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“How Do We Replace Concrete?” Building Sector Professionals Addressing Knowledge Asymmetries about Climate-wise Housing

Abstract

The aim of the article is to explore how housing and construction field experts give advice concerning climate-wise housing in a professional magazine, and what types of potential knowledge asymmetries are connected with the advice. By potential knowledge asymmetries we refer to situations in which experts writing to other experts in a professional magazine indicate differences in the depth, scope, or type of knowledge possessed about a topic by offering advice to the readers. By offering advice, the authors position themselves as having epistemic authority on the topics they address. Based on argumentative, editorial-type texts in a Finnish building and construction field magazine, a pragmatic discourse analysis combined with qualitative content analysis of ways of advice-giving and sources of potential knowledge asymmetries in the context of climate-wise housing was conducted. The findings reveal that (1) all combinations of explicit-implicit and targeted-not-targeted advice-giving are present in the data, but explicit and not-targeted advice are most prevalent; (2) there are five main sources of potential knowledge asymmetries concerning system-level phenomena: technical, legal-regulatory, political, economic, and expertise-related. The paper concludes by discussing the potential and limitations of advice-giving in written expert-to-expert contexts in contributing to advancing climate-wise housing.

Keywords

advice-giving; knowledge asymmetries; expert-to-expert communication; professional magazines; housing and construction sector

1 Introduction

Climate change is a major concern in contemporary societies. For example, there is an urgent need to promote sustainable housing because housing and construction account for 30–40% of GHG emissions and energy use (Nielsen & Farrelly, 2019; Yoffe et al., 2024). Housing and construction is a complex industry that involves many material, technological, and human aspects, all of which must be taken into consideration when pursuing solutions that address climate change and environmental sustainability. However, there has thus far been no shared understanding of what constitutes so-called *climate-wise housing* (see e.g., Lovell, 2004), which is why the opinions and advice of sector professionals are in high demand—for example, in *professional magazines*, that is, magazines published by established professional actors and focusing on professional issues of a specialized domain (see e.g., Domenec & Millot, 2021).

In the context of professional magazines, both those who write for the magazine and those who are cited are considered experts—persons who are deeply acquainted with some aspects of the field and know more about the field than the average citizen (Ericsson, 2018). Together the experts as writers and readers form a community around the magazine and participate in the construction of the

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voice of the field towards the society. However, as many different professions, such as architecture, land use and planning, law, business, electricity, plumbing and heating, are involved, the voice is not unanimous. Differences of opinion and conflicts of interests may appear, especially when it comes to complex issues, such as climate change.

This article examines *expert advice* as an indication of potential knowledge asymmetries concerning climate-wise housing. The concept of “knowledge asymmetry” describes a situation in which participants of a communication situation have different resources to engage in communication about a topic (cf. Kastberg, 2007; Jacobsen, 2014). The aim of this article is to study how perceived differences in knowledge become visible when housing and construction sector experts, as “individual knowers,” mediate socially constructed specialized knowledge (see Engberg, 2022) by offering advice to different stakeholders about climate-wise housing issues.

The starting point for our study is that when these experts give *advice*, that is, well-grounded recommendations or guidance (e.g., Locher, 2006, p. 62), they simultaneously expose potential knowledge asymmetries and make them apparent. As this is a text-based study, we concentrate on what advice-giving reveals of the discursive construction of potential knowledge asymmetries in expert-to-expert communication about climate-wise housing. That is, we are interested in how housing and construction field experts give advice to their readers, the topics they address, and any connections between these.

Knowledge asymmetry is a cognitive phenomenon indicating differences in individual knowledge of the communicating partners (Maier & Engberg, 2021, p. 187), which can be only indirectly observed in communicative encounters. The concept thus has its limitations in empirical investigations, but it is relevant for understanding how advice is formulated and presented. In their texts, the experts participate in the discursive construction of potential knowledge asymmetries by positioning themselves as having epistemic authority about a topic. There may be different intentions behind the advice; from friendly altruism to self-interest and power dynamics, and the readers may perceive them differently. By connecting ways of giving advice to topics with potential for knowledge asymmetries we seek to shed light on the dynamics of written expert-to-expert communication in the multiprofessional context of climate-wise housing.

As earlier research in climate communication tends to focus on the understandings offered by the media to the general public (e.g., Kääntä et al., 2024), this research contributes to the discussions by highlighting the expertise of the housing and construction sector. Moreover, this article addresses a gap in earlier research by concentrating on the intersection of field-specific expertise and perceived knowledge asymmetries. In the specific industry-based community, consisting of the authors and readers of a professional magazine, knowledge asymmetries are particularly interesting in relation to decision makers whom the community strives to influence. Ways of giving expert advice in this context likely reflect the relational dynamics of the community, which makes them an important topic to study.

2 Knowledge Asymmetries and Sharing Expertise

Real or perceived knowledge asymmetries are the basic reason for communicating in many contexts. Prototypical *knowledge asymmetries* emerge in communication between social classes, between experts and laypersons, as well as between those with power and those without (Kastberg, 2007). Thus, for example, offering advice is based on an evidenced deficit in knowledge or uncertainty of the recipient, and successful advice needs to be designed according to who it is addressed to (see Hutchby, 1995, p. 222).

When it comes to complex global problems, such as climate change, it should be noted that knowledge asymmetries may also occur between experts from different fields or with different agendas. Indeed, Alrøe and Noe (2011, pp.153, 164) stated that there are three types of knowledge

asymmetries; *problems*, which can be solved by offering more information to those who do not have it; *dilemmas*, which cannot be solved with more information but rather with negotiations; and *paradoxes*, where more information leads only to fragmentation of knowledge. In areas with knowledge fragmentation, climate change being a case in point, asymmetries cannot be solved by providing more information; rather, one needs to “transgress the framework in which the paradox exists.” This means that scientists and other experts should acknowledge that scientific knowledge is perspectival, and recognize and respect each other’s perspectives.

