



Paper Session

Making Things the Same: How Carbon Has Been Constructed for Decarbonization Policies

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Organizers

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Call for Papers

A growing number of jurisdictions around the world are recognizing the threat of climate change and implementing policies to reduce their own carbon dioxide emissions. Carbon dioxide is conceptualized as a global pollutant because it is in theory spatially homogeneous in its impacts. Thus, climate policies have largely framed the climate change problem and carbon dioxide emissions as a set of technical and managerial challenges (Edwards 2010) requiring the application of economic theory (Lohmann 2009). However, decarbonization policies at all levels hinge on local efforts--and have localized impacts. The production, measurement, and regulation of carbon dioxide emissions is a highly heterogeneous process incumbent upon existing social, spatial, and political economic dynamics, making these policies highly relevant to geographers. This raises questions around the construction of carbon as a commodity; how biochemical processes came to be counted and made fungible; how systems of measurement, tracking, and exchange are defined, managed, and regulated; the political economy of decarbonization; and who gains and loses through the construction and implementation of decarbonization policies.

We ask: What are the costs of the emerging technocratic regime to manage carbon? Geographers have begun to explore the nature of decarbonization efforts, from market-based instruments like carbon pricing policies (Bryant 2017) to non-market policies like voluntary targets and command-and-control regulations, as well as complementary policies that address renewable energy and energy efficiency. Others have begun to assess the environmental justice impacts of carbon pricing programs (Cushing et al. 2016). This session aims to apply a critical lens to policy instruments that theorize carbon as a commodity. We are interested in

papers that draw on theories from science and technology studies, political economy, political ecology, climate and environmental justice, and other critical approaches to open up new frameworks and methodologies for understanding the construction, implementation, and impacts of decarbonization policies in different geographies. Specifically, this session seeks to promote discussion around the following themes and questions:

- The political economy of decarbonization policies
- Differences between decarbonization policies in theory and in practice, and the production of socio-spatial unevenness and disparity
- Expertise and knowledge production in the design of decarbonization policies (Lippert 2015), as well as the relationship between decarbonization policies and citizen science/advocacy
- The ways in which the materiality of carbon and carbon dioxide emissions interact with regulatory structures (Mackenzie 2009)
- The logics of neoliberalism and accumulation expressed in carbon pricing mechanisms (Knox-Hayes 2010; Bohm et al. 2012)
- The historical context and genealogies of decarbonization policies
- The expression of modernity, ecological modernization, and futurism in decarbonization infrastructures (Bailey et al. 2011; Knox-Hayes 2010)
- The effects of decarbonization policies, including but not limited to hot spots and related environmental and climate justice concerns (Cushing et al. 2016)

Please send your abstract of no more than 250 words to Cecilia Springer (cecilia.h.springer@berkeley.edu) and Xi Wang (xi_wang@colorado.edu) by **October 24, 2019**. We will notify participants within one week and participants should submit their abstracts to the AAG website by **October 30, 2019**.

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