to not proceed further down this familiar path; to pause before proceeding too far with the standard scholarly impulse to define culture. The incentive for reconsidering the search for definitional clarity might be given more impetus by acknowledging that clarity with respect to the term 'culture' is apparently hard to come by, as borne out in survey texts. The 1952 classic book-length study by Kroeber and Kluckhohn, *Culture: a critical review of concepts and definitions*, concludes with an argument that culture is a multi-layered construct and abstraction (1952), and a more recent effort by Baldwin documents more than 300 definitions over 87 pages while acknowledging that culture is a moving target (2006). These are only the most pointed efforts to engage the meaning of culture, and it is widely acknowledged that culture is a very challenging term to define. If one thing is clear about the term culture, it is that attempting to ground or justify analysis through definition can mire theorising culture, and perhaps the wider task of knowing culture, in complicated debates. The challenge that culture presents to standard scholarly processes of definition suggests that we might search further afield and perhaps in stranger places; that we might move away from definition rather than into its comforting embrace.

One starting point for putting definition in question while remaining with the impulse that is internal to definition itself is to ask if there is possibly something intrinsic to 'culture' that confounds definition. Certainly, the fact that culture is bound up with questions of being and meaning evokes ineffable realms of human experience that seem unlikely to be fully amenable to technical precision of the sort pursued by social sciences seeking to emulate ways of knowing borrowed from the precise or natural sciences. Processes of definition generate a certain power for the knower that places him/her in a position of exteriority in relation to the world, usually through the use of text and writing (de Certeau 1984: 134), and these may simply not be suitable for matters the involve the more ephemeral aspects of human experience. What if, then, we take this possibility further by turning to consider the notion that culture may be examined—as at least partly—as an 'unknowable known'?

Beyond the challenges imposed by its ineffable referent, part of the reason that culture confounds—and part of the reason for its status as an ambiguous yet powerful phenomenon in scholarship—is that it is located at the frontier of the disciplines. As the sciences displaced religious ways of knowing from the sixteenth century, culture initially came to stand for the balance that could not be known. Michel de Certeau (1984: 6) notes that 'ever since ... [scientific work] stopped being theological, it has constituted the *whole* as its *remainder* ... [and] this remainder has become what we call culture'. This remainder—whether it involve questions of civility, theatre and other fine arts that we call 'high culture' or a way of life—can certainly be described and commented upon, but it is not particularly tractable within the (otherwise) powerful calculus that emerges with Enlightenment thinking and gives particular priority to physical or material phenomena and the faculty of reason.

It is perhaps unsurprising, then, that when the study of culture is brought into the fold, so to speak, gaining its own scientific discipline, anthropology, the focus was initially upon subjects hitherto perceived as unknowable – on 'other' peoples in places remote from metropolitan centres. So while anthropology emerges within the disciplines, it initially deals with those from without, generating, in the process and as postcolonial scholarship informs us, both indexical and oppositional reference points to recognise, gauge, and practice European knowledge, society and selves as progressive, civilised, noble, moral, and rational (Said 1995; Stoler 1995; Cooper and Stoler 1997; Shapiro 2004). While this knowledge has historically bypassed and in many cases actively disavowed the representations other people give of themselves (Foucault 1970: 378; Burridge 1979: 11–13), it also brings mainstream western scientific knowledge to its limits; to the stark incommensurability of other ways of thinking (Foucault 1970: 373–374, 376–378).

Lying at the limits of the disciplines and conventional knowledge, then, culture continually engages with that which is apparently unknowable in conventional scientific terms. Regardless, for instance, of how much anthropology breaks culture into separate elements—language, kinship, religion and so on—culture continues to be a complex whole, larger than the sum of its parts, and to some extent an unspecifiable abstraction (Freilich 1989; Herbert 1991). This abstraction is also not only 'out there' because while it is a construction and an invention (Wagner 1975), culture is also *of us* such that it partly makes us who we are. In a curious piece of self-reference, the study of culture is, as Wagner shows, part of '*our* culture' (1975: 16) – the culture of western society and scholarship. It is for this reason that, all too often, scholarly attempts to understand the socio–political orders of other peoples, 'discovers' whatever phenomena are necessary 'to explain indigenous culture in heuristic Western terms' (1986: xi). We tend to ask '"How do these people solve our problems within their means" rather than "How do they resolve and transform our meanings within their problems"' (1986: xii). The risk, of course, is self-reference such that scholarship becomes a 'moral allegory of what we consider to be "culture" or "society"…' (1986: xiv).

Yet amidst the complex challenges of etymology, intellectual history, definition and conceptual hijinks, culture fascinates, spawning research and attempts to investigate and know diverse human experiences and relationships. We do, then, also know a lot about 'culture'. Anthropology has contributed a great number of detailed ethnographic studies spanning many decades. Moreover, from the 1980s, there has been an explosion of wider interest in culture (Sewell 1999: 36). Historians, political scientists, sociologists, psychologists, literary theorists and many others have taken up the study of cultural phenomenon, not to mention the discipline of cultural studies. This 'cultural turn' is broadly concerned with the ways in which understandings of human sociability are mitigated or inflected by the ways people understand their social and physical world, and the values, beliefs and processes that are produced or reproduced as a result of this interaction. As Steinmetz states, there is a 'general assertion of the constitutive role of culture' (1999: 4). The result is that, as Christopher Herbert (1991: 1–2) notes, the 'principle that our categories of thought are … "culturally constructed" … is called upon to exert ever more leverage'.

