

# The place of democracy in the three selective traditions of ESE + Investigating pluralism in practice

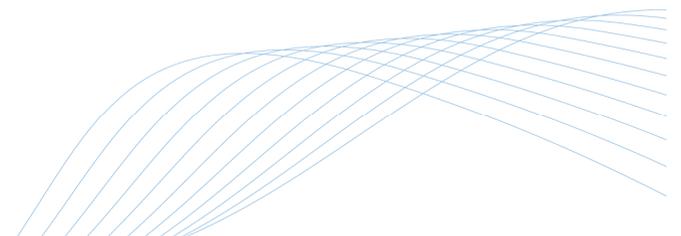
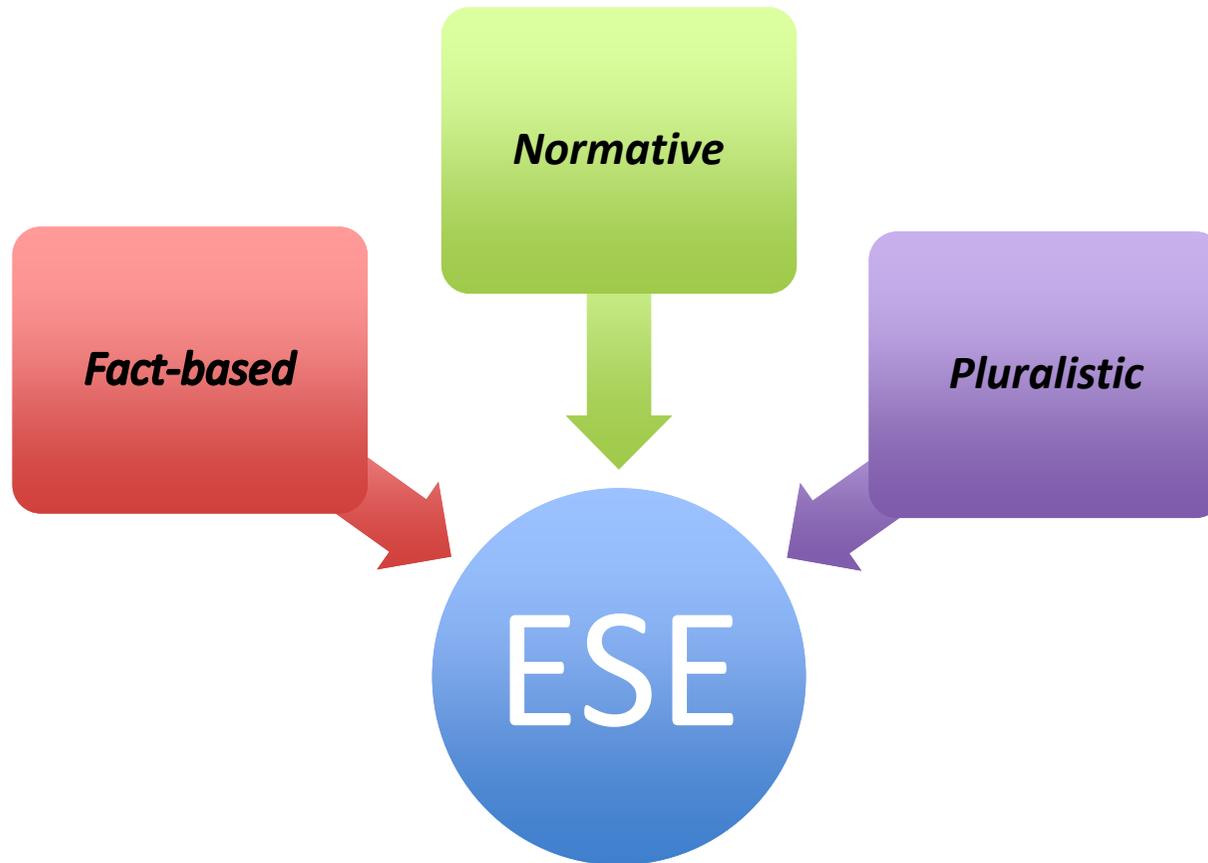


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Studies of Meaning-making in  
Educational Discourses

