Incubator: Accountability and (Contested) Knowledge

WCSG presentation

January 18, 2018

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Incubator project: rationale

Motivation: to leverage and enhance our existing international visibility on issues of accountability and transparency...

...and bring this into productive conversation with our expertise and interest in the politics of (contested) knowledge

Aim of proposal:

- To explore common questions around (learning-based) accountability and (contested) knowledge
- To extend conceptual and methodological innovation in this area
- To expand our academic and practitioner networks within and beyond WUR

Illustrative questions + main activity

Illustrative questions:

- (How) do (novel) learning-based mechanisms enhance multi-actor accountability, given contested political contexts within which knowledge for sustainability is produced, disclosed and used?
- What impacts do proliferating infrastructures of transparency (monitoring, reporting and verification) have? What do they do, and for whom?

Specific incubator grant period (Oct. – Dec. 2017) activity:

- A pilot study to explore these questions collaboratively, focusing on multilateral climate governance

Pilot: exploring accountability mechanisms in multilateral climate governance

- Accountability: sought through states being transparent to each other about domestic climate actions
- Elaborate measuring, reporting and verification infrastructures being set up: (what) do they deliver?
- We went to ~~Fiji~~ Bonn to find out

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Focus of pilot:

The Facilitative Sharing of Views (FSV)

Four workshops 2016-2017

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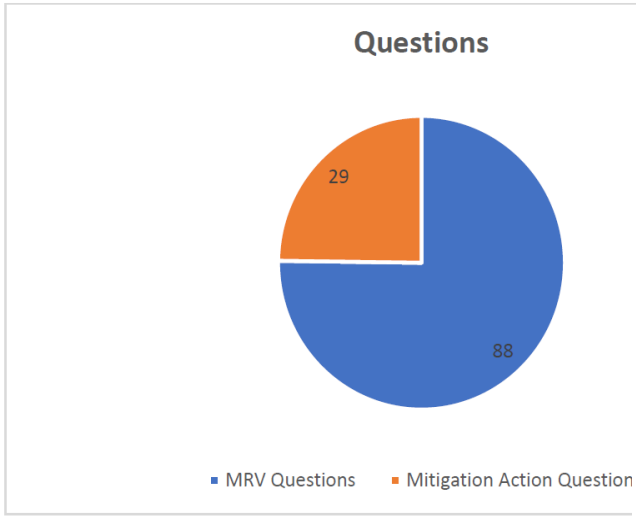
Why the FSV?

- First ever discussion of developing country reports to the UNFCCC
- Its purpose is to increase the "transparency of mitigation actions and their effects"
- The learning-based transparency and associated accountability mechanism of the Paris Agreement will build on the experiences of this FSV process
- No systematic analysis of the FSV process exists

Analysing FSV process and outcomes

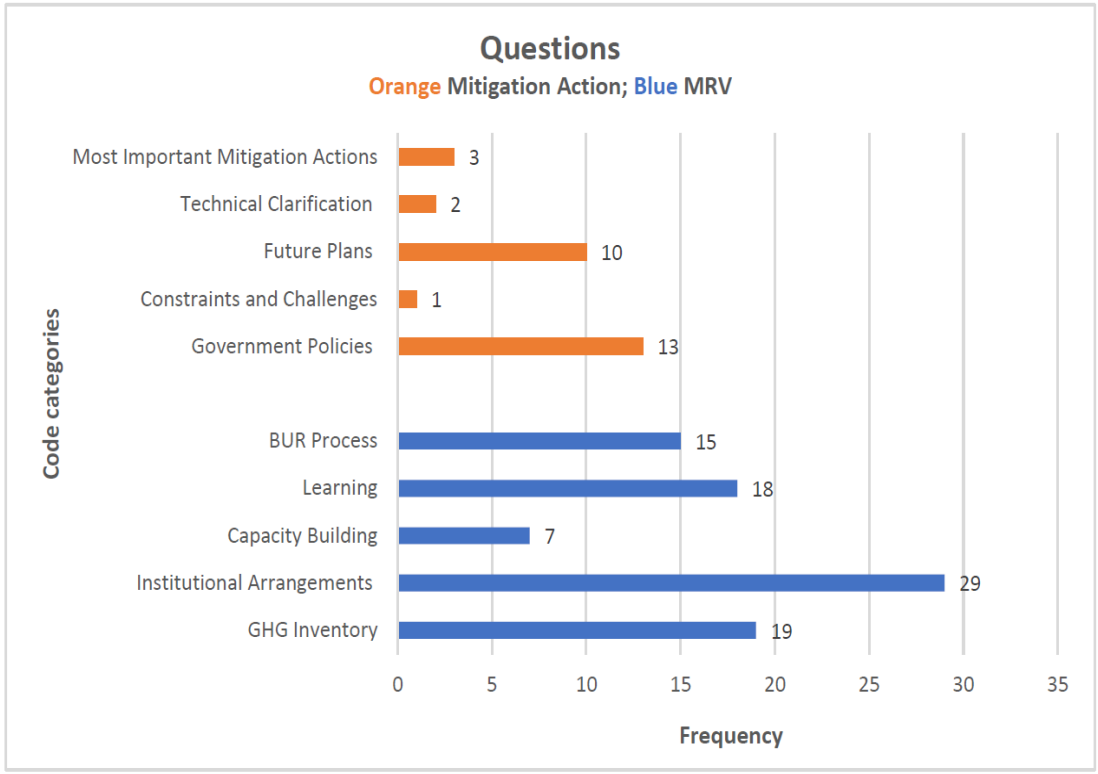
- (Virtual) attendance and transcription of all four FSV sessions
- Coding what countries ask each other, according to specific criteria (who asks? what kinds of questions are being asked?)
- Analysing what it means: Is accountability furthered? Whose? In what ways?

Figure 1. Total number of questions



Behind these beautiful figures lurk a huge amount of coding– generously funded by WCSG!

Figure 2. Number of questions per category



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Bringing a comparative lens to project

- The notion of "accountability" is central in law as well
- Many similarities between climate-FSV process and accountability mechanism in the UN human rights system: Universal Periodic Review
- States ask questions to each other about human rights, supposedly non-confrontational, cooperative mechanism
- **Overall similar questions raised**: is it useful? Is it fit for purpose? What is the added value? Should it be "strengthened"?
- Adds a comparative perspective to analysing state-to-state accountability in contested global arenas

Outputs and future plans

- **Pilot study: what did it achieve?**
  - Collaboration across WCGS groups
  - New data generated, new methods learned
  - Multi-authored article in preparation
  - WUR/WCSG visibility further enhanced within UNFCCC and within climate research communities
- **Future plans: where next?**
  - Broaden out to other issue-areas: e.g. biodiversity
  - Bridge to contested knowledge to be built
  - Seed money to yield fruit: funding proposal(s) to continue research collaboration on incubator topic