While the folding back of culture upon the disciplines of western (social science) knowledge through the 'cultural turn' continues the intellectual struggles and perplexities discussed above,[3] it has also been incredibly productive for bringing out the overall importance of culture and increasing our understanding of it. In this respect it seems to be clear that culture is enduring and remarkably significant to people, in some cases more so than anything else. Examples from around the globe demonstrate that in the face of threats to their culture, people are willing to engage in long term struggle, sometimes giving their lives, for what is often termed cultural recognition. Such struggles can span generations, often seeing off political power backed by military force. Perhaps this is because, as philosopher Emmanuel Levinas tells us, a most serious form of violence is one that makes people play roles in which they cannot recognise themselves (1991: 21). If culture is the means through which people recognise themselves and make meaning of existence it perhaps takes the form of an existential good. Perhaps this is why culture is remarkably durable: a phenomenon that can be mobilised against oppressors or lay dormant to be recuperated and revitalised at a later stage.

Even here, though, no easy conclusions are possible because the significance of culture does not allow us to make predictions about when and how people, individually or collectively, might stand firm in their culture, under what conditions they might access and recuperate culture, or when they might choose, in an apparently very different move, to 'pass' or dissemble, their cultural identity, including by combining or blending with other (perhaps more dominant) culture/s. These strategies cannot even be read as contrary to each other, for people routinely 'pass' their identity in order to wait for more opportune political circumstances to reassert or recuperate (a version of) their culture. We might draw a partial analogy between culture and the enigmatic neutrino particles of quantum physics: ubiquitous and always interacting (weakly) with other particles; very difficult to detect but crucial to existence.

Culture, then, is a complicated phenomenon that challenges the human sciences and conventional efforts at definition. It routinely confounds conventional ways of knowing and is located at the frontiers of the disciplines. Culture is to some extent insubstantial and diaphanous, linked as it is with ineffable questions about being and existence. But it is also very real; a concrete force in social life that is crucial to human existence. If we are able to sustain a paradox, these circumstances suggest that we might accept, at least for the purposes of exposition pursued here, that culture might be both unknowable and known. In other words, rather than proceeding along more conventional paths of attempting to define culture and know it *in toto*, it may be more productive to explore the possibilities that culture may hold for global cooperation by engaging cultural difference as a phenomenon that is unknowable as much as knowable. To set the scene for exploring such possibilities, what are some of the quotidian ways in which culture has been—and is being—recognised as an important force in social and political life, including for facilitating cooperation?

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[3] The cultural turn has perhaps brought us to the point where, as David Scott (2003) observes, culture has come to "resemble (in some respects at least) its old and now enfeebled antagonist, Reason".

Culture, Change, and Cooperation

Classic and influential studies of society and social transformation render culture as an intensifier of social action that enables or limits change. Perhaps most famously, Max Weber argued, in *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, that the mass emergence of certain values about work enabled the take-off of capitalism. Conversely, Daniel Lerner, in *The Passing of the Traditional Society,* a book which was very influential in post-WWII modernisation theory, argued that development efforts should, as a way to kick-start economic growth, aim to displace existing cultures by identifying and targeting 'transitional' individuals who exhibit entrepreneurial spirit and a commitment to reason (Lerner 1964). Others still see culture as a fundamental force in social and political life in somewhat different ways. Samuel Huntington argued that people's cultural and religious identities, figured as blocs or 'civilisations', would be a key source of conflict in the post-Cold War era (1996). And Michel Maffesoli (1996) discerns, in *The Time of the Tribes*, a shift beyond both mass society and individualism in the lifestyle and identity politics of wealthy consumerist societies, evoking tribes in a metaphorical sense to evoke fragmented and small-scale social groupings such as those that emerge in the online world. In all cases, culture is both an important social force and a phenomenon that builds and sustains connections and bonds among people.

In the early 21st Century Maffesoli's thesis resonates beyond wealthy capitalist societies. Contrary to the expectations of many modernisation theorists, economic growth and globalisation have not seen the end of cultural difference. Although we have seen the spread of capitalism, cultural belonging and differentiation are very much alive. Indeed, we currently witness the revitalisation of cultural and religious traditions as one of the most significant contemporary global trends (eg., see Reuter and Horstmann 2012). Culture seems to be fundamental, though not at the level of civilisational blocs identified by Huntington. It appears that humans need to differentiate themselves from each other—through both longstanding historical or atavistic cultural identifications as well as newly crafted or emerging groupings such as those that emerge online—even as we are brought into closer contact with each other and share more and more of each other's lives in an increasingly globalised world.

The importance of culture in social life and continued cultural differentiation suggest the usefulness of developing ways to make culture a resource for cooperation not only within groups but also across cultural difference. Some fields are beginning this work, both by adjusting to the reality of continued cultural differentiation and exploring ways of making a virtue of the persistence of diversity. Management studies, for instance, are increasingly recognising the importance of diversity for strong organisations. In conflict resolution and peacebuilding efforts there is increased recognition of the importance of diverse ways of managing conflict, and a turn to local cultural resources to assist with conflict management and governance (eg., see Mitchell and Hancock 2012; United States Institute of Peace 2012). More broadly, and in response to Huntington's notion of a 'clash of civilizations', former Iranian president Mohammad Khatami introduced the Dialogue among Civilizations, and from 2005 Spain and Turkey have led the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations (UNAOC) (eg., see Lynch 2000; Bilgin 2012). And while so-called 'cultural diplomacy' has long been used as part of public

diplomacy efforts to support foreign policy in instrumental ways, there are recent moves afoot to deploy cultural diplomacy in less partisan ways (see Gienow-Hecht and Donfried 2010). Players in all these fields and ventures intuit that culture is, in one way or another, a resource for building affiliations, connections and bonds among people not only within groups but also across difference—in short, that culture is a resource for facilitating cooperation across difference.

