

Tom Goosse - Spatial planning to Citizen Science for resilient climate action

The current climate governance is confronted with the major challenges of formulating plans and policies coherent with the concrete life world of citizens as well as of being consistent with the implemented measures. Due to the common shared impact of the problem and the uncertainty surrounding the effectiveness of climate measures, the relevance and prioritisation of certain climate measures are continuously open to public debate and, in many cases, subject to misinformation. In that context, many witness a decrease in the overall trust towards democratic public institutions. In order to answer these challenges, a consensus is established amongst the scientific community concerning the necessary involvement of citizens and other stakeholders in the implementation of climate measures. The institutional structures yet often demarcate lay citizens from scientific and government experts, and the commonplace communication practices in policy formulation and implementation constrain increased citizen participation.

While citizen science is broadly defined as scientific work done by citizens, it can also include the analysis and interpretation of that scientific work for public debate and its translation to policies. Research has already shown that citizen science can be effective in increasing knowledge and understanding in environmental issues, influencing policy decision and promote citizen's engagement. This PhD. research explores the potential of citizen science in spatial planning practices for raising awareness and understanding of climate change measures, improve policy design and coherence, and enhance citizen's engagement and trust in public decision-making processes. The research investigates also how citizen science could lead to the definition of a new role for citizens that moves beyond the commonplace participatory engagement with climate change policies.

“Spatial planning to Citizen Science for resilient climate action” is a joint and double doctorate between the Faculty of Spatial Sciences of the University of Groningen and the Centre for Mobility and Spatial Planning of the Ghent University.