

CHINA CROSSROADS

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Western Bias in Comparisons of Good Governance: What do the Global Indicators Really Measure?

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We seem to be living in an ‘indicator culture’, marked by expansion of indicators and rankings which have become cornerstones of policymaking. However, this culture also brings with it discordant and contrasting orientations, shaped by the exercise of power, knowledge and counter-knowledge production, as well instances of validation, contestation, trust, and skepticism. What do governance indicators really measure? Global measures of corruption, for instance, while represented as universal, are based on notions of state and public interest which are informed by specific (but partial) normative preferences, historical experiences and understanding of the way of governing. A Global North-Global South divide also exists in the production and use of governance metrics and affects their legitimacy. This talk will provide a critical introduction to the analysis of these indicators as instruments of global governance.

[Debora Malito](#) is an Assistant Professor of International Relations at Xi’an Jiaotong-Liverpool University (XJTLU). Her academic work surrounds questions of inequality in international politics. Her current research interests engage issues of knowledge production, infrastructure in global development financing and the politics of international interventions in the reordering of states and political orders. Her many publications have appeared in journals such as *International Peacekeeping*, *Politikon*, *Peace Review* and *Third World Quarterly*. She is the author of [Destabilising Interventions In Somalia](#) and co-editor of [The Palgrave Handbook of Indicators in Global Governance](#) (2018) with G. Umbach and N. Bhuta. She holds a PhD in International Relations from the University of Milan.

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