

Science and the (Re)Making of World Order: From Standards of Civilization to Planetary Governance

Wednesday 3 June 2026 15:00 (1h 30m)

International Relations (IR) has traditionally conceived science as primarily an instrument of state power, perceiving areas such as science diplomacy and science governance as primarily tools for the pursuit of state interests. This roundtable questions that narrow understanding of the role of science in IR and proposes an expansion of the way science can be thought of and researched within the discipline. Science is here understood as a primary site of social struggle where different conceptions of human beings' relations with each other and the rest of nature are advanced, contested and reshaped, and consequently where world orders are made and remade. Bringing together scholars working on the historical role of science diplomacy in defining 'standards of civilization', the political ecology of ecocide, and the contentious knowledge politics of geo-engineering, we explore science as a constitutive force of global politics. We discuss how scientific practices and technoscientific communities have historically shaped the hierarchies and institutions of international society; how science expresses the division lines between particularistic and planetary orientations in global international society; and how contemporary techno-scientific fixes seek to reshape collective understandings of possible global futures? Moving beyond a conception of science as a tool, this roundtable investigates it as a battleground where the very terms of planetary order and future civilization are being contested and defined.

Track Classification: International Studies and Emerging Technologies Working Group