

Politics of Scientific and Non-scientific Knowledge Systems in Global Governance

Panel Chair:

- Adam Stepien, University of Lapland (adam.stepien@ulapland.fi)

Proposed for Section S17: Co-production of Science, Technology, and Society in Global Governance (Chair: Justiina Dahl, European University Institute)

Abstract:

The authority of specific kind of scientific discourse that relies on what Theodore Porter called “Trust in Numbers” in global policy-making has been empirically illustrated and analyzed, including through a plethora of case studies. At the same time, there are increasing efforts – at least at a declarative level – to incorporate into global policy-making various forms of lay knowledge or traditional ecological knowledge (TEK), particularly that of indigenous peoples. Traditional knowledge constitutes a type of knowledge particularly strongly transcending the emphasis on “numbers”.

Science and technology often propose solutions based on further technological advancement as responses to global problems caused by the earlier application of modern technologies. Thus, the human-driven climate change is to be mitigated by geoengineering, the answer to rising energy consumption is technological enhancement of efficiency and energy capacity, the solution for environmental impacts of fertilizers are innovations in fertilizing technologies.

Lay and traditional knowledge is supposed to contribute to more comprehensive and accurate scientific data, utilizing local people's long-term experience of their environment. More ambitiously, there have been hopes that TEK can introduce into decision-making different world views, effectively confusing dominant technology-focused discourses. This, ideally, could allow imagining development trajectories alternative to those construed solely on the bases of technological solutions, neoliberal market governance and environmentally and socially exploitative forms of production. Ever more advanced technological solutions to achieve sustainability (such as geoengineering) are thus juxtaposed with the ideal of harmonious coexistence of humans within nature and of sustainability based on the respect for the environment and for existing social networks.

In the last decades, researchers have vigorously explored the relationship between different kinds of knowledge and their influence on policy-making at all levels of governance. Ways how different kinds of knowledge could complement each other have been discussed. Doubts were raised about the possibility of productively integrating elements of traditional knowledge into

fragmented and isolated scientific inquiries or into policy-making, as traditional knowledge is anchored in holistic world views, belief systems and complex understandings of the relationship between human beings and nature. Utilizing specific data or information derived from TEK may be ultimately misleading without appreciation for holistic knowledge structures. What is more, in many places TEK shows a declining trend, including due to lack of inter-generational knowledge transmission and proves to be less useful for knowledge users due to climate and environmental changes.

This Panel would aim to go beyond more practice-oriented or technical questions regarding relationship between scientific and traditional knowledge, although such discussion cannot be put aside. The focus is on how different kinds of knowledge are used in and are elements of global politics, how they are politicized and depoliticized. How can traditional ecological knowledge – by nature localized – be applied at the level of global governance? This panel aims to compare the use in different global governance settings of (and interactions between) scientific power/knowledge –system and lay and traditional indigenous knowledge. In particular, global governance arenas dealing with environmental challenges (UNFCCC, CBD, Arctic cooperation, etc.). While the papers in the panel examine a variety of case studies and ideas as related to global governance, globally-produced concepts, norms and rules as they manifest at national, regional and local levels constitute an integral part of this picture.

If you have a Paper you think might fit in this Panel, please contact the Panel Chairs before the proposal deadline of 15 February. Please ensure you inform the Panel Chairs of your email address as registered with your MyECPR account. If you do not have a MyECPR account, you can create one [here](#).