

Exploring Methodological Frontiers in Global Environmental Politics

European Workshops of International Studies
Cardiff, June 7-9, 2017

Location: 0.26 Law Building, Cardiff University, Museum Avenue, CF10 3AX
<https://www.google.com/maps/preview?q=51.489022,-3.181669>

Workshop convenors: Hannah Hughes and Alice Vadrot

Workshop participants: Thomas Hickmann; Matthew Hoffmann; James Hollway; Gabriela Maria Kuetting; Philip Leifeld; Matthew Bruce Paterson; Kimberly R. Marion Suiseeya; Oscar Widerberg

DAY ONE: Wednesday, 7.6.	
From 10.00	Registration <i>Law Building, Park Place</i>
13.30-14:00	Introduction <i>Hannah Hughes</i>
14:00- 15:30	1. Identifying the limits in GEP thinking: What's wrong with what we've got? Gold mining, environmental governance and justice <i>Gabriela Maria Kuetting</i> New Alliances in Global Environmental Politics: Intergovernmental Treaty Secretariats and Non-State Actors <i>Thomas Hickmann</i>
15.30-16.00	Coffee Break
16.00-18.00	Plenary and Keynote (with First Minister) <i>National Museum Cardiff, Cathays Park</i>
18.00-20.00	Post Plenary Reception (sponsored by Learned Society of Wales) <i>National Museum Cardiff, Cathays Park</i>

DAY TWO: Thursday, 8.6.	
9.00-10.30	2. Complexity in GEP: How do we identify, model and map complex relations and interactions? Modelling time-stamped political relations <i>James Hollway, Christoph Stadtfeld</i> Mapping the global climate-energy governance nexus <i>Oscar Widerberg, Lisa Sanderink, Philipp Pattberg</i>
10.30-11.00	Coffee Break

11.00-12:30	<p>3. New concepts and methods in GEP: How are we innovating?</p> <p>Making Influence Visible: Innovations in Ethnography in International Relations <i>Kimberly R. Marion Suiseeya, Laura Zanotti</i></p> <p>Epistemic Selectivities: Institutions, Knowledge and Power in GEP <i>Alice Vadrot, Ulrich Brand</i></p>
12:30-14.00	Lunch
14.00-15.30	<p>4. New concepts and methods in GEP: How are we innovating?</p> <p>Researching Decarbonization in Future Time: Connecting Political Processes and System Trajectories <i>Steven Bernstein, Matthew Hoffmann</i></p> <p>IPBES between Theory and Practice: How weighted concepts travel <i>Hannah Rachel Hughes, Alice Vadrot</i></p>
15.30-16.00	Coffee Break
16.00-17.30	<p>5. The PhD perspective: What do we need?</p> <p><i>Harry Conway, Valeria Tolis, Caer Smyth</i></p>
17.30-	Drinks and Dinner

DAY THREE: Friday, 9.6.	
9.00-10.30	<p>6. Social Network Analysis in GEP: How are we adapting methods in and for the field?</p> <p>SNA and exploratory research in Global Environmental Politics <i>Matthew Bruce Paterson</i></p> <p>Using Social Network Analysis to Study the Evolution of Climate Politics <i>Dana R Fisher, Philip Leifeld</i></p>
10.30-11.00	Coffee Break
11.00-12.30	<p>7. Between GEP and IR: Where do we go from here?</p> <p>Roundtable discussion</p>
12.30-14.00	Lunch
	Trip to Cardiff Bay
17.30-19.30	EWIS Happy Hour
20.00-	EWIS Closing Event

Abstracts:

Gold mining, environmental governance and justice

Gabriela Maria Kuetting

Cardiff University, United Kingdom; kuettingg@cardiff.ac.uk

The Global Environmental Politics literature tends to focus on institutional and governance frameworks as the solution to global environmental problems rather than on the systemic constraints that limit the potential effectiveness of governance efforts. Part of the problem with institutional frameworks to reform global environmental governance is insufficient attention being paid to deeper structural challenges. Through a case study approach, I will investigate the tensions between austerity politics and environmental policy and its implications for environmental justice. Environmental governance approaches have stressed the institutional importance of legitimacy and accountability, often framing these concerns in the language of social and environmental justice. However, such research is obviously framed with the normative aim of making institutions more accountable rather than with justice concerns as the main variable, especially at the international level. The paper will demonstrate how important it is to avoid misleadingly equating increased accountability or representativeness with improved levels of equity.