# Selective traditions of ESE

- National evaluation of EE/ESD in Swedish schools (Öhman & Östman, 2001)
- Using the concept of *selective traditions*: regular patterns of the selective processes concerning content and methods – an educational practice and a framework for teachers' interpretation (Williams, 1973; see Östman, 1996)
- Selective traditions of environmental education: approach to *environmental problems + educational philosophy*
- Sandell, Öhman & Östman (2003/2005); Öhman (2006, 2008, 2010), Sund (2008), Johansson & Wickman (2013), Öhman & Sandell (2016)



## *Fact-based tradition*

- Environmental problems are viewed as *knowledge problems*
- Only scientific facts and models are seen as having objective foundations and should be part of environmental education (*scientism*)
- Teachers transfer adjusted essential scientific facts and models to students (*essentialism*)
- **Purpose:** citizens who have enough information to judge between different political alternatives in environmental issues
- The democratic process comes *after* education

## *Normative tradition*

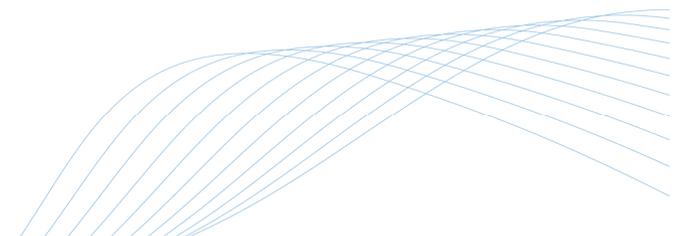
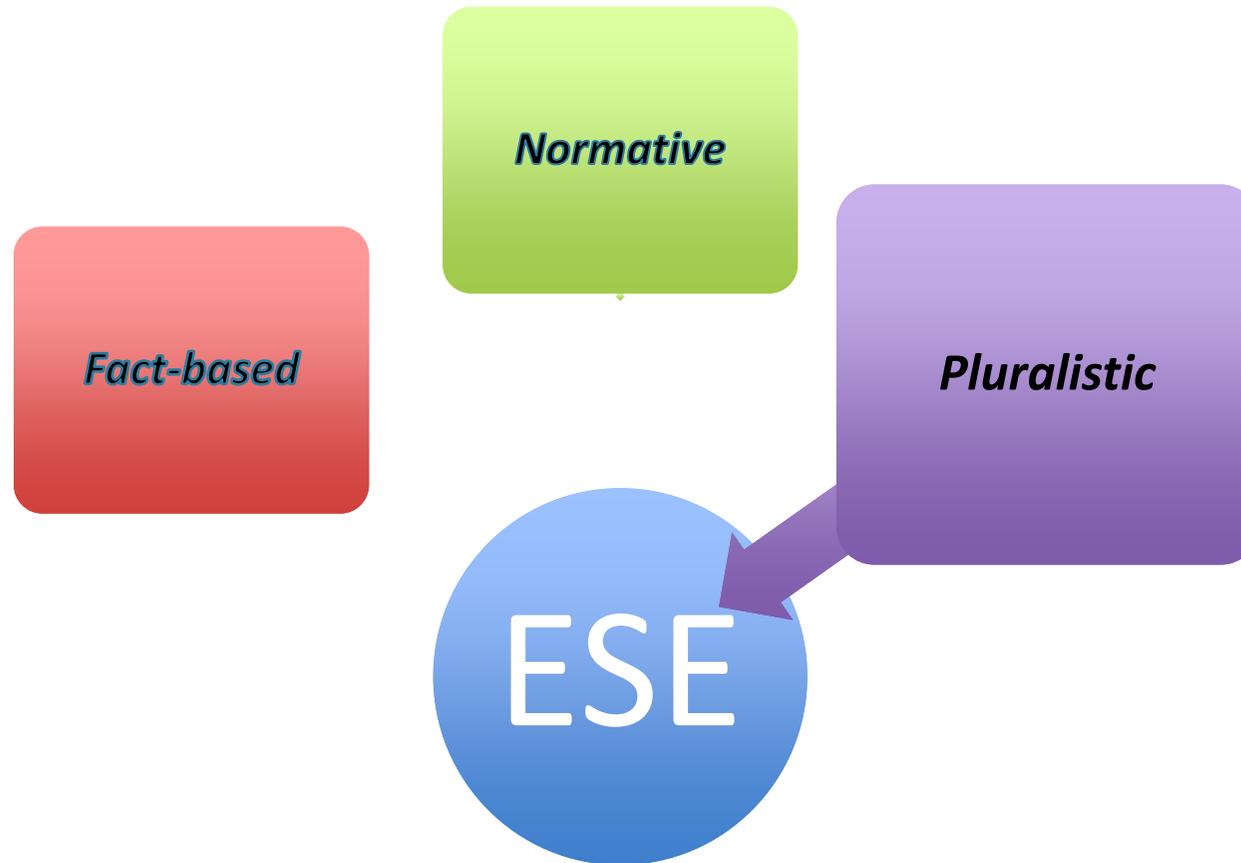
- Environmental problems are seen as *attitude and lifestyle* problems
- The facts provided by science are used to derive the norms for correct environmental behaviour (*value-rational scientism*)
- Learning of environmentally friendly attitudes and behaviour on the basis of scientific insight (*essentialism + progressivism = 'progressessentialism'*)
- **Purpose:** citizens who accept and approve of the necessary environmental changes in society
- The democratic process comes *before* education

