The role of scientific knowledge in stakeholder deliberations on local climate adaptation: Two case studies in Sweden

Åsa Swartling, Stockholm Environment Institute and Stockholm Resilience Centre*
Karin André, Centre for Climate Science and Policy Research, Linköping University

Over the past decade, the global climate change debate has increasingly been transformed into mitigation and adaptation action by policymakers and public and private actors. Sweden has often been considered a pioneering country in terms of mitigation efforts, while the country’s adaptation policy agenda is still in its infancy. Considerable progress has however been made, which is evidenced by the recent appointment of climate officials in Swedish County Administrative Boards with dual responsibility for mitigation and adaptation policy issues, a growing number of web pages on climate adaptation issues, and adaptation responses in municipalities notably in southern Sweden. However, for stakeholders engaged in adaptation efforts there is still much uncertainty regarding what climate change impacts are to be expected in their localities, how various sectors will be affected and what are the most effective and cost efficient adaptation responses in their sectors. While scientific information is widely recognized as one key source of knowledge for decision support, it is less understood what kind of knowledge is needed and how it should be communicated to users.

This paper highlights the role of scientific knowledge in stakeholder deliberations on climate adaptation efforts in two case studies in Sweden, a horizontal study of the Stockholm region, as well as a vertical study of the forestry sector. Preliminary results from a series of focus groups are discussed, centering around two dimensions: 1) Stakeholder needs and perceptions on usefulness/user friendliness and modes of communication of scientific results; and 2) Perspectives on climate and impact model results and implications with regards to risk perceptions and adaptation needs. Apart from focusing on the stakeholder dimension, in taking a trans-disciplinary approach the paper highlights some challenges and opportunities for climate and impact scientists to meet stakeholder requirements as well as the relevance of stakeholder feedback to scientists.

* Email: asa.swartling@sei.se