New Alliances in Global Environmental Politics: Intergovernmental Treaty Secretariats and Non-State Actors

Thomas Hickmann

University of Potsdam, Germany; hickmann@uni-potsdam.de

After a long period of academic neglect, scholars have recently devoted increasing attention to international bureaucracies. Particularly in the realm of global environmental politics, authors have conducted several case studies on different types of international bureaucracies. Compared to other bureaucracies, the political leeway of intergovernmental treaty secretariats has traditionally been considered rather limited. This has much to do with the specific problem structure of the environmental policy domain, especially the fear of powerful nation-states that far-reaching international environmental agreements will have negative consequences on their economies. For that reason, national governments have endowed the secretariats of multilateral environmental agreements with relatively narrow mandates. However, in the past few years, it has become obvious that intergovernmental treaty secretariats have adopted a more active role in global environmental policy-making by collaborating with non-state actors. In fact, intergovernmental treaty secretariats engage certain sub-groups of non-governmental organizations into a policy dialogue and mobilize advocacy, create demonstration effects, or otherwise pressure national governments in order to generate progress in multilateral treaty-making. Against this backdrop, this paper builds upon a mixed methods approach and explores the interplay between different intergovernmental treaty secretariats and non-state actors in the field of global environmental politics.

Modelling time-stamped political relations

James Holloway¹, Christoph Stadtfeld², Per Block²

¹Graduate Institute Geneva, Switzerland; ²ETH Zürich, Switzerland

A key challenge in global environmental politics is how to model the dynamics of the complex political systems prevalent in the area. These systems consist of complex patterns of socially and temporally interdependent relationships between and among the environment, actors, and the institutions they establish. While the public and formal nature of these institutions means data can be collected that points to the precise sequencing of cooperative relationships through time, we usually need to coerce this data into the format expected by statistical models made for other fields. We propose an actor-oriented statistical network model for studying time-stamped, dynamic networks of ties. It both takes an actor-oriented perspective that is straightforward to interpret and makes full use of the temporal information available to improve the precision of inference about network dependencies. It also enables new questions, such as when actors are influenced by historical ties or choose to reinforce existing ties instead of creating new ones. We demonstrate the value of this model using cases drawn from a novel dataset on interstate cooperation on global environmental issues which includes comprehensive information on when cooperative agreements start and end. In sum, this new model not only offers increased precision and new properties, but also a flexible framework upon which future extensions can be built.

Mapping the global climate-energy governance nexus

Oscar Widerberg, Lisa Sanderink, Philipp Pattberg

Institute for Environmental Studies (IVM) Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam

Global climate governance is increasingly characterized by institutional complexity, challenging decision-makers to navigate a wide variety of interacting institutions across different issue areas. This paper uses results from the CLIMENGO project (<http://www.climengo.eu/>) aiming to map the institutional complexity of global climate and energy governance, or the climate-energy nexus. The climate-energy nexus comprise institutions aiming to tackle climate change through the transforming of current energy systems. The paper answer the question: How has the global climate-energy nexus unfolded, and what relationships can be identified between the various governance arrangements? The empirical results are based on a dataset with over 120 institutions in the climate-energy nexus, for which data on membership, function, theme, and discursive framing have been collected and used to link them using network-based approaches. The data is presented through a series of innovative visualizations, allowing for a deeper understanding of the positioning of institutions in their larger context. The results show how the global climate-energy nexus is situated in a complex structure of interacting actors, functions and frames. However, it also points towards visible clusters of institutions joined by function, themes or discursive frames.

Making Influence Visible: Innovations in Ethnography in International Relations

Kimberly R. Marion Suisseya¹, Laura Zanotti²

¹Northwestern University, United States of America; ²Purdue University, United States of America

In our project, From Presence to Influence, we use collaborative event ethnography to investigate how Indigenous Peoples, critical—yet marginalized—actors for solving global environmental challenges,

access, navigate, and engage power to shape environmental politics. Collaborative event ethnography is a team-based approach to studying mega-events like the Paris Climate Summit and the World Conservation Congress where team members adopt a common set of analytics and engage in real-time, on-site iterative analysis. Because it is team-based and reflexive, collaborative event ethnography provides unique and rigorous ways of examining power that facilitates observing influence as it unfolds. Drawing from multiple field sites of global environmental governance, this paper introduces international relations scholars to collaborative event ethnography as a method that can help expand our understanding of pathways to influence in international politics. The paper seeks to: 1) situate collaborative event ethnography within current methodological debates on ethnography in political science; and, 2) demonstrate how this method can illuminate new potential pathways to and mechanisms of influence.

