
 Fractured Epistemic Orders: Politics of Knowledge and Expertise in Global Governance

Convenors: Elifnaz Yalcindag Geneva Graduate Institute elifnaz.yalcindag@graduateinstitute.ch
 Rasmus Salén Geneva Graduate Institute rasmus.salen@graduateinstitute.ch

In a world marked by deep geopolitical fractures, competing authorities, and escalating global crises, the politics of expertise has become central to struggles for both survival and solidarity. This workshop examines how scientific, technical, and professional knowledge is produced, mobilised, and contested within global governance. Bringing International Social Sciences into conversation with Science and Technology Studies (STS) (e.g. Knorr-Cetina 1983; Callon 1986; Shapin and Schaffer 1985; Gieryn 1999; Eyal 2019; Latour 1987; Jasanoff 2004; Latour and Woolgar 2013; Bueger, 2018; Leander, 2024; Littoz-Monnet, 2024), it explores how actors construct and negotiate epistemic authority in spaces such as global health (Ødemark & Engebretsen 2022;), climate politics (Beck & Mahoney 2018; Howarth et al. 2022), food governance (Uribe 2024), humanitarian governance (Piquard 2022), trade (Bonneuil and Lebidow 2012), and emerging technologies (Selin 2008).

Rather than treating the ‘expert’ character of knowledge as an attribute of specific forms of knowledge, we focus on the political work involved in defining what counts as valid and useful expertise and whose knowledge is recognised. Fractured global landscapes reveal profound inequalities in epistemic representation — between North and South (Chakrabarty, 2007), state and non-state actors, public institutions and private philanthropies, and across disciplines (Gieryn 1983; Fox and Sneddon 2019; López-Rivera 2022). At the same time, new solidarities emerge as actors collaborate across borders, institutions, and epistemic communities (Haas 1992; Cross 2013) to address shared challenges.

We welcome submissions addressing, though not limited to, the following questions:

- How do fractured global political and institutional landscapes reshape who counts as an expert, and whose knowledge is marginalised?
- In moments of crisis, how do actors mobilise scientific or technical expertise to build political authority, foster solidarities, or legitimise exclusion?
- What new epistemic inequalities, hybrid forums, and cross-border alliances emerge as diverse actors struggle over what counts as valid and useful knowledge?
- How do global governance institutions navigate tensions between expert consensus and political contestation in an increasingly polarised world?
- How do non-state, private, or philanthropic actors reshape epistemic authority and create new forms of governance influence?
- How do fractured geopolitical and institutional landscapes reshape the production, circulation, and contestation of expert knowledge in global governance?
- How do political, economic, and scientific actors co-produce governing realities under conditions of deep fragmentation?
- How do private foundations and corporate actors shape epistemic boundaries, and what solidarities or fractures result from their involvement?
- How can international social sciences scholarship better study expertise and knowledge production across fractured global settings — what methods, concepts, or collaborations do we need?

We invite junior and senior scholars across the social sciences and humanities to submit papers that investigate how knowledge and expertise is mobilised in times perceived as crisis; how actors contest and reconfigure epistemic boundaries; how hybrid forums, alliances, and infrastructures shape governance outcomes; and how knowledge practices reinforce or challenge global inequalities. Abstracts can be submitted via the [EISA website](#) until 11 February 2026.

