

International Conference 27-28 October 2022
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Global challenges in turbulent times: decentering the study of the international

“The world is closed” – has been the *leitmotif* of the COVID-19 pandemic. The world we were familiar with has become a more unexpected and unpredictable place, entering a temporally undefined lock-down, limiting its inherent outreach and becoming more localised and regionalised.

The world faces today significant global challenges such as power shifts in the international system, climate change, terrorism, healthcare, justice, war, food and human security to mention but a few. Understanding these challenges, especially during rapid instances of transformation and turbulence requires both epistemic and ontological rethinking. For the scholarship interested into the research and teaching of 21st-century global challenges, a better understanding of the world depends also recognising epistemic unbalances and injustices put forward by hegemonic systems of knowledge production. Expanding the scope and instruments of analysis in the way we teach and research the international is impelled by changes in the real world. In the context of uncertainty and crisis of the liberal international order, emerging powers contest the centrality of existing configurations of powers, norms, and institutions. At the same time, systems of belief and knowledge production anchored to pre-existing systems of world hegemony are increasingly questioned. Yet, how do we research and teach the ‘international’ and global challenges? How does an interdisciplinary outlook by contributors from around the globe enable our understanding of these challenges?

How are changes, continuities and paradoxes defining “the international” studied, imagined, constructed, and mutually produced? To study global dynamics, we inherently need to place the study of global challenges in context and perspective, as unequal access to power, educational opportunities and funding transform how knowledge is constituted in the first place. We invite proposals that explore the implications of power and knowledge formation in shaping how we study, research and teach the international realm. We welcome contributions in the field of International Studies— understood as an interdisciplinary field dedicated to understanding issues and trends with international, transnational, and global implications, in their multifocal historical, cultural, social, economic and political dimensions. We invite proposals for papers, panels, and roundtables on topics relevant to the study of global challenges from an interdisciplinary perspective, intersecting analysis of knowledge formation. This could include proposals that deal with aspects relating to both opportunities and limits in a more diverse approach in International Studies, as well as in bridging disciplinary traditions.

Possible topics include, but are not limited, to questions climate change, inequality, migration, urbanization, energy transition, big data and digitalization, global and regional governance, crisis of the liberal order, data and information governance, science communication, epistemic communities. We also welcome more broadly reflections on theoretical, methodological, and intellectual foundations, conventions and practices of academic disciplines that contribute to the understanding of the “international”.

We encourage the submission of panels, roundtables, papers in any area including, but not limited, to:

1. *Epistemes and ontologies of the international*

- How do national-, regional-, indigenous-developed theoretical frameworks locate themselves within broader global debates?
- How does knowledge participate in ‘politics of exclusion’? How leaving things out of research and teaching also reinforces certain existing imbalances and skews knowledge production in various ways?
- Which implications do politics of exclusion have for scholars of Area Studies and IR? How to close the gap between the area studies’ generated data and insights and the disciplinary traditions and conventions?

2. *Interdisciplinary understandings of change and challenges*

- How are ‘change’ and ‘continuity’ understood from different disciplinary angles?
- How do scholars from different fields in Social Science and Humanities (Literature to Linguistics, Politics, History, Area Studies, International Relations, Sociology, Anthropology, Economics, Communication Studies) understand the main ontological categories of the international?
- What can an interdisciplinary encounter tell us about global changes and global challenges?

3. *Teaching the international*

- How do we teach the politics, history, sociology, economics, cultures and communications of the international?
- To what extent does teaching practice in International Studies and cognate disciplines in the Humanities and Social Sciences tend towards reproducing Western-centric ideas and attitudes in students? Which strategies can guide us towards decentering the study of global issues?
- How a potential cognitive clash between implicit Eurocentric bias and more plural views of the international in international higher education institutions affects students learning?
- How culturally specific and/or scientifically compromised are learning outcomes, and/or the measurement of them by teachers who have internalized norms that differ from those of students?
- How can the teaching of International Studies be innovatively informed by the policy-making community?