Networked G20 Governance of COVID-19 and Its Transversal Crisis Effect[1]

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Abstract

In this article, the Group of 20's (G20) networked pluralism and transversal policy practices in the governance of COVID-19 and the pandemic crisis effect are analyzed. The G20 is an important global governance hub, with the strategic capacities and authority to improve cooperation on the pandemic and economic recovery efforts. The forum's increasingly pluralistic networked-governance processes have been crucial for recent shifts in global governance practices and authority. They were augmented by transversal consequences of the pandemic crisis effect, the latter denoting the consequences of new evidence during a crisis leading to a heightened perception of uncertainty and the repoliticization of background knowledge. The analysis combines a "practice-relational" social constructivist analytical approach with discourse-analytic and sociological insights. It integrates empirical evidence from semi-structured interviews, informal discussions, participant observation, and documentary analysis of G20 engagement on transversal policy dimensions of the COVID-19 pandemic, especially with its interlocutors and governance networks. This indicates the growing significance of networked G20 governance, involving engagement with increasingly pluralistic networks of actors from the Global North and Global South.

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In this article, how the Group of Twenty's (G20) networked governance practices have influenced and been influenced by the COVID-19 pandemic, plus the global crisis response and its consequences are examined. The pandemic involves complex and *transversal* or interconnected multisectoral challenges for policymakers and societies, including those of the G20.

The G20 is well-positioned to strengthen global coordination on COVID-19 and the post-pandemic recovery because of its importance as a global governance hub. The following assesses the significance of this forum during the pandemic, combining a "practice-relational" social constructivist analytical approach with discourse-analytic and sociological insights. First, the core conceptual focus is clarified, which is the co-constitutive processes of G20 network pluralism and transversal policy practices. Second, how networked G20 governance influenced the global pandemic response is examined. Third, the G20's role in managing transversal policy challenges from the pandemic, linking public health, economic, social, environmental, and other dimensions, is analyzed. Finally, evidence for a COVID-19 *crisis effect*, including the heightened perception of uncertainty and repoliticization, is examined, focusing on its influence on the G20 as a network hub of global governance.

G20 cooperation on COVID-19 and transversally linked issues has been flawed but with substantive achievements. The forum's networked-governance processes remain crucial for improving multilateral cooperation on pandemics, especially their diverse consequences. Pluralistic and transnational G20 governance networks constitute important coordination processes, combining with the pandemic crisis effect to augment contemporary shifts in global governance practices and authority relations.

G20 Network Pluralism and Transversal Policy Practices
Global governance networks [Baker, Carey, 2014; Luckhurst, 2020a; Sørensen, Torfing, 2017; Stone, 2013], and specifically G20 governance networks [Eccleston et al., 2015; Luckhurst, 2019a; Stone, 2015], have become an important research focus in recent years. They involve assemblages of private, intergovernmental, supranational, state, semi-state,[2] and civil society actors, working together through linked professional ecologies [Luckhurst, 2019a; Seabrooke, 2014]. The latter constitute processual and relational contexts in which actors from diverse

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[2] "Semi-state" or "quasi-state" indicates quasi-autonomous public bodies or state-backed private institutions that provide public services. They generally have ties to the state without being subsumed by it, hence retaining at least some aspects of formal autonomy.

professional backgrounds coordinate their activities and practices [Baker, Carey, 2014; Eccleston et al., 2015; Karlsrud, 2016; Luckhurst, 2019a; Seabrooke, 2014].

There is also some research on the linkages between global governance networks and transversal policy practices (see A. Ålund and C. U. Schierup [2019] and J. Luckhurst [2020b]). The more common usage of the word "mainstreaming" among G20 governance networks [Dongxiao et al., 2017; G20, 2018; Kulik, 2018; Luckhurst et al., 2020; UNDP-OECD, 2019; Thomas et al., 2018], in particular, indicates transversal linkages across the forum's extensive policy agenda.

The official G20 agenda covers a broad spectrum of policy issues, including economic growth, financial regulation, sustainable development, gender equality, infrastructure investment, employment, the environment, and anti-corruption measures, among others. This indicates the importance of the G20 as a global governance hub [Kirton, 2013, pp. 27–47; Luckhurst, 2016, pp. 141–71], as well as a nexus of decentralizing global authority, through which state and non-state actors, particularly from the Global South, have become increasingly influential in global governance [Luckhurst, 2016, 2019b]. The G20's agenda is increasingly managed through transversal governance practices, with joint ministerial meetings and other forms of policy coordination indicative of a growing trend for transversal, or "joined-up," governance approaches to reduce policymaking silos [Bastos Lima et al., 2017; Leal Filho et al., 2018; Pollitt, 2003; Rao et al., 2015; Russel, Jordan, 2009]. This involves more heterogeneous and often transnational governance networks, comprising public, private, intergovernmental, and civil society actors such as policy experts and advocates [Sørensen, Torfing, 2017; Stone, 2013].

The growing G20 policy agenda constitutes new contexts for transversal coordination between such networks, while increasing the potential for network *pluralism*. In this article, the importance of ideational and network pluralism in global governance is emphasized, echoing aspects of A. Acharya's conceptualization of a "multiplex world" [2018, pp. 28–32]. He indicates, with this, "multiple, overlapping layers of governance, at global, regional, and local levels… [in which] the sources of ideas and approaches to order are diffuse and shared among actors with differential material capacities" [p. 30]. This involves "multiple, diverse but cross-cutting forms of agency… more global and more diverse in scope" [pp. 30–1]. The distinctive contribution of the present article is to augment this conceptualization of "pluralism" with its focus on G20 *network* pluralism, as indicated by the heterogeneity of G20 governance networks.

