

# Nordisk forskningskonferens om miljö- och hållbarhetsutbildning

## Abstract

**Huvudförfattare:** Ásgeir Tryggvason

**Medförfattare:** Johan Öhman

**Titel** (max 20 ord): The political in pluralism: On deliberation and agonism in ESE.

**Keywords** (max 5 ord): Pluralism, consensus, conflicts, deliberation, agonism

**Introduktion, problem, syfte och frågeställningar** (max 200 ord):

Within the field of environmental and sustainability education (ESE), three different teaching traditions can be identified; the fact-based tradition, the normative tradition, and the pluralistic tradition (Öhman, 2007). Within the pluralistic tradition, the multitude of perspectives and conflicting opinions on sustainability issues are seen as the starting point, and not as an obstacle, for ESE practice. In this sense, the pluralistic tradition acknowledges the political dimension of environmental and sustainability education in terms of plurality and conflicts. A crucial question is then: From what theoretical ground can teachers approach this plurality and these conflicts in their classrooms? In this paper we provide a theoretical ground for approaching the political dimension of environmental and sustainability education. We do this by outlining deliberation and agonism as two different approaches to plurality and conflicts.

**Teoretiska och metodologiska utgångspunkter** (max 200 ord):

The deliberative approach and the agonistic approach share a common ground in that they both acknowledge pluralism of perspectives and conflicts as being key in democratic education. The differences between deliberation and agonism can be seen in ideas about what should be the aim of classroom discussions. From a deliberative perspective the rational and respectful communication is underlined as being crucial for classroom discussions, alongside with the aim to reach consensus in political issues. From an agonistic perspective the crucial role of emotions in classroom discussions are underlined, alongside with the aim to enable conflicts to have a democratic outlet. In the research field of citizenship education, these differences have been an epicentre for an ongoing discussion about deliberation and agonism (see Englund, 2016; Ljunggren, 2007; Todd & Säfström, 2008). However, when exploring the deliberative and the agonistic approach in relation to environmental and sustainability issues, these differences do not only become accentuated, but also seem to have specific educational meaning and consequences (cf. Lundegård & Wickman, 2012; Sund & Öhman, 2014).



INSTITUTIONEN FÖR HUMANIORA,  
UTBILDNINGS- OCH SAMHÄLLSVETENSKAP

**Metod, data och analysprocess** (max 200 ord):

The paper is a philosophical and theoretical exploration of deliberation and agonism as two different approaches to the political dimension in ESE. By focusing on consensus and conflicts as main concepts within the theories, we highlight how deliberation and agonism provide teachers with two different theoretical grounds for acting upon environmental and sustainability issues as political issues (cf. Englund, Öhman & Östman, 2008). With references to previous empirical research on consensus and conflicts in classrooms (e.g. Öhman & Öhman, 2013; Håkansson, Östman & Van Poeck, 2017) we elaborate on the specific educational meaning and consequences of deliberative and agonistic theory in ESE.

**Preliminära/slutgiltiga resultat** (max 200 ord):

A conclusion that we draw is that deliberation and agonism are not only divided when it comes to what the aim should be for classroom discussions, but the two approaches are also grounded in different conceptualization of “the classroom”. Moreover, the educational consequences of deliberation and agonism can be seen as being specific within ESE. This stems from the specific political character of environmental and sustainability issues. Environmental and sustainability issues are characterized, and constituted by, an apparent lack of time, as well as an urgency to go from discussions to actions. In the light of this, the deliberative ideal of consensus, and the agonistic ideal of democratic conflicts, do not only differ from each other, but also have specific educational meaning and consequences within environmental and sustainability education.

