

Laudation

For the Rudolf Wildenmann Prize 2024

The Jury has this year chosen to award the prize to Timon Forster of Universität St Gallen for his paper *Selective responses to the climate crisis: Multilateral development banks and oracular power*, presented at the ECPR Joint Sessions of Workshops 2024.

The jury had the following to say:

Amidst the climate crisis, major international financial institutions (IFIs) have recognised the need for involvement in financing low-carbon development and many of them have committed to aligning their efforts with the Paris Agreement. Timon's paper expertly examines how international financial institutions like the World Bank respond to global warming.

In his paper, Timon poses the following research questions: How do these institutions respond to global warming? Which aspects of climate change do they emphasise? Which dimensions of climate change do they neglect? The main premise of the paper is that these institutions exercise strategic ignorance. While the increased focus on climate issues of IFIs has not gone unnoticed in recent research, the discursive praxis around climate change – and particularly what IFIs do not say when they talk about climate change – have received little attention.

Timon breaks new ground by introducing the concept of 'strategic ignorance', which allows him to argue that IFIs will communicate selectively and strategically about climate change. In other words, they will emphasize those aspects of the climate crisis that they could most convincingly use to advance their own agendas and resource base. Looking at 1,599 speeches of IFI leaders, which are the key figureheads representing their organisation as a whole, Timon applies several cutting-edge text analysis methods to systematically extract and figure out whether and how IFIs communicate about climate change issues.

The paper addresses a pressing and relevant issue, with significant potential for impact, considering the financial impact of leading IFIs, which have a potentially strong influence on sustainable ecological transformations.

The paper is very innovative and presents a clear and original argument. The basis of the paper is an excellent methodological framework. It is a very promising paper with a wealth of data and a very appealing argument.

Christian Haerpfer

On behalf of the Rudolf Wildenmann Prize Jury
European Consortium for Political Research