Institutionalizing Public Trust and Credibility: Challenges for SRM?

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Whether they know it yet or not, geoengineers have a public trust and credibility problem. Worse, this problem integrates three of the most entrenched credibility challenges in contemporary societies—skepticism about climate change; concern about new and emerging technologies and their unforeseen societal consequences; and angst about the long-term consequences of globalization. Historically, states have developed a range of institutional mechanisms to try to secure public trust and confidence in governmental and extra-governmental actions to promote the public welfare. Existing mechanisms are under serious strain, however, and governments are searching for new procedural approaches to reengaging publics and re-securing their acquiescence. Yet, the problem may lie deeper than mere administrative tools can accomplish; indeed, it may challenge some of the core constitutional arrangements put in place in democratic societies in the 21st century. In this talk, I will explore these questions, asking, in effect, what it would take to be able to say that solar radiation management constituted a legitimate exercise of global power.