# Nordisk forskningskonferens om miljö- och hållbarhetsutbildning

## Abstract

**Huvudförfattare:** Pernilla Andersson

**Medförfattare:** Klicka här för att ange text.

**Titel (max 20 ord):** Talking about sustainability issues when teaching business economics – the positioning of a responsible business person in classroom practice

**Keywords (max 5 ord):** business education, sustainable development, companion meanings, privileging, classroom observations

**Introduktion, problem, syfte och frågeställningar (max 200 ord):**

It has long been suggested that the ‘homo economicus’ assumption underpinning neo-classical theory is not limited to its theoretical function, but also has a ‘productive’ function by ‘creating’ individuals acting in accordance with the assumption (Schütz, 1953). Nelson (2006) and Zaman (2013) offer some clues as to how this process can be understood. They describe that and how we have come to embrace the metaphorical understanding of economy as a machine, running on self-interest, as something real rather than a figure of speech. Along the way, the tools with which sustainability issues could be addressed have become limited to those that fit ‘homo economicus’. In order to equip students for the challenges of the 21st century, it has been suggested that economics education needs to embrace a more complex and dynamic picture of human nature (Nelson, 2006; Zaman, 2013; Brant, 2016; Raworth, 2017). Against this background, this paper (a) presents the roles of a responsible business person that are privileged by teachers’ in classroom practice when ‘sustainable development’ is integrated into the curriculum, (b) illuminates different aspects of the subject matter and/or particular classroom practices opening up for different (egoistic or altruistic) roles.

**Teoretiska och metodologiska utgångspunkter (max 200 ord):**

The study draws on poststructuralist discourse theory (Laclau & Mouffe). This involves understanding a person’s identity as comprising a collection of different roles (like dad, banker, crosscountry skier, and animal rights activist). Just like gender roles and other social roles, the role of a ‘business person’ can be reproduced or challenged in social practices, i.e. is changeable. Accordingly, reproduction or change of social roles can be studied through studies of language use. ‘Reproduction’ of roles (or norms) are hard to discover since they are often just perceived as a normal way of talking or writing (“the way we speak”), which is why it is important to pay specific attention to this. The methodological approach used in the study is also similar to those used in studies of classroom practices in situ analysing ‘companion meanings’ in science education (Lidar, Lundqvist, & Östman, 2006; Wickman & Östman, 2002; Östman, 2015) and classroom



INSTITUTIONEN FÖR HUMANIORA,  
UTBILDNINGSG- OCH SAMHÄLLSVETENSKAP

studies of environment and sustainability education (Rudsberg & Öhman, 2010; Öhman & Öhman, 2013; Östman, 2010). Inspired by critical pragmatism (Rorty, 1982; Cherryholmes, 1988), the aim is to facilitate teachers' and students' critical reflections by making the discourses, rules, presuppositions and assumptions on which they rest visible.

**Metod, data och analysprocess (max 200 ord):**

The empirical material was collected two years after a curriculum reform in which the concept of sustainable development was integrated into the business economics syllabus for upper secondary education. I collected the empirical material in my role as a passive observer in the classrooms of five teachers. The teachers worked at schools located in different socio-economic and geographical settings in Sweden. Some of the schools were run by private actors and some by municipalities. The empirical material consisted of field notes, 20 video and audio-recorded lessons, images of the teachers' notes and written instructions on the whiteboard and the texts used in the lessons. A previous interview study of teachers was used as a guide when approaching the teachers and selecting which lessons to observe. The selection criteria included the possibility of capturing as many different teaching approaches, methods, content and perspectives on business ethical responsibilities as possible. A logics approach to discourse analysis was used to analyse the empirical material. More specifically, this involved analysing the rules and conditions of doing business as (implicitly) depicted by teachers in classroom practice.

**Preliminära/slutgiltiga resultat (max 200 ord):**

The results show how different rules and conditions for doing business are foregrounded in classroom practice. This in turn has different implications for whether a responsible business person is expected to: a) adapt to self-interest, b) respond to customers' increasing interests in sustainable products, or c) be sensitive to the needs or interests of others (including humans, animals and nature), when making business decisions. These three 'business roles' can be described in terms of meanings that follow together with the subject matter (i.e. companion meanings) when talking about sustainability issues in the context of teaching business economics. The roles could also be described in terms of 'collateral teaching' or what sometimes is described as 'the hidden curriculum'. The results illuminate how talking about 'homo economicus' as 'real' can hinder, how talking about customers in altruistic terms can facilitate, and how talking about the complexity of others' interests can suggest ways of doing business (more) sustainably.

