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Indicators and the Ecology of Governance

NYU Law School Conference, July 6-7, 2015

CALL FOR PAPERS

On July 6-7, 2015, the Institute for International Law and Justice (IILJ) at New York University School of Law will convene a conference on indicators and the ecology of governance. This conference has three objectives: to take stock and analyze key ideas from very recent work in the field; to bring together interested scholars and celebrate the launch of several recent books on indicators in global governance; and above all to explore promising directions in current and future research, with a particular focus on the dynamics or ecology of governance in which indicators are one of several competing technologies.

This Call for Papers seeks to bring forward new work, whether case studies or theoretical in any relevant discipline, and to put authors (whether senior or junior, and academics or practitioners) in dialogue with scholars who have been involved in some of the recent publications listed below. The starting point is that indicators are simply one technology of governance among many. Individual indicators exist in increasingly dense and fast-moving environments in which they interact with numerous other indicators and other technologies and modes of governance. These dynamic ecological features have not been studied sufficiently, nor have their implications for institutions, law, resistance, and power-knowledge frameworks been very fully considered.

Lines of inquiry for papers could include the following, but there are many other possibilities:

- **Interaction.** Under what conditions has the proliferation of indicators resulted in competition, complementarity, coordination, parallel operation, etc. among producers and/or users of indicators (or, instead, in hegemony of one or a select few indicators)?
- **Countering Indicators.** Indicators and now big data and algorithms are a prevalent technology of governance. What have been, or could be, some counter-strategies (including production of competing indicators)? What resistance or contestation has occurred to the rapid proliferation of indicators and measurement algorithms and the use of these in advocacy and decision-making? Are there signs of rejection or delegitimation of governance-by-numbers in favor of other modes of governance? Under what conditions do these phenomena or rejection, contestation and countering occur, and with what results?

- **Indicators, Standards, and Law.** What is known about commonalities or relations between indicators, standards and laws? What influences choices of methods or their strategic linkage? How do these insights reflect in regulation?
- **Changes in Data Availability.** What impacts do changes in the methods of data collection, in the kinds of data available, and in methods of using data have on power-knowledge dynamics of governance-by-indicators? What have been the relationships between for-profit, non-profit, and governmental or IO sectors in driving changes? What have been the impacts of new entrants and new promulgators of indicators (e.g., corporate philanthropists), or newly influential promulgators, users and targets in different regions of the world?

Recent publications from scholars in several disciplines have contributed greatly to understandings of the theoretical underpinnings of governance by indicators, and have illuminated practical dimensions of indicators within governance structures in such areas as corruption, money laundering, credit ratings, health, education, criminal justice, development, humanitarian relief, democracy, rule of law, transitional justice, human rights, violence against women, human trafficking, land restitution, and climate change, among others. Recent books and special journal issues devoted to the broad topic of governance by indicators and which will be celebrated at the conference include:

- *Gouverner par les standards et indicateurs – de Hume au Ranking*, (Benoit Frydman, Arnaud Van Waeyenberg, eds.) (Bruylant, 2014)
- *Indicadores, derecho internacional y el surgimiento de nuevos espacios de participación política en gobernanza global*, 25 *Revista Colombiana de Derecho Internacional* (2015).
- *The Quiet Power of Indicators: Measuring Governance, Corruption, and Rule of Law* (Sally Engle Merry, Kevin Davis, Benedict Kingsbury, eds.) (Cambridge University Press, forthcoming 2015)
- *Governance by Indicators: Global Power through Classification and Rankings* (Kevin Davis, Angelina Fisher, Benedict Kingsbury, and Sally Engle Merry, eds.) (Oxford University Press 2012, paperback 2015)
- *Ranking the World: Grading States as a Tool of Global Governance* (Alexander Cooley, Jack Snyder, eds.) (Cambridge University Press, forthcoming 2015)
- *On Governance: What It Is, What It Measures and Its Policy Uses* (Robert I. Rotberg, ed.) (CIGI, forthcoming 2015)
- *A World of Indicators* (Richard Rottenburg, Sally Engle Merry, Johanna Mugler, and Songi Park, eds.) (Cambridge University Press, 2015)
- *The MDGs, Capabilities and Human Rights: The power of numbers to shape agendas* (Sakiko Fukuda-Parr, Alicia Ely Yamin, eds.) (Routledge 2015)
- Sakiko Fukuda-Parr, Terra Lawson-Remer, and Susan Randolph, *Fulfilling Social and Economic Rights* (Oxford University Press, 2015)
- Sally Engle Merry, “The Seductions of Quantification: Measuring Human Rights, Violence against Women, and Human Trafficking” (University of Chicago Press, forthcoming 2016)

Paper Submissions

Submissions of papers from junior and senior scholars and experienced practitioners are invited on any of the themes outlined above.

Draft papers, ideally in the range 15-35 pages, should be sent (in .pdf or .doc format) to angelina.fisher@nyu.edu by May 15, 2015. (Earlier submissions are encouraged and will be considered on a rolling basis where possible.) Please provide contact details and a link to an author bio. All authors will be informed of the selection decisions quickly thereafter. Selection will be based on relevance to the theme, innovative materials or perspectives, and the overall blend and coherence of the conference. Authors invited who choose to take part will be asked to send final papers by June 20, 2015.

For those selected from this Call for Papers, the IILJ will provide conference meals, plus accommodation for those based outside the NY area. The IILJ also hopes to be able to assist with modest travel funding in a limited number of cases where needed, subject to budget constraints. This conference is funded by a grant from the National Science Foundation, whose generous support is gratefully acknowledged.

This conference builds on research by NYU Law faculty on the general phenomenon of global governance as well as in fields such as trafficking, rule of law and corruption. Much of this work takes place under the rubric of two ongoing projects of the Institute for International Law and Justice: Inter-Institutional Relations in Global Law and Governance, and Indicators as a Technology of Global Governance. For more information and relevant readings on both of these projects, please see www.iilj.org