

# UTRECHT WINTER SCHOOL ON EARTH SYSTEM GOVERNANCE 2018

Wednesday, 31 October 2018 – Sunday, 4 November 2018  
Utrecht University, The Netherlands

## **Academic directors**

Dr Rakhyun E. Kim

Dr Joost Vervoort

## **Course coordinator**

Sandra van der Hel

Contact: [uc2018@earthsystemgovernance.org](mailto:uc2018@earthsystemgovernance.org)

Application deadline: 16 April 2018

Course fee: €300

---

## FOCUS OF THE WINTER SCHOOL

The earth system governance research community is at a crossroads. The existing Science and Implementation Plan has provided useful guidance to the research community for the past decade. However, it is due to be replaced with a new research plan at the 2018 Utrecht Conference on Earth System Governance. What have we achieved so far and what new themes and debates can we expect over the next ten years? It is time to take stock of research findings and engage with the new research agenda that has started to emerge.

The 2018 Utrecht Winter School on Earth System Governance is designed to function as an incubator for early career researchers working with the new earth system governance research agenda. The aim is to critically reflect on the new research agenda and start taking it forward by facilitating early career researchers' work connected to this agenda.

The Winter School is immediately followed by the 2018 Utrecht Conference on Earth System Governance, held 5-7 November, in order to allow participants in the Winter School to also take part in the Utrecht Conference (separate conference registration is required).

## FORMAT

The Winter School will combine a series of highly stimulating lectures and dialogues on key themes in the new science agenda with interactive 'writeshops' focusing on participants' work-in-progress.

- 1) **Lectures and dialogues:** Lectures will be offered by senior researchers in the field and will focus on the five core themes of the new science agenda. We will have multiple lectures

reflecting on these themes from different perspectives. Each set of lectures will be concluded with a dialogue with the speakers and audience. The lectures and dialogues will provide an opportunity to critically reflect on the new science agenda from multiple perspectives.

- 2) **Writeshops:** The writeshops will focus on participants' own work. The aim of the writeshops is to take the ideas from the science agenda forward into concrete projects and publications. We will work in small groups of people whose work addresses themes from the new science plan, combining short exercises with intensive writing and peer review sessions. At the end of the week, participants will have an improved piece of written work to take home.

## CORE THEMES

The Winter School will focus on five themes that form the core focus of the new earth system governance research agenda<sup>1</sup>.

1. Anticipation and Imagination

Increasingly, earth system governance includes proliferating processes of *anticipating and imagining diverse futures*, including through foresight and scenario building. How to govern anticipation processes, but also scrutinize the politics of governing by anticipation and foresight is a crucial and timely research agenda for the social and interdisciplinary sciences. Investigating the interplay between the role of anticipation in dealing with contextual challenges and the role of imagination in limiting and enabling practical action toward new futures is essential.

2. Adaptiveness and purposeful change

How can societies navigate change towards global sustainability? Adaptiveness and reflexivity are two core concepts of the new earth system governance agenda. The lens of adaptiveness connects related concepts such as vulnerability, resilience, adaptation, robustness, adaptive capacity and social learning. Reflexivity refers to the ability of actors and institutions to critically reflect on their own performance (especially their environmental impacts), and to reshape their goals, practices, and values accordingly in order to wisely navigate complex, contested, and changing human-environmental systems. Adaptiveness emphasizes *responses* to changing social and ecological conditions (which may be coordinated, self-organized, or emergent), while reflexivity emphasizes the centrality of *critical scrutiny* of prevailing values and practices in governing processes of change.

3. Architecture and Agency

Research on architecture and agency in earth system governance focusses on understanding the frameworks through which earth system governance occurs and how these frameworks change. The notion of architecture addresses the complexity of governance systems, while the concept of agency raises questions about the influence, roles and responsibilities of the different actors and agents that drive earth system governance. Over the last decade, researchers studying governance have increasingly highlighted the interaction between

---

<sup>1</sup> These themes and their description are based on a draft of the new Earth System Governance Science and Implementation Plan, to be released prior to the 2018 Utrecht Conference on Earth System Governance.

architecture and agency within governance systems. Combining these topics opens up new opportunities for understanding dynamics and change in environmental governance systems.

#### 4. Democracy and Power

Democracy worldwide is under pressure from new configurations of power within states, notably the resurgence of populism and authoritarianism, often with a strident anti-environmental tenor. Political currents at the national level may in turn have far-reaching implications for the international community's capacity to solve collective problems. In these conditions it is imperative to examine whether new conceptions of democracy and power can help make sense of -- and craft responses to -- these trends. Earth system governance research must also contend with the fact that the exercise of power extending well beyond conventional political institutions may influence global environmental change, not least through the ways in which business interests and dominant discourses shape patterns of production and consumption.

#### 5. Justice and Allocation

Questions of justice and allocation are becoming central political discourses in a world with growing inequalities within and across national borders. However, the concept of justice is elusive and means different things to different people. In view of the complexity, key research questions are as follows: How can we advance interdisciplinary approaches to justice and allocation? Which new demands for justice and allocation are emerging in the context of profound transformations of the earth system? What types of steering have been helpful and not helpful to channel personal, regional, national and global worldviews towards more sustainable approaches to environmental rights and duties?

## WHO SHOULD APPLY?

The Winter School is intended for early career researchers (including junior researchers, PhDs and postdocs). The programme will cater both for those already familiar with the Earth System Governance Project and those new to the network. At the end of the Winter School, every participant should be able to situate her or his own research in key debates in earth system governance research and build towards the next generation of environmental governance scholarship.

## PARTICIPATION FEE

The course fee is 300 euros. Travel and accommodation are not included in the fee and need to be arranged by participants.

## CERTIFICATE

Participants will receive a certificate for completing the course. The Winter School is equivalent to 2 credits in the European academic Credit Transfer System. If required, participants should get these credits approved through their own university or graduate school.

## PREPARATIONS

Participants will be expected to prepare for the Winter School by reading a key text setting out the new research agenda for earth system governance. Moreover, each participant is expected to bring a piece of written work to further develop during the Winter School. This could be a paper or research proposal. Expect to be working on 3-5 pages during the writeshop, i.e. if you would like to work on a paper in progress it would make sense to focus on a specific sections such as the introduction or theoretical framework. The workshop will be most useful if you have a draft ready before the workshop.

## APPLICATIONS

Participants will be selected based on the following criteria:

1. Fit of research with the core themes of the Winter School
2. Benefit of the Winter School for their ongoing research
3. Motivation to reflect on emerging themes in earth system governance research

Please fill in the application form below and send your application together with your CV to [uc2018@earthsystemgovernance.org](mailto:uc2018@earthsystemgovernance.org) with “Winter School Application” in the subject line. The deadline for application is **16 April 2018**. Participants will be notified of acceptance by the end of April.

# APPLICATION FORM

---

Utrecht Winter School on Earth System Governance 2018

31 October 2018 – 4 November 2018

Utrecht University, The Netherlands

Name:

Email address:

Institution:

Position (e.g. PhD student, Post-doc, etc.):

1. Please provide a short motivation statement explaining why you would like to participate in the Winter School and what contribution you think you can make.

2. Please explain to which of the five core themes in this Winter School your work relates. You may select multiple themes but please state your first preference.

3. Please provide an abstract of the project that you would like to work on during the 'writeshops'. This could be a paper or research proposal.