



## Democracy and expertocracy

The "crisis of democracy" is debated more intensely than ever. Electoral participation decreases and political parties are losing members. Trust in political institutions is declining, while the forms of politics are changing: private actors are gaining more power and influence, and more political decisions are transferred from traditional decision-making bodies to expert groups. Do all this imply a transformation from democracy to expertocracy? This is the question *Fronesis* 29–30 (2009) takes as its point of departure.

The growing power of experts can in particular be noticed within contexts that demand a certain professional expertise, for example environmental issues and genetic engineering. In her text on the Swedish debate on climate issues, political scientist Åsa Knaggård concludes that the question of global warming is characterized by scientific uncertainty, a fact with both scientific and political consequences. Departing from the problem of nuclear waste, sociologists Rolf Lidskog and Göran Sundqvist discuss how the relation between expertise and politics can be democratized. Both Knaggård and Lidskog/Sundqvist show how the dislocation from politics to science tends to depoliticize environmental issues. Issues like these are not only complex, but also highly controversial from a normative point of view, a circumstance pointing towards the need for political solutions.

Several articles in this issue of *Fronesis* touch upon a classic dilemma of democracy theory: who should govern? The experts or the people? It would be easy to interpret diminishing electoral participation as lack of interest in politics and decreasing support for democracy. Such a conclusion would however be flawed — research from all over the world indicates that the ideal of democracy has a stronger support than ever before. Thus, the question is rather how the growing power of experts should be handled.

American political scientist Frank Fischer writes about the necessity of experts in political decision-making, but simultaneously proposes an enlarged role for the experts: not only being providers of scientific knowledge, but also supporting citizens' political participation. To achieve this, Fischer proposes a deliberative model, based on the idea that democratic participation is animated by deliberations involving diverse actors. In opposition to such an ideal of democracy, Iris Marion Young claims that deliberations like these — as long as they are carried out within the political institutions of today — will be controlled by those already in power.

In *Fronesis* 29–30 (2009), we also publish articles by amongst others Theodor W. Adorno, Carina Listerborn, Michael Walzer and Helmut Willke.

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