

SCIENCE DIPLOMACY FOR THE 21ST CENTURY? THE OLD, THE NEW AND THE WANTED

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Abstract:

Science diplomacy is not new, but its ambition, substance and actual delivery are constantly evolving. This is not least due to shifting paradigms of geopolitics, but also a result of the changing nature of contemporary science: how it is organised, who manages its framing and delivery. As such, while diplomacy remains one of the most ancient forms of statecraft, the delivery of science diplomacy no longer hinges on state or institutional actors, but can be shaped and conducted by assemblages of private and public interests. This may be especially true in emerging information and biomedical technologies, where science diplomacy not only shapes social uptake of a particular innovation that is already available, but also may have long-term impacts on the socio-political discourses that frames the future norm of that technology. Many international aids projects have also shown that science diplomacy can help ameliorate regional tensions, but can also whitewash neo-colonial intentions and aggravate global inequality. The rise of Global South actors and new conflicts of ambition both underlines the importance of science diplomacy and complicates its delivery.

In this session, we unpack the idea of ‘science diplomacy’ through examinations on past and emerging experiences. What does it mean to different communities? What are its real-life impacts, both in relation to the wellbeing of communities and to the development of science and innovation? Who are the emerging actors and leaders? What are the new norms and expectations of science diplomacy in global politics? And finally, what is ‘good’ science diplomacy and how can we promote it? In short, what are the old and new lessons, and what kind of science diplomacy do we want for the 21st century?

We invite both empirical and conceptual reflections. Papers that focus on non-state actors and/or on under-discussed regions, and papers with novel research methods are particularly welcome.

Key words:

Science diplomacy, assemblages, Global South