The foregoing efforts, though not without critics (eg., see Bilgin 2012), evoke some of the most straightforward and everyday ways in which culture, as a powerful force in everyday social life, can be a vehicle for cooperation. Cultural exchange and learning of the type suggested by dialogue and cultural diplomacy, for instance, help an individual to see here or his own way of viewing the world as partial, contingent or specific. The accompanying self–reflexivity, including the positioning of oneself within a wider and diverse world, helps to guard against ethnocentrism, and develops a pool of culturally–literate players who are able to operate 'in–between' groups as brokers, negotiators and envoys. To this extent contemporary dialogues and exchanges share continuities with longstanding trade and related activities that have always played in expanding understandings and horizons to facilitate relations among peoples.

Such commonsensical understanding of how culture contributes to facilitating relations across difference is sufficient basis for further exploring culture as a resource for cooperation across difference. However, such a venture invariably encounters the skepticism of those who see culture as a barrier rather than a vehicle for cooperation. Such critics might ask, , for instance, how can it be that culture can be a resource for building connections and cooperation among people when it is so often and readily mobilised as an everyday polarising force? Culture can be and is, it must be acknowledged, mobilised to incite conflict, create out–groups, and dehumanize others. From this point of view, inter–cultural exchange should be directed toward getting *beyond* culture, perhaps through the development of a cosmopolitan ethic, rather than embracing cultural difference. The possibilities of cooperation from these critics, in other words, lie beyond cultural difference rather than in culture. For those advocating this position, reason typically serves as a unifying force that transcends localised cultural or other communitarian tendencies, and it is to reason rather than culture that we should turn.

The argument of 'culture skeptics', though, must be set against not only the centrality of culture to human social life and continuing cultural differentiation (and thus the practical need to engage cultural difference), but also the fact that the most dominant and enduring forms of reason in human history are not abstract, decontextualised and universal but socially pluralistic and embedded (Cahoone 2005: 210). It seems that culture endures (and thus that we have to live with and in it), and that reason and culture cannot be readily cast as opposites. Nonetheless, because culture can generate a sense of sharedness and positive connection as much as difference and destructive conflict, coming to terms with culture as a paradoxical phenomenon is a necessary preliminary task in pursuing culture as a potential resource for cooperation. To do so is to begin to touch upon the ways in which culture is unknowable.

To engage the apparent contradiction between culture as a force for generating destructive conflict as well as cooperation, consider the nuance that comes with

commonsensical understandings of how culture contributes to facilitating relations across difference. When people develop self–reflexivity across difference they exhibit capacity to inhabit an apparent paradox: cultural others are different (and sometimes very significantly so, including in terms of fundamental worldviews), and yet this understanding also carries the realisation that cultural others are also fellow human beings and thus are also the same. (Vice versa, the recognition of sameness can serve to underscore difference.) What is crucial here is that neither difference nor sameness can be reduced to the other in the exchange: the fact that others are in some sense the same does not diminish their otherness (shared humanity does not trump difference) and the fact that they are different does not make them any less the same. Culture, it seems, is simultaneously powerful and diaphanous. As Jean–Luc Nancy says, '[w]hat we have in common is also what distinguishes and differentiates us'. In his case he notes that what 'I have in common with another Frenchman is the fact of not being the same Frenchman as him' (Nancy 2000: 155). More broadly we might say that what makes all people human is the fact of not being the same humans.

The joining of difference with sameness in cultural exchange signals how cultural difference is a site of exchange for generating both conflict and cooperation. To think of culture as a force for only one or the other overly simplifies matters and neglects hitherto underappreciated ways in which culture may be a resource for engaging and cooperating across difference. Holding difference and sameness together, as occurs in inter–cultural exchanges, seems to come readily and naturally—indeed it is frequently naturalised to the point of invisibility. In this context culture speaks to the quite remarkable capacity of humans to be able to maintain their differences yet regularly cooperate. To this extent culture may be a key means through which humans navigate both difference and interdependence, and thus a powerful and under–recognised resource for global cooperation. Furthermore, the way cultural difference both dissolves into sameness and re–forms through exchange (while perhaps being further clarified and elaborated) seems to resonate with an inability to know culture in a definitive way, suggesting that the unknowability of culture may indeed be linked with its capacity to serve as a resource for relating and cooperating across difference.

Culture, then, is an acknowledged force in social change and means of building and sustaining bonds and connections among people. This is accepted for in–group dynamics, but is understandably much less established for relations and cooperation across difference where culture can be a cause of conflict or barrier to cooperation. Nonetheless, culture is both automatically and programmatically deployed to facilitate cooperation across difference, and to many it appears a commonsense vehicle for supporting collaboration. The enigmatic capacity of culture to bring together difference and sameness suggests that it may be an underappreciated resource for enabling cooperation across difference. To explore how culture organises and navigates between sameness and difference is one way of further pursuing this possibility. This is not the only way in which culture may facilitate cooperation but it is nonetheless an appropriate entrée because questions of how difference and sameness can be navigated are particularly charged ones for the analysis and practice of global cooperation. By way of further caveat, the analytical task at hand should not lead to an overstating of the case for culture. To understand how culture may be a resource is valuable, not least because culture is a central art of human social life, but it would be a mistake to, in the

process, turn culture into a colossal force or a determining factor in cooperation and conflict. The goal here is to draw out the significance of culture so that it can be laid alongside other factors rather than to suggest that it trumps them.

