Economic planning for climate futures: Knowledge and democracy problems

Call for abstracts to workshop 18-19 March 2027 at the Royal Institute of Technology (KTH), Stockholm

Organized within the Nordic Summer University Study Circle *Act, React, and Reflect: Meta-perspectives on Climate Change Knowledge*.

The present conjuncture of ecological breakdown, energy insecurity and (geo)political fragmentation is increasingly described as a global "polycrisis" (Lawrence et al., 2023). Against this backdrop, there is a proliferation of calls for sustainability transitions and for governance arrangements capable of steering socio-technical systems towards ecological sustainability (Feola, 2015; Geels, 2019). Two enduring questions underlie these debates: how can "we," as societies, know enough to wilfully steer complex socio-technical systems, and how can such steering be organised democratically?

These questions are directly addressed in renewed debates on economic, ecological and democratic planning, as well as on post-growth forms of economic coordination (Akbulut et al., 2022; Durand et al., 2024; Koch, 2024). Recently, Durand (2026) has argued that longstanding epistemic critiques of planning, rooted in the Socialist Calculation Debate and Hayekian liberalism, have precluded planning on the grounds of a lack of possible knowledge. Nonetheless, contemporary societies possess unprecedented capacities to generate and coordinate information, which partly shifts the central question from whether planning is possible to how societies can generate sufficient knowledge to steer transitions democratically and within ecological limits.

In this workshop, we are interested in exploring the twin problems of knowledge and democracy in non-market approaches to economic and ecological planning. We equally invite contributions on the possibilities and limits of "knowledgeable" and "democratic" forms of planning. Furthermore, we expect and welcome the tension between top-down (e.g., state-centred) and bottom-up (e.g., grassroots or community-centred) alternatives to current capitalist-market-state configurations. The workshop's scope encompasses scholars from sociology, policy studies, economics, STS, philosophy, anthropology, or

any other relevant field wishing to reflect on these issues. Furthermore, while we do not preclude contributions from the now well-established research strands of climate imaginaries and post-growth futures, we believe this workshop could offer a space where these fields come closer to discussing the role of planning in wilfully scaling down and post-growth development (Kallis et.al., 2020).

We welcome contributions that explore different possible models, modes or scenarios for planning, and the thinking that underpins them. These could include:

-Beyond capitalism? (beyond growth) Planned capitalism (social democracy)

-top down vs. bottom up

-Local vs. global

-Knowability vs. unknowability

-Expertise vs. Democracy

The workshop will feature two kinds of contributions. Participants can either submit a **full paper** (meaning that all or most parts of the paper draft should exist) or hold a shorter oral **speed-talk**. Speed talks could be an introduction to your research topic, ongoing project, or preliminary ideas from early stages of research.

There will only be a limited number of places available. If you want to secure a place ahead of the submission deadline (pending relevance of abstract) please email the organizers. Full papers will be given priority if we receive an excess of submissions.

Format

The two-day workshop will focus on participants' presentations, with sessions divided between longer in-depth discussions of full papers and shorter speed talks.

Public keynote by Cédric Durand
On the evening of 18 March, Cédric Durand will give a public keynote on ecological planning. Durand is professor of political economy at the University of Geneva. His work examines finance, digital capitalism and, most recently, how economies can be democratically planned to stay within ecological limits. His book with Razmig Keucheyan, How to Change Course: The Principles of Ecological Planning, will be published in English by Verso in February 2027.

Working session
The program will also include an open working session, co-organized with the Division of

Urban and Regional Studies and the KTH Environmental Humanities Laboratory. Details on the topic and format will follow.

About Nordic Summer University

This workshop is part of **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**: 10 January 2027
- Notification of acceptance: 15 January 2027
- Deadline for registration: 29 January 2027
- Deadline for submission of full papers: 8 March 2027
- Workshop: 18-19 March 2027

Abstract submission

Submit your **abstract** (max 300 words), a **short bio** (max 200 words), and **full paper/ speed talk preference**, via email to: jakob.lundgren@gu.se and eskilen@kth.se

Participation fee

The participation fee covers the full program, NSU Membership, lunches and dinner.

Regular participants: 150€

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

References:

Feola, G. (2015). Societal transformation in response to global environmental change. Ambio, 44(5), 376–390.

Kallis, G., Paulson, S., D'Alisa, G., & Demaria, F. (2020). The case for degrowth. Polity Press.

Lawrence, M., Homer-Dixon, T., Janzwood, S., Rockstrom, J., Renn, O., & Donges, J. F. (2023). Global polycrisis. SSRN Electronic Journal.

Geels, F. W. (2019). Socio-technical transitions to sustainability: a review of criticisms and elaborations of the Multi-Level Perspective. Current Opinion in Environmental Sustainability, 39, 187–201.

Akbulut, B., Dufour, M., Legault, F., Pineault, E., & Tremblay-Pepin, S. (2022). Democratic Economic Planning, Social Metabolism and the Environment. Science & Society, 86(2), 291–313.

Durand, C. (2026). The problem of knowledge in the Anthropocene. Globalizations, 23(4), 899–918.

Durand, C., Hofferberth, E., & Schmelzer, M. (2024). Planning beyond growth: The case for economic democracy within ecological limits. Journal of Cleaner Production, 437.

Koch, M. (2024). Deepening the degrowth planning debate. Sustainability: Science, Practice, and Policy, 20(1).