

Call for Applications

Metrics of sustainability: Critical studies of sites, practices, and performances of accountability in environmental governance

Toronto, Canada July 12-16, 2018

Applications are currently being accepted for the **Summer Institute on Critical Studies of Environmental Governance** to be held at the University of Toronto July 12-16, 2018. We welcome applications from advanced doctoral students (i.e., advanced to candidacy, completed data collection, and actively writing) and junior scholars who received a Ph.D. after May 2015, working in the social sciences, law, humanities, and other relevant disciplines. The Institute will reimburse travel expenses up to \$1200 (USD) and cover food and lodging for successful applicants. For more information, visit : <http://blogs.cornell.edu/envgov2018/>

2018 Theme: “Metrics of sustainability: Critical studies of sites, practices, and performances of accountability in environmental governance.”

Addressing global environmental change and advancing the sustainability of variously scaled processes, organizations, and territories involves diverse approaches to social regulation. We identify accountability mechanisms, and the underlying metrics and assessment protocols, to be important sites of critical analysis.

Environmental metrics, indices and standards of various kinds are central to the advancement of regulatory objectives. Moreover, they can be a resource for democratic accountability. But in addition, metrics can be instruments of authoritarian discipline at a distance and may give rise to or augment social and ecological problems. While metrics may serve as vital feedbacks that allow for functional coupling of social and ecological systems, metrics may also obscure ecological knowledge, disguise uncertainties, impede alternative problem definitions, and advance an empty performance of engagement in environmental management. It is often said “You cannot manage what you do not measure.” There may be some truth in this aphorism, but as we try to make sense of the politics of sustainability, it is worthwhile to consider the possibility that increasingly sophisticated, integrated and elaborate measurements and performances of accountability may substitute for or distract attention from substantive engagement in sustainable transitions. On this basis, relationships between assessment, accountability and the (re)distribution of rights, responsibilities, and risks merits attention.

The 2018 Summer Institute aims to realize emerging topical, theoretical, and methodological synergies pertaining to critical studies of environmental metrics and accountability, with emphasis on sharing insights among a mix of established and junior scholars. We welcome research grounded in a wide variety of disciplines and socioecological problems. We are committed to substantive engagement with environmental regulation and governance through a

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variety of disciplinary lenses aimed at revealing the ways in which the establishment of metrics and accountability regimes can induce complex and unforeseen socio-ecological responses. Our aim is to understand the promulgation of metrics and accountability as dynamic forms of governmentality, and to support junior scholars in the development of this multi-faceted area of scholarship and policy analysis.

Examples of empirically grounded, actor-centered analysis of practices of accountability and metrics “in action” may include various issues and questions, including:

- Market-based conservation strategies such as transferrable permit systems, payments for environmental services, habitat exchanges, and carbon markets. These trials raise questions regarding what is valued and who is accountable for environmental conservation when elegant policy schemes derived from microeconomics confront frictions posed by local biophysical conditions and social histories. How are rigor and rationality advanced and performed, and who wins, who loses, who gets what and why and how?
- Ecolabels, green supply chains, sustainability standards, and geographic indications. Research on standards of governance and governance of standards presents opportunities to leverage existing critical scholarly engagement into the ways values are codified through metrics and how metrics are employed to advance accountability.
- Promulgation of new environmental metrics and regulatory mechanisms create new sites of authority and expertise within state-centered and multi-lateral organizations. The proliferation of multi-actor platforms emerging at international levels and at community scale raise important questions about the re-scaling of environmental governance and the potential implications of shifting bases of authority.
- The emergence of metrics from below (e.g., participatory mapping, citizen science and crowdsourcing) and through unexpected alliances break down the dichotomy between states and markets and positions new actors as key sites of authority. Exchange and aggregation of environmental monitoring data via social media presents new potential pathways to accountability. What opportunities and constraints structure potential for democratic practice through metrics?
- What is the role of quantification and invocation of rigor in performing accountability and projecting legitimacy in environmental governance? How do scientists and other professionals position themselves in relation to policy processes and uncertainty attached to knowledge in specific contexts? The costs of measurement and data integration, as well as costs of monitoring and enforcement, present important constraints on precision implied by metrics and by what passes for accountability. How is imprecision and uncertainty incorporated into metrics and oversight, and what are the social and ecological implications of the negotiations and conventions that obscure these elements of governance?