Conjoining Difference and Sameness: Relational Culture

In a quest for rigor, social science has long traded in entities and structures in the search for 'laws' of the social world. By transposing the classical Newtonian approach from the natural sciences to the social world, and by drawing upon industrial and mechanical metaphors, it has been possible to isolate objects and variables, to sharpen understandings, and to advance causal analyses. Early anthropological understandings of culture followed this broader pattern to the extent of identifying cultures as units, or culture *in toto* as a 'thing'. And in line with other social sciences conceptions of political community and social grouping, culture was used to refer to some form of bounded group. Indeed, the idea of the separateness of one social group from another remains one of the important meanings of culture, and is probably crucial to its utility as a concept (Sewell 1999). However, much recent anthropological and other analysis has moved away from the idea of firmly separate or otherwise 'essentialised' cultures.

Most contemporary understandings of culture tend to stress that cultures are not 'bounded' (cultures blend and mix with each other) and that cultures are not 'fixed' (they change through time). As a result culture is typically understood as fluid and as linked to social processes or practices. Most commonly these are thought of in terms of semiotics and meaning-making, though the recent growth of interest in 'practices' invokes a wide range of human ways of being and interacting beyond language. Cultural practices, for instance, include those that are encoded, embodied and enacted through bodies rather than only through speech. Anthropologists have led this shift in understanding through a type of auto–critique of culture as their (previously) core object of analysis and, indeed, the rationale for their discipline. They have often been among the most vociferous critics of 'culture'. Lila Abu–Lughod argues, for instance, that culture is a conceptual tool or 'making other' enforcing separations that inevitably carry hierarchies, and thus as a phenomenon that anthropologists would want to write against (1991). Nonetheless, culture endures both within and beyond anthropology, albeit in a form which radically downplays earlier understandings of cultures as units or things. Instead, contemporary understandings of culture emphasise fluidity and the emergence of cultures through the actions and interactions of both individuals and groups.

The shift away from understanding culture as bounded has made space for recognition of the previously unrecognised—and still underappreciated—dynamic whereby cultures emerge at least as much through interaction among groups of people as through their relative isolation from each other. By drawing analogies with biological evolution, anthropologists and many others had previously assumed that cultural differences arise as groups inhabit places independently of each other. The commonsensical proposition here is that people evolve different ways

of making social meaning, gradually elaborating differences in a more or less spontaneous way. However, there is a now a slow but growing recognition that it is longstanding interaction among peoples is a key force for generating cultural diversity (Mair 2006; Harrison 2007). Networks of trade and warfare see exchange in cultural motifs and practices, including the mutual distancing of these motifs and practices among groups. This pattern of interaction and the creation of distinctions subsequently come to be recognised—and, all too often, ossified—as different 'cultures' without regard for the interaction which generated difference. Cultural difference, in other words, is formed in relationship and hence through shared processes. This suggests that culture is 'relational'. Such a move revises earlier understandings of culture such that if we were to insist on accuracy it would be necessary to speak (somewhat clumsily) only of 'culture-effects'. Culture (the entity) no longer comes first, with relations flowing from it. Culture results; it is secondary to relations and derived from them.

Much anthropological analysis demonstrates the relational formation and maintenance of cultural difference by documenting the ways in which culture links (groups of) people across difference while simultaneously differentiating them from each other. Cultural groups navigate their 'inside' with the 'outside', marking aliens or others as 'wild' or otherwise different or threatening while simultaneously creating channels for periodically linking with or incorporating these same others. The channels for linking include warfare, marriage, extended kinship or totemic universalisation (extending humanity into the landscape or to animals) that transcends ethnic boundaries (Jackson 1998: 42). The much–noted diversity of culture of the region of Melanesia, for instance, arises as much out of such exchanges as through—as is commonly thought—the assumed isolation of tribal groups from each other and the wider world (Harrison 2007). Longstanding contact among peoples, including exchange and trade in ideas and cultural forms, allowed groups to articulate their differences and maintain connections such that individuals and groups 'could have rights in, and affiliations to, several cultural identities at once' (2007: 70). Within this system, cultures deserve to be 'conceived in an imagery of transactional networks and lines of transmission rather than of discrete and bounded entities' (2007: 70-71). Culture, it seems, is ambidextrous: able to help humans to both articulate their differences and to interact together across difference, carrying both differences and shared-ness.

Understanding culture as a relational effect does indicate some sort of shared process, but it is necessary to be wary of overstating sameness, or of the temptations of a universal 'we–identity'. While much political thought in the western tradition tends to see some level of shared–ness, sameness or unity as the basis for political community and as necessary for cooperation, difference may be more important than we have previously allowed. In Simon Harrison's (2007) analysis, for instance, the impetus for processes of cultural differentiation arises because it is sameness rather than difference that presents a threat for human group identities; it is sameness rather than difference that creates problems. Building on Sigmund Freud, Rene Girard, Gregory Bateson and others, Harrison argues that conflict in social life arises from too much alikeness rather than, as much western social thought assumes, from difference. This requires, then, that 'social actors have a need for and therefore maintain a degree of mutual differentiation and distance' (2007: 153). Harrison's analysis suggests that difference, rather than sameness, is crucial to human social life and thus also to the

possibilities for human cooperation. Indeed, the fact that people hold strongly to cultural identities even in an age of intensified globalisation seems to indicate that while cultural difference is formed in relationship—and hence through shared processes—it is no less significant for being formed in this way.

Understanding culture as a relational effect highlights that cultural difference is not a natural obstacle to cooperation. Culture joins difference and sameness, facilitating transit between the two, so to speak. In this perspective, which offers a theoretical explanation for the efficacy of intercultural exchange discussed above, culture is a remarkable phenomenon. By holding difference and sameness together in dynamic relation, culture has potential to facilitate human cooperation while retaining and respecting human diversity.

