

Reviewer #2 (Courtney Jermyn)

This is a well-written and interesting paper addressing an important and underexplored issue: how researchers in government-funded knowledge organizations navigate their roles as scientists, civil servants and citizens in relation to climate advocacy. I particularly appreciated that the findings do not reduce participants to being either for or against advocacy, but instead show how independence, objectivity, credibility and responsibility can provide arguments both for and against engagement. Finding an appropriate balance in how climate-related science is communicated and how researchers engage with policymakers, political actors and the wider public is an important and timely challenge.

We thank the reviewer for these very positive comments on our study.

I would support publication, with a few suggestions that I think could strengthen the discussion and conceptual clarity:

Develop the proposed “value-based approach”. The abstract suggests that researchers should delineate their roles and responsibilities more clearly, following a value-based approach, but I did not feel this was sufficiently developed in the Discussion. The findings provide a good basis to discuss what this might mean in practice, considering researchers' personal values, their roles as researchers/civil servants/private citizens, institutional expectations and scientific credibility. This could also include some reflection on the different ways researchers can contribute to society and policy, such as providing scientific evidence, policy advice, knowledge exchange, public communication or activism, and how these might be navigated within personal and institutional constraints.

This is a good point by the reviewer. We have now added a sentence *“Government-funded organizations could adopt a value-based perspective grounded in the philosophy of science to distinguish between ‘acceptable’ and ‘unacceptable’ forms of value influence in both their research (e.g., the formulation of research questions, choice of methods, and interpretation of findings) and their science communication (e.g., explicit policy advocacy, civil disobedience in lab coats), drawing on the fundamental concerns identified in the literature (Douglas, 2015; van Eck et al., 2024; Messling et al., 2025)”* (lines 341-345 of the track-changed pdf).

Clarify the terminology around advocacy and activism. The distinction between advocacy and activism is not always clearly maintained throughout the paper, with some activities appearing to be described under both terms. A brief definition of these terms and their relationship to the broader concept of engagement would strengthen the conceptual framing and ensure their consistent use throughout the manuscript.

In hindsight, we agree with the reviewer that we didn't clearly distinguish the terminology of activism and advocacy. In the revised manuscript, we explicitly state how we define advocacy: *"While we acknowledge that communicative acts may be perceived as advocacy depending on the messenger, audience, and context, here we follow Finnerty et al. (2026) to define advocacy as the 'act of persuading or arguing in support of a specific cause, policy, idea, or set of values' (Pezzullo and Cox, 2022)."* (lines 35-38 of the track-changed pdf).

Furhermore, we have streamlined the terminology to only use advocacy, removing "and activism" from the title and other places in the manuscript.

Minor typographical error. In line 190, under Section 3.1.3, the sentence reads, "They **ought** it impossible to engage in advocacy...". I believe "ought" should be "**thought**".

We thank the reviewer for pointing out this type-o. We have now fixed it.

Overall, I found this to be a valuable and thought-provoking contribution on an important topic. These suggestions are primarily intended to help draw out the implications of the findings more fully and improve conceptual clarity. I do not see a need for fundamental changes to the study design.

We are very grateful to the reviewer for this warm and encouraging reflection.

The study also raises an interesting question for future research: whether similar tensions and considerations would be found across the broader landscape of research and knowledge organizations in the Netherlands, particularly in organizations with different relationships to government. This would provide an interesting opportunity to explore how different institutional contexts shape these considerations.

We fully agree with the reviewer. As mentioned also in our response R1, we have added the following future research suggestion: *"Therefore, we encourage that similar studies be done in other national, institutional, and policy contexts, where the boundary arrangements may be different"* (lines 334-335 of the track-changed pdf).