This analytical approach is indicative of the social-processual and relational ontology that underpins the present study, which fits the "practice-relational" turn in international relations research [Adler-Nissen, 2015; Cooper, Pouliot, 2015; Jackson, Nexon, 1999; McCourt, 2016; Pouliot, Cornut, 2015; Qin, 2018]. The qualitative methodology builds on substantial empirical evidence, gathered over a decade of researching the G20. This includes over 50 unstructured and semi-structured interviews, conducted online and in person, as well as informal discussions with around 10 G20 sherpas and sous-sherpas, a few policy advisors working for G20 secretariats and delegations, politicians, diplomats, and dozens of civil society representatives involved in official G20 engagement processes. This includes about a dozen interviews and group discussions specifically on the G20's COVID-19 response. This evidence is complemented with substantial analysis of G20 and World Health Organization (WHO) documents, especially related to the pandemic response, and participant-observation at G20 summits and engagement meetings, in-person in pre-pandemic times and virtual during the pandemic—including through media accreditation for the Riyadh G20 summit in November 2020. This approach to evidence gathering fits the practice-relational ontology, as it centres on analyzing how relational processes and practices shape the G20 and influence the global governance of COVID-19.

The expansion of both the G20's agenda and engagement have been co-constitutive social-relational processes over the past decade. The expanding agenda, especially since the Korean G20 presidency of 2010, involved more heterogeneous actor engagement. The official engagement groups, for example, constituted new practices for embedding G20 inputs from increasingly heterogeneous networks [Kirton, 2013; Luckhurst, 2016, 2019a; Naylor, 2021]. The broader engagement expanded the G20's agenda and vice versa, as the more diverse issue-agenda involved more heterogeneous networks in G20 dialogue.

Normative practices of G20 deliberations with a growing assemblage of those perceived as *appropriate* global governance actors from the Global South and civil society, which increased the impetus for an expanding agenda, were indicative of what might be called a rhetorical trap [Schimmelfennig, 2001]. This is because G20 practices of inclusivity and agenda expansion became increasingly imbricated with perceptions of G20 legitimacy, which became difficult to reverse for politico-normative reasons [Luckhurst, 2019a, pp. 527, 533]. This further contributed to the "Christmas-tree effect," indicating how each rotating presidency tends to add new issues to the G20 agenda, like multiplying the ornaments adorning a Christmas tree, as they attempt to influence the future G20 agenda and leave a mark on the forum [Rewizorski, 2017, p. 38; Ye, 2014, p. 28].

The United Nations (UN) Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) indicate another key example of co-constitutive processes of network pluralism and transversal policy practices, as well as the rhetorical trap noted above. The SDGs' normative emphasis on a pluralistic agenda and actor inclusivity [Fukuda-Parr, 2016], incorporating voices from the Global South and civil society across a diverse range of policy fields, significantly influenced global governance and G20 practices [Berger, Leininger, Messner, 2017, pp. 120–1; McBride, Hawkes, Buse, 2019]. The SDGs became a key element of the legitimizing discourse for multilateral cooperation and policymaking practices [Fox, Stoett 2016; Thiele, 2016, pp. 6–8] (see also Luckhurst [2020a, 2020b, p. 50]), augmenting the trend for transversal and inclusive global governance practices. This was also indicated in the G20 context, with the goals frequently referenced in leaders' declarations and the forum's other policy documents (see G20 [2015, 2016a, 2016b, 2017, 2018, 2019, 2020a]). There is a growing normative consensus on the SDGs within the G20 and influential global governance networks [Luckhurst, 2017, pp. 155–85], which reinforces processes of network pluralism and transversal policy practices.

The co-constitutive processes of G20 network pluralism and transversal policy practices combine expanding pluralistic engagement between more heterogeneous governance networks, with more transversal policymaking. The processes are mutually reinforcing—G20 engagement of heterogeneous governance networks contributes to the increasing transversality of its policy agenda; the latter process co-constitutively broadens the inclusivity of G20 engagement. Engagement between more heterogeneous networks expanded the scope for transversal policy deliberation, enabling those networks to articulate issues such as gender equality and sustainability across the G20's agenda. This agenda expansion co-constitutively augmented heterogeneous actor engagement, as noted, due to the relevance and normative pressure to extend deliberations with appropriate global governance actors on a broader range of issues. This included the increased number of joint ministerial meetings and multistakeholder consultations and engagement processes.

The Importance of Networked G20 Governance for the COVID-19 Response

The key focus for this article is networked G20 governance of the transversal policy challenges from the COVID-19 pandemic. The pluralism of networked G20 governance was augmented by transversal consequences of the pandemic, even as the forum's agenda focused on public health and pandemics in 2020 and 2021 [G20, 2020a, 2020b].