However, relational culture is also deeply puzzling, especially for those who might want to design interventions to support cooperation based upon social science knowledge. Relational culture is, paradoxically, both abstract and real because it is continually unfolding; continually coming into being. It sits, along with myriad relational phenomena, in an 'unfolding relation to its own nonpresent potential to vary' (Massumi 2002: 4). Relationality is thus a phenomenon not readily amenable to definitional or instrumental treatments. Asking 'What is it?' or 'What can we do with it?' is likely to lead, to the consternation of many practitioners of science, to mystification and perplexity rather than to clarity and a ready path for action. Cultural actors, meanwhile, need ask no such questions to operationalise culture. The social sciences are practised at asking after entities, it seems, and at reducing complexity to the discrete, predictable and operable, but less familiar in asking after everyday relations and the partly unknowable abstractions of culture. This poses the challenge of how tensions between entities and relations might be engaged, including to draw out the possibilities for supporting and facilitating cooperation through cultural difference.

To contemplate the challenge of thinking relationally rather than in terms of entities, consider the way efforts to deal with complex and fluid social phenomena in recent decades have tried to grapple with relational phenomena by focusing on the 'in-between' and 'borderzones' through notions such as 'hybridity'. These ideas have come into usage because they go some way toward capturing dynamics that have not been able to be grasped through conventional social science analysis. The logical problem, though, is that the in-between or hybrid is a derivative effect of already-constituted entities. It therefore reproduces the existing state of play by relegating the relational to the margins. The in-between or hybrid is unable to stand alone. In other words, without the underlying categories to which they refer, the in-between and hybrid 'vaporize into logical indeterminacy' (Massumi 2002: 69). There is a need, then, to go further afield and to be more audacious.

To embrace relationality, as Brian Massumi suggests, is to 'give a logical consistency to the in-between' (to not have it derive from pre-existing entities) and 'would mean realigning with a logic of relation' (2002: 70). This requires reversing the prevailing priority of object over relation to focus our attention primarily on how entities arise or emerge through relations and processes. Ontological privilege would be with the relations for it is they that constitute the field of emergence from which entities arise (2002: 8). Culture, in this formulation, is always coming into existence, is always at variance with its current state as it stands in relation to its potential to vary or change through its relations, both 'internal' and 'external'.

Of course, some level of fixity is also retained in this set-up. Within a relational approach 'social and cultural determinations feed back into the process from which they arose' (2002: 8). Nonetheless, shifting ontological commitments from entities to relationality gives priority to change, process and dynamism. It thus requires thinking dynamically rather than statically. Thinking itself must become dynamic, must (again) become agile and mobile. This is necessary both to grasp how the relations that we name as culture-effects can simultaneously produce and join difference, and to entertain the possibility that relational culture might be a resource for facilitating cooperation.

To speak of relational culture, then, is to foreground dynamic forces in the formation and maintenance of culture and cultural difference. This move requires embracing both paradox and the partially unknowable. It asserts that culture and cultural difference are formed relationally—hence through shared processes—and yet that both are no less significant for being formed in this way. To foreground dynamic relations is not, of course, to say that a given culture/s does/do not exist, but to say that it exists in a continually 'unfolding relation to its own nonpresent potential to vary' (Massumi 2002: 4). The dynamism of culture, and the fact that it is difficult to define, pushes the limits of conventional social science knowledge, exposing scholars to relational forces that they have all–too–often tended to disavow in the search for more secure ontological footing. However, perhaps it is time to—in turn—disavow the security of conventional social science. To this extent, culture may, along with the contemporary turn to theories of practice, emergence and self–organisation, be the harbinger of more adventurous ways of knowing in the human sciences. Indeed, to think of culture relationally requires engaging more deeply with relationality *per se* to attempt—despite the obvious challenges—to understand what kind of phenomenon relationality is, including how it operates through human beings.

Relationality: Affirming Interactive Dynamism

To approach the relational is to approach a threshold of unknowability at which science tends to recoil. It may thus seem strange to attempt to explicate relationality with reference to the precise sciences, rather than through theology and philosophy or the traditions of non–western peoples and traditions where relationality is either occasionally or routinely engaged. And yet, following Massumi, the precise sciences are also ineluctably being drawn toward relationality. Science frequently resists the relational ways of being and knowing of theologians and indigenous peoples, and yet many sciences also approach a 'relational limit' as observations accumulate and paradigms complexify (Massumi 2002: 229). This limit might be thought of as an excess of dynamically generated effects, a surplus of events, results or forms that confound both science's expectations about the world and its existing ways of knowing. Examples include the emergence of quantum mechanics in the first half of the twentieth century or the discovery of dissipative structures in thermodynamics in the late twentieth century. Recent discoveries in neuroscience and biological systems identify phenomena that are similarly challenging for conventional science: self-organising and non-predictable systems in which order emerges through the interaction of local ingredients (neurons in

brains, bird in flocks, fish in schools, bees in hives, ants in colonies) and without regard for linear and cause-effect analysis or proportionality of input and effect.

