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A Note from the Associate Director

By **Joshua Galperin**, Associate Director, Yale Center for Environmental Law & Policy

It has been a year since we released the 2014 Environmental Performance Index. It is hard to believe how time flies, even harder to believe when you look through this newsletter and see how much the EPI team has grown over that year, and how much they have accomplished.



Of course, the Yale Center for Environmental Law & Policy has been working hard on other projects as well. Since last year we have launched the Yale Climate Dialogue, a project that seeks to energize the international climate negotiation process by offering creative and politically realistic ideas for broader and more effective climate leadership; we have brought in a series of top-notch speakers including James Cameron, Peter Lehner, Tom Kizzia, and Mary Wood, among others; and we have continued to explore cutting-edge land use issues in collaboration with the Land Use Law Center at Pace Law School.

This time next year we will be releasing the 2016 EPI and this newsletter gives a peak at the new innovations and insights that are likely to be a part of the next EPI. It also gives a profile of our expanding EPI team.

The EPI Team's Top Hits of 2014

By **Alisa Zomer**, Yale F&ES '14 and **Jason Schwartz**, Yale F&ES '13

The Environmental Protection Index (EPI) team had a hugely productive 2014. We've brought in a lot of new talent, taken on vital research, gotten coverage in academic and popular journals, upped our communications game, and widened our collaborations across sectors. To stay in touch, like us on [Facebook](#) and follow us on [Twitter](#) @YaleEnviro.

2015 is going to be intense -- climate negotiations in Paris, shaping the Sustainable Development goals, ramping up for the 2016 EPI. But we're feeling ready to take it on. If you want to know why we're so confident, take a look at some of our accomplishments in 2014.

[Building a Social Network for Climate Action: a Conversation with Alexander Verbeek](#)

[An Integrated Approach to Climate Action: a Conversation with Alexander Verbeek](#)

[Politics and Environment in Iceland: a Conversation with Thora Arnorsdottir](#)

[Bottom-up Energy Production and Supply: a Conversation with Erik Christiansen](#)

The full collection is available on [iTunesU](#) and [SoundCloud](#).

Who's in Your Country's 'Social Network?'

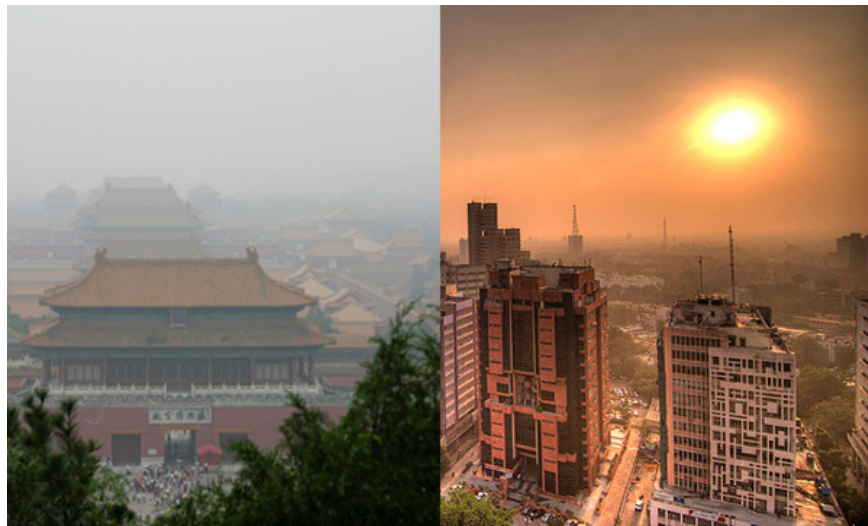
Yale's Environmental Performance Index (EPI) team is conducting a survey to see which countries people perceive as comparable to their own on issues of policy direction, economic models, and/or institutional reform. Using this data, we hope to reveal "social" relationships beyond traditional country groupings by GDP or geography.

