

Cambridge University Press
978-0-521-75667-9 - Visions of World Community
Jens Bartelson
Frontmatter
[More information](#)



Visions of World Community

Throughout the history of Western political thought, the creation of a world community has been seen as a way of overcoming discord between political communities without imposing sovereign authority from above. Jens Bartelson argues that a paradox lies at the centre of discussions of world community. The very same division of mankind into distinct peoples living in different places that makes the idea of a world community morally compelling has also been the main obstacle to its successful realization. His book offers a philosophical and historical analysis of the idea of world community by exploring the relationship between theories of world community and changing cosmological beliefs from the late Middle Ages to the present.

JENS BARTELSON is Professor of Political Science in the Department of Political Science at Lund University. He is the author of *The Critique of the State* (Cambridge, 2001) and *A Genealogy of Sovereignty* (Cambridge, 1995).

Cambridge University Press
978-0-521-75667-9 - Visions of World Community
Jens Bartelson
Frontmatter
[More information](#)



Visions of World Community

JENS BARTELSON



CAMBRIDGE
UNIVERSITY PRESS

Cambridge University Press
978-0-521-75667-9 - Visions of World Community
Jens Bartelson
Frontmatter
[More information](#)

CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS

Cambridge, New York, Melbourne, Madrid, Cape Town, Singapore,
São Paulo, Delhi

Cambridge University Press
The Edinburgh Building, Cambridge CB2 8RU, UK

Published in the United States of America by Cambridge University Press, New York

www.cambridge.org

Information on this title: www.cambridge.org/9780521756679

© Jens Bartelson 2009

This publication is in copyright. Subject to statutory exception
and to the provisions of relevant collective licensing agreements,
no reproduction of any part may take place without
the written permission of Cambridge University Press.

First published 2009

Printed in the United Kingdom at the University Press, Cambridge

A catalogue record for this publication is available from the British Library

ISBN 978-0-521-76009-6 hardback

ISBN 978-0-521-75667-9 paperback

Cambridge University Press has no responsibility for the persistence or
accuracy of URLs for external or third-party internet websites referred to
in this publication, and does not guarantee that any content on such
websites is, or will remain, accurate or appropriate.

Cambridge University Press
978-0-521-75667-9 - Visions of World Community
Jens Bartelson
Frontmatter
[More information](#)

To Nicholas Greenwood Onuf

Of exactitude in science

In that Empire, the craft of Cartography attained such Perfection that the Map of a Single Province covered the space of an entire City, and the Map of the Empire itself an entire Province. In the course of Time, these extensive maps were found somehow wanting, and so the College of Cartographers evolved a Map of the Empire that was of the same Scale as the Empire and that coincided with it point for point. Less attentive to the Study of Cartography, succeeding Generations came to judge a map of such Magnitude cumbersome, and, not without Irreverence, they abandoned it to the Rigours of sun and Rain. In the western Deserts, tattered Fragments of the Map are still to be found, Sheltering an occasional Beast or beggar; in the whole Nation, no other relic is left of the Discipline of Geography.

From J. A. Suarez, 'Miranda Travels of Praiseworthy Men' (1658), in Jorge Luis Borges and Adolfo Bioy Casares, *Los Anales de Buenos Aires*, March 1946. Translated and reprinted in *A Universal History of Infamy* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1975), p. 131.

Contents

<i>Preface</i>	<i>page ix</i>
1 A conceptual history of world community	1
2 Paradoxes of world community	19
3 In the beginning was the world	46
4 Nationalizing community	86
5 Reinventing mankind	115
6 Globalizing community	141
7 Community unbound?	171
<i>Bibliography</i>	183
<i>Index</i>	211

Preface

One of the greatest challenges faced today by the social sciences is how to understand the world as essentially one single community. But despite all recent efforts in this direction, why has this proved so hard to achieve? This book responds to this question by offering a meditation on the many difficulties involved in articulating a coherent conception of a world community, trying to explain how these problems have emerged and why they seem so unsurmountable. By situating different historical conceptions of world community in the context of changing cosmological beliefs, I hope to show that the idea of world community once constituted the default setting of political thought and action, and thus not only antedated but also effectively conditioned the emergence of our modern and bounded forms of community. By making the latter look like a historical parenthesis, I hope to restore some sense of familiarity to a time when these modern sources of human belonging and fulfilment have been lost.

So, by its very nature, this book is based on intuition rather than on conviction. As such, it has grown out of random encounters with many sources which have traditionally attracted little or no interest from students of international political thought. Yet the very same reason why these sources have frequently been overlooked is precisely what makes them crucial to my present endeavour: they do not assume that communities have to be bounded or that authority has to be centralized for political order to be possible and viable. Instead, they point to those characteristics that draw human beings together in the hope of making both these requirements forever redundant. They contain visions, and as such they reflect those precious moments in the history of political thought when the contours of another world were revealed to those struggling to find a higher meaning in the often messy political realities of their day.

Many people have provided invaluable inspiration and support in the process of writing this book. As always, conversations with my

old friend Nick Aronowitsch provided much of the initial inspiration. In a similar vein, discussions with Richard Little, Nick Onuf and Rob Walker have kept me on track over the years. Perhaps more unwittingly, Álvaro Dias Mendes provided me with a sanctuary in the Algarve for many summers, the tranquillity of which made the master plan for this book come easily after an ocean swim. I am also grateful to Chris Hill and Duncan Bell at Cambridge University for giving me the opportunity to discuss my early ideas about community in a very stimulating environment. Other colleagues put in lots of hard work. Olaf Corry, Martin Hall, Peter Haldén, Fritz Kratochwil, Henrik Larsen, Ulf Mörkenstam, Noel Parker, Casper Sylvest, Vibeke Schou Tjalve, Anders Wivel and Ole Waever all kindly commented upon individual chapters with great care, and eventually Mikkel Vedby Rasmussen and Anders Berg-Sørensen took upon themselves to read the entire manuscript and provided constructive suggestions for revision. Once submitted, it goes without saying that credits for the happy fate of the manuscript should go to John Haslam at Cambridge University Press. Finally, I am immensely grateful to Paulo Esteves, Mônica Herz, Nizar Messari, Eduardo Neves, and João Pontes Nogueira for inviting me to Pontifícia Universidade Católica do Rio de Janeiro and to Pontifícia Universidade Católica de Minas Gerais to present my work to receptive and challenging audiences.

J. B.
Lund, November 2008