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Institute for Environment
and Human Security

GGA and the Global Commons

5th GGA workshop, Session 3:

Changing mindsets towards transformational adaptation

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Take home messages

1. Adaptation goes beyond local or state level adaptation
“We need to shift our mindset, and we need to think bigger.”
(Khadeeja Naseem, opening address of the workshop)
2. GGA could play a role in governing the relationship between adaptation and the Global Commons.
3. Global treaties and agreements on global commons seen as part of adaptation action.



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Transboundary considerations

- Global interconnectedness -> individual States susceptible to policies and actions adopted by others
- Negative impacts often cascade via supply chains or the depletion of common resources
- Also benefits can cascade and interconnectivity can be a mean for designing better solutions
- Examples: <https://interconnectedrisks.org/>



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Global Commons

- those parts of the planet that fall outside national jurisdictions and to which all nations have access.
- International law identifies four global commons:
 - the High Seas,
 - the Atmosphere,
 - the Antarctica and
 - the Outer Space.



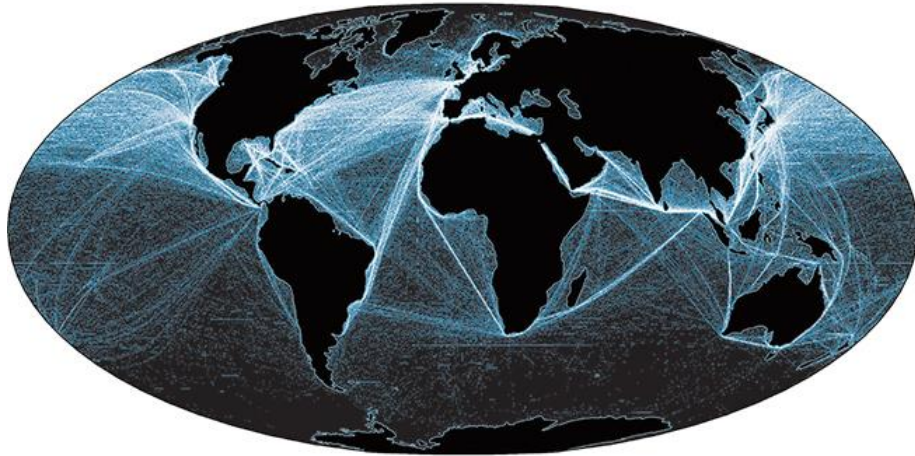
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Global Commons High Seas

Global Shipping Routes Cross Critical Ocean Areas Beyond National Jurisdiction

Interconnected economies mean the high seas are increasingly busy spaces



Note: The lines represent shipping paths across the globe. The most heavily trafficked paths show up most brightly on the map.

Source: B. Halpern et al., Cumulative Human Impacts: Raw Stressor Data (2008 and 2013), Knowledge Network for Biocomplexity, <https://doi.org/10.5063/F1S180FS>

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Issue:

- Only 39% of the ocean falls under the national jurisdiction
- Only 1% of the high seas has been under any protection

Implication:

- Fish stocks: extraordinary declines in abundance of many open ocean species
- Shipping: pollution, disturbance of marine habitats



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Global Commons High Seas



Photo: Dona Edite



Photo: Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Singapore

Adaptation context:

- overexploitation of resources, loss of genetic diversity, biodiversity → loss of adaptation options now and in the future

2023 : High Seas Treaty

- first legal framework for establishing vast marine protected areas (MPAs)
- major step toward the target to protect at least 30% of ocean areas by 2030 (CBD's 30 by 30 target)
- share of genetic resources



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Global Commons: Outer Space

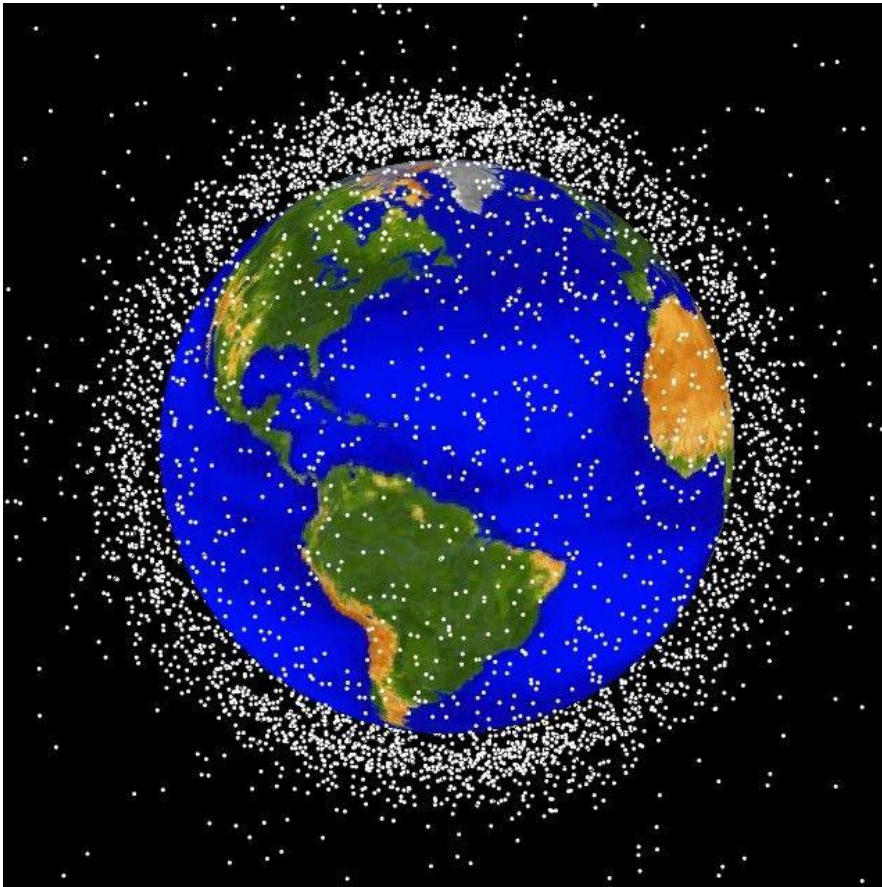


Image credit: NASA, orbital debris
https://www.nasa.gov/mission_pages/station/news/orbital_debris.html

Issue:

- companies and states do not account for the cost their satellites impose on other stakeholder

Implication:

- if remains unregulated, the number of collisions and space junk will increase
- constraining future use of space



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Global Commons: Outer Space

Adaptation context:

- any space-based solution such as **early warning and monitoring is at risk.**
- decisions of individual states and companies **constrain the adaptation options of others now and in the future.**

Solution context:

- **Regulation is still lacking**
- Space Safety Coalition (SSC) proposed voluntary guidelines designed to keep space junk development at bay.



Artist's illustration of a debris-spawning event in Earth orbit that can cause the Kessler Syndrome. (Image credit: ESA)
<https://www.space.com/kessler-syndrome-space-debris>



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Global Commons

- **Global Common definition is currently widening from physical space toward the virtual space** to include also science, data, information or the cyber space
- **Adaptation context: Open science and open data movements to support adaptation**
- e.g. ECA: Economics of Climate Adaptation - open access tool, advocates for open data, encourages standards to be developed inclusively and accompanied by capacity building

https://i.unu.edu/media/ehs.unu.edu/attachment/23351/ECA_infographic_LOGO.png



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Summary

GGA can emphasize (also) the global aspects of adaptation by

1. Considering transboundary issues (cascading, systemic perspectives) in finding adaptation solutions and
2. Linking global adaptation efforts (also) to the governance of the Global Commons