The case of chaos theory serves to elucidate both science's relationship to unknowable-relational phenomena and provides one entrée for understanding relationality in more detail. Chaos theory is a recently emerged and widely applied field of scientific study that describes and analyses, through detailed mathematics, dynamic systems that are fully determined by initial conditions and, at the same time, are highly sensitive yet to them. These two characteristics generate apparently paradoxical systems that are partly deterministic and yet unpredictable in the long-term. Weather patterns are the classic example. The semi-deterministic character of such systems holds out the hope for conventional scientific ways of knowing while extreme sensitivity to initial conditions confounds this same possibility. Chaos enables science and apparently disavows it, and it is perhaps this that leads to scientific efforts that vigorously pursue formal modelling and efforts to quantify the uncertainty factor in an attempt to bring chaos back into the scientific fold (Massumi 2002: 244).

Chaos walks the threshold between what is known and unknowable in conventional scientific terms. As Massumi notes, the 'still-suspect status of chaos theory in the eyes of the established scientific disciplines may have everything to do with its verging on ideas considered more 'properly' to be of the province of philosophy', including relationality, creativity and affect (2002: 229). It seems reasonable to expect that conventional science might recoil at the threshold of unknowability brought to us by dynamically self-organising relational phenomena such as those we see in traffic flows, brains, crowds and throughout nature. Nonetheless, these phenomena call for understanding. In the process they orient us to 'unknowable' realms.

To stay close to conventional ways of knowing in the first instance—to ease toward knowing the unknowable—we can approach relationality by considering how it speaks to 'an expanded notion of causality' (2002: 225). Classical linear understandings of cause and effect pertain to proportional impacts among locally–acting entities or ingredients, but recent scientific work requires coming to terms with non–proportional system impacts resulting from extreme sensitivity to initial conditions in chaos theory, with non–local dynamics brought to light by quantum mechanics (see Nadeau and Kafatos 2001), and, more generally, with relational changes emerging through the coming–together of entities or ingredients in their dynamic unity (2002: 225). This relational type of 'cause' is perhaps better termed 'a quasi cause, since it concerns openness rather than determination, and dynamic unities rather than parts' (2002: 225). Science may be uncomfortable with a 'quasi cause' and yet such a phenomenon is no less significant for not being able to be pinned down in the terms of conventional scientific knowledge. To be sure, it is precisely not possible to refer to a 'relational cause', and there is no question here of being for or against science. Science is an incredibly powerful way of knowing the world, and yet relational phenomena are both known and unknown by science; they are understood by and yet also exceed conventional scientific ways of knowing.

While there is no possibility of strictly saying what relationality is—of *defining* or otherwise knowing it in conventional scientific terms—the unknowable dimension which chaos and other scientific developments open onto does help to better

understand relationality and, perhaps, to work with it. Working from a conventional scientific base, we might say that relationality is the 'potential for singular effects of qualitative change to occur [in a system of interactions] in excess over or as a supplement to objective interactions [of the cause-effect type historically discerned by science]' (2002: 225). In Rayleigh–Bénard convection, a layer of liquid between two horizontal planes chaotically dissipates the heat that is applied from below until the random microscopic movement in the liquid becomes spontaneously ordered, self-organising into an macroscopic ordered population of convection cells (2002: 224). In a mediation process among parties to a conflict, tension increases until an apparently insignificant piece of information or exchange sees the emergence of a new pattern of interactions that unfolds and processes prior tensions and difficulties.

Such events evoke the unknowable–relational dimension beyond conventional science. And yet understanding relationality requires more because referring to such a 'beyond' does not tell us much about the *quality* of relationality. Two further ingredients are crucial. First, the qualitative change among ingredients or participants requires that interactions underway are *open* 'to being affected by something new' (2002: 224). Relationality thus involves both *openness* and *affect,* reflecting not just the possibility of change but an orientation and predisposition toward it. Second, the qualitative change arises *dynamically* in ways that involve some type of contagion, mutual susceptibility or, minimally, transmission of information leading to behavioural effects that reflect the changes afoot in the whole. Relationality thus allows, as exemplified in Rayleigh–Bénard convection experiments, the whole to become something else while continuing to be what it is. (The relational quasi cause, as might be expected, works in paradoxical ways).

To return to culture to exemplify, individuals of a given culture may be involved in reconfiguring power hierarchies internal to their cultural group, modifying motifs and practices following inspiration from beyond the immediate context, or incorporating technologies produced and circulated through global capitalism. These events, proceeding through openness, affect, and relational quasi–cause, often involve substantial personal and cultural transformation. Nonetheless in these processes we see the maintenance of both individual senses of self and the wider sense of culture. This involves the simultaneous dissolution and preservation of cultural difference. The possibilities of this pattern for global cooperation are more obvious at the larger scale of inter–cultural interaction. In processes of intercultural exchange, people are invariably changed by their experience. From the vantage of their culture, people become part of a wider and larger whole in interactions with others while also remaining who they are. To be sure, they may subsequently resettle again, changed and yet the same, into their prior cultural identity. Nonetheless, the phenomenon of becoming something else while continuing to remain the same involves a qualitatively singular event: a being–in–relation or coming–together through dynamic interaction that mixes already–ordered interaction (in the form of cultural identities) with openness and possibility for change. In this way cultural difference both affirms and transcends itself.

Culture, Relationality, and Cooperation:
Possible Directions

A wide range of players in global affairs broadly endorse the notion that cross–cultural exchanges can and do contribute to enhanced global cooperation. Formal governmental and inter–governmental organisations as well as their civilian and non-governmental counterparts facilitate and support programs for cross–cultural interaction and dialogue to enhance tolerance and understanding. At the everyday level too, good personal relationships among individual officials, necessarily established through cross–cultural engagement, are crucial for the smooth functioning of international affairs. Of course, it remains the case that the possibilities that cultural exchange might suggest for global cooperation currently tend to be either trumped or obscured by 'harder' conceptualisations of international public life, whether they have their base in realist theories of international relations or technocratic formulations of global governance. Nonetheless, the fact that foreign ministries and other agencies provide broad support for cultural exchange and similar programs suggests that these efforts cannot be wholly reduced to an expression of 'soft power' undertaken in the prosecution of a competitive game of power relations. In short, there exists a broad *intuition*, supported by experiences of cross–cultural engagement, that culture—including cultural difference—is a vehicle for facilitating interaction across difference and supporting global cooperation.

