

Place, performance and power in international political economy

Thursday 4 June 2026 10:45 (1h 30m)

How is international political economy performed in different places? This panel brings together a new agenda around performance in political economy with the wide range of literatures on place in international relations and IPE. The everyday international has created a wealth of insights into the mundane and quotidian acts that constitute international relations. Yet invocations and enactment of the international continue to surprise in their appearance and consequence. In the summer of 2025, George Cross flags sprouted overnight from lampposts like C20th talismans warding off a small boat invasion. The same year saw water protestors fighting global capital not as workers, but dressed as shitty emoticons and with panty liners stuck to their faces.

Seaside towns have found themselves battered by the changing international relations. House prices in coastal areas shot up as Airbnb and staycations dove international investor interest leaving the homes of their parents beyond the reach of many locals. Low wage and precarious work that characterised old coastal industries, like fishing and marine sectors, are replaced by new low wage (call centres) and precarious (hospitality) sectors that carry the same status. Yet at the same time coastal places offer different opportunities for agency in international relations. Citizen scientists gather microbial data on water quality to hold utility companies to account, families renew expressions of kinship in a splash and a dip, volunteers crew lifeboats to search for and rescue migrants on boats. People change when they visit the seaside, taking on different identities and attitudes to each other and themselves, as they stretch out near naked on a beach towel. Promenades, sea defences and maritime and military architecture structure the way people behave by the sea: they even dress differently at these interstitial locations that once so clearly defined nation's border.

Brighton is a well connected seaside town that lends itself to a discussion of the practice of international relations in an internationalised political economy. The panel brings together authors of a new Performance and Political Economy Framework with experts on microbial health, local infrastructure, seaside identities and the ways that value is performed differently by different intellectual places. Together the panel examines different ways of exploring the ways that the material, cultural, scientific and social dynamics of place feed into our understanding of international political economy.

Track Classification: International Political Economy Working Group