Epistemic Selectivities: Institutions, Knowledge and Power in GEP

Alice Vadrot¹, Ulrich Brand²

¹University of Cambridge, United Kingdom; ²University of Vienna,

Knowledge is becoming an important category in understanding global environmental politics today. The significant increase in institutional arrangements interfacing environmental sciences with local, regional, national and global policy-making processes has contributed to a vivid debate on how to “create better science policy interfaces”. Together with ideas of “policy relevance” and “scientific evidence” this claim has culminated in the emergence of very particular strategies within scientific communities to make their science relevant to policy-makers. Important examples include the emergence of the concept of ecosystem services after the publication of the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment (MA) and the role scientific claims and imaginaries have played in establishing the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES). By analysing the role of science in relation to the spatiotemporal characteristics of global environmental politics, we go beyond the actors-oriented concept of epistemic communities and general – and often rationalistic - statements about the increasing role of knowledge in global environmental politics. We propose the concept of epistemic selectivities to understand the contested relationships between different forms of knowledge as part of a methodology to study the interplay between political, economic and scientific actors, discourses and political institutions.

Researching Decarbonization in Future Time: Connecting Political Processes and System Trajectories

Steven Bernstein, Matthew Hoffmann

University of Toronto, Canada; steven.bernstein@utoronto.ca, mjhoff@utsc.utoronto.ca

A fundamental problem with researching the politics and possibilities of decarbonization is that classic social science research designs are rendered problematic (if not useless) because of three key characteristics. First, there are no significant cases of decarbonization to compare to negative cases where decarbonization is pursued but is not successful. Second, even defining ‘cases’ of decarbonization is profoundly difficult because the carbon lock in that decarbonization efforts are designed to disrupt exists simultaneously at many levels and realms of action (political jurisdictions, markets and practices)—it is both a diffuse global phenomenon and a discrete local phenomenon. Finally, decarbonization can potentially flow from both intentional actions and unintended effects of actions

taken for other reasons. Methodological innovation is thus necessary and in this paper we explore a way to empirically study decarbonization politics by defining and describing intervention trajectories and potentials. Unlike approaches that focus on hypothetical scenarios or backcast from desired outcomes, we begin by empirically examining the political effects of conscious decarbonization interventions. This empirical research, which can be done with classic social science methods, then becomes the foundation for forward theorizing and conceptualization of intervention trajectories—a way to assess the potential for decarbonization in specific places and for more widespread impact. We illustrate this method with examples of diverse decarbonization interventions.

IPBES between Theory and Practice: How weighted concepts travel

Hannah Rachel Hughes¹, Alice Vadrot²

¹Cardiff University, United Kingdom; ²Cambridge University, United Kingdom

The aim of this paper is twofold: Firstly, it wishes to explore the role of the term “biocultural diversity” in international biodiversity politics. Secondly, by doing so, it aims to understand the particularities of international science-policy interfacing bodies in contemporary environmental politics on the basis of the Intergovernmental Platform for Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) and its fourth Plenary held in February 2016. Our analysis starts with the observation that the use of particular terms in multilateral negotiations activates a particular constellation of reactions repeating frames by means of a theatrical rationality. By analysing the way in which the term “biocultural diversity” structured the reactions of delegates negotiating the Summary for Policy Makers (SPM) of the pollination assessment of the IPBES, we want to show that particular semi-scientific terms in international environmental governance de-stabilised and re-stabilised the distribution of argumentative power in a particular way. In order to theoretically ground this observation, we introduce the notion of “weighted concepts”, which the paper further elaborates as methodological innovation in Global Environmental Policy.

SNA and exploratory research in Global Environmental Politics

Matthew Bruce Paterson

University of Manchester, United Kingdom

Social Network Analysis (SNA) has rapidly expanded as a tool in the analysis of global environmental politics, as elsewhere in political science and International Relations. This paper suggests that its potential is limited by the imagination of what counts as good research, especially the logic of formal hypothesis-testing that dominates much research in the field. Instead, I argue that SNA can play a much expanded and useful role as a tool for rich exploration of specific empirical fields. As a means to explore formally the patterns of connections across actors, institutions, technologies, and discourses, SNA can enable us to map the complex connections that characterise GEP and provoke ideas for further research. It works best within mixed-methods research designs combined with ethnography, discourse analysis, process tracing, and other methods. The paper illustrates this argument with reference to some existing work using SNA in global climate politics, notably on emissions trading, the IPCC, and carbon accounting governance.

Using Social Network Analysis to Study the Evolution of Climate Politics

Dana R Fisher¹, Philip Leifeld²

¹University of Maryland, United States of America; ²University of Glasgow, Scotland, United Kingdom;

How do we understand the evolving factions of policy actors engaged in climate politics in the United States? Using a methodological innovation in network analysis, this paper analyzes discussions about the issue within the US Congress. Through this analysis, the ideological relationships among speakers providing Congressional testimony on the issue of climate change are mapped over time. The paper is separated into three sections. First, we review the ways scholars have applied social network analysis to study climate governance and policy networks. Then, we present analysis of statements made during Congressional hearings on climate change over a six year period to map out the evolving networks of actors engaged in the issue. This paper concludes by discussing how these findings help us understand shifting positions within American climate politics and the implications of these findings as well as how social network analysis can be used to monitor changes in environmental politics over time.