

Techno-Scientific Uncertainty and the Translation of Scientific Knowledge into Political Power

Panel Chair: Justiina Dahl, KTH Royal Institute of Technology (justiina.dahl@eui.eu)

Abstract

In the 1992 special issues of *International Organization* on epistemic communities, Peter Haas, defined the context in which the analytical framework was developed as one of “growing technical uncertainties and complexities of problems of global concern.” Most of the analytical revisions to the epistemic community framework have argued for the need to move the empirical focus of expert networks away from the techno-scientific context. Examples of the kinds of epistemic communities the analytical framework has been extended to analyse include the study of trans-governmental legal regulatory networks of product exchange, economists and political scientists, as well as special advisory groups of the United Nations. The continuing prominence of global climate change scepticism and specific numeric, natural and technical sciences in international evaluations and rankings, would, however, imply that there is something special in the role of natural and technical epistemic communities in the organization of global governance - especially in contexts plagued by techno-scientific uncertainty that originates from complexity of problems of global concern or lack of previous experiences and accumulative, experimental knowledge.

This Panel examines if there is something special about natural technical scientific epistemic communities and the process of translating *techno-scientific uncertainty* into political power. Like in the 1992 developed framework of epistemic communities, the focus in the Panel is on case studies of epistemic communities consisting of primarily technical and natural scientists in context of international and national policy coordination characterized by some sort of techno-scientific uncertainty. Examples of the kinds of epistemic communities discussed include global climate change scientists that try to model and develop adaptation strategies for future climate conditions in different parts of the globe, climate geo-engineering lobby-groups, and ship-builders arguing for the feasibility of the expansion of trans-continental shipping into the Arctic Ocean.

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