The G20's health leadership role grew during the COVID-19 pandemic through its coordination of key aspects of the global response, including from interlocutors such as

international organizations, governments, and civil society organizations (CSOs). Aside from substantial financial commitments from individual G20 members to tackle the pandemic, the forum pledged to support the WHO's COVID-19 Solidarity Response Fund and initiated its own action plan on COVID-19 in early 2020 [G20, 2020c]. The Italian G20 presidency appointed a "*High Level Independent Panel* on financing the global commons for pandemic preparedness and response" [Italian G20 Presidency, 2021 (original emphasis)], involving élite actors in networked G20 governance of the pandemic. Their remit further indicates the G20's role as a hub of networked global governance, as they were tasked to liaise with the WHO-appointed Independent Panel for Pandemic Preparedness and Response [2020]. The two independent panels further augment the pluralism of this networked pandemic governance by involving actors such as civil society representatives, former politicians, and public health experts from the Global South and North.

Interlocutors from the Think 20 (T20) proposed the implementation of new G20 peer-review mechanisms and additional joint ministerials to increase transversal global policy coordination [Luckhurst et al., 2020], building on the forum's joint finance and health ministerial of September 2020, scheduled again for October 2021. This included the claim that heterogeneous priorities and needs of different states should be a core aspect of the G20's pandemic response, echoing the SDG's emphasis on tailoring policy strategies to local conditions. This could involve a particular focus on pandemic challenges for the Global South. The *subsidiarity* principle is important here [Knight, Persaud, 2001], that is, the normative argument that people in the Global South or at local levels often have more appropriate experience and insights to understand local requirements. This is one argument why the G20 should prioritize feedback from interlocutors in the Global South, including on public health, economic, environmental, and social consequences of the pandemic. This is especially relevant in communities where poverty and infrastructure constraints reduce their capacity to introduce pandemic measures implemented in some high-income states, such as homeworking or mandated national lockdowns.

The G20's discourse on the pandemic, including frequent references to "preparedness" and "resilience" [G20, 2020a, 2020b, 2021] (see also Luckhurst et al. [2020]), indicates core aspects of consensus between broader G20 governance networks and member state officials. This includes the widespread endorsement of the need for comprehensive institutional and preventive capacity building to improve future pandemic governance. There has also been support for global financial cooperation on the COVID-19 response, for example, Oxfam [2021] and several other CSOs advocated a new special drawing rights (SDR) allocation from

the International Monetary Fund (IMF) [LATINDADD, 2021],[3] which the G20 [2021] agreed to support in April 2021. There remain issues of contestation, especially from G20 civil-society interlocutors. The official Civil 20 (C20) [2020] engagement group, and CSOs such as Oxfam [2020a, 2020b], argue the G20 should go further than its existing debt service suspension initiative (DSSI) for low- and middle-income states,[4] especially through a long-term extension of the initiative or by substituting it with debt cancelation.

The articulation of the G20's legitimacy and inclusivity claims, noted above, increased the potential for pluralistic engagement and transversal policy strategies on COVID-19. This consequence of networked G20 governance was indicated by the forum's inclusion of interlocutors such as Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance (GAVI), and the Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations (CEPI), in its engagement with global governance networks on the pandemic. This included GAVI representatives participating in discussion panels at the two G20 virtual summits held in 2020, while voluntary funding contributions from G20 members to GAVI and CEPI were noted in its leaders' extraordinary summit declaration of March 2020 [G20, 2020b]. This engagement augments G20 governance of the multifaceted challenges from COVID-19.

There are growing discussions within G20 stakeholder and governance circles about the need to address perceived inefficiencies or flaws of the forum's outreach engagement. There is a wealth of human expertise and capacity, a key resource for the G20. This expertise and local-level insights should continue to provide important benefits for the G20 member governments as well as their interlocutors. The pandemic response indicates the need for transversal policymaking, but this requires more heterogeneous voices to avoid the flaws of what has been called "groupthink" by social psychologists [Janis, 1971], when people with similar professional backgrounds and life experiences converge on common assumptions due to those commonalities. This potentially leads such groups to ignore evidence outside of those shared experiences, exacerbating the negative consequences of disconnected policymaking silos by restricting the potential for more comprehensive and effective policies. This increased heterogeneity of actor insights is one of the key policymaking gains from more pluralistic, networked G20 governance.

The official G20 engagement groups attempted to influence the forum's pandemic agenda through policy briefs, joint statements [B20 et al., 2020], communiqués, and other

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[3] SDRs are an international reserve asset allocated to IMF members, also used as a unit of account [IMF, 2021].
[4] The G20 [2020b; 2021] established the DSSI in 2020; it offers temporarily to suspend debt payments for 73 eligible states to reduce financial pressures on health systems during the pandemic [World Bank, 2021].

forms of deliberation. It is useful to examine the processes and consequences of such forms of networked G20 governance in this policy context. For example, the author of the present article organized a co-authored T20 policy brief on increasing the G20's role in the global governance response to COVID-19. This involved nine authors from diverse academic and practitioner backgrounds, collaborating through linked professional ecologies, which is further indicative of how network pluralism increases the scope for transversal policy practices. The policy brief advocated a transversal G20 approach to increasing pandemic policy-preparedness and institutional resilience [Luckhurst et al., 2020]. The core proposals were included in the T20 [2020] communiqué, which was presented to the Saudi G20 presidency and shared with G20 summit delegations.