References

- Beck, S., Mahony, M., 2018. The politics of anticipation: the IPCC and the negative emissions technologies experience. *Glob. Sustain.* 1, e8. <https://doi.org/10.1017/sus.2018.7>
- Bonneuil, C., Levidow, L., 2012. How does the World Trade Organization know? The mobilization and staging of scientific expertise in the GMO trade dispute. *Soc Stud Sci* 42, 75–100. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0306312711430151>
- Bueger, C., 2018. Territory, authority, expertise: Global governance and the counter-piracy assemblage. *European Journal of International Relations* 24, 614–637. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1354066117725155>
- Callon, M., 1986. The Sociology of an Actor-Network: The Case of the Electric Vehicle, in: Callon, M., Law, J., Rip, A. (Eds.), *Mapping the Dynamics of Science and Technology*. Palgrave Macmillan, London, pp. 19–34.
- Chakrabarty, D., 2007. *Provincializing Europe: postcolonial thought and historical difference*, Princeton studies in culture / power / history. Princeton university press, Princeton (N.J.).
- Cross, M.K.D., 2013. Rethinking epistemic communities twenty years later. *Rev. Int. Stud.* 39, 137–160. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0260210512000034>
- Eyal, G., 2019. *The crisis of expertise*. Polity Press, Cambridge, UK Medford, MA.
- Fox, C.A., Sneddon, C.S., 2019. Political Borders, Epistemological Boundaries, and Contested Knowledges: Constructing Dams and Narratives in the Mekong River Basin. *Water* 11, 413. <https://doi.org/10.3390/w11030413>
- Gieryn, T.F., 1999. *Cultural boundaries of science: credibility on the line*. University of Chicago Press, Chicago.
- Gieryn, T.F., 1983. Boundary-Work and the Demarcation of Science from Non-Science: Strains and Interests in Professional Ideologies of Scientists. *American Sociological Review* 48, 781. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2095325>
- Haas, P.M., 1992. Introduction: epistemic communities and international policy coordination. *Int Org* 46, 1–35. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0020818300001442>
- Hamborg, S., Meya, J.N., Eisenack, K., Raabe, T., 2020. Rethinking resilience: A cross-epistemic resilience framework for interdisciplinary energy research. *Energy Research & Social Science* 59, 101285. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.erss.2019.101285>
- Jasanoff, S. (Ed.), 2010. *States of knowledge: the co-production of science and social order*, transferred to digital print. ed, International library of sociology. Routledge, London.
- Knorr-Cetina, K.D., 1983. The ethnographic study of scientific work: towards a constructivist interpretation of science, in: Knorr-Cetina, K.D. (Ed.), *Science Observed: Perspectives on the Social Study of Science*. London: Sage, pp. 115–140.
- Latour, B., 1987. *Science in action: how to follow scientists and engineers through society*. Harvard University press, Cambridge (Mass.).
- Latour, B., Woolgar, S., Salk, J., 2013. *Laboratory life: the construction of scientific facts*. Princeton University Press, Princeton, New Jersey. <https://doi.org/10.1515/9781400820412>
- Leander, A., 2024. Objects at Work: Cybersecurity Certificates Making Topological Expertise. *Global Studies Quarterly* 4, ksae064. <https://doi.org/10.1093/isagsq/ksae064>
- Littoz-Monnet, A., 2024. Knowledge Machineries and Their Objects of Expertise. Knowing Bodies, Moves, and Moods through “Mobile Health” Data. *Global Studies Quarterly* 4, ksae061. <https://doi.org/10.1093/isagsq/ksae061>
- Littoz-Monnet, A., 2017. Expert Knowledge as a Strategic Resource: International Bureaucrats and the Shaping of Bioethical Standards. *International Studies Quarterly* 61, 584–595. <https://doi.org/10.1093/isq/sqx016>
- López-Rivera, A., 2020. Blurring Global Epistemic Boundaries: The Emergence of Traditional Knowledge in Environmental Governance. *Global Cooperation Research Papers*. <https://doi.org/10.14282/2198-0411-GCRP-25>

- Ødemark, J., Engebretsen, E., 2022. Challenging medical knowledge translation: convergence and divergence of translation across epistemic and cultural boundaries. *Humanit Soc Sci Commun* 9, 71. <https://doi.org/10.1057/s41599-022-01088-6>
- Piquard, B., 2022. What knowledge counts? Local humanitarian knowledge production in protracted conflicts. A Central African Republic case study. *Peacebuilding* 10, 85–100. <https://doi.org/10.1080/21647259.2021.1989902>
- Seabrooke, L., Tsingou, E., 2016. Bodies of Knowledge in Reproduction: Epistemic Boundaries in the Political Economy of Fertility. *New Political Economy* 21, 69–89. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13563467.2015.1041482>
- Selin, C., 2008. The Sociology of the Future: Tracing Stories of Technology and Time. *Sociology Compass* 2, 1878–1895. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1751-9020.2008.00147.x>
- Shapin, S., Schaffer, S., 1985. *Leviathan and the air-pump: Hobbes, Boyle, and the experimental life with a new introduction by the authors*. Princeton University Press, Princeton, N.J.
- Uribe, J., 2024. Excluding through inclusion: managerial practices in the era of multistakeholder governance. *Review of International Political Economy* 31, 1686–1709. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09692290.2024.2362666>