In many fields working with practical problems and solutions, such as the building and construction sector, cross-disciplinary communication is a requirement, and professional magazines offer a site for joint discussions. These magazines communicate specialized knowledge across knowledge asymmetries in different directions: from researchers and experts in one field to those in others, from experts to practitioners, politicians, and laypersons, and also from practitioners to researchers and experts (see Engberg, 2022, p. 71). In this context, knowledge asymmetries are not about knowing more and knowing less, but about different knowledge of the same phenomenon from different perspectives (see Kastberg, 2011).

Alongside information, negotiation, and acknowledging different perspectives, as described above, offering expert advice in a professional magazine can be seen as an indication of a potential knowledge asymmetry. By expert advice in this context we refer to situations where expert authors imply an authoritative or knowledgeable perspective (e.g., Heritage & Sefi, 1992). They then may offer solutions to perceived problems, as well as suggestions and recommendations for future action (e.g., Rundblad & Chen, 2015). These in their turn highlight which issues are deemed as important at the moment of writing within the field and in the society. They also show the dynamic nature of knowledge asymmetries: as stated by Jacobsen (2014, p. 58), knowledge asymmetries are in constant movement, they emerge and vanish in the course of communication. The definition of advice will be discussed in more detail below.

3 The Concept of Advice and Earlier Research

When it comes to written communication, a growing strand of advice-related research concerns advice seeking and responses to it in online contexts, such as discussion forums and platforms of different kinds (e.g., Park, 2012; Vepsäläinen, 2022). Written advice has typically been studied in educational contexts; Hyland and Hyland (2012), for example, studied how teachers gave feedback on academic writing and how it was received by students. They concluded that the parties had different expectations concerning advice. In the context of newspapers, Rundblad and Chen (2015) studied advice-giving in Chinese newspaper weather commentaries. They found that more advice was given during extreme weather conditions and that the use of imperatives increased significantly in such circumstances. They also distinguished between writers who would take an authoritative stance and those who positioned themselves “with” their readers.

In journalism research, advice-giving has typically been connected with science journalism and health journalism (e.g., Armon, 2016), as well as with specific advice columns published in newspapers and magazines, often targeting women (e.g., Franklin, 2008). Also, lifestyle journalism (Fürsich, 2012) and service journalism (Usher, 2012; Eide, 2017), where journalists and other experts offer support to people who need to make choices and who strive to improve their lives have been studied from an advice-giving perspective. In these forms of journalism, advice-giving typically takes the form of concrete how-to-act instructions (Klemm et al., 2019) or encouragement (Andersen et al., 2019).

Defining advice and advice-giving is a matter of interpretation. In this article, advice is understood broadly as the description, recommendation or other type of forwarding “a preferred course of future action” (e.g., Heritage & Sefi, 1992, p. 368; for definitions of advice, see e.g., Locher, 2006, p. 62; DeCapua & Dunham, 2007; Vine, 2004, p. 26-27; Lindholm, 2019, p. 56). In other words, advice

includes suggestions, recommendations for future action as well as invitations for consideration (Locher, 2006, p. 62; DeCapua & Dunham, 2007; Vine, 2004, pp. 26-27; Lindholm, 2019, p. 56). Even though we acknowledge the discursive complexity of advice-giving as a practice, in this article, we lean on the understanding that advice is about telling in different ways what is best for the receivers and those they represent. We suggest that linguistic choices used to emphasize certain perspectives, actors, events and objects function as indications of different ways of advice-giving.

Searle's (1976) theory of speech acts has been applied to make the analysis of advice-giving more transparent and less intuitive. In addition to Searle's categories, other types of categorizations and taxonomies have also been developed. For example, Abolfathiasl and Abdullah (2013) introduced a comprehensive taxonomy of strategies and linguistic structures for making suggestions. Even though suggestions tend to be more general and are not as closely connected with expertise as advice, the taxonomy has been used for studying advice (e.g., Govindarajan et al. 2020). Abolfathiasl and Abdullah (2013) distinguish between *direct strategies*, such as using performative verbs, nouns and verbs of suggestion and imperatives, *non-conventionally indirect strategies*, including impersonal pseudo-cleft structures, and *conventionally indirect strategies*, which include among others modal verbs, conditionals and questions.

Indirectness and mitigation of advice have been found to be common especially in contexts where experts and non-experts meet because authority and expertise may come through as face-threatening (Henricson & Nelson, 2017). In situations where communicators have (presumed) expertise, they tend to assert this expertise, and simultaneously imply insufficient knowledge or competence by others (see e.g., DeCapua & Dunham, 1993, p. 519; Yip, 2020, p. 29; Bates, 2021). In particular, explicit and direct advice presented using imperative forms without any mitigating devices, such as hedges or disclaimers, may be interpreted as impolite especially in face-to-face communication. On the contrary, indirectness is seen as a way to mitigate the threat to the face of the receiver of advice (Yip, 2020, p. 29).

In this article we concentrate on the context of the building and construction sector, which has not thus far been the focus of interest for addressing advice-giving. Even though both authors and readers of the professional magazine are experts, knowledge asymmetries emerge as the author who offers advice assumes epistemic authority of the topic at hand. This is also implied by the media as they invite specific experts to write for the magazine. In the context of expert-to-expert communication between experts from different subfields, it is also an important question to whom the advice about climate-wise housing is addressed, that is, in relation to whom the potential knowledge asymmetry is indicated, and if and how the targets are named or whether the target of the advice is left for the reader to infer. Who one addresses potentially influences the way of presenting advice in a more direct or indirect way as concerns of face saving may actualize (e.g., Yip, 2020).

