



European
Research
Council

Toolbox of Environmental Governance: Numbers, Metrics, and Acronyms

CALL FOR PAPERS

Division of History of Science, Technology and Environment

KTH Royal Institute of Technology, Stockholm, Sweden

Workshop | December 2-4, 2020

Discourses of environmental governance make conspicuous use of what can be described as abridged, standardized objects. Whether it is calls to limit the average global temperature rise to “1.5 degrees Celsius” in accordance with the “IPCC report,” keep CO₂ emissions “below 2 tons” per person per year “by 2050,” heed “GDP growth” in relation to environmental welfare, save the world’s rainforests, which have dwindled by “1.3 million square miles” in “the last 25 years,” or relocate Indonesia’s capital city of Jakarta, which is sinking “5 to 10 cm” every year, assertions about ways to govern the environment are inundated with numbers, metrics, and acronyms of various kinds. Although in policy or advocacy communication, such expressions tend to be invoked authoritatively, to forceful practical and rhetorical effect, they arguably do not merely represent self-evident facts about the environment. Rather, they are produced and propagated through protracted scientific and political work, render environmental entities governable by subjecting them to acts of quantification, simplification, standardization, and prognostication, and, once firmly cemented into the broader framework of environmental governance, appear to fossilize into elements that bear a life and potency of their own. They may be deployed to rouse a sense of threat, project imminent futures, gather political support, promote particular conduct, or otherwise evoke action or affect.

This workshop aims to explore numbers, metrics, and acronyms (one could append to this indefinitely; e.g. units, quotas, targets, indicators, thresholds, ...) as basic instruments that make up the *Toolbox of Environmental Governance*. The workshop seeks to investigate the many ways in which such devices have been used to construct and maintain the environment as a governable entity. How did they enter the “toolbox” to begin with and become fixtures of environmental governance—through what kinds of social, political, scientific, and historical processes? How might a particular number, metric, or acronym be seen to acquire significance beyond the surface level scientific information it apparently denotes?

Toolbox of Environmental Governance is organized in affiliation with [SPHERE](#), an ERC-funded project that examines the rise of global environmental governance in historical perspective. If you, too, are keen to engage in critical and comprehensive conversations surrounding the themes and questions described above, let us know! Please submit an abstract (max. 400 words) and a brief biography to gloria.samosir@abe.kth.se by **June 12, 2020**. We welcome submissions from a broad range of disciplines, including but not limited to History of Science, Environmental History, Environmental Humanities, Science & Technology Studies, Geography, Law and Legal History, Development Studies, and Political Science. It is our ambition that the workshop will result in a publication with contributions from participants.

We are currently hoping and planning to hold the workshop with as many participants physically present in Stockholm as possible. Costs of travel and accommodation for invited speakers will be covered by the workshop organizers. However, we realize that even if travel is generally possible, this still may not be the case for some, and we will ensure the possibility of remote participation for those who require or choose it. If travel is restricted, we still anticipate the event will go ahead remotely. In these uncertain times, we will ensure that risks of cancellation are borne by the organizers.

For any further questions or concerns, please contact Gloria Samosir: gloria.samosir@abe.kth.se

Conveners:

Sverker Sörlin, Professor, PI of SPHERE project

Sabine Höhler, Assoc. Professor, Co-PI

Gloria Samosir, PhD student, workshop assistant

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