New engagement processes, combined with the May 2021 Global Health Summit and the Rome Declaration on pandemic cooperation, augmented the G20's role as a global governance hub on COVID-19 and potentially future pandemics. The preparations for this summit included civil society engagement, such as the official web-consultation sessions co-organized by the Commission of the European Union (EU) and the Italian G20 presidency on 20 April 2021. The C20 engagement group participated in this meeting, which included representatives from a number of CSOs. The official purpose was to gain insights from civil society interlocutors, which would be presented to sherpas of the delegations to the Global Health Summit. A detailed written report of the meeting proceedings would also be provided by the EU Commission and Italian G20 presidency to G20 delegations, as an input to their preparations for the Rome Declaration.[5]

There is some scepticism about these types of engagement processes, especially from scholars that doubt the policy influence or sincerity of official G20 outreach efforts [Harris Rimmer 2015; Larionova, 2012; Slaughter, 2013]. Dr. Fifa Rahman, who is a civil society representative working with the WHO's Access to COVID-19 Tools (ACT-) Accelerator, was also a civil society contributor to the April web consultation with the EU Commission and Italian G20 presidency. Dr. Rahman noted the under-representation of the Global South in this virtual meeting; while perceiving a general lack of G20 engagement with the ACT-Accelerator, which is the main global response toward supplying and scaling up COVID-19 vaccines, diagnostics, and therapeutics, and includes key civil society stakeholders.[6]

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[5] This information was shared by the meeting moderator Martin Seychell, a deputy director-general at the EU Commission, during the session. The recording of the meeting is available at:
https://webcast.ec.europa.eu/consultation-with-csos-global-health-summit-rome-declaration-principles
[6] Interview with the author, April 2021.

Civil society representatives often make such criticisms, exposing the opacity of some G20 engagement practices. The engagement forums sometimes contribute to this perception; their consultation processes, policy priorities, and actor networks are at times unclear and partially dependent on rotating G20 presidencies [Crump, Downie, 2018]. This indicates that while networked G20 governance constitutes opportunities for inclusivity, pluralism, and decentralizing authority, global governance networks also include leadership groups with more influence than other actors [Luckhurst, 2019b, p. 535]. It should be noted, such authority relations are fluid and contestable, through network-relational processes and practices. They are also context-dependent, with the COVID-19 pandemic increasing the potential for repoliticization[7] of the cognitive authority and background knowledge that underpin socially constructed hierarchies due to the heightened sense of uncertainty [Broome, Seabrooke, 2015; Widmaier, Blyth, Seabrooke, 2007].[8]

The augmentation of pluralistic networked G20 governance depends, in part, on further contestation and decentralizing global governance authority [Luckhurst 2016, 2017, 2019a]. Networked G20 governance constitutes new pluralistic social-relational processes and practices of contestation. Networked G20 pluralism significantly augments the transversal effectiveness of the forum in the global COVID-19 pandemic response.

G20 Role in Tackling Transversal Pandemic Challenges

The G20 has a wealth of experience in transversal global governance due to its increasingly complex policy agenda over the past decade. One of the key challenges for the rotating G20 presidencies, plus the "troika" coordination between the previous, current, and incoming presidency, is to sustain and build on this agenda.

The transversal G20 agenda and its influence as a global governance hub, partly due to its authoritativeness as its members' "premier forum" for international economic cooperation [G20, 2009], constitutes sufficient capacity to coordinate global efforts on the complex policy challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic. The G20 response to the pandemic, however, has received some poor reviews [Demekas, 2021; Independent Panel for Pandemic Preparedness and Response, 2021, p. 27; Subacchi, 2020]. Several G20 members reacted too slowly or with

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[7] "Repoliticization" indicates moments of increasing political contestation on policy or political issues [de Goede, 2004; Edkins, 1999].

[8] "Cognitive authority" refers to actors' socially constructed authoritativeness due to their professional standing, perceived access to information, know-how, experience, and other status markers.

insufficiently robust policies. Some failed to prepare for the pandemic by failing to implement the public health advice from the WHO's [2016] International Health Regulations (IHR) of 2005 and other important guidelines [WHO, 2014].

COVID-19 had begun to spread globally by February 2020 [WHO, 2020a]. Many governments failed to take substantive action until late March 2020, too late to halt the spread of the pandemic. The WHO [2020b] declared the novel coronavirus a public health emergency of international concern (PHEIC) on 30 January 2020; it was subsequently designated a pandemic on 11 March 2020 [WHO, 2020c]. Some argue that the organization acted too slowly, despite these steps [Larionova, Kirton 2020, p. 9], though a faster announcement of the pandemic might not have influenced political decision-making in many states. It should be noted that WHO director-general Dr. Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus repeatedly urged governments to act faster and more forcefully to contain the virus throughout February and March 2020, while imploring them to boost virus testing, tracing, isolation, and treatment capacities [Reuters, 2020; WHO, 2020d].

Several G20 governments, including the UK and U.S., failed to act swiftly on such measures even after the pandemic declaration. The UK government, for example, allowed major sporting events with large crowds to go ahead despite the pandemic in mid-March 2020; it delayed introducing a national lockdown, contrary to pleas from many UK experts, despite growing evidence from Italy of the terrible consequences of failing to prevent the spread of the virus. The UK and Japanese governments, among others, also implemented campaigns to promote domestic leisure and tourism in mid-2020, with some evidence that such campaigns exacerbated subsequent rises in COVID-19 cases [Phillips, 2020].