# Nordisk forskningskonferens om miljö- och hållbarhetsutbildning

## Abstract

**Huvudförfattare:** Michael Håkansson

**Medförfattare:** Katrien Van Poeck, Leif Östman

**Titel (max 20 ord):** Political tendency: A typology of different ways how the political dimension can emerge and be experienced in environmental and sustainability education practices

**Keywords (max 5 ord):** political, conflict,

**Introduktion, problem, syfte och frågeställningar (max 200 ord):**

An increasing number of scholars' emphasis the importance of paying attention to the political in Environmental and Sustainability Education (ESE) by acknowledging conflict as an integral part of education in the face of sustainability issues. This paper address political dimension in ESE practices and how different ways of doing this have very different educational implications.

**Teoretiska och metodologiska utgångspunkter (max 200 ord):**

We take departure in the work by Öhman and Östman (2008) who created a typology of the ethical and moral dimensions of ESE which they call the 'ethical tendency'. Using this as a model, we will develop and present a typology for addressing the political dimension of ESE in educational practice: the 'political tendency'. The method that Öhman and Östman (2008) used in their work on the ethical tendency, and which we will also use here, takes its inspiration from Wittgenstein's way of working. Wittgenstein's work is based on the idea that most theories on language use a third person perspective (a spectatorship perspective) of language. In its most basic terms, such a perspective characterises language as consisting of three separate parts: 1) the words, sentences, etc., 2) the world and 3) the meaning. These theories attempt to explain how these three parts come together and thereby make meaning about the world possible. According to Wittgenstein, these theories create misunderstandings and problems because in language use the connection between the words, meaning and the world is already there.

**Metod, data och analysprocess (max 200 ord):**

Working with recognisable reminders for constructing typologies and classifications such as the political tendency and using Wittgenstein's term 'language game', the researcher is situated as a first-person language user in a specific circumstance. It prevents the researcher from escaping into a theoretical and, thereby, a spectator position on language. Öhman and Östman (2008) used this method in order to clarify the ways in which morality and ethics are staged in education. They took concrete examples from educational practices as reminders of the specific function of value judgements connected to the ethical tendency. The



INSTITUTIONEN FÖR HUMANIORA,  
UTBILDNINGSG- OCH SAMHÄLLSVETENSKAP

result of a researcher collecting and classifying reminders is a typology (a classification) of situations where morality and ethics are staged in educational practice, and where the differences and similarities between these situations are clearly visible. The reminders that will be used in this presentation are those that illustrate an ordinary and basic trait of a language game (an activity and the language use that is integral to the activity) that demonstrate how the political dimension of ESE arises in educational practice; this is how the basic criterion of this political dimension becomes visible in the ordinary language use in specific situations. For our purpose of identifying situations that express the political tendency, we will look for other traits in the use of language and focus on language games centred on the question how to organise social life recognising that this inevitably requires decision-making about different and competing alternatives.

**Preliminära/slutgiltiga resultat (max 200 ord):**

We presents a typology that educators can use to identify different manifestation of the political dimension and in that way also identify opportunities for the students' to experience and learn from the political dimension in ESE. Further, the typology aims to prepare teachers for planning different teaching activities in relation to controversial issues and to respond to conflict-oriented deliberation that can always, unexpectedly, pop up in classrooms. It offers them tools to reflect upon and consider different possible ways of acting in relation to their purpose. Based on empirical illustration we distinguish the appearance of the political dimension in the classroom into 'Democratic participation', 'Political reflection', 'Political deliberation' (sub- divided into 'Normative deliberation', 'Consensus-oriented deliberation' and 'Conflict-oriented deliberation') and 'Political moment'. Each typology offers students' different ways of experiencing and learning from encounter the political dimension in educational practice. In doing so, we aim to contribute to a more nuanced understanding of the very diverse and particular ways in which students can experience and learn how to handle the political dimension in ESE-practice.