## *Pluralistic tradition*

- Environmental problems are seen as *political* problems (involves *conflicts* between different knowledge perspectives, values and opinions)
- Critical examination of and deliberation on different alternatives in focus of education (*reconstructionism*)
- **Purpose:** citizens who actively take part in the democratic debate and practices that concern a sustainable future
- The democratic process is situated *in* education

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ESE-tradition	Fact-Value relation	Democratic process	Problem
<b>Fact-based</b>	Is	After	Omitting the value dimension
<b>Normative</b>	Is $\rightarrow$ Ought	Before	Indoctrination
<b>Pluralistic</b>	$\updownarrow$ Is $\leftrightarrow$ Ought $\updownarrow$	In	Relativism



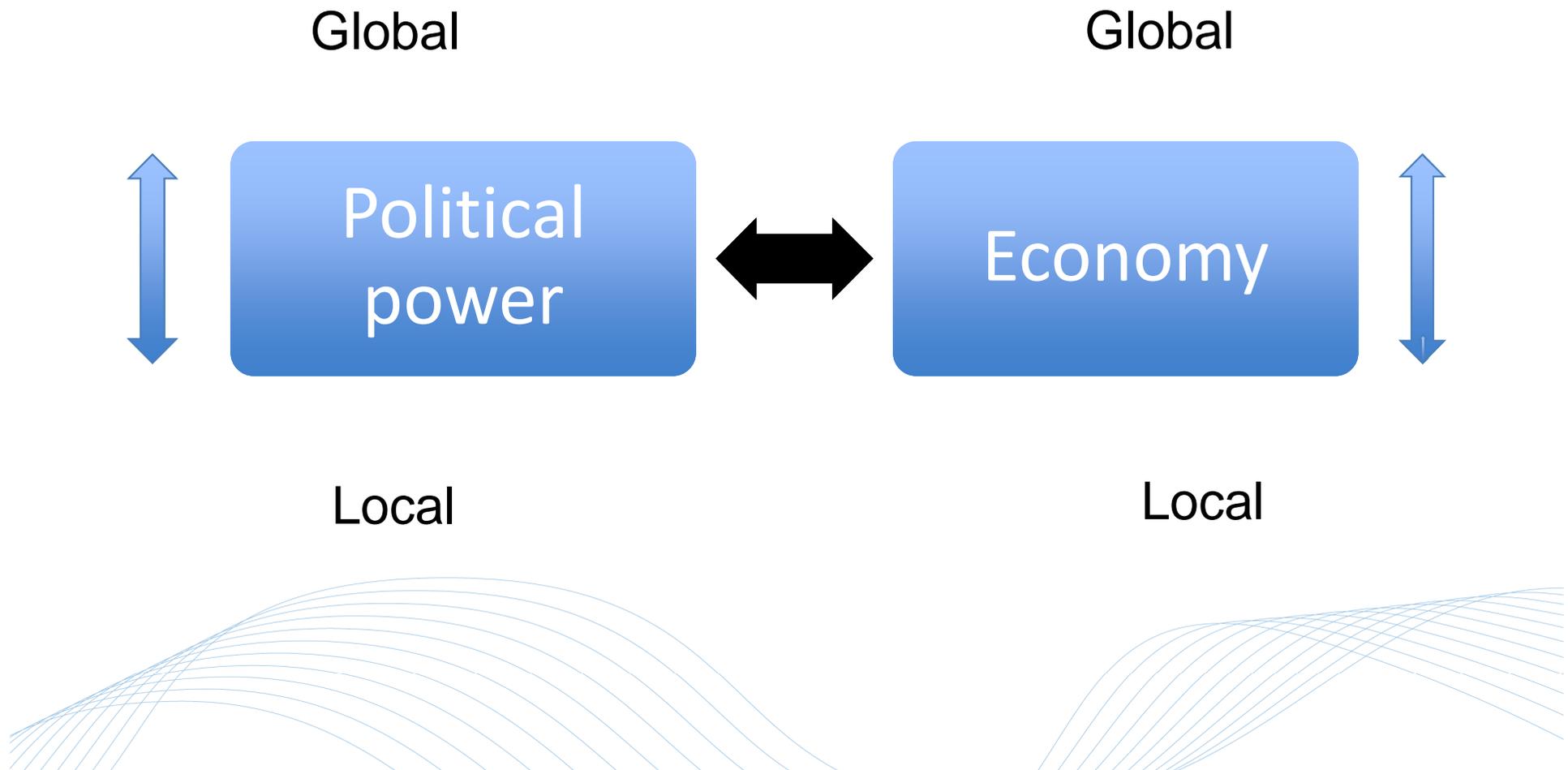


# Participatory approach in practice

– an analysis of student discussions about climate change  
(Öhman & Öhman, 2012)

- *Background:* The shift from normative to participatory (pluralistic) approaches in ESE
- *Purpose:* **To investigate and clarify the constitution of knowledge within participatory practices (process and content)**
- *Empirical material:* Ten week thematic project on climate change in Swedish upper secondary school with a pronounced sustainability approach. Video-recorded student discussions in examining group seminars (2 x 90 min)
- *Methods:* Epistemological Moves Analysis (EMA) and pragmatic discourse analysis

# Constituted environmental knowledge



Epistemological move	Function	Example	Frequency
<i>Confirming move</i>	A direct confirmation of somebody's statement	<p>"Yes, exactly as you say, you don't want to loose your power";</p> <p>"I think it is very interesting what you say..."</p>	18
<i>Mutual agreement move</i>	A statement is developed by a second person and the first person confirms that this development is in line with his or her view	<p>"Yes, exactly..."</p> <p>"Absolutely..."</p>	23
<i>Fulfilling move</i>	A statement that brings another person's unfinished statement to completion	<p>"... one-way trade between west and... north and south";</p> <p>"... have to listen to that country</p>	20
<i>Clarifying move</i>	A question that clarifies a certain description and makes it more precise	"You mean that all countries would be self-supporting?"	4
<i>Critical generative move</i>	A question that makes the participants reconsider and deepens the discussion	"But, is there really a sustainable way of development if we have the current economical system?"	17
<i>Counter-argument move</i>	A statement that questions another persons statement	"I question some parts of this, because I think that..."	1

## Conclusions

- Students establish complex and insightful knowledge: participatory approaches can ***facilitate advanced learning processes*** and discussions are an important part of those processes
- There is the risk that governing processes within peer discussions make the discussions very ***consensus oriented***. Ideological conflicts between students are hidden. Thus, knowledge does not necessarily become more diverse