4 Data and Method

The data of this study are part of a larger dataset collected in a multidisciplinary project (DeCarbon Home 2022) that studies, promotes, and develops participatory solutions to the challenges of housing and residential segregation in the context of climate change. The data for the whole project were collected from the largest general journalistic sources in Finland (largest daily newspaper and public service media) as well as from specialized magazines and media outlets through electronic searches based on keywords in the databases of selected publications. The keywords (and their combinations) selected for the project, with small variations depending on the outlet, were *housing*, *energy*, *energy renovation*, *carbon footprint*, *carbon neutral*, *climate*, *climate-wise*, *sustainable*, *reparatory construction*, *heating*, *emissions*, and *environment*. After comprehensive searches, the whole data consisted of three types of media texts; two news media outlets, two lifestyle magazines, and two professional magazines. The whole data cover ca 700 articles from the years 2010-2020. In addition, citizen discussions on different online platforms were collected.

Out of the professional magazines, we chose the Finnish professional magazine *Rakennuslehti* [literal translation: *Construction magazine*] as the data source for this study because it represents communication from experts to other experts and decision makers (e.g., Alrøe & Noe, 2011; Eppler, 2004). The magazine is the traditional (since 1966) and leading forum for the sectors' professionals and their associations in Finland (Rakennuslehti, 2022b), giving it expert status in the field. The magazine is issued once a week and has about 70 000 readers. It functions as a trade journal and offers news and information about the building, construction, and real estate industries, and its target group consists of architects, engineers, builders, and decision makers in these industries (Rakennuslehti, 2022a). Thus, it is the only magazine that is targeted to experts in the construction industry as a whole in Finland, while other potential magazines have wider target audiences (often citizens in general or homeowners) or more specific focus in the field (such as architecture, or a particular area of engineering). Therefore, it enables examining potential knowledge asymmetries between different kinds of experts involved in the same industry.

The searches in *Rakennuslehti* (from 2010 onwards) returned 153 relevant texts about sustainable housing. Among these texts, we decided to focus on one specific genre: about 300–400 words long texts published under the main heading 'Point of view'. There were 29 such texts in the corpus. The 'Point of view' texts represent a hybrid genre (e.g., Mäntynen & Shore, 2014, p. 738) that combines the characteristics of editorials, columns, and opinion articles. As is typical of editorials, the Point of view texts are rhetorically structured with an introduction describing the topic, followed by an intermediate section with analysis, reason-giving, evidence, examples, and solutions, and finally a concluding section with conclusion and moral (see Katajamäki & Koskela, 2006). These texts were chosen for closer analysis because they provide a platform for various experts who are regarded as trusted and influential authorities in the relevant field (see Kääntä et al., 2024). In comparison to other texts published in the magazine, such as news of the market situation or plans for new construction projects, the texts have a community-building function in addition to offering a forum for debate of current issues.

The authors of these texts are representatives of companies, professional associations, such as associations for the construction industry, concrete builders, the log house industry, electrical and telecommunications contractors, lobbyists, and advocacy organizations. Some of the texts have been written by the editors and journalists of the magazine, or researchers, including four authors with a doctoral degree. Most of the texts have one author (two texts have two authors, while one text has three authors). Reader comments online are not included in the analysis because the focus is on expert writers addressing potential knowledge asymmetries, and only some of the texts (15) had received any. The affiliations of the authors are listed in Table 1.

Affiliation	Number of articles
Companies	11
Professional associations	10
Editors/journalists	7
Researchers	1
Total	29

Table 1. Authors' affiliations.

The texts are written by selected experts who are given a voice on the pages of the magazine to address other experts and decision makers on issues considered relevant by the editors. The writers

of the Point of view texts are presented in the magazine as experts based on their education, other credentials, or affiliation with an institution (see Ericsson, 2018). The writers' expert status is supported by the fact that they have been asked to contribute to the discussions in the professional magazine. Being an expert writer thus puts the writers in a position where offering advice is seen as part of the role. In that position they are entitled and expected to have a voice and to appear as "authorized knowers" speaking "about the action of others" (Carlson, 2017, pp. 124, 127).

Because most of the readers of *Rakennuslehti* are themselves experts in the field, they are aware of the fact that the writers affiliated with companies and professional associations tend to engage in lobbying that tries to influence decision makers (see Lhtinen, Toppinen & Malm, 2019, p. 80). For example, based on their online comments, readers recognize the fact that a CEO of a company producing insulation materials tends to promote the use of additional insulation, and that a representative of the log house industry speaks in favor of wooden construction.

The analysis focuses on two research questions:

- (1) In which ways is advice given in the Point of view texts and to whom is it targeted?
- (2) What are the topics forming sources of potential knowledge asymmetries in the texts and how do they relate to the ways of giving advice?

The approach of the analysis is qualitative and combines pragmatic discourse analysis and content analysis (see DeCapua & Dunham, 2007; Kouper, 2010). First, the passages where advice is given were identified and coded. To answer the first research question, the types of illocutionary speech acts typical of the advice-giving sections were analyzed, where applicable, by applying Searle's (1976) categories of illocutionary acts. The illocutions are signaled by linguistic cues, which were used to recognize instances of advice, such as the use of imperatives, interrogatives, and certain verbs, such as *advise*, *recommend*, and *suggest*. To support the analysis, the taxonomy presented by Abolfathiasl and Abdullah (2013) was applied in a modified form, so that modal and semi-modal constructions (*should*, *must*, *ought to*), which in the taxonomy are treated as conventionally indirect, were counted as direct strategies in the analysis. However, not all advice is explicit, but rather a matter of interpretation, and discourse analysis was used to identify instances of implicit advice-giving (see e.g., Locher, 2006). Such cases were analyzed by looking at the overall discourse patterns in order to distinguish statements that express concern for some future action.

Second, to analyze whom the advice is targeted, pragmatic discourse analysis was applied to categorize and code each instance of advice-giving according to both named and implicit addressees. For example, an author may explicitly name the government as the target of advice, as in "*The government should use tax payers money efficiently*", or implicitly by using an impersonal structure: "*The conditions for wood construction could be improved by waiving the obligation to build a civil shelter*". In this context, it is shared knowledge that only the government can make policy decisions about civil shelters, so this need not be expressed explicitly in the text.