Within the United Nations Climate talks, countries are often aligned in negotiation blocs. Brazil, South Africa, India, and China - all major emerging economies - comprise the BASIC group; small-island states have their own bloc called AOSIS, or



#2014EPI takes off. We launched the 10th iteration of our index at the World Economic Forum. The launch came with a brand new interactive website, which won the Platinum Award in the Creativity International Awards, a silver medal in the W3 Awards, and was a Webby honoree in the Science and Green categories. Explore the website [here](#).

India vs. China on city air pollution. EPI analysis showing that air quality in India is worse than China sparked a media storm, with coverage in the Guardian, the Economist, and New York Times (read the article [here](#)). Later in the year, India established a new air quality index for cities, largely based on our model. More [here](#).



(LEFT: Forbidden City in Beijing, September 2005, photo by Brian Jeffery Beggerly/Flickr. RIGHT: Connaught Place in New Delhi, November 2006, photo by Ville Miettinen/Flickr.)

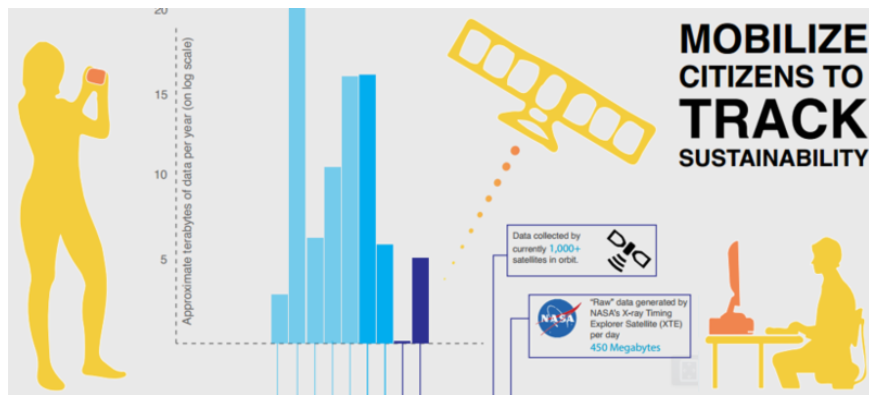
Mobilizing citizens to track sustainability. The journal *Nature* published the EPI's article and infographic on how information technologies can be used to crowdsource environmental data. Read the article [here](#) and check out the complete [infographic](#).

Alliance of Small Island States; and, the Like-Minded Developing Countries is made up of a diverse group of developing nations. Ultimately, the goal of the survey is to harness the power of behavioral norms to elevate environmental issues on the global policy agenda and improve the substance and ambition of environmental performance.

Do you think your country is a leader in policy development? What countries are similar to yours?

Please take a minute to fill out [this survey](#) and add to a growing dataset of perspectives from around the globe.

Thank you for your help!



(Infographic by Anne Householder.)

Smart-scaling the EPI. The EPI research agenda expanded significantly to include sub-national applications of the EPI methodology and indicator design (in [Iraq](#), [Malaysia](#), [Viet Nam](#), and the [United States](#)), as well as new urban projects on urban governance, city metrics, civic science. More about the projects [here](#).

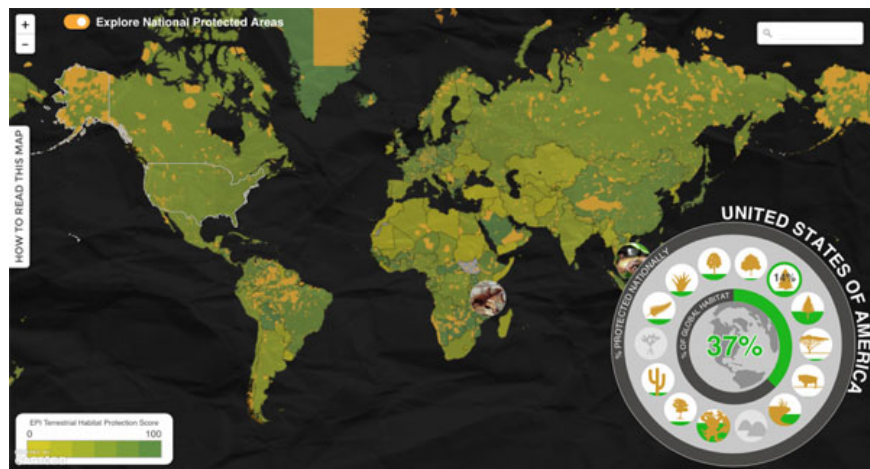


(Iraq delegation from the Ministries of Environment and Planning with the EPI team at Yale, June 2014.)

