

Global Partnership

Sat. Jul 18, 2026 4:50 PM - 6:20 PM JST | Sat. Jul 18, 2026 7:50 AM - 9:20 AM UTC | Main Hall(Main Conference Hall in Kojin Kaikan)

Science Exile

Chair: Encieh Erfani(International Science Council, Fellow)

5:40 PM - 6:00 PM JST | 8:40 AM - 9:00 AM UTC

[ScwNXsLf-04] Scientific Exile as a Phenomenon of Academic Unfreedom

Sayaka Oki (The University of Tokyo)

Background / Context

Briefly describe the background of the topic and why it is important in the current scientific or societal context.

Key Issues or Challenges

Explain the key issues, gaps, or challenges that the presentation will address.

Approach / Perspective

Describe the perspective, research findings, experiences, or initiatives that will be introduced in the presentation.

Key Messages

Summarize the main insights or lessons that the audience will gain from the presentation.

Implications for Science and Society

Explain how the discussion contributes to advancing science, leadership, diversity, or international collaboration.

This paper examines scientific exile as a phenomenon of academic unfreedom, arguing that the displacement of scholars and institutions should be understood not only as an effect of war or disaster but also as a consequence of gradual restrictions on intellectual autonomy. We propose a staged perspective on scientific exile, beginning with visible crises such as violent conflict, climate-induced migration, disasters, and pandemics; moving through explicit threats including criminalization, intimidation, and death threats; and extending to more ambiguous pressures located between ordinary “brain drain” and forced departure under illiberal or authoritarian regimes. Drawing on indicators of academic freedom in Hungary and Poland, especially the sequencing of intimidation, legal regulation, parallel institution-building, research evaluation, funding redistribution, and personnel replacement, we try to show how exile can emerge before open repression becomes fully visible. We then turn to the “invisible exile” of researchers in the humanities and social sciences, with particular attention to women and queer scholars whose work may be marginalized, underprotected, or politically vulnerable. Examples include Ukrainian historians, Chinese gender studies researchers working abroad, and Japanese queer studies researchers based in Europe or North America. We further broaden the concept of exile from individuals to institutions, discussing universities displaced by political attack or war, including European Humanities University, Central European University, Donetsk National Technical University, and universities affected by the civil war in Sudan. The current situation suggests there have been already a series of important international initiatives which are essential, but still in developing phases. We conclude that protecting science in crisis requires a comprehensive approach that links academic freedom, gender & sexuality related vulnerability, institutional continuity, risk management, and post-crisis recovery, while also recognizing forms of exile that remain hidden because they occur before displacement is formally acknowledged.