# Investigating pluralism in practice



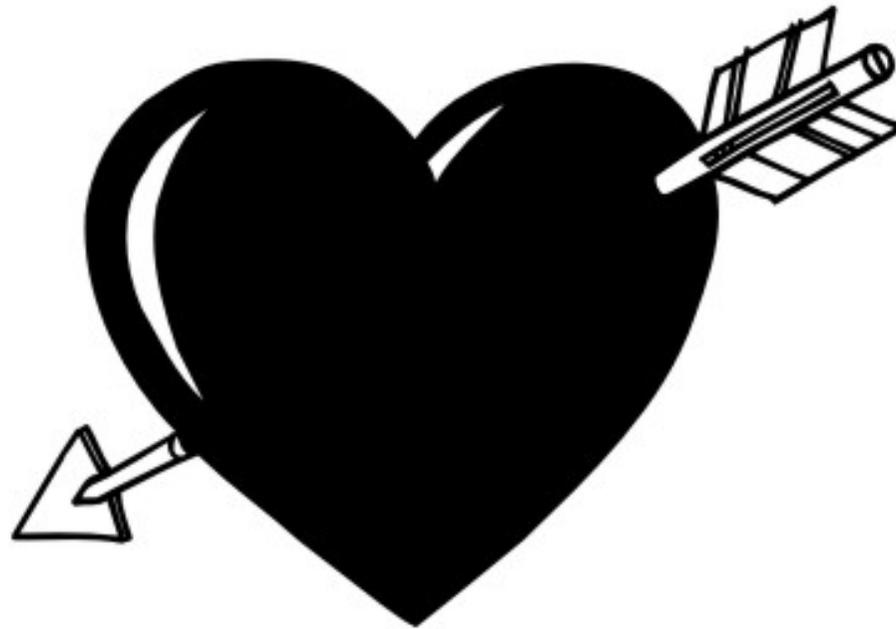
**Young people's conversations about environmental  
and sustainability issues in social media**

**Andersson & Öhman (2016)**

# Content

1. Social media: The empirical case of Black Heart
2. Pluralistic conversation: Global warming is a hoax!
3. Main findings
4. Conclusions
5. Discussion

# Social media: The empirical case of Black Heart



# Pluralistic conversation: Global warming is a hoax!



C: The hysteria surrounding global warming has scared me for several years. It is disturbing to see how it has been transformed from an economic idea in the 1980s to a racist cult of pure insanity. Nowadays, it is just enervating.

I have for many years been convinced that it is a completely natural cycle. What finally convinced me was when I looked at the roots of the whole idea, that the political forces wanted to use global warming for financial gain and when it took off, realized how profitable it was...

I just wonder if there is anyone else, like me, who has any brains left instead of following like sheep and falling for this madness? Anyone who has not joined this fanatical cult of mass hysteria? Anyone, please?

# Pluralistic conversation: *Global warming is a hoax!*



C1: Hum...coal, oil and nuclear power **are not** good long-term solutions at all. Sun and wind would have been very nice, but **they generate** too little to develop a whole continent...

The tragedy **is that** we have the technology and knowledge to create inexhaustible energy for the whole world. But **it is not** in the interest of the elite, hence the GW hoax...

Altruism **is not** on the agenda.

T1: So, what is this technology you're talking about? Admittedly, I am just a stupid 17-year-old who is controlled by the elite, but last time I checked it was a bit **difficult to CREATE energy.**)

C2: **Not** stupid at all, only in denial. **It's** cloudy at present...but **there is** a big yellow ball up there. The energy emitted by that ball for less than 1 minute **is** the same as a year's consumption on Earth...

# Pluralistic conversation: Global warming is a hoax!



S1: I couldn't **care less** if it's our fault that the climate is changing. But it feels like a bit more than a coincidence that the glaciers have melted as much in the last 40 years as they did during the 16–1800s.

And even if it is a conspiracy **it's super** that we have started **to care about** the environment. Because even if we don't ruin the climate we still **mess up** the environment as a whole.

With the **concern about** the environment, concern for people further back in the production chain has also increased and **I don't see anything negative** in that. The climate threat has been a bit of a **wakeup call** to get us to discover how much **we are destroying**.

# Main findings from a pluralistic conversation about *global warming*



- The participants are expected to:
  - prove and refute other participants' statements,
  - express political interests and positions,
  - put forward arguments well grounded in facts,
  - express moral and political judgements and use relevant references.
- The conversation is polemic and conflict-ridden.
- The meaning-making of the participants is marked by argumentation based on personal values, scientific facts and recurring arguments from the main public debate.

## Conclusions

- The conversation could be viewed as an educational situation in which facts about the world, different moral and political values and interests are discussed and argued.
- The conversation is controversial and handled within an agreed and participant driven framework with a focus on the specific topic.
- As a participant you are given the opportunity to use and develop your ideas and arguments, critical analytical capacity, content and topic orientation, perspectives, experiences and opinions.
- The participant, or the learner, becomes both a producer and a consumer of content in the conversation – a *prosumer*.

## Discussion

1. What can be learned from young people's conversations in social media?
2. What are the educational implications for teachers' staging of classroom discussions?
3. How do online community discussions differ from classroom discussions?