The explication of culture as a relational phenomenon, building upon culture scholarship of recent decades and working through the partial unknowabilty of culture, helps to theorise the foregoing intuition about cultural exchange. In the relational schema developed here, culture is ambidextrous, helping humans to both articulate their differences and to interact together across difference. Relationality foregrounds culture's paradoxical qualities by acknowledging that culture and cultural difference are formed dynamically through shared processes *and* that the difference thus–formed is no less significant for being formed in this way. Consistent with the persistence of cultural differentiation despite modernisation and globalisation, relationality suggests that dynamically formed cultural difference may be more important than had previously been anticipated. Indeed, in partial and paradoxical contrast to familiar moves that seek out unity or shared–ness as the basis for global cooperation, that which human beings and human groups share at a very fundamental level may be our desire—and processes—for creating difference; differences which continually re–form in dynamic relation.

In the theoretical analysis offered here, culture and relationality are intimately bound. Culture is a relational phenomenon and relationality offers a way of modulating culture; of respecting cultural difference and yet allowing that culture is a shared human resource. Relationality also has wider application beyond cultural phenomena, and yet to the extent that relationality generates benefits it challenges conventional ways of knowing in the western tradition. Engaging relationality brings us to the limits of conventional science, exposing us to excesses of dynamically generated non-linear and unpredictable effects that confound science's conventional expectations about the world. Relational phenomena involve the contagion, mutual susceptibility or transmission of information among

interacting ingredients or parts, leading to dynamic changes in the whole; changes that allow both the ingredients of a whole and the whole itself to become something else while continuing to be the same.

A relational approach, then, might be a basis for extending understandings and analyses of global interactions and cooperation across cultural difference in order to better understand both the force of culture and dynamics of cooperation in ways that are more attuned to the interplay of difference and sameness than has hitherto been the case. As noted earlier, though, there is a need to be cautious about overstating of the case for culture. While culture is a central art of human social life, culture is not an overwhelming or determining factor in cooperation and conflict, and the relational analysis and possibilities offered here join with rather than displace other understandings of social and international life.

Although the possibilities for knowing relationality currently lie at the limits of current knowledge, concrete starting points are also available. Perhaps the most obvious entrée, as indicated in this paper, involves drawing upon theory and analysis from the limits of the precise sciences—chaos theory, emergence and self–organisation, for instance—as source and inspiration for theorising about and analysing social, cultural and political dynamics. Some anthropologists have begun the work of bridging between the hard and social sciences (e.g., Mosko and Damon 2005) as have cultural theorists and philosophers (eg Massumi) and some sociologists (e.g., Urry 2003). However, those working in fields most obviously and closely related to global cooperation—political science, international relations, global governance—have not yet made significant inroads in drawing upon chaos and similar theories or taking up the broader relational turn. There are, nevertheless, exceptions and early efforts (e.g., see Cederman 1997; Jackson and Nexon 1999; Nexon 2010; Wendt 2010), including in the sub–field of peace and conflict resolution (e.g., see Coleman 2011; Hendrick 2009; Kuttner 2012).

Most existing social science engagements with the hard science have not yet, though, been applied to global cooperation and they need to be further developed for this purpose, both through theorising and empirical analysis. To the extent that non–linear and emergent phenomena are beginning to be countenanced in considerations of global cooperation, they primarily come from the hard sciences or highly interdisciplinary settings that are linked to addressing the challenge of global climate change (e.g., see Vasconcelos, Santos et al. 2013). There are, once again, exceptions, including emerging efforts to tackle the challenges of global cooperation by linking with the behavioural sciences, including complexity theory (see Messner, Guarín et al. 2013). In short, there is great scope for social sciences scholarship to work with ideas of relationality by taking inspiration from the limits of the hard sciences to explore possibilities for analysing and facilitating global cooperation.

The limits of science, though, are only one type of limit, operating as they do within a certain way of knowing and relating to the world that has emerged and become dominant in contemporary research and scholarship. This is not to relativise or diminish this very powerful way of knowing, or to challenge the apparently superior purchase it has on knowing our world. But it is the case that science does not know everything—as it itself demonstrates—and that there are other ways of knowing that might be drawn upon. Relational phenomena such as the co–emergence of selves are explored in various strands of western philosophy

from pragmatism to existential phenomenology as well as in elements of philosophical anthropology and a variety of religious and philosophical traditions. Many cultural traditions around the globe also embrace relational phenomena, including through mythology and ways of knowing and being that accept—and indeed celebrate—indeterminacy, form–changing, and the polyvalence of meaning. To this extent, many peoples who have previously been maligned and excluded from global conversations on account of various 'lacks' in large part defined through western knowledge are subtle masters of relationality. Moreover, these three sets of knowledge resources—philosophy, religion, and cultural difference— are a vast reserve that may be drawn upon in combination with the resources of the precise sciences.