To answer the second research question, the conventional approach of qualitative content analysis where categories are derived directly from the data (see Hsieh & Shannon, 2005, pp. 1279–1280) was used to identify the topics for advice-giving in each text. The advice-giving passages are understood as signs of potential knowledge asymmetries since knowledge asymmetries form the rationale for most advisory communication. While it is not possible to discern what the knowledge asymmetry in each case and between each writer and reader consists of, the point of interest in this article is to analyse ways of giving advice in relation to the topics as potential sources of knowledge asymmetries. Finally, the ways of advice-giving, the intended target-addressees and the topics are discussed and related to each other, results are discussed, and conclusions presented.

5 Ways of Advice-Giving and Sources of Potential Knowledge Asymmetries

The magazine we study is read by professionals who want to keep current on the latest developments in their field, but also by non-professionals and political decision makers who need information about the field to support their decisions (Rakennuslehti, 2022b). The expert writers who have been invited to write a Point of view text in the construction magazine are expected to contribute with new knowledge, fresh point of view and additional understanding that the readers do not have, and thus the concept of ‘knowledge asymmetry’ is actualized. Even though the authors communicate mainly within the field of building and construction, they possess different types of knowledge, or at least look at the same topics from different points of view (cf. Kastberg, 2007). In each case, the communicative context, including the magazine itself and the topics discussed in each number, informs how the readers interpret the text, for example as advice. For engaging readers to promote climate-wise housing it is important that the experts are able to present their message so that it is perceived as relevant (see Whitmarsh et al., 2013); only then can it be valuable and valid in the context (Armon, 2016, p. 4).

Based on pragmatic discourse analysis, we identified four possible clusters of types of advice-giving. Figure 1 summarizes the types based on two central aspects; that is, how implicit or explicit the advice is and, related to that, whether or not and how the targets of advice are named.

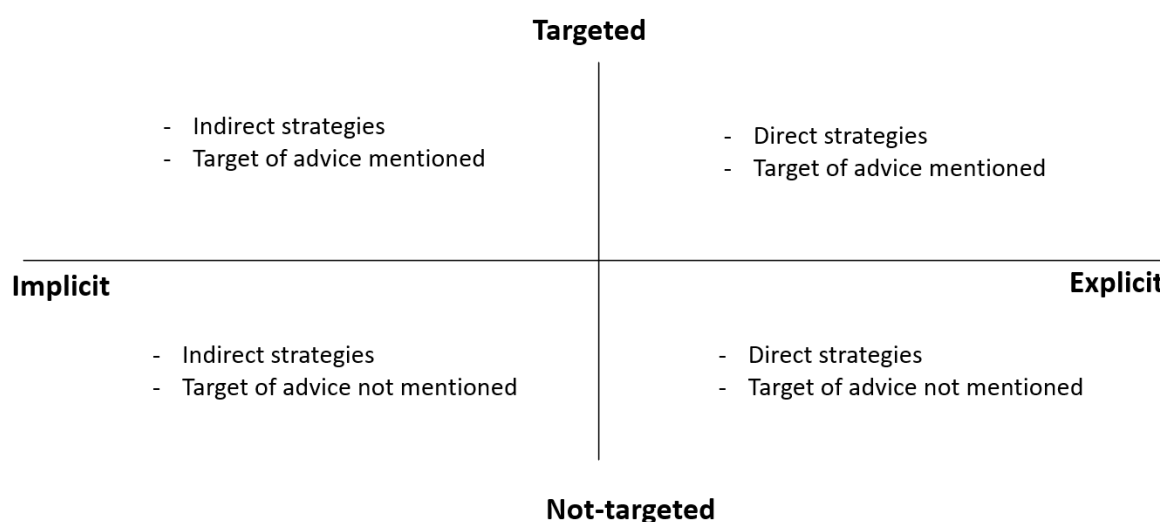


Figure 1. Types of advice-giving in the data.

In Figure 1, *explicit advice*, refers to passages of text where *direct strategies* (see Abolfathiasl & Abdullah, 2013) of giving advice are used. In our analysis, however, modal verbs and semi-modals are counted as direct strategies, and they are also the most typical in the data. On the other side, *implicit advice* stands for statements and claims that can be interpreted as advice based on the context. Here we have included both conventionally and non-conventionally *indirect strategies* (Abolfathiasl & Abdullah, 2013). *Targeted advice* means that the writer clearly indicates to whom the advice is intended, while in not-targeted advice, human actors are not named, but a requirement is expressed. Because our data are in Finnish, it should be noted that the Finnish language offers numerous resources for *non-conventionally indirect strategies*, that is, impersonal and abstract expressions (e.g., Shore, 1988), which can at times be difficult to translate into other languages. (This may be reflected in our “non-fluent” semi-literal translations of examples.)

According to our analysis, the advice is typically expressed explicitly with *direct strategies* (particularly with a deontic modality, see e.g., Peltola, 2016), but the target or addressee is often left

implicit. In the context of expert-to-expert communication, this could be related to the rather small discourse community with a significant amount of shared knowledge. However, all the types are present in the data. Next, each cluster of advice-giving will be discussed in more detail with illustrative examples from the data.

5.1.1 Explicit Advice

In the Point of view texts, advice has varying degrees of explicitness or implicitness. In terms of illocutions (Searle, 1976), the typical form of advice-giving is through *assertives*, while *directives with imperative forms* (e.g., ordering, commanding, challenging) are not used. This is understandable because the writers of the texts are field experts and specialized journalists addressing their peers; they are not, for example, giving instructions to non-experts in the field.

Assertives that represent explicit advice-giving are typically *suggestions* or *recommendations* expressed with modal verbs and modal constructions. In example 1, the editor of the professional magazine offers explicit advice to planners and builders to consider what has already happened to the climate. After each example, a number indicates which text in the data the example stems from. The numbering runs in chronological order.

