PROJECT n. 3
Trust, science, and disinformation

In democratic societies, environmental decisions in contemporary knowledge-based forms of governance, like many policy decisions such as public health policies, are driven by advice, evidence and data provided by experts from multidisciplinary arenas. In those contexts, trust in the provenance and justification of policy measures are essential for their implementation. Nevertheless, especially in democratic societies, the rise of populist politics with its anti-elitist mantra has brought the trustworthiness of experts and their areas of expertise into question, and has affected political discourse by manipulation and propaganda.

In a context in which pseudoscience and scientific disinformation, also spread through social media, are thriving, it is crucial to address the problem of trust in science and preemptively foster the awareness of citizens. The project will focus on the acquisition of knowledge, beliefs, trustworthiness, and the verification of sources, and will aim at using climate change and climate science as a test case in exploring the social, ethical and psychological indicators of trustworthiness of experts. It will address questions like the following:

- How does scientific disinformation affect public opinion and the implementation of policies, in this case specifically environmental policies? How does scientific disinformation affect the behaviour of citizens with regards to environmental and sustainability policies?
- How does scientific disinformation on sustainability and environmental issues affect the implementation of environmental policies?
- What are the most effective policies for enhancing evidence-based beliefs on sustainability and environmental issues, and for encouraging virtuous behaviours with regards to energy consumption?

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