It was not only with hindsight that some G20 governments failed to take sufficient measures against COVID-19, as implied by those that argue the pandemic was unprecedented or unforeseeable. The WHO and its director-general issued multiple warnings that the window of opportunity to contain the virus was closing. Several governments disregarded them and also ignored the foresight contained in the WHO's IHR guidelines on pandemic preparedness measures, indicated by an earlier WHO [2015] review of members' performance on the IHR, which emphasized the inadequacy of implementation in some states. The WHO [2014] also published guidelines on preventing respiratory-virus epidemics and pandemics, stressing the need to improve virus testing and tracing capacities, maintain sufficient supplies of personal protective equipment for medical staff, and implement clear policy strategies for virus containment. Many states failed to comply with these recommendations.

Policymakers and commentators in G20 states sometimes posed a false dichotomy between prioritizing the economy *or* public health during the COVID-19 pandemic. The evidence indicates an effective public health strategy has important economic benefits, hence the two should not be counterposed [Independent Panel for Pandemic Preparedness and Response 2021, p. 24]. A transversal, multisectoral approach to policy preparedness and institutional resilience should negate this false dichotomization of prioritizing one or the other. Effective preparations for future pandemics and improved global policy coordination on the present emergency should address both aspects, as well as other key issues.

Some Asian G20 members seemed better prepared than their African, European, and North and South American counterparts to manage the COVID-19 pandemic, suffering less severe virus outbreaks. There was no room for complacency, though, as the slow roll-out of vaccinations in Japan exacerbated the fourth and fifth pandemic waves in spring and summer of 2021. The G20 could be a source for sharing useful policy experience, for example, initially the Japanese vaccination programme depended on medical staff, when they could have adopted the faster UK approach of deploying a large number of volunteers to help with vaccinations. Some "populist" G20 governments, including in Brazil, the UK, and U.S., generally performed badly in 2020 by ignoring or undermining scientific advice or refusing to implement strategies based on it, such as the aforementioned WHO guidelines. There is growing evidence of these failings in journalistic and academic accounts (see C. Kahl and T. Wright [2021] and J. C. Pevehouse [2020]). They were slow to implement public health measures such as social distancing and face coverings, lockdowns, and prohibiting mass gatherings for sporting and other events.

Important lessons should be learned from the first year of the COVID-19 pandemic, with further research on the divergence in G20-member responses and performance in managing the complex and transversal policy issues. In the present article, how networked G20 governance influenced the global governance response to the pandemic, including its transversal policy challenges, is examined, as is how the pandemic influences networked G20 governance. The growing pluralism of this hub of global governance networks was important for its role in the pandemic, embedding the transversal G20 policy agenda on COVID-19 and its consequences. This echoed core public policymaking practices since the 2008–09 global financial crisis (GFC), in which complex and multifaceted approaches were prioritized, especially on sustainable development and the UN's 2030 agenda for the SDGs.

The G20 agenda on the COVID-19 pandemic constituted a transversal approach to the policy challenges, evidenced by the Riyadh summit leaders' declaration [G20, 2020b]. The

declaration substantially focused on the pandemic, but transversally across the G20 policy agenda. It discussed the significance of the pandemic for employment, economic growth, the financial sector, debt in low-income countries, trade and investment, transportation, the digital economy, anti-corruption, sustainable development, inclusive economic growth, women's empowerment, education, tourism, migration and refugees, and for the environmental agenda. The latter indicates the strategic importance of a transversal global strategy on the COVID-19 pandemic. The G20 could focus more on the environment and deforestation to increase long-term resilience against further global pandemics. Civil society experts [Rockström, Edenhofer, 2020; Vittor et al., 2020] and international organizations [OECD, 2020; WHO and Convention on Biological Diversity Secretariat, 2020] note the danger of deforestation contributing to the spread of zoonotic diseases; indeed, it has been hypothesized that deforestation could have contributed to bringing humans into contact with the SARS-CoV-2 virus that causes COVID-19.

The G20's response to the pandemic often focused on economic aspects, including the aforementioned DSSI; G20 members' individual fiscal stimulus measures amount to over $5 trillion [G20, 2020b]. Other innovations included the Saudi G20 presidency's convening of an extraordinary virtual summit in March 2020 as a crisis response measure and the holding of the Global Health Summit on pandemic issues in May 2021, jointly hosted by the Italian G20 presidency and the EU Commission.

The global governance lessons from COVID-19 could be crucial for "building back better" through coordination across diverse policy areas. This should include cooperation on important and shared public health challenges, such as the need to accelerate vaccination efforts and to coordinate on the aforementioned diverse policy issues. This echoes the similarly heterogeneous and transversal challenges of the SDGs, indicating how pluralistic and networked G20 governance and engagement is suited to the growing transversality of contemporary global governance.

The transversal approach to global governance is intended to avoid the flaws of disjointed policymaking silos in which interconnectivities between policymaking challenges might be overlooked, undermining the potential for better policy outcomes. Networked G20 governance improves the prospects to achieve such a strategy through pluralistic engagement on its extensive and transversal policy agenda.

