



Notes from Vetenskap & Allmänhets Conference on Citizen Science at the Natural History Museum in Stockholm, December 8, 2021

Citizen research has been developing rapidly over the past 10 years. Interest is growing both from researchers and from the general public. Citizen research is not particularly well known in Sweden but its impact on societal decisions is great, especially through the Species Data Bank. With a wink to the Species Database, Dick Kasperowsky, professor of theory of science at the University of Gothenburg, describes the archetype of participants in citizen research as "boys who like colorful birds". It is resourceful and often well-educated individuals who have time to contribute to research work such as inventory of birds. It also means that some species inventories are more attractive to participate in than others. But biodiversity is so much more than birds, what about the gray sows?

René van der Wal, professor of civic research at SLU, mentions that the researcher is paid for by the state, but the participants work voluntarily. Thinking about the balance of power, who is asking the questions and who chooses to participate, are important questions before working with civic research. Will the participants become co-creators or means of production? Dick Kasperowsky adds that trying to make participation more attractive by making it into a competition is the wrong way to go.

Citizen research can thus from researchers perspective be perceived as a way of working with greater risks and not having full control over collected data. Researchers therefore often make data collected by volunteers invisible, not to be accused of having poor quality of the research material. It is therefore important to point out that the scientific relevance of the research work is as important in civic research as in all other research. The goal of the work must therefore be clear to everyone right from the start. An example of a clear goal is to, like the Swedish Museum of Natural History, ask the public to transcribe handwritten texts from their archives. If three people, independently of each other, indicate a text in the same way, the text is seen as correct and entered in the digital museum archive.

Citizen research today mainly consists of researcher-initiated work. But there is a growing interest in co-created research issues where the public already participates in the initiation of research issues. For such a development, a forum is needed for meetings between citizens and researchers, but also opportunities for funding through seed projects. Within the EU, Horizon Europe is already generous in contributing to citizen science projects. In Sweden, there are hopes that Formas will support the development of co-creation by announcing support for research initiation.

<https://v-a.se/2021/12/boom-in-swedish-citizen-science-conference-and-new-platform/>

At the notepad on the conference,
Kerstin Jakobsson