

Researchers describe how philosophers can bridge the gap between science and policy

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Public policy should be based on scientific evidence—but scientists often lament the gap between science and policy, while policy-makers feel that scientists don't deliver the evidence that is needed.

Fifteen researchers from across the globe, co-led by Dr. Anne Schwenkenbecher from Murdoch University's School of Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences have shown that philosophical expertise can help close the gap between research and policy.

[In their latest publication](#) in *Nature Human Behaviour*, the group describes how philosophers can benefit public policy development, especially when dealing with [complex problems](#), like those faced during the COVID pandemic.

In the research, the group showed that good evidence-based policy needs to engage with philosophical questions.

"When one thinks of public policy one doesn't usually think of the need for philosophical expertise," Dr. Schwenkenbecher said.

"But philosophers can help tackle the complexity of problems where there are many interconnected components and a lack of any single optimal solution.

"We have shown that some of the problems in translating [scientific evidence](#) into public policy are philosophical in nature: how much evidence do we need? What evidence do we need and what does that evidence really show? What obligations do [policy-makers](#) have to seek and obtain evidence?"

Dr. Schwenkenbecher added, "Philosophical expertise can help clarify decision making and integrate philosophical—in particular ethical and epistemological—considerations into policy-making when there are challenges with experts coming together from different disciplines, with varying methodologies and unique points of view, like we saw happening in our own country during COVID, as [experts](#) sought to find the best policies and solutions as new problems arose."

Philosophical expertise was also found to help with "transparency of reasoning" laying open the process, evidence-base, decisions and reasons that lead to the adoption of a particular piece of [public policy](#).

More information: Mike D. Schneider et al, Science–policy research collaborations need philosophers, *Nature Human Behaviour* (2024). [DOI: 10.1038/s41562-024-01892-x](https://doi.org/10.1038/s41562-024-01892-x)

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