

Combining physics and politics during the Cold War: The role of international scientific networks and institutions

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The approach on historical epistemology pursued by Jürgen Renn and Department 1 has led to delve more and more into the question of the structural role of scientific institutions in the production, circulation, and certification of knowledge. The focus on scientific institutions, on the other hand, necessarily requires to comprehend the political, economic and social conditions that led to their establishment and shaped their activities. The process of integrating political and scientific matters is particularly central in international scientific institutions, as their scientific goals have necessarily to be integrated and negotiated with their diplomatic agendas in the context of changing international political relations. In the talk, I discuss a general framework based on network analysis and the concept of science diplomacy to analyze the relations between scientific and political aspects of international scientific institutions in their historical unfolding. This framework will be discussed in relation to case studies drawn from the activities of three different international scientific institutions devoted to physics during the Cold War: The International Committee on General Relativity and Gravitation, the European Physical Society, and the International Union of Pure and Applied physics.

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