

Research Statement

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My main research agenda investigates how the interaction between actors at the global and local levels determines policy responses to environmental challenges like climate change and ecosystem destruction, both domestically and internationally. The overarching objective is to understand how authority is structured and exercised in new, experimental global environmental governance arrangements, as well as the drivers of system change. My current research focuses on three broad questions. First, when states fail to address a global problem, either through multilateral agreements or national laws, why and how are actions nonetheless taken on the ground? Second, how do ideas regarding the best way to tackle global problems, and the structures for implementing these ideas, evolve? Third, how does the interaction between global, national, and local actors determine the success of governance reform attempts? To answer these questions, I examine the distribution and flow of power across levels of analysis (international, national, and subnational) and within transnational governance networks; the politics of creating collaborative, multi-level governance arrangements; norm contestation and evolution; and ecological economics. I am particularly interested in how these issues shape the politics and policies relating to climate change and sustainable development.

My first book, *Grassroots Global Governance: Local Watershed Management Experiments and the Evolution of Sustainable Development* (Oxford University Press, 2017) provides a theoretical framework for understanding new global governance structures that have emerged in the wake of states' failure to adequately address problems like deforestation, poverty, disease, and climate change. When international agreements fail to solve global problems, transnational networks attempt to address them by implementing "global ideas"—policies and best practices negotiated at the global level—locally around the world. *Grassroots Global Governance* not only explains why some efforts succeed and others fail, but also why the process of implementing global ideas locally causes these ideas to evolve.

Grassroots Global Governance shows how transnational actors' success in putting global ideas into practice depends on the strategies they use to activate networks of grassroots actors influential in local social and policy arenas. Yet, grassroots actors neither accept nor reject global ideas as presented by outsiders. Instead, they negotiate whether and how to adapt them to fit local conditions. This contestation produces experimentation with unique institutional applications of a global idea infused with local norms and practices. Local experiments that endure are perceived as "successful," allowing those involved to activate transnational networks to scale up and diffuse innovative local governance models globally. These models carry local norms and practices to the international level where they challenge existing global approaches. Grassroots global governance theory explains why this process endures or breaks down at different points. In doing so, the book's theory and process model provide new insight into: (1) how global authority is structured and exercised in response to many of the world's most pressing problems; (2) how national and local systems intersect with and push against these global structures; (3) how power is distributed and exercised across the local, national, and international levels; and (4) how these global governance systems change.

Grassroots Global Governance shows how local actors guide the way global ideas evolve through local experimentation. In so doing, they reshape international actors' thinking, discourse, organizing, and the strategies they pursue globally. This makes them *grassroots global governors*. To demonstrate this, the book compares transnational efforts to implement local Integrated Watershed

Management programs across Ecuador and shows how local experiments altered the global debate over how to conceptualize and implement sustainable development. The book shows that the grassroots level is not merely the object of global governance, but rather a terrain where global governance is constructed.

My current book project analyzes the global diffusion of Earth law, including legal provisions that recognize rights of nature, and their role in changing global norms and policy debates regarding how to practice sustainable development and address climate change. The book and related articles examine the global Rights of Nature movement and its effort to incorporate rights of nature into laws and institutions at both the domestic and international levels. Because rights of nature is rooted in indigenous, non-Western understandings of humans' relationship with nature, my research explores the challenge of translating indigenous views into Western legal systems. Theoretically, my work addresses how global norms emerge and change, and provides an alternative to explanations rooted in Western, neoliberal norms like human rights and sovereignty. Empirically, I am analyzing the politics surrounding the development of Earth law/rights of nature provisions in Ecuador, Bolivia, New Zealand, and the U.S., as well as efforts to incorporate rights of nature into international law and institutions. Due to the large size of the project, I am collaborating with Pamela Martin of Coastal Carolina University.

A third set of projects relate to collaborative governance and ecological economics. I am part of an inter-disciplinary team (involving scholars and practitioners from Yale and the World Bank) developing an original dataset to analyze the effect of international conservation aid on tropical deforestation worldwide. Given regional variation, we are working on various articles examining the relationship between aid and deforestation regionally as well as studying global trends. This work builds on my previous research on experimental financing mechanisms for conserving forest and watershed ecosystems.

Grants and Awards

Since joining the University of Oregon faculty, I have won several internal university awards that have allowed me to finance fieldwork without seeking additional outside funding. These include the Sony Scholars Award (2013), the Junior Professor Development Award (2014), and the Faculty Research Award (2015). These awards provided me with \$25,000 over the last two years and, among other things, financed fieldwork in Ecuador, France, New Zealand, and the U.S. for my current book project. Previously, I received two outside research grants/fellowships: the Inter-American Foundation Grassroots Development Fellowship, 2010-2011 (\$35,000) and The Rotary Foundation Ambassadorial Scholarship, 2006 (\$25,000).

External Recognition

In 2016 the United Nations invited me to join the United Nations Knowledge Network on Harmony with Nature. In December 2015, the UN General Assembly passed resolution 70/208, which called for the development of Earth Jurisprudence as part of a post-2015 sustainable development agenda dedicated to living in harmony with nature. As a member of the knowledge network, I participate in annual dialogues and provide recommendations based on the results of my research on implementing rights of nature legislation (Earth Jurisprudence) and related norms.

I have given invited talks at Yale University, Victoria University of Wellington (New Zealand), the University of South Australia (Adelaide), and the College of Wooster (Wooster, OH). Details are listed on my CV. In addition, I have been a Visiting Researcher at the Latin American School of Social Sciences - Ecuador (2009-2011) and at the Law Faculty of Victoria University of Wellington (2016).