1. Construction therefore aims to contribute to curbing climate change, but at the same time **designers and builders** *must take into account* the warming that has already occurred. [8]¹

Rakentamisella pyritään siis osaltaan hillitsemään ilmastonmuutosta, mutta samalla *suunnittelijoiden ja rakentajien on otettava huomioon* jo tapahtunut lämpeneminen.

The advice in example 1 is **explicit and targeted**; that is, a modal construction (*must take into account*) is used and the addressees are defined as planners and builders. This advice is reasoned by emphasizing how the construction sector is participating in curbing climate change. It implies that everyone in the sector is important in this action, even though specified professionals are addressed explicitly.

Examples 2 and 3 illustrate **explicit not-targeted advice** in the form of assertives. In example 2, the authors, as representatives of the professional association of builders, make a suggestion for the future development of buildings without explicitly naming who should do it. The rather strict formulation of the advice (*must be developed*) is contrasted with leaving the obligation to the future. Interestingly, buildings are understood as animate actors that can have abilities.

2. The ability of buildings to anticipate external changes and the ability to recover from them *must be developed more* in the future than before, for example, by utilizing sensor technology and artificial intelligence. [3]

Rakennusten kykyä ennakoida ulkoisia muutoksia sekä kykyä toipua niistä *pitääkin tulevaisuudessa kehittää* aiempaa enemmän esimerkiksi hyödyntäen anturitekniologiaa ja tekoälyä.

3. On the way to carbon-neutral construction, planning *must first be tackled*. [26]

Matkalla hiilineutraaliin rakentamiseen *on tartuttava ensin* kaavoitukseen

Example 3 is the title of an article written by an architect that highlights the role of statutory land use planning in controlling the carbon footprint. Also, here the expert offers not-targeted advice in an explicit way. The implicit target of the advice is the part of the housing and construction sector that

¹ Numbers in square brackets identify the Finnish-language corpus texts (1–29) from which the examples are drawn. The corpus is not included in the appendix due to language considerations.

is able to make decisions about the role given to this kind of planning. The role of planning as part of the expert's own professional activity is emphasized.

In addition to assertives, explicit advice is also given in the form of *commissives*, or declarations that commit the writer while trying to get the reader to do something (see e.g., Searle, 1976). These can be calls for joint action to tackle the consequences of climate change or shared goals. In other words, commissives are community and consensus oriented.

4. We *should start thinking* about things more in the long term. This requires questioning many old ways of working and choosing. We need new perspectives. We must broaden the traditional view of sustainable construction. [14]

Meidän tulee alkaa ajatella asioita pitkäjänteisemmin. Tämä vaatii monien vanhojen työtapojen ja valintojen kyseenalaistamista. Tarvitsemme uusia näkökulmia. Meidän on laajennettava perinteistä näkökulmaa kestävästä rakentamisesta.

In example 4, the author, who is the CEO of a construction material company, offers advice to the actors in the field and expresses commitment to the change. This is illustrated by repeating expressions with *we*, such as *we should*, *we need*, *we must broaden*, and the request to do and see things differently than before. Thus, example 4 represents a form of explicit targeted advice in which the frequent use of *we* has a community-building function. Simultaneously, the need to highlight these issues reflects the fact that not all might agree.

5.1.2 Implicit Advice

Implicit advice consists of statements and claims interpreted as advice in the analysis, and they are either targeted or not targeted. Earlier research has shown (e.g., Vine, 2004, p. 26-27) that it is not necessarily easy to recognize advice-giving based on a specific speech act. In other words, implicit advice is typically not signaled with direct strategies. However, directive expressions have been found to be used more when there is a need to appear competent and knowledgeable (e.g., Craven & Potter, 2010). On the other hand, the need to *appear* competent generally tends to be less highlighted if the advice giver is a high-status expert (cf. Agneessens & Wittek, 2012), as is the case in our data.

Implicit advice is similar to explicit advice in that it is typically formulated as assertive statements. Expressions such as “something is needed/important/required/essential” are here interpreted as non-conventionally indirect signals of advice in Point of view texts.

Example 5 offers advice to the field of building and construction as a whole, which makes it **implicit and targeted advice**.

5. From the point of view of the industry, however, *it is worth seeing the situation* above all as an opportunity. [22]

Alan kannalta tilanne *kannattaa nähdä* kuitenkin ennen kaikkea mahdollisuutena.

In the example, the chair of the association of the construction industry offers advice (and consolation) to representatives of the field by stating that it is beneficial to see the increasing requirements of carbon neutrality as an opportunity rather than a burden. The advice is formulated implicitly in terms of the worth of seeing the benefits without a directive (cf. *we/you need to see*), potentially considering those who have difficulties in aligning with the advice. The expression *be worth X* is quite neutral, reader-friendly and peer-like way to give advice in written context (see Kääntä, 2015).

Implicit and targeted advice can also be less subtle and have an argumentative character. In example 6, a specialist editor of the construction magazine makes an argument against applying the life cycle model for municipal buildings. In the model, the construction company is responsible for the maintenance of the buildings for a long period of time.

6. Regular maintenance *should not be more difficult* for the municipality to order than it is for a construction company. It is the local cleaners and maintenance that YIT [i.e., a large construction company] also hires for the site. [28]

Säännöllisen huollon ei pitäisi olla kunnalle sen vaikeammin tilattava asia kuin rakennusliikkeellekään. Paikalliset sodankyläläiset siivoojat ja huoltomiehet se YIT:kin palkkaa kohteeseen.

The lead argument is that municipalities should have their public buildings built by hiring a contractor directly and not through a life cycle model. In example 6, the author makes a supporting argument in an ironic tone about the use of local workers for the maintenance. Even though there is a negated modal construction (*should not be more difficult*), the advice is implied, suggesting that municipalities should not try to avoid their responsibilities for taking care of public buildings.

In example 7, the authors call for more open discussion about ways to reach low-carbon housing. This represents **implicit not-targeted advice**.

7. There is still a need for more joint open discussion about low-carbon methods. [110]

Yhteistä avointa keskustelua vähähiilisyyden keinoista tarvitaan vielä lisää.

