



Sustainability Series



Mark Cooper

Representation and Responsibility: The Politics of Knowledge, Belief, and Governance of Climate Change

Efforts to mitigate climate change rely on the creation of robust systems for valuing greenhouse gas emissions. These systems attempt to create a new value chain that connects sources and sinks of emissions to the costs and benefits of mitigation in order to induce changes across society and the economy. The fundamental impediment to achieving effective and equitable governance of climate change is political disagreement about how the problem of climate change is defined and what responsibility different parties have for reducing emissions. In this talk, I explain how this problem of representation and responsibility can be best understood by analyzing the metrics that shape the measurement, valuation, and commensuration of greenhouse gas emissions. Examining these metrics reveals important and underappreciated connections between scientific efforts to measure emissions and their effects, the characteristics of climate policy instruments, stakeholders' beliefs and attitudes, and the politics of governing climate change. This focus on metrics and measurement offers a lens for critical analyses of environmental problems that treat sustainability as simultaneously cultural and biophysical. Likewise, systems of value and valuation are at the core of environmental issues such as climate change adaptation, climate justice, and natural resource extraction.

Mark Cooper is a Mellon Postdoctoral Fellow at the College of William & Mary. He received his Ph.D. in Geography at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, with a minor concentration in Science and Technology Studies and a M.S. in Sociology. His research interests include climate change and society, political ecology and the political economy of natural resources, environmental politics and governance, environmental perception and behavior, and science and technology studies.

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3-4:20 PM

Crawford Hall 105

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