Pandemic Crisis Effect on the G20 and Global Governance

Financial crises sometimes narrow the focus of multilateral cooperation, including within the G20 [Cooper, 2010; Subacchi, Pickford, 2011, p. 3]. The broad G20 agenda persisted during the pandemic crisis of 2020, however, despite the sense of emergency. The G20's policy agenda was transversally influenced by it, becoming substantially filtered through a COVID-19 lens. The pandemic thus became mainstreamed across the G20's policy agenda, rather than being siloed as an isolated policy focus [Luckhurst et al., 2020; Thomas et al., 2020].

The increased G20 role in global public health governance as a consequence of this pandemic augmented the forum's importance as a hub of transversal public policymaking due to the diversity of interconnected policy challenges [Luckhurst et al., 2020]. This could continue to influence the G20's agenda over the coming years. A COVID-19 crisis effect has influenced conventional understandings and significantly raised public and policymakers' awareness of global governance challenges from pandemics and public health threats. The joint G20-EU Commission Global Health Summit of May 2021, which resulted in the Rome Declaration, indicates that the G20 has extended its hub role in global governance to include key aspects of global public health. This is partly evident from the Rome Declaration statement that the COVAX Vaccine Manufacturing Working Group, with support from the COVAX Manufacturing Task Force, led by the WHO, CEPI, GAVI, and the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF), "should report on their progress to the G20 in time for the Leaders' Summit in October" [G20 and EU Commission 2021, pp. 6–7].

The pandemic augmented the earlier, pluralistic expansion of the G20's agenda and engagement, while reinforcing the co-constitutive processes of network pluralism and transversal policymaking. G20 engagement on COVID-19 contributed to its increasingly transversal policy agenda, since it involves complex and interconnected policy issues [Luckhurst et al., 2020], while integrating more heterogeneous actor networks in G20 deliberations. The pandemic crisis effect also engendered forms of *repoliticization*, in the sense of heightened political contestation on particular policy issues. This occurred during the GFC, for example, as the inconsistency of new evidence from the crisis with the "efficient markets" hypothesis undermined confidence in the latter among public policy networks [Luckhurst, 2017, pp. 83–116]. Arguments from behavioural economists such as G. Akerlof and R. Shiller [2009] became more influential in policy circles, as evidence from the GFC reinforced their claims that psychological factors aside from rational calculation significantly influenced financial markets and other aspects of human behaviour. This had echoes of a "Kuhnian" paradigm shift [Kuhn, 1962], as erstwhile background knowledge assumptions were foregrounded, increasingly questioned and their influence declined—such that, for example,

macroprudential financial regulation rapidly superseded the microprudential approach (see A. Baker [2013] and Luckhurst [2017]). This opened space for alternative conceptualizations to gain prominence in public policy discourse, plus signifiers such as "sustainability," "inclusivity," and "resilience." The COVID-19 crisis effect further reinforces this evidence of the post-GFC and pandemic-induced shift in cognitive authority markers, at least among influential global governance networks.

The "global public goods" conceptualization of the COVID-19 pandemic response was prominent among global and G20 governance networks during 2020–21 [Chakrabarti, 2020; G20, 2020b; Love, 2020; Seavey, 2021; South Centre, 2020; Thomas et al., 2020; UN, 2020]. This emphasizes collective or even universal gains instead of particularistic political competition for resources (see I. Kaul, I. Grunberg and M. A. Stern [1999]), thus constituting a depoliticizing logic. It is congruent with important rhetorical and practical shifts in post-GFC global governance, such as the emphasis on macroprudential financial regulation, sustainable development, and especially during the pandemic, on resilience. This is further indicative of the cognitive-authority shift within G20 governance networks away from the pre-GFC prevalence of individual rational choice-based policy analysis to focusing, instead, on holistic and collective goods [Luckhurst, 2017], as well as emphasizing the importance of *resilience* in a world of uncertainty [Luckhurst et al., 2020] (see also N. Taleb [2007])—a further cognitive shift away from the pre-GFC emphasis on risk calculation [Nelson, Katzenstein, 2014], reviving earlier arguments from J. M. Keynes [1948 (1921)] and F. Knight [1921].

Poststructuralist scholars such as J. Edkins [1999, pp. 125–43] and M. de Goede [2004] argue that repoliticization of economic policymaking occurs as the contingency of political decisions becomes evident. Contingency and uncertainty are pushed to the fore in public and policy discourse during moments of crisis, such as the GFC or the COVID-19 pandemic, through contextual relational processes that shift cognitive authority. Background assumptions, including conventional policy beliefs, become more contestable and contested in this context. The influential international relations scholar R. Keohane similarly argues, from a rationalist perspective, "under conditions of uncertainty in the real world, the chain of 'inheritability' will be broken, and actors' preferences about future outcomes will not dictate their choices of alternatives in the present" [2002, p. 265].

The Trump administration's accusations against the WHO over its handling of the pandemic, which it claimed justified the threat to withdraw from the organization [Rauhala, Demirjian, Olorunnipa, 2020], was one indication of how repoliticization constitutes an opening for potentially radical policy shifts. The Biden administration subsequently reversed

this withdrawal policy, recommitting to U.S. membership of the WHO. The politicization of the pandemic due to short-term domestic political goals, especially by the Trump administration but also by others, undermined strategic aspects of global pandemic cooperation [Kickbusch, 2020; Kreps, Kriner, 2020]. The failure of many G20 members to comply with core tenets of the WHO's [2016] IHR and other guidelines during and prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, noted above, implicitly repoliticized global public health and pandemic governance. This was because it undermined the policy consensus on global pandemic governance practices.