The authors of the text in example 7 are representatives of the construction industry association who write jointly with a business consultant. They end their text about sustainability requirements and how to calculate the carbon footprint with a general call for more discussion about carbon neutrality. In the context of a professional magazine, however, it can be inferred that the discussion should be both within the field and towards decision makers. This is implied in the use of attributes for the discussion (*joint, open*) that refers to the idea that the discussion includes different kinds of participants with potentially different opinions on the matter. Thereby, a knowledge asymmetry is exposed and treated as a problem (see Alrøe & Noe, 2011) that can be solved with more discussion.

In the context of climate-wise housing, warnings given in the form of assertive statements sometimes work as implicit advice (example 8). The warning in this case is formed through negation and through emphasizing deficiencies.

8. The risk of error assessments is high when the importance of different factors *cannot be identified without sufficient information*.

Virhearviointien riski on suuri, kun eri tekijöiden merkittävyyttä ei ilman riittävää tietoa tunnisteta. [22]

In example 8, an environment and sustainability manager at the construction industry association addresses a knowledge asymmetry between experts and decision makers concerning how to define sustainable housing and how to make calculations for standards. The advice is implicit (high risk of error = do not do it) and not targeted at the sentence level, but in the context of the whole text the advice suggests that decision makers should listen to experts before making binding decisions. Next, we will discuss the topics of advice, i.e. the sources of potential knowledge asymmetries.

5.2 Connecting topics as sources of knowledge asymmetries and ways of advice-giving

In this section, we delve into the topics of the texts as sources of potential knowledge asymmetries in the data. Focusing on instances of explicitly or implicitly targeted advice, we explore whether there are connections between the sources of potential knowledge asymmetries, targets of advice, and typical ways of advice-giving. The results of the analysis are summarized in Table 2. The Finnish originals of the examples are in Appendix.

Sources of knowledge asymmetries	Target of advice	Typical ways of advice-giving	Examples
EU directives and their implementation - Critical views and reasoned opinions of the national implementation.	Typically implicit: decision makers and politicians - E.g., the ones who decide on the use of factors	Implicit - E.g., <i>there is no reason to use</i> (=do not use)	There is no reason to use any factors to direct consumption towards heating systems that are more emission-intensive and more environmentally damaging. [28]
Issues of technical character -Expert knowledge about technical matters, reasoned opinions	Explicit or implicit: decision makers and industry actors -E.g., the industry continues on the current path	Both explicit and implicit -Implicit (e.g., <i>the carbon footprint will be reduced by continuing...</i>)	Until geopolymers take over the market, the carbon footprint of concrete construction will be most effectively reduced by continuing on the current path, namely, first and foremost, by reducing the carbon footprint of cement. [13]
Business issues -Claims of what is good for businesses, business situation described from a selected expert perspective	Construction companies (us)	Implicit -E.g., expressing a hope; different actors	The Log House Industry Association hopes that different actors will not resort to belittling each other's products in this energy efficiency discussion. [26]
Organization-related issues -Building and construction field as a community highlighted -What the field and its actors have done and are doing (need to do) in the future	The field, industry actors (us)	Both explicit and implicit, inclusive -E.g., <i>it is better to be at the forefront</i>	The construction industry is therefore expected to contribute to curbing climate change, but also to adapting to the changes that have already occurred – new products and innovations are needed. In this work, it is better to be at the forefront than to follow in the rear. [4]
Promoting expertise -Highlighting one type of expertise over others, often focusing on underestimation of a certain type of expertise	Decision makers, the field, often inclusive (our)	Both explicit and implicit, inclusive -Implicit (e.g., <i>it is our responsibility as architects and designers, we</i>)	It is our responsibility as architects and designers to bring more questions, options and perspectives to the discussion, rather than taking the initial information as given. We have multidisciplinary expertise from which to draw on for improved solutions. [11]

Table 2. Different types of knowledge asymmetries, targets of advice and ways of advice-giving.

Based on the content analysis, five main topics as **sources of potential knowledge asymmetries** could be identified in the data (see Table 2). These reflect system-level factors that shape climate measures and policies in general (e.g., Whitmarsh et al., 2013). The main source of potential knowledge asymmetries in the Point of view texts, especially at the beginning of the time period studied (2010–), was regulation—in particular, **EU directives and their implementation** at a national level. These are complex issues with clear knowledge asymmetries that the authors want to bridge with information about what has been decided, on what grounds, and which include advice

about what the Finnish authorities should do when implementing them. However, this topic is not only about lack of knowledge, as the data reveal a substantial lack of agreement in the field concerning how the carbon footprints of construction and housing should be measured (see e.g., Toivonen et al., 2021). Therefore, the expert authors choose to bridge assumed knowledge asymmetries with information about different ways of measuring and reasoned opinions about which types of calculations should be used as a basis for policies and future recommendations. These knowledge asymmetries are typically met by giving implicit, general advice to decision makers and politicians without naming them as targets of advice. However, sometimes the target is made explicit as in Example 9.

9. The Ministry of the Environment has promised a roadmap for the pace of energy tightening until 2020. *Hopefully there will be enough traffic restrictions on that road.* [105]

Ympäristöministeriö on luvannut tiekartan energiakiristysten tahdista vuoteen 2020. Toivottavasti liikennerajoituksia on tuolla tiellä riittävästi.

In the example, the Finnish Ministry of the Environment is mentioned as the target, but the advice itself remains implicit as it is metaphorically expressed (*roadmap vs. traffic restrictions*). If spelled out, the advice is that the Ministry should not make the schedule of the implementation of the EU's energy-saving targets in construction too tight. There is a critical undertone in the advice, which may explain why the advice is not formulated more explicitly.

The potential knowledge asymmetries in the data can also be of a **technical character**, especially when the authors share information about the pros and cons of the sustainability of different construction materials, and procedures and practices of planning and construction in relation to climate change. Example 10, written by the CEO of the concrete industry association, answers the question "How do we replace concrete?" in the title of the article.