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Workshop Objectives

In a workshop held over the course of five days and through a mix of feedback on pre-circulated papers, intensive discussions, keynote lectures, and interactive excursions, participants will have the opportunity to develop their own work and acquire new skills in a rigorous, collegial, and interdisciplinary setting. Successful applicants (up to 14) will feature topical research programs with broad empirical and theoretical originality. The workshop will stimulate vibrant and unexpected cross-disciplinary exchange among scholars whose research is situated in varying regional settings and targeting environmental sustainability metrics and standards promulgated in a variety of historical contexts. To be clear, applications are welcome from all world regions representing the full range of environmental governance concerns.

A second goal of the Summer Institute is to produce an edited scholarly volume or special issue(s) of an academic journal. To that end, successful applicants will be expected to submit a 6000-word draft of a solo-authored unpublished paper by June 1, 2018. The workshop will serve, in part, to stimulate further development of submitted papers for inclusion in the eventual publication(s). All working papers will be pre-circulated to participants in advance of the workshop to stimulate ideas, foster synergies, and enhance the quality of feedback participants will receive on their own work.

By design, the end of the workshop coincides with the opening of the International Sociological Association (ISA) World Congress in Toronto. Analysis of metrics and accountability applied to environmental governance is represented in Congress program, and we aim to carry ideas and energy from the workshop into the Congress. There is no expectation that participants in the Workshop will attend the Congress, but we highlight this opportunity.

Application Process

Applications are due no later than midnight (EST) on January 31, 2018. Applicants should send a single pdf to: envgov2018@cornell.edu that includes:

- a cover letter (1-2 pp. single-spaced)
- a 300-word abstract of an unpublished paper that the applicant proposes to contribute to the workshop
- a current CV
- a solo authored writing sample (max. one journal length article).

Each applicant should arrange for a letter of recommendation from an academic advisor to be sent directly to envgov2018@cornell.edu.

Successful applicants will be notified by February 28th, 2018. Participants from outside of Canada will be responsible for securing their own visa and related documentation. Please note that accepted applicants are expected to attend the entirety of the workshop.

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Organizers: This year's Summer Institute is coordinated by Allison Loconto (Interdisciplinary Laboratory for Science, Innovation and Society, INRA, allison-marie.loconto@inra.fr), Scott Prudham (Geography, University of Toronto, scott.prudham@utoronto.ca) and Steven Wolf (Natural Resources, Cornell University, saw44@cornell.edu). Questions regarding the workshop should be directed to one of the organizers.

Sponsors: Cornell University, Mario Einaudi Center for Environmental Studies and Institute for Social Sciences; University of Toronto, School of the Environment, School of Graduate Studies and Munk School of Global Affairs; Earth System Governance Project Task Force on Accountability in Global Environmental Governance; Research Committee on the Sociology of Agriculture and Food (RC40), International Sociological Association; Institut National de la Recherche Agronomique (INRA) and the French Institute for Research, Innovation and Society (IFRIS).

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Frequently Asked Questions:

What file formats may I use to submit my materials?

Please email materials as single pdf to envgov2018@cornell.edu. No hard copies are needed. Letters of recommendation are to be sent separately (See below).

What are the expectations for the cover letter?

The cover letter should express how the applicant engages with the themes of the Summer Institute. In addition to describing the applicant's interest in the Summer Institute and a précis of their intellectual project, the cover letter should include the name and email address of the applicant; the date, institution, and field of expected or awarded Ph.D.; the working title of the proposed paper; and the name and institutional affiliation of the author of the letter of recommendation.

How should letters of reference be submitted?

Letters of reference can be sent by email directly by the letter-writer from their personal email address as an MSWord or pdf file to envgov2018@cornell.edu. Although digital copies are preferred, letters of reference may be mailed by surface post to Steven Wolf, Department of Natural Resources, Cornell University, 121 Fernow Hall, Ithaca, NY 14853. USA.

How will I know when my application materials are complete?

You will receive an email from the organizers when your application is complete.

When will the ISS stop accepting applications for review?

We will no longer accept applications after Jan 31, 2018 at 11:59 PM (EST).

Where can I find more information about the ISS?

ISS has its own webpage! Visit: <http://blogs.cornell.edu/envgov2018/>