



Expertise and politics in climate change knowledge

Call for abstracts to Gothenburg workshop 27-28 February 2025

An invitation to a workshop organized within the Nordic Summer University Study Circle *Act, React, and Reflect: Meta-perspectives on Climate Change Knowledge*, and hosted by the Faculty of Humanities, University of Gothenburg.

Global climate change presents societal challenges at multiple levels, each including different forms of expert knowledge. The kinds of knowledge required for climate research, policy formulation, conflict management and new political agendas poses challenges to established structures and conventions of knowledge production, and to the role of expertise. In these processes, boundaries between researchers, stakeholders and politics are being blurred as the role of science (natural and social) in society is renegotiated. Scientific knowledge claims and their implications have increasingly become the subject of political debate and contestation. This poses a challenge to the established understanding of science as non-partisan and value-free, as well as being cause for reflection about the roles of experts in governance (Soneryd & Sundqvist 2023).

In this workshop we explore the role of experts as knowledge brokers, the role of scientists and expertise in policy processes and in the public sphere, and contested climate expertise. We further invite rethinking the role of expertise and academic knowledge in the post-truth era. For example, it is well known that a common tactic of climate deniers is to undermine public trust in climate expertise (Oreskes & Conway, 2012). At the same time, overconfidence in the ability of experts to reduce complex political questions to technical puzzles can lead to real problems of legitimacy and confidence in public policy (Wynne, 2003). Balancing between the extremes of repressive technocracy and “anything goes” post-truth, questions about the role of experts in the climate crisis connect our ideas of what knowledge and society is and should be (Durant, 2011).

We invite papers broadly addressing the role of experts and politics in the knowledge production, policy formulation and decision-making surrounding climate change and sustainability transitions. Are there some issues that are to be decided by experts and some through deliberation? How is expertise established and recognized, or contested?

How has expert opinion been implemented (or not) in concrete cases? What is expertise anyway, in particular climate- or sustainability expertise? We welcome empirical or theoretical papers discussing these or related issues from any discipline concerned with knowledge production in sustainability, including but not limited to sociology, philosophy, anthropology, STS, and cultural studies, and we especially welcome contributions from practitioners who are interested in reflecting on their own practices. Papers can be at any stage of completion.

Format

The workshop will be centered around in-depth discussions of participants' papers, with joint summary discussions. There is also an option to participate without presenting a paper, but participants with full papers will be prioritized. We will start with two keynote sessions aiming to establish a common ground for discussion.

Keynote speakers

Darrin Durant (University of Melbourne) – Dr. Durant's research focuses on disputes between experts and publics, and he has published on topics including nuclear waste management, nuclear power, energy policy, and the impact of disinformation and misinformation on democracy.

Göran Sundqvist (University of Gothenburg) – Prof. Sundqvist's research concerns the interplay between science and politics; how scientific knowledge gains influence over political decision making, but also how influence is exerted in the opposite direction. This includes the interplay between scientific experts and citizens in the development of so-called "scientific citizenship."

The event will be organized in collaboration with the **Gothenburg Museum of Natural History**, who will host a **public panel discussion** and a special **guided tour** of their collections relating to the workshop topic.

Nordic Summer University

This workshop is part of the [Act, React & Reflect: Meta-perspectives on climate change knowledge](#), a three-year study circle under the umbrella of the [Nordic Summer University](#) (NSU). Through inter- and transdisciplinary exchanges during three thematic winter sessions and three summer sessions, we explore the role of knowledge in relation to climate change and sustainability transitions. The overarching aim of the study circle is to establish and grow a Nordic-Baltic research network centered on meta-perspectives on climate knowledge.

ECTS Credits for PhD students

Participating PhD students with full papers will be offered a certificate of participation for 2 ECTS credits upon request.

Important dates

- Deadline for submission of abstracts: 29 November 2024
- Notification of acceptance: 6 December 2024
- Deadline for registration: 10 January 2025
- Deadline for submission of full papers: 31 January 2025
- Workshop: 27-28 February 2025

Submit your, and a short bio (max 200 words) via email to: Jakob.lundgren@hh.se or anders.hylmo@hh.se

Participation fee & travel grants

A small participation fee covers NSU Membership, lunches and dinner.

Regular participants: 80€

Reduced fee (PhD students and independent researchers): 50€

Limited travel grants will be offered, primarily for PhD students in the Nordic & Baltic region. Please notify us of interest in travel grants when submitting your abstract.

References

- Durant, D. (2011). Models of democracy in social studies of science. *Social Studies of Science*, 41(5), 691–714. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0306312711414759>
- Oreskes, N., & Conway, E. M. (2012). *Merchants of doubt: How a handful of scientists obscured the truth on issues from tobacco smoke to global warming*. Bloomsbury. <https://www.merchantsofdoubt.org/>
- Soneryd, L., & Sundqvist, G. (2023). *Science and Democracy*. <https://bristoluniversitypressdigital.com/monobook/book/9781529222159/9781529222159.xml>
- Wynne, B. (2003). Seasick on the Third Wave? Subverting the Hegemony of Propositionalism: Response to Collins & Evans (2002). *Social Studies of Science*, 33(3), 401–417. <https://doi.org/10.1177/03063127030333005>