

Call for papers

Workshop: **Ethical underpinnings of climate economics**

Helsinki 11-13 November 2014

Confirmed speakers:

John Broome (University of Oxford)

John O'Neill (University of Manchester)

The debates around climate change have renewed the interest in the relation between ethics and economics. The most recent indication of this is the Working Group III report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), which takes the ethical foundations of climate mitigation policies explicitly into consideration. For the first time, influential climate ethicists were invited to be among the authors of the report. The aim was to connect the economic evaluation of climate policies to the discussion of the ethical issues.

While recognising the role of economics in climate policy choices, the IPCC report stresses the limits of economics in addressing some ethical values and considerations of justice that cannot be easily monetized. The report also emphasises how economic methods – even when monetizing is possible – implicitly involve significant ethical assumptions.

This workshop will bring together scholars from both disciplines to discuss the interrelation between climate ethics and economics. Proposals for papers dealing with any aspect of this relation are welcome. In particular, the workshop aims to focus on (1) ethical assumptions underpinning the methodological choices of economics and (2) the ways that economics might accommodate those ethical considerations that seem to challenge the standard way of doing economics.

Submission

To have a paper considered for presentation, please submit a 500-1000 word abstract, along with your name, institutional affiliation and email address to [ethicalunderpinnings\(at\)gmail.com](mailto:ethicalunderpinnings@gmail.com)

Deadline 17 August 2014.

The authors selected for presentation will be notified by 5 September.

Topics could include, among others:

Issues of justice

The IPCC report distinguishes between two main ethical considerations: value and justice. Although economics is acknowledged not to be well suited to account for many aspects of justice (e.g. historical responsibility, compensatory justice), the IPCC report argues that at least distributive justice may be understood as a value of equality and be measured in terms of people's wellbeing (e.g., through the Gini coefficient). Also when aggregating people's

wellbeing across time, economists standardly use specific parameters that should reflect people's collective aversion to inequality (e.g., the parameter *eta* in the Ramsey formula employed in the choice of the social discount rate). We welcome papers that address the extent to which these methods are able to accommodate issues of justice (both intra- and intergenerational) within economics. One particular area of examination could also be the incorporation of rights-based or threshold-based theories of (intergenerational) justice into economics.

Non-substitutability in cost-benefit analyses

In the economic evaluation of climate policies, people's wellbeing is calculated in terms of consumption equivalents, so as to make them comparable to each other. The calculation of consumption equivalents enables the comparison of different kinds of costs and benefits, and it thus constitutes the very basis for the cost-benefit analysis. However, this assumption also implies that all kinds of costs and benefits are substitutable (natural resources can be substituted with other goods and/or services that have a comparable consumption-equivalent value). Some have even argued that perfect substitutability is implicitly assumed also in the choice of the discount rate for climate mitigation policies. Papers are invited to address whether and to what extent the assumption of perfect substitutability limits the incorporation of many theories of justice as well as accounts of strong sustainability that regard some values, fundamental interests or forms of natural capital as non-substitutable.

Questions concerning cultural/ecological values

Economics is claimed to be particularly suitable when we concentrate on promoting values related directly to people's wellbeing. However, difficulties arise when the attempt is made to accommodate other relevant cultural, social and non-human values within economics. Papers could therefore examine how far these other values can or cannot be incorporated into wellbeing calculations.

Workshop organisers:

Joanna Burch-Brown (University of Bristol)

Säde Hormio ('Climate Ethics and Economics', University of Helsinki)

Simo Kyllönen ('Climate Ethics and Economics', University of Helsinki)

Aaron Maltais (Uppsala University)

Matthew Rendall (University of Nottingham)

The workshop will be hosted by the Centre of Excellence in the Philosophy of the Social Sciences at the University of Helsinki (www.helsinki.fi/tint).