Brian Massumi (2002: 229) argues that 'relationality is nigh' across a wide range of scientific fields, and relationality is certainly also burgeoning in the social sciences. But to better understand relationality requires significant investment in knowing a phenomenon that does not offer clarity of the sort we have come to expect in science. Relationality is relatively new and remarkably challenging for conventional ways of knowing, none of which necessarily lose relevance because of the advent of relationality. It is—at least for many at this juncture—both conceptually difficult and an affront to the agency that has come to expected through conventional ways of knowing. There are also more practical challenges. While it is possible to theorise and analyse relationality as a phenomenon, this does not, unlike in many other areas of science and scholarship, provide a secure platform for prediction or instrumental action. Relational dynamics are concrete and real and yet relationality, like culture, is in some senses diaphanous. Relational phenomena can be observed, but when one attempts to grasp relationality to turn it to one's ends it slips through one's fingers. Nonetheless, if Massumi (2002) is correct about the rise of relationality, the work of knowing relationality, already underway, will gather pace as an effect of efforts to extend the boundaries of current knowledge.

The current scientific and scholarly state of play as well as the characteristics of relationality itself suggests a dual strategy of both extending understanding relationality as a socio–cultural phenomenon in itself and developing applied knowledge about the use of relationality in the pursuit of global cooperation, including through cultural difference. It makes sense to approach relationality conventionally; to attempt to know it by deploying reason, theorising, and empirical analysis. Conversely, relationality might be also known in unconventional ways, through feeling and imagination for instance, and thus by deploying faculties unfamiliar to—and usually eschewed—in science and scholarship. Relationality might be usefully approached obliquely, indirectly, and with openness to being surprised from unexpected quarters; it calls to be approached both head on and circuitously, both in extending our knowledge of it and in exploring ways to deploy it to address the challenge of global cooperation.

The task of drawing upon relationality to directly facilitate global cooperation can be stated quite straightforwardly. It requires deploying relationality to engage already ordered interactions that tend to impede or block cooperation (typically political, social, economic, or cultural institutional set–ups of one sort or another) in such a way as to reopen their interactive coming–together, exposing them to relational quasi causality of dynamic unity in ways that are oriented toward cooperation. Undertaking this work requires making arguments and proposals on a range of fronts to engage with current institutional set–ups, from manifestations

of cultural and religious identity to political and governance architecture and ways of conceptualising political community and cooperation itself. It necessarily flows through the human sciences, particularly the disciplines most closely related to global cooperation—political science, international relations, global governance— and thus requires, as indicated above, the further development of relational approaches in a range of disciplines.

Nonetheless, it is also possible to point, in particular, to opportunities to draw upon cultural difference and relationality to analyse and extend concrete practices for supporting global cooperation. In recent decades a range of practices that are largely directed at the task of generating relational and cooperative effects have been developed in the field of conflict resolution. Mediation, facilitation, dialogue processes, and problem–solving workshops all work with interactions among parties to assist them to reconfigure relationships—both with each other and to the issues they share—in a cooperative mode. Although the dynamics of these processes have been studied to some extent, much remains to be done, particularly to understand transformative or critical moments; exchanges in which apparently remarkable and inexplicable shifts in dynamics progress the process to a new stage or overcome an apparently intractable obstacle. These phenomena, which lead many practitioners to argue that running such practices is as much art as science, particularly across cultural difference, deserve to be theorised and observed through a relational lens. Some of this work has begun, with relationality beginning to be taken up in the conflict resolution field alongside ideas of complexity, emergence and self–organisation (eg., Jones and Hughes 2003; Hendrick 2009; Körppen, Ropers et al. 2011). Taking these developments further promises to make a contribution to understanding of how to directly facilitate and support broader cooperation efforts through established conflict resolution processes.

Culture and cultural difference take us to edge of conventional scholarly ways of knowing but also provides unique opportunities. At the limits of current ways of knowing, culture is both 'relational' and an example of a wider phenomenon of 'relationality' which foregrounds relations over entities, becoming over being, and dynamism over fixity. Theorising culture as a relational phenomenon respects cultural difference while allowing that culture is a shared human resource for pursuing cooperation. To this extent, relationality modulates culture, demonstrating how culture simultaneously differentiates and joins human beings. Meanwhile, relationality also reveals, beyond the culture question *per se*, the limits of conventional western knowledge. This provides opportunities for theorising and analysing a wide range of social and political interactions relating to current cooperation challenges, including examination of how ingredients or parts of systems can interact in ways that lead to dynamic changes that are oriented toward cooperation. Engaging relationality, whether through the limits of the precise sciences, philosophy, religion or by drawing upon other cultural traditions, thus offers hitherto underappreciated ways that may help us to engage and meet contemporary global cooperation challenges.

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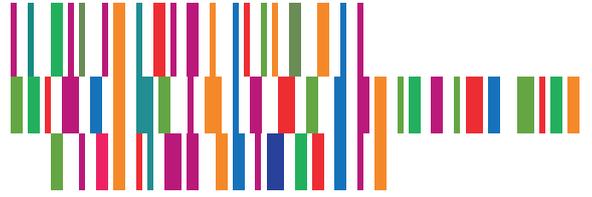
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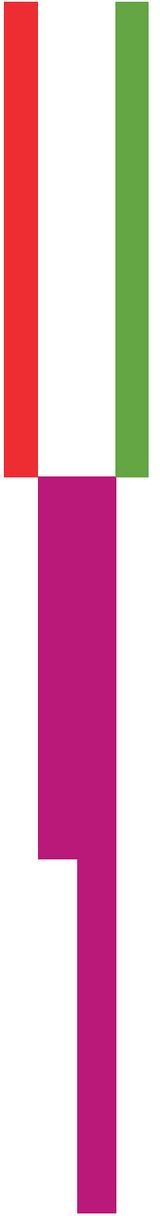Global Cooperation Research Papers 1, Duisburg 2013

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