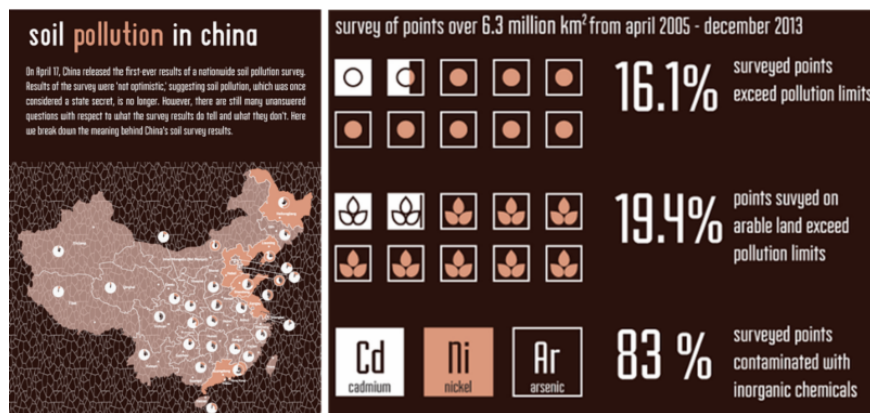
Hacking the environment, for good. EPI participated in its first ever [EcoHackathon](#) and produced a cool interactive map overlaying national air pollution quality with specific cities. The map was published by the *Atlantic* and republished by NASA-Earth Observatory on Facebook, receiving over 12,000 likes, 6,000 shares, and 700 comments. Check out the interactive map [here](#).

UNEP adopts new EPI Wastewater indicator. There was no good dataset for wastewater, a critical determinant of water quality and human health impacts. So EPI researcher Omar Malik decided to make one from scratch with the aim of informing data and measurement for the new Sustainable Development Goals. Already, the United Nations Environment Programme is using the indicator in its Transboundary Waters Assessment Program. More [here](#).

#MapMonday goes wild. *Scientific American's* #MapMonday blog featured three interactive maps produced by the EPI team - on [air pollution](#), [biodiversity](#), and [pesticides](#). Shout out to [@Tallitrigg](#) for sharing and to EPI researcher Laura Johnson for [making it POP](#).



Greener, but browner in China. The *Economist* covered the 2014 EPI release with a special focus on China's positive environmental performance. Read the article [here](#). Following on this, EPI did a deep dive on soil pollution in China, published by *Scientific American* and accompanied by a sweet infographic. Check out the full image [here](#).



Behind the EPI curtain. None of these milestones would be possible without the hard work and dedication of the student researchers, writers, programmers, and designers who bring the data to life. This year, the EPI had 13 amazing students including: Amy Weinfurter, Andrew Moffat, Anna Young, Anne Householder, Ariana Spawn, Daphne Yin, Diego Torres Quintanilla, Pamela Jao, Peter Hirsch, Susan Wang, Xiao Wu, Whitney Johnson, and Yodi Melkinov.

EPI team grows. In addition to the veritable army of students, the EPI full time-staff got bigger. [Angel Hsu](#) received a joint faculty appointment at Yale F&ES and Yale-NUS College. [Jason Schwartz](#) rejoined the team as the full time EPI manager and communicator extraordinaire. And, [Alisa Zomer](#) came on board to lend her all-star skills to kick-off the cities work.

But amidst the growth is a huge loss. We are so sad to lose [Susanne Stahl](#), who has been the backbone of YCELP for four years. She led the social media and website overhaul for the 2014 EPI, and it is not an overstatement to say this place wouldn't run without her. We will miss you Susanne.



Okay 2015, we're ready to take you on with bigger and better data visualizations, more interactive and engaging stories, and more tasty ways to digest and apply critical environmental performance data for decision-making.