



Science and Technology in Society Collaboration: Events 2012-2013

Who Speaks for the Global Climate? Institutional Pluralism and Democratic Representation

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Environmentalists have frequently asked who "speaks for nature" or "represents nature's interests." They have wondered how nature's representatives can best make their case against the more well established representatives who speak for humans. This way of framing the issue tends to suggest a preexisting category of nonhuman nature, conceived as separate from humans. It thus fails to capture the hybrid character of many environmental problems, such as climate change, which are best understood as simultaneously biophysical and sociopolitical. It may be impossible to "speak for the global climate" without simultaneously speaking for both humans and nonhumans. This paper suggests that representing global climate change requires diverse institutions that facilitate multiple and conflicting representative claims on behalf of both humans and nonhumans. Science advisory bodies, NGOs, national governments, and many other players make diverse representative claims, often combining scientific and political considerations. What it might mean to call the representation of climate change "democratic," therefore, depends on the normative standards appropriate to particular institutions, as well as the dynamic relationships among them.

Thursday, October 25, 2012
Great Hall
Conrad Grebel College University
7:00 p.m.

For more information <http://sciencetechsociety.uwaterloo.ca/index.html>