



SCHOOL OF GLOBAL STUDIES

Call for Papers for Workshops

for the Nordic Environmental Social Science Conference (NESS), University of Gothenburg, Sweden, June 7-9, 2022. [Link to Conference site](#)

Workshop: Can democratic innovations support environmental governance? Theoretical and empirical evidence of challenges and opportunities

Workshop chairs:

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Innovations are recognized to play a key role in any transformations to sustainability, but the focus has been on technical innovations rather than democratic innovations. Democracies, with short electoral cycles, increasingly partisan politics and a wariness of radical policy proposals struggle to address long-term, complex and contested sustainability questions. So can democratic innovations help to address sustainability challenges in fair and novel ways? Deliberative democratic theory, and recent empirical results show the promise of innovations such as citizens' climate assemblies and participatory budgeting. In these spaces, representative groups of citizens can grasp complex scientific information, overcome polarisation and develop common proposals to address wicked problems. However, sceptics point to their limited impact on public debate and policy, as issues of power and vested interests dominate politics and decision-making processes.

This session will explore the potential for democratic innovations, such as deliberative mini-publics, to support environmental governance. We invite papers exploring the role of democratic innovations in environmental governance from a theoretical perspective and based on specific case studies. Some of the key questions for this workshop include, but are not limited to:

- What types of democratic innovations can support environmental governance?
- How can democratic innovations affect political debate, policy processes, public engagement and the role of scientific evidence in environmental politics?

- Can democratic innovations support long-term change in democratic systems through changes in incentives, feedbacks or information flows?
- Can democratic innovations support radical sustainability transformations in the face of political inertia and vested interests?

Instructions for Workshop Participants

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 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. Participants should only choose and attend one workshop for the duration of the conference, but you may send abstracts to more than one workshop. Workshop participants will be asked to comment on at least one other paper in the respective workshop, read the other papers and participate in the general discussion of the papers. 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.

Send your abstract of up to 300 words to all the workshop chairs no later than **December 15, 2021**. Chairs will respond to questions which relate to the workshop theme. For questions of a general nature (i.e. not workshop specific) they should be directed to ness@globalstudies.gu.se

The conference organizers will notify the participants of their acceptance to the workshops by **March 1, 2022**. Workshop papers are to be submitted to the workshop chairs and the other workshop participants at the latest **May 20**. May 20 is also the last day to register for the conference on the website. A workshop schedule including information on presentations, session chairs and discussants will be available on the conference website at the end of May. The workshop format only allows for very short paper presentations (ca. 5 min) and all workshop participants are expected to have read and be able to comment on the papers in the workshop.