10. The replacing material must be cheap and available in very large quantities.[...] Before any widespread adoption, geopolymers must demonstrate their capabilities in many respects. They must be strong and of uniform quality and withstand long-term moisture, frost and temperature fluctuations, and protect fittings from rusting. In addition, they must be safe for people and the environment to use. In this respect, Portland cement has a 150-year head start. [27]

Korvaavaa materiaalia tulee olla tarjolla edullisesti ja hyvin suurina määrinä. [...] Ennen laajaa käyttöönottoa geopolymeerien on osoitettava kyvykkyytensä monessa suhteessa. Niiden tulee olla lujia ja tasalaatuisia sekä kestää pitkäaikaista kosteutta, pakkasta ja lämpötilavaihteluita sekä suojata raudotteita ruostumiselta. Lisäksi niiden tulee olla ihmisille ja ympäristölle turvallisia käyttää. Portland-sementillä on tässä 150 vuoden etumatka.

The whole paragraph can be interpreted as explicit advice - and also a warning - to industry actors and decision makers concerning technical issues to consider carefully before making binding decisions about replacing concrete with other materials. The advice is reasoned by using technical and subject-specific information, future-orientation and comparisons.

In addition, **business opportunities** may be treated as sources of knowledge asymmetries, especially when promoting carbon neutral solutions. In business-related texts, typically written by the leaders of professional associations, CEOs of large companies, or consultants, advice to business actors in the field, such as construction companies (see example 11), tends to be implicit and not-targeted, but the target is still clear.

11. There is a much greater potential in the repair construction market than perhaps we could have imagined. [22]

Korjausrakentamisen markkinasta löytyy paljon suurempi potentiaali kuin ehkä olemme osanneet ajatellakaan.

This type of advice is often connected with we-talk, highlighting the role of the construction sector as a community. It also lures with potential, representing the issue as appealing especially to businesses.

Equally, a promotional stance to knowledge asymmetries is found in some texts written by representatives of professional organizations. In these **organization-related texts**, the writers describe what their organizations are doing at the moment—such as strategy work, statements, projects, or publications—for their members and for the building and construction sector more broadly. These are obviously details about which the broader readership lacks awareness or familiarity, and filling this gap in knowledge may border on legitimation or promotion of the organizations in question. In these texts, advice is directed to the actors within the industry, encouraging the joining of forces to reach shared goals and advocating more cooperation and fairness (see example 12).

12. The construction industry is, therefore, expected to contribute to curbing climate change, but also to adapt to the change that has already taken place—new products and innovations are needed. In that job, it's better to be at the forefront rather than following in the rear. [8]

Rakennusalaalta odotetaan siis, että se on osaltaan suitsimassa ilmastonmuutosta, mutta myös sopeutumassa jo tapahtuneeseen muutokseen – tarvitaan uusia tuotteita ja innovaatioita. Siinä työssä kannattaa olla enemmän eturintamassa kuin seuraamassa takajoukoissa.

In example 12, the author states that it is better to be an initiator rather than only a follower. This implies that the construction industry association prefers to see itself as a forerunner and recommends a similar approach to others.

Finally, there are some **expertise-related texts** where certain types of expertise, such as that of city planners and architects, are explicitly highlighted and promoted. The advice in these texts is about the value of this expertise to the actors in the field, as in example 13 (*our responsibility, we have multidisciplinary expertise*).

13. It is our responsibility as architects and designers to bring more questions, options and perspectives to the discussion instead of taking the initial information as given. We have multidisciplinary expertise from which to draw in order to improve solutions. [24]

On meidän arkkitehtien ja suunnittelijoiden vastuulla tuoda keskusteluun entistä enemmän kysymyksiä, vaihtoehtoja ja näkökulmia sen sijaan, että otamme lähtötiedot annettuina. Meillä on monialaista asiantuntemusta, josta ammentaa parantavia ratkaisuja.

All in all, the analysis of connections between sources of knowledge asymmetries, targets of advice, and typical ways of advice-giving (see Table 2) shows that different types of knowledge asymmetries are exposed and bridged by offering advice mainly to decision makers and politicians and to the actors in the field. In the context of a professional magazine, the advice to decision makers prompts them to make “right decisions for the field,” while the advice to the industry prompts the actors in the field to joint action, hinting at the possibility of co-creating knowledge to bridge potential asymmetries. As can be expected of a professional magazine representing the construction industry, the identified sources of potential knowledge asymmetry are system-level factors that are addressed

in policies, principles and in societal discussions. Advising the general public, however, is not the focus of the writers of the Point of view texts because they are addressing a well-defined discourse community with specific interests.

6 Discussion and Conclusion

In this article, we have discussed how housing and construction field experts give advice to each other, which topics come through as sources of potential knowledge asymmetries, and how sources, targets and ways of advice-giving are connected. Our results show that advice has varying degrees of explicitness or implicitness. Indeed, illocutions are used variably for advice-giving in the data; assertives dominate, commissives are possible, but directives in the form of imperative forms are not used.

Our findings illustrate the complex interdisciplinary character of the construction industry. The sector professionals seek to fill knowledge asymmetries in technical, legal (especially concerning regulations), political, and economic matters. They offer advice to architects and planners, builders, politicians, as well as decision makers. The addressee often remains implicit either because it is self-evident in the context or alternatively, for mitigation purposes.

The ways of advice-giving vary according to their degree of directness (see e.g., Kouper, 2010; Abolfathi & Abdullah, 2013; Coen et al., 2020). The relationship between direct strategies and advice-giving may be interpreted in various ways in relation to the data, where expert writers are communicating mainly with decision makers and other experts. Because many of the writers are representatives of lobbying organizations, it is expected in the genre that they will offer expert advice to decision makers. When there is agreement in the field, this type of advice may create a feeling of a unified community in the field. However, when it comes to offering advice to peers, differences of opinion may emerge and the threshold to give explicit and targeted advice might be higher. Logically, this could mean that advice to decision makers might be explicit and targeted and advice to peers implicit and not clearly targeted, but there is no such consistent pattern in our data. Instead, advice to peers often has a community-building character indicated by we-talk.

