Program and Background Paper

Away Day on Global Governance Indicators

GLOBAL GOVERNANCE – Global Research Priorities

Friday 15 November: 10am to 3pm,

Location: B0.08 in the WBS Building, Scarman Road

10.00 - 11.00: Defining what is meant by ‘indicators’ and learning from colleagues in different departments about their conception of indicators and key issues in their studies; Discussion of the different conceptual/theoretical/substantive or methodological issues pertaining to the use of indicators as we understand them in our different disciplines

11.00 - 12.15: Key research questions (starting point is the short paper below) in research at Warwick and discussion of the methodologies that Warwick researchers have used in approaching these issues and how different disciplines can learn from each other

12.15 - 13.00 Lunch

13.00 – 14.45: Exploring the potential for cross-departmental and interdisciplinary collaborative work in relation to common themes emerging.

14.45-15.00: Further Actions and Closing Remarks
Indicators Project Away Day

Introduction

This away day is organised under the auspices of the Global Governance GRP (see http://www2.warwick.ac.uk/research/priorities/globalgovernance for details). It brings together researchers in Warwick who are interested in indicators (or analogous concepts such as tools, barometers, benchmarks, guidelines or yardsticks) and their role in global governance. There will be an inter-disciplinary mix of people attending the away day from the School of law, PAIS, Economics, WBS, WMG, Life Sciences, Mathematics and Complexity Sciences.

We are excited about the potential for stimulating discussions during the day in relation to a variety of aspects of the role of indicators in global governance. We hope that the day will lead to longer term collaborations between scholars interested in these issues.

This very short paper and timetable for the day is intended to get people thinking about some key issues that might be of mutual interest in our discussions. But there will be plenty of opportunity to raise other issues, and to discuss themes not mentioned below.

What do we mean by Global Governance?

For those who have not been involved in the Global Governance GRP before, it is important to stress that the definition of ‘global governance’ we utilise in the context of the University’s Global Governance group is a very broad and inclusive one. By ‘global’ we mean conditions that manifest themselves beyond individual countries and regions. And by ‘governance’ we mean constitutive practices and regulatory aspects of society: the formulation, application and review of rules, norms, standards and principles that are invoked to bring order and/or to effect change in a human collectivity.

Combining the two terms, ‘global governance’, we can see an increasingly long list of substantially globalised issues where there is a global governance dimension including climate change, employment patterns, regulation of multinational corporations, energy provision, economic flows, food security, health and other social policy concerns, human rights, intercultural relations, new information and communications technologies, political mobilisations, trans-border production chains, and various developments in warfare. And there are many more besides. In a number of these areas, indicators have become increasingly important mechanisms of governance.

For more detail on what we mean by global governance and how the term is utilised. See the Global Governance GRP website at http://www2.warwick.ac.uk/research/priorities/globalgovernance/about/

What are indicators and how are they utilised in Global Governance initiatives?

We adopt as our starting point the following definition of indicators:
“Indicators are a named collection of rank ordered data that purport to represent the past of projected preferences of different units in a way that usually simplifies often complex social phenomenon.” Kingsbury et al OUP 2012. *Governance by Indicators: Global Power Through Quantification and Rankings* (ed. with Kevin Davis, Angelina Fisher and Sally Engle Merry)

In terms of global governance initiatives, indicators have been developed and used by a wide range of actors at the international level. Indicators might also be utilised in national or local governance efforts (in relation to a range of non-state and/or multi-stakeholder initiatives), but be based on standards that have a ‘global dimension’.

In relation to indicators which Warwick scholars may be studying in a wide range of different fields, some of the questions we might be interested in exploring collectively would be:

1. How are particular sets of indicators created and from what sources are they drawn?
2. What are the problems/limitations/barriers to the creation of optimal indicators?
3. What participatory mechanisms are involved?
4. What makes indicators (il)legitimate and (un)accountable tools of global governance?
5. What are the normative/political/ethical implications of indicators for existing systems of governance?
6. How have indicators impacted on existing systems of governance?

**Existing research into the area**

We were able to identify a number of global projects that are trying to research indicators on governance issues. Consideration of some of these types of initiatives might stimulate us to think about how scholars might think about collaborating on these issues, while not reinventing the wheel in terms of what is done elsewhere:

1) *Global Governance by Indicators at the European Union Institute in Florence*
   Starting in 2013, this research project focuses on the analysis of indicators as instruments of global governance, which impact on the behavior of actors in global governance contexts, potentially bypassing traditional, public authority-based forms of global governance and international law. The project aims to examine the development, application and impact of indicators, sets of indicators, composite indicators and indices in global governance and global administrative law.

2) *Indicators as Global Technology/Justice by the Institute of International Law and Justice New York University*
   The use of indicators as a technique of global governance is increasing rapidly. Major examples include the World Bank’s Doing Business Indicators; the World Bank’s Good Governance and Rule of Law indicators; the Millennium Development Goals (which inform many indicators); many OECD indicators and rankings; the indicators produced by Transparency International, by Freedom House, and by consultancies specialized in advising investors on political risks; and, the US State Department’s Trafficking in Persons indicators. Human rights indicators are being developed in the UN and regional
and advocacy organizations. The burgeoning production and use of indicators has not been accompanied by systematic comparative study of, and reflection on, the implications, possibilities and pitfalls of this practice. What does it mean to use indicators as a technology of governance? How does the increasing use of indicators in global governance affect the distribution of power, and the power of the governed? How does it affect the nature of decision-making about the allocation of resources and efforts to monitor compliance with global standards?

http://www.iili.org/research/indicatorsproject.asp

3) Key Indicators Database

The Pew Research Center's Global Attitudes Project conducts public opinion surveys around the world on a broad array of subjects ranging from people's assessments of their own lives to their views about the current state of the world and important issues of the day. Over 300,000 interviews in 59 countries have been conducted as part of the project's work.

http://www.pewglobal.org/database/