The crisis effect could shift cognitive authority in ways that subsequently embed new forms of taken-for-granted or background knowledge, including associated authority markers. This could have significant consequences for WHO and G20 authority on global pandemic governance if repoliticization leads to the embedding of forms of background knowledge that increase their scope to reshape policy practices [Adler, 2019; Hopf, 2010]. This indicates another important dimension of the transversal G20 role in the global response to the pandemic, that is, the potential to *depoliticize* new policymaking approaches [Fawcett et al., 2017]. Practices of repoliticization and depoliticization thus coexist in this context.

The pandemic crisis augmented the sense of political contingency and uncertainty, thus constituting a repoliticization of aspects of global governance and public policymaking, by increasing the scope for shifts in many policy fields and organizational aspects of global governance and other policymaking contexts. This involved relational processes of networked G20 governance and other public policymaking contexts, then, including state, regional, and municipal contexts in addition to other global governance settings. The politicization of the pandemic undermined the policy response in several countries; for example, face coverings and warnings about mixing in crowds were sometimes perceived as political totems rather than public health measures.

The repoliticization of global pandemic governance in 2020, especially the role of the WHO, was influenced by heightened public awareness of the issue and the Trump administration's criticisms of the WHO's pandemic response [Kreps, Kriner 2020; Pevehouse, 2020, p. E206]. This fits the assertion from some scholars that closer scrutiny of international organizations increases the scope for contestation of their effects and functions [Zürn, Binder, Ecker-Ehrhardt, 2012, p. 71]. The new Biden administration has been more supportive than former U.S. president Donald Trump of multilateral and, importantly, G20 and WHO cooperation on the pandemic and transversally linked issues. This contributed to reinvigorating multilateral pandemic cooperation in early 2021, in combination with efforts to depoliticize

pandemic governance by emphasizing scientific and evidence-based dimensions of public policies.

Depoliticization sometimes has negative consequences, for example, when it undermines challenges to flawed policies; it also could be problematical if it were to undermine democratic accountability and public feedback mechanisms, which could reduce public trust in global governance fora and institutions and thus increase support for political populism [Zürn, 2021]. There are, nevertheless, some important benefits in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, especially from publicizing evidence-based public health advice and seeking to marginalize conspiracy theories and other misconceptions detrimental to public health. The GFC already indicated how the G20 could help its members to depoliticize potentially controversial domestic policy decisions [Luckhurst, 2016, p. 143], an aspect of multilateralism noted by R. Putnam [1988, pp. 428–9] in his influential article on diplomacy and domestic politics. Examples include the Obama administration's deflection of domestic political pressure to act against perceived Chinese currency manipulation by stressing the preference to act through the G20 [Kennedy, 2010; U.S. Department of the Treasury, 2010]. The Chinese government, under Hu Jintao, arguably utilized G20 agreements to pressure for controversial domestic reforms such as currency revaluation and shifting to a consumption-led growth strategy [He, 2014, pp. 12–3]. UK prime minister Gordon Brown was accused of using the London G20 summit fiscal-stimulus agreement to deflect criticism of his domestic fiscal-stimulus measures [Eaglesham, Barker, 2009; Helm, Stewart, 2009].

The G20's authoritativeness was crucial for this capacity to depoliticize domestic policymaking. The forum's endorsement effect conferred a perception of legitimacy on those policies [Eccleston, Kellow, Carroll, 2015, p. 300], while its collective action and peer-pressure encouraged members to comply [Angeloni, Pisani-Ferry, 2012, pp. 33, 35]. The same aspects of G20 authority could become more significant for the contemporary global pandemic response, including the Rome Declaration, since the May 2021 Global Health Summit and the G20's endorsement of the COVAX facility.

The G20's role in the pandemic has remained less politicized than that of the WHO in public discourse, at least as of the time of writing. Networked G20 pluralism consequently provides a useful context for depoliticizing the global governance response to the pandemic, through a technical and arguably technocratic approach. This is indicated by the tendency of its T20 interlocutors, especially, to emphasize "evidence-based" or "research-based" policies [Jayaraman, Rocholl, 2017; T20, 2020]—a useful rhetorical technique for undermining populist contestation that is evidentially flawed. Some public health researchers, though, warn

depoliticizing language could undermine democratic accountability [Barnes, Parkhurst, 2014; Parkhurst, 2017], as noted above. The expansion of networked G20 governance through increasingly pluralistic G20 inclusivity might offset such concerns, in keeping with the global governance trend for increasing civil society engagement since the end of the 1990s.

The G20's network pluralism and transversal policy practices augmented and further embedded this global governance shift. It was normatively well-suited to the context of global governance because *global* governance, by definition, holistically emphasizes the broad, strategic dimension of policymaking. This is not to argue that G20 network pluralism and transversal policy practices have resolved all global governance challenges. The Global South is particularly vulnerable to the challenges from the COVID-19 pandemic [Knight, Reddy, 2020; Luckhurst et al., 2020]; civil society advocates and UN secretary-general António Guterres [UN, 2021] have urged more action to help with those challenges through the WHO's [2021] COVAX facility for expanding access to vaccines as part of its ACT-Accelerator programme and other means. There have been criticisms of the relative exclusion of Global South actors from G20 and multilateral deliberations on the pandemic response [Oldekop et al., 2020], also evidenced by the present author's discussions and interviews, including the one noted earlier.

