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Final meeting

Project PRIN 2022 PNRR COP_Scipo

UCSC Piacenza (Italy), October 16–17, 2025

Governance in complexity.
A Lab on Forms of Knowledge,
Policy and Institutions for Climate Change



UNIVERSITÀ
DEGLI STUDI
DI MILANO



UNIVERSITÀ
CATTOLICA
del Sacro Cuore



Università
degli Studi
della Campania
Luigi Vanvitelli

Governance in Complexity. A Lab on Forms of Knowledge, Policy and Institutions for Climate Change

"Given that human brains quite literally process the world through narratives, questioning our underlying narratives is crucial. Narratives shape how problems are defined influencing the flow of laws, policies, and funding streams. The drive for such a narrative shift could arise from both negative emotions (such as anxiety, fear, and worry) associated with eco-logical decline, which can be harnessed and transformed into powerful catalysts for ac-tion, and a vision of new relationships between people and nature"

Marco Malavasi

Beyond crisis and grief: Rethinking conservation narratives (2025)

We must produce stories starting from the ruins left by the collapse of our all-encompassing narratives, devastated by the unstoppable rise of the new. The senselessness and disorientation experienced by contemporary societies are due to a crisis of imagination. We must learn to see things in a different light, because the torch of reason is no longer sufficient to illuminate the intricate labyrinth that is taking shape".

Benjamin Labatut

The Stone of Madness (2021)

"Governance in Complexity" is the title of a report published by the European Environmental Agency in 2024. In analyzing the major elements of the current triple planetary crisis of climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution, it highlights the need for the epistemic humility of recognizing that we are not governing complexity, but we are learning to stay "with" and "in" it.

Coping with climate change is one of the most significant challenges of our time, affecting science, politics, and society. This multifaceted crisis questions the traditional approach to governance and demands new problem-solving practices. To legitimize their decisions, politicians and public authorities must consider scientific information when assessing the best mitigation and adaptation policies. However, the inherent complexity of the climate problem requires re-evaluating how relevant knowledge is selected to inform intricate decision-making processes.

"Models and predictions", the EEA explains, "are essential but never perfect. Some issues are notoriously complex and can open existential questions of philosophical nature, like the relationship between humans and nature. Only by truly understanding and appreciating the nature of sustainability challenges can we meaningfully respond".

The final event of "Coping with Climate Change. Method, reasons and procedures for science-based policy making" aims to conclude the project with a small laboratory of ideas and innovative tools toward "re-imagining" climate change, through renewed approaches integrating knowledge and policies, people and institutions, and experimental forms of knowledge and regulatory tools.

This perspective raises several critical issues, such as governance models, the mechanisms for co-production between knowledge and policy, the role of experts, and the participation of civil society.

Climate change is a wicked problem that embodies the criteria of “post-normal science”, where facts are uncertain, values in dispute, stakes high, and decisions urgent. In such contexts, it becomes essential to expand the basis for decision-making by engaging citizens and incorporating a variety of perspectives and contributions. This involves reflecting on the nature and applications of knowledge and examining the normative procedures that ensure scientific advice is democratically accountable. In a post-truth era, trust will rely not only on scientific consensus but also on the strength and transparency of scientific advisory systems.

The growing awareness of uncertainties in climate science and the difficulty of evaluating local specifics highlight the need for new epistemological and institutional approaches. STS and law scholars acknowledge that we must move away from the ideal of science “speaking truth to power”, neutrally providing objective facts that decision-makers can use to formulate science-based policies. Instead, we should focus on trade-offs and interdependences between the political and scientific realms.

Similar considerations also apply to the leading global scientific advisory body on climate change, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC). Since the late 1980s, the IPCC has played a crucial role in framing the issue of global warming and, later, climate change. It has provided the scientific basis for international climate policies and created the public perception of the problem. Nevertheless, its work has also revealed the limits of a purely technical and governmental strategy.

The complexity of climate change cannot be reduced to value-free predictive scenarios as it is intrinsically entangled with political, economic, and social interests. Therefore, we need to rethink climate narratives, which not only serve as communication tools but also shape our perception of reality. These narratives often oversimplify complex issues by focusing solely on techno-scientific aspects while neglecting the needs and experiences of citizens and local communities.

Intended as an open workshop, the meeting will shed light on these issues from several complementary perspectives, drawing on the principles underlying governance in complexity, such as participation and experimentation. It will explore the shifting meaning of climate change, examine the role of scientific expertise and focus on real-life examples of polycentric decision-making, encouraging a new mindset at institutional and societal levels.

Programme

October 16, 2025

2:00 pm – 3:30 pm

Welcome address: Carmine Petteruti (UNICampania), Giada Ragone (UNIMI), Mariachiara Tallacchini (UCSC)

Session 1 – Imagining and Re-imagining Climate Change

Keynote speech: “History teaches but has no pupils. Is it true also for social studies of disasters?”

Bruna De Marchi

SVT - University of Bergen, Bergen, Norway

Keynote speech: “Re-attuning societies temporal patterns to climatic change: a case for transdisciplinarity”

Scott Bremer

Centre for the Study of the Sciences and the Humanities, University of Bergen, Bergen, Norway; NORCE Climate

3:30 pm - 4:00 pm

Coffee Break

4:00 pm – 5:30 pm

Keynote speech: “Bridging different ways of knowing in climate change”

Jeroen van der Sluijs

Centre for the Study of the Sciences and the Humanities, University of Bergen, Bergen, Norway;
Department of Chemistry, University of Bergen, Bergen, Norway

Keynote speech: “Governance: From Simplicity to Complexity”

Silvio Oscar Funtowicz

European Centre for Governance in Complexity (ECGC), Centre for the Study of the Sciences and the Humanities - University of Bergen, Bergen, Norway

5:30 pm – 6:30 pm

Wonder and imagination from the Museum of Anthropocene Technology

Frank Raes

Museum of Anthropocene Technology, Museo Casanova, Festival della meraviglia

Discussion

October 17, 2025

9:30 am – 11:00 am

Session 2 – Roundtable 1

Scientific advice and climate change policies: which dialogue between scientists and policy-makers?

Moderators: Giacomo Grassi (JRC and IPCC); Silvia Maritano (UNITO)

Participants: Eleonora Ciscato (UNIMI); Eleonora Dallagiacoma (UCSC); Giulia Fontanella (UNICampania); Fabio Forgione (UCSC); Calogero Micciché (UCSC); Chiara Padrin (UNIMI); Alessandra Vanacore (UNICampania)

11:00 am – 11:30 am

Coffee Break

11:30 am – 1:00 pm

Session 2 – Roundtable 2

“...better outcomes arise when we treat democracy and inquiry as joint, experimental ventures”: ways of constitutionalizing experimentation

Moderator: Silvio Funtowicz (ECGC)

Participants: Federico Costantini (UNIUD); Carmine Petteruti (UNICampania); Chiara Ragni (UNIMI); Giada Ragone (UNIMI); Sara Valaguzza (UNIMI); Lorenza Violini (UNIMI)

Discussion and conclusions

Programmed comments: Maria Luisa Clementi (Epidemiologia & Prevenzione)

1:00 pm – 2:00pm

Conference closing buffet
