

Call for Papers

NESS Workshop: What can science deliver and what does policy want?

Science-policy interactions and climate action

Workshop chairs:

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How does policy listen to truth? The climate change issue seems to be trapped in a situation of either too much or too little listening. The linear model, assuming that science must come before action, gives birth to its counterpart: climate scepticism. The intensified search for certainty becomes an easy target for sceptics, and creates a dichotomy between believers and non-believers. Controversies over evidence become a proxy for political conflicts, and real action is blocked. Besides too much focus on certainty, a possible reason for lack of action is that climate science, as presented by the Intergovernmental Panel for Climate Change (IPCC), does not deliver ready-made technological solutions, or so-called *technological fixes*. A technological fix is a shortcut for dissolving larger conflicts in society by ignoring and circumventing their complexities and presenting context-independent solutions without changing preferences or behaviour of the user. There seems to be lack of connection between knowledge and action, and one dimension of the knowledge-action gap to explore further, is the link between knowledge and technology. Or is there a too strong focus on both knowledge and technology when trying to understand and manage climate change? Is it perhaps better to understand climate change through more human-centred and cultural approaches?

The starting point for this workshop, and in line with key scholarship in Science and Technology Studies (STS), is a sceptical view on the notion of ‘speaking truth to power’ and on ‘technological fixes’, while considering the former to be based on an out-dated *linear model of expertise*, and the latter on a similar old-fashioned *technological determinism*. STS’ detailed empirical studies of science and technology show a more complicated picture.

According to STS, the components of ‘speaking truth to power’ need to be opened up and diversified, by identifying 1) multiple voices, 2) a multitude of power centres, and, 3) multi-directional processes of interaction and co-production in contrast to a linear model from knowledge to power. Scientific facts and technological artefacts are never self-evident and remain open to interpretation. Proposed technological fixes may end up adding to the problems they are claimed to resolve. They must be studied in their context of use, in which they are always embedded.

We are hoping for contributions that are not only focusing on deconstructing complex science-policy interactions, but attempts in more reconstructive directions: how and when can policy listen to science, and what can science/technology deliver? Examples beyond the climate change case are also welcomed, as well as contributions from different national and transnational contexts.

The NESS workshops follow a standing session format (similar to ECPR), which allows for substantive discussions on research in progress. The conference invites scholars from multiple disciplinary backgrounds in environmental social science. The overall **objective** of the **workshop** is to facilitate and encourage participation, equality and collaboration between younger and more established scholars. Each paper is expected to relate to the theme of the workshop, and the participant submits and presents a paper (or work in progress) for the discussion. Workshop participants will be asked to comment on at least one other paper in the respective workshop and participate in the general discussion of the other papers presented. Participants should only choose and attend one workshop for the duration of the conference. The ambition with this format is that the workshops allow for in-depth and coherent discussions of the respective themes and provide opportunity for potential joint publications or other continuing collaborations between the participants.