The surge of COVID-19 cases in India in the early months of 2021 increased the political pressure to suspend vaccine patents, eventually leading the U.S. Biden administration to endorse this policy measure [Kaplan, Stolberg, Robbins, 2021]. This is a further example of the politico-normative crisis effect from the pandemic, shifting long-held U.S. political reluctance to accept relaxation of commercial patent rights. The political shift from 2020 to 2021, especially the change in U.S. administration, arguably indicates how COVID-19 undermined the politics of populism and increased the salience of multilateralism and global governance [Kickbusch, 2020]. Some EU leaders argue suspending intellectual property rights would not solve the problem of vaccine access for low- and middle-income states; although the Rome Declaration indicated the G20's commitment to funding for COVAX, it remains divided on a patent waiver [Guarascio, 2021].

Global South actors themselves, such as the Indian and South African governments, the African Union, and healthcare CSOs, with backing from WHO director-general Dr. Tedros, assert that vaccine patents inhibit the expansion of global production capacities [Nagaraj, Moloney, Harrisberg, 2021; Pietromarchi, 2021; Stiglitz, Wallach, 2021]. The outcome of this debate would indicate the authoritativeness of Global South networks on the global pandemic response, including those engaged with the G20.

The performance of several Asian states in containing the pandemic more effectively than other regions does not obscure concerns about civil rights. In Indonesia, South Korea, Malaysia, and elsewhere, concerns have been raised about the intrusiveness of telephone contact-tracing applications. Japanese constraints on foreign residents' travel and re-entry during the COVID-19 pandemic diverged from international norms on the equal treatment of citizens and foreign residents in the imposition of travel restrictions. This raised important concerns about whether they contravene international human rights law, including when it is legitimate to discriminate between citizens' and foreign residents' family and home rights. The Australian government was also criticized by some politicians and citizens because of its decision to prevent its nationals from returning to Australia from India in May 2021, using biosecurity laws some argue violate internationally and domestically recognized civil rights [Martin, 2021; Murphy, Martin 2021; Pillai, 2021].

The G20 could collectively re-examine the legal implications of civil and human rights protections in this context. It is particularly important to assess whether policies justified as public health measures during the pandemic contradict legally "inalienable" rights, such as those contained in the UN's *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* [1948] and *International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights* [1976]. The G20 could request the UN and relevant international and domestic actors contribute to constructive dialogue on these rights, including how they might be better protected during future pandemics. This aspect of the pandemic crisis effect should not be ignored, especially when cross-border movement of people could substantially contribute to the economic recovery from the pandemic. There are also important transversal policy implications; for example, if citizens' and foreign residents' security, families, and livelihoods could be harmed by arbitrary or illegal travel restrictions, this might influence their willingness to accept employment in other countries. It might further damage the travel and leisure industries if people avoid international travel due to fears of potential future measures.

Conclusion

The practice-relational focus of this study indicates how networked G20 governance of the COVID-19 pandemic and its transversal crisis effect increased the potential to expand the forum's broad agenda, while crucially influencing its global governance role. This new role as an albeit-flawed hub of the global pandemic response augmented the co-constitutive processes of networked G20 pluralism and its transversal policy practices, thus increasing pre-pandemic global governance trends since the GFC.

Co-constitutive processes of G20 network pluralism and transversal policy practices increased the forum's strategic and relational governance capacities to manage the pandemic, despite flaws such as only partial inclusion of its Global South and civil society interlocutors. The forum was significant for multilateral cooperation, in support of the UN and WHO agenda, with G20 policy engagement on useful measures such as the DSSI. Challenges to multilateral cooperation in 2020, especially the lack of engagement from the Trump administration, became more manageable due to greater U.S. engagement through the G20 and other contexts in 2021. The G20's authoritativeness as a hub of global governance could bring further improvements in global governance coordination on the pandemic, depending on potential consequences from networked G20 pluralism and transversal policy practices, as well as the effects of repoliticization and depoliticization due to the pandemic crisis effect.

Networked G20 governance is reinforced by the shift in U.S. engagement, though political agency from heterogeneous actors shaped the G20 and global-governance agenda on the COVID-19 pandemic. Pluralistic and transversal aspects of networked G20 governance sustained its broader agenda, despite the substantial COVID-19 lens, as the G20 mainstreamed its pandemic agenda rather than implement a disjointed or siloed policy response. This was congruent with the increasingly holistic and transversal practices of global governance in the post-GFC period, indicated by macroprudential financial regulation and the SDGs.

The pandemic crisis effect could have lasting consequences for the G20 and global governance. The growing rhetorical emphasis on a global public goods approach to pandemic governance, particularly among G20 and global governance networks, at least contests the flaws and limitations of country-first approaches to challenges that require multilateral solutions, including issues such as vaccine distribution. It also augments the G20's broader transversal policy agenda, which is congruent with the holistic logic of global public goods. This crisis effect of emphasizing transversal global governance practices could increasingly extend to additional policy areas, such as international legal and normative practices on travel and civil and human rights, as indicated by the Rome Declaration statement on the IHR and the need for "new public health guidance in consultation with relevant health organisations on international travel by air or sea" [G20 and EU Commission 2021, p. 9].

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