In the data, knowledge asymmetries may consist of either assumed lack of *knowledge* (cf. *problems* by Alrøe & Noe, 2011, p. 153) or assumed lack of *agreement* (cf. *dilemmas* by Alrøe & Noe, 2011, p. 153). Advice can be offered based on both types of assumed asymmetries. The types of *paradoxes* with fragmented knowledge referred to by Alrøe and Noe (2011, p. 153) were not explicitly highlighted in the data. The lack of paradoxes may be explained by the relational dynamics of the closed discourse community of professionals participating in the discussions in the Point of view texts. However, it remains a topic for further research whether such paradoxes exist in other types of data.

The data come from a professional magazine which is a forum for expert-to-expert communication. The discourse community of experts often addresses decision makers who need to make decisions that concern the field and its business conditions. However, when offering advice to decision makers, the authors simultaneously inform the professionals of the field about which issues are currently on the table and what the field experts think about them. Within the discourse community there are both joint interests and conflicts of interest. This is the case also when lobbying towards decision makers. This factor may contribute to the tendency that advice-giving is often implicit and not-targeted. While the concept of “knowledge asymmetry” hints at differences in cognitive resources (Kastberg, 2007), it does not rule out the idea that knowledge is simultaneously co-created in written interaction, which the discourse community continuously engages in on the pages of this regularly published professional magazine. In this process, knowledge asymmetries relationally emerge and call for expert authors to offer advice.

Our study has contributed to the study of expert-to-expert communication by focusing on advice-giving as a way to overcome knowledge asymmetries in a hybrid genre of semi-argumentative texts written by housing and construction sector experts. We have participated in the discussion of advice-giving as a pragma-discursive phenomenon and illustrated the linguistic repertoire that lies behind the offering of relevant information in context-specific ways to expert audiences. Methodologically, we have contributed with an approach in which a taxonomy of suggestions (Abolfathiasl & Abdullah, 2013) is modified and applied to recognizing advice and by applying the idea of direct and indirect strategies to identifying the targets of advice. Moreover, we have also related the ways of advice-giving to topics as sources of potential knowledge asymmetries and touched upon the relational dynamics of the community participating in the genre of Point of view texts.

A limitation of this study is that the data only consists of openly argumentative Point of view texts where advice-giving is an expected feature. In this article, we have concentrated on what expert advice reveals of potential knowledge asymmetries concerning climate-wise housing. The starting point of the study is that genre matters when it comes to offering advice because the authors tend to take a specific stance towards their readers depending on the genre. Earlier studies have shown that there are certain journalistic genres (e.g., science journalism, health journalism, service journalism and specific advice columns) where advice is common (e.g., Armon, 2016; Usher, 2012; Eide, 2017; Andersen et al., 2019; Rundblad & Chen 2015). Our results are in line with earlier findings when we show that there are topics and contexts which tend to increase the frequency of advice, its diverse realizations and affect its tone. When the authors take an authoritative stance, they imply that there is a potential knowledge asymmetry. In the multidisciplinary field of building and construction involving different professions, these can be treated as problems, dilemmas or even paradoxes (Alrøe & Noe 2011, pp.153, 164). In expert-to-expert communication, advice-giving thus opens up for dialogue of whether the implied knowledge asymmetry is accepted or contested by the readers, a topic which is outside the scope of a text-based analysis. Thus, we suggest that future studies explore advice-giving in a wider variety of genres and from an interactional perspective, for example, based on interviews with experts. In addition, our data describe the practices of a rather small discourse community. More analyses are needed to expand upon the practices of advice-giving in other professional fields.

In this article, we emphasize the centrality of the building and construction sector for discussions about climate-wise living. According to our analyses, the discourse community of construction industry experts seems to embrace the shared goals and offer advice about how to best reach them instead of contesting them. The few critical voices are targeting decision makers, but in an indirect and polite manner. This is different from service journalism: when citizens are seen as consumers whose mundane housing choices help prevent climate change, direct advice and suggestions for concrete opportunities for action are explicitly offered (Eide, 2017, p. 199). Still, to have an impact, it is important to know how the advice is formulated. Similarly, the readers need to be able to recognize when they are targeted as receivers of advice. Further research could focus more on the balancing between different interests and how the need for joint lobbying is mastered in other types of data from the sector. In addition, it would be interesting to study how advice-giving is used when addressing citizens and consumers, where paradoxes with fragmented knowledge may be more accentuated. To conclude, we have demonstrated the importance of genre knowledge and understanding the nuances and context-specific character of advisory communication to shape and transform the discourses on climate-wise living in this specific field.

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Appendix

The Finnish language originals of examples presented in Table 2.

Row 1:

EU directives and their implementation

Ei ole mitään syytä jollain kertoimilla ohjata kulutusta runsaspäästöisempiin ja ympäristöä enemmän rasittaviin lämmitysmuotoihin.

Row 2:

Issues of technical character

Ennen kuin geopolymeerit valtaavat markkinat, betonirakentamisen hiilijalanjälkeä pienennetään tehokkaimmin jatkamalla nykyisellä polulla, siis ennen kaikkea pienentämällä sementin hiilijalanjälkeä.

Row 3:

Business issues

Hirsitaloteollisuus ry toivoo, että eri toimijat eivät sorru tässä energiatehokkuuskeskustelussa toistensa tuotteiden vähättelyyn.

Row 4:

Organization-related issues

Rakennusosalta odotetaan siis, että se on osaltaan suitsimassa ilmastonmuutosta, mutta myös sopeutumassa jo tapahtuneeseen muutokseen – tarvitaan uusia tuotteita ja innovaatioita. Siinä työssä kannattaa olla enemmän eturintamassa kuin seuraamassa takajoukoissa.

Row 5:

Promoting expertise