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c:o/re Käte Hamburger Kolleg Cultures of Research

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Nowhere(to)land?

What Science Studies Contribute to Science Communication

Call for Contributions (deadline: 15. January 2023)

Collaboration between Science and Technology Studies (STS) and Science Communication Studies (SCS) has not been strong so far. At first glance, this is surprising since STS and SCS scholars deal with similar subject areas such as the practice of academic research, the development of scientific knowledge, or the role of scientists in society. A closer look, however, reveals that, as communities, STS and SCS have followed different trajectories that result in different identities, motivations, and interests. On the one hand, STS scholars have regularly aimed to open up the black box of the laboratory and the inner world of research. They have critically engaged with scientific knowledge and truth claims, and with the authority of expertise. They have addressed the public's awareness by explaining and reinforcing how 'facts' are fabricated and how scientific knowledge is bound up with power, social interests, and implicit values. SCS scholars, on the other hand, started with a more optimistic image of scientific knowledge as the most robust knowledge available. Their initial aim was to study how research findings can be communicated to various audiences to improve their lives, and to find out why some people deny or resist scientific knowledge – at least in some areas. Later, SCS developed more reciprocal perspectives, aiming to enable two-way dialogues between the wider public and the researchers/experts up to public engagement with science. That notwithstanding, the key mission of SCS is still to facilitate successful forms of science communication, i.e., to communicate robust research findings.

For the conference 'Nowhere(to)land? What Science Studies Contribute to Science Communication', we invite interested researchers from both fields to question this juxtaposition of STS and SCS as well as the tension between overly complex and reflective forms of science studies and overly simplistic forms of science communication. This stance is informed by the insight that science communication needs to be reorganised in order to respond to wicked problems in a post-normal age such as climate change, the Covid19-pandemic, or the crisis of truth. In addition to the results of disciplinary research, this includes communicating knowledge about the science system itself: the roles, norms and values of scientists and academics, the functioning of universities and other research institutions, of journals, publishers and funding agencies, and the basic principles of data literacy. Since STS produce exactly this kind of knowledge, they provide an important source for reconceptualising the theory and practice of science communication.

To look into the black box of 'science as a social system' means at the same time that the trading zones between STS and SCS need to be revisited. Entering this 'no man's land' raises three sets of research questions. First, where do the logics of STS and SCS interact/overlap and how can STS help to improve science communication? Second, what kind of STS knowledge is relevant to which audiences? How can STS knowledge, for example, help decision makers to make better judgements when faced with disinformation, multiple facts, expert dissent, or more generally, the uncertainty of knowledge claims? Third, are there blind spots in STS regarding science issues in current public debates?

With this call for contributions, we invite participants to map the yet uncharted territory between STS and SCS. We are interested in ideas, perspectives, and projects that address STS/SCS constellations and corresponding topics of their interconnectedness. In addition to the exemplary questions listed above, the following topics at the interface of STS and SCS might be helpful starting points for mapping the terrain:

- Alternative facts, uncertain knowledge, and multiple facts: The crisis of truth as a challenge for STS and SCS
- Science communication, public outreach and other transfer activities as a new core mission for academic researchers
- The potential of Living Labs and Citizen Science projects for communicating research findings from STS
- Automated forms of research, data procession, and transformation in the content and style of science communication
- The transformation of scientific publication systems: how digital platforms, open science strategies, preprint servers etc. change the practices of science communication

However, we also invite participants to discuss other topics if they find them useful for mapping the 'no man's land' between STS and SCS. Thinking together across these research fields requires a willingness to engage in mapping common as well as divergent ideas and interests. For that purpose, the conference is conceptualized as a working format: the focus lies more on conversations than on presentations. We thus invite 'inputs' and 'ideas' instead of 'results' and 'papers'. Of course, we will also talk about publishing the results, but only after the discussion.

Proposals (for contributions) should not exceed **500 words**. Please also add a short one-page CV. Both senior and younger researchers are invited, and we particularly encourage scholars with a Non-Western background to participate. Travel costs for accepted participants can be reimbursed. Please send your proposals including a short CV as one PDF to Laura Morris (laura.morris@tu-dortmund.de) and David Kaldewey (kaldewey@uni-bonn.de) until **15. January 2023**. Notification of acceptance will be sent by the end of February.

The conference is organized by the Rhine Ruhr Center for Science Communication Research (https://rhine-ruhr-research.de) in cooperation with the Käte Hamburger Kolleg Cultures of Research (https://khk.rwth-aachen.de). The keynote will be delivered by Sarah R. Davies (Vienna). The conference will be held at Forum Internationale Wissenschaft at the **University of Bonn** and is funded by the **Volkswagen Foundation**.