

The Science of Science Communication: Mapping the Field

Preconference at the 72nd Annual Conference of the ICA

May 25, 2022

The beginning of the new century's "Roaring 20s" is determined by global crises around climate change, biodiversity loss, migration, social inequalities, and a pandemic disease. At the same time, it is shaped by the advent of scientific and technological solutions to these problems (e.g. artificial intelligence, genetic modification, geo-engineering). These processes of change emphasize the importance of science communication.

The communication *of* and *about* science and technology, as well as *for* environmental and social change includes new, digital, and creative pathways to convey scientific knowledge, foster public engagement, and negotiate the social, ethical, and legal implications of scientific research (Bucchi & Trench, 2021). Science communication is highly relevant for decision-making in political, environmental, cultural, and economic discourses and collaborations (Davis et al., 2018), the institutionalization of new social norms like sustainability (Weder et al., 2021), and social change processes among the general population (Fischhoff, 2013).

Enabling effective and sustainable science communication poses challenges for science communicators and intermediaries alike. In a society where information is highly valued, trust is a new currency – trust in facts, trust in information, and trust in communicators such as scientists and journalists, influencers and activists, or artists and PR professionals. Science communicators need to raise attention for complex issues through various forms and processes of communication targeting different audiences – and aimed for being covered in the media. Therefore, they (have to) rely on intermediaries, mainly on PR professionals and journalists, but also increasingly on bloggers and influencers. The challenge: addressing various audiences in increasingly competitive and increasingly digitalized communication environments (Brossard, 2013). Moreover, science communicators, institutions, and intermediaries have to cope with public resentment and the task of (re-)building trust in science and science communication (Schäfer, 2016) in an era of disinformation and intransparencies.

Communication research has addressed these challenges by establishing the "science of science communication" (Fischhoff, 2013; Jamieson et al., 2017; Kahan, 2015) – a cross-sectional, inter- as well as transdisciplinary field of research analyzing communicators, interpersonal messages, intermediaries, media coverage, media use, reception, processing, and

effects. On the one hand, neighboring fields of communication (e.g., environmental communication, health communication, journalism) fruitfully intersect with the science of science communication. On the other hand, it has created genuine fields of interest, its own research questions and concepts to answer them – recently facing the mentioned challenges concerning risk, trust, and misinformation, for example.

The preconference acknowledges the increasing relevance of science communication in current societies and accounts for the plurality and interdisciplinarity of the *science of science communication*. It aims to offer a platform to present, discuss, and connect international science of science communication research within the ICA community – with a specific focus on existing environmental communication research, theories, and methodologies. It also seeks to bring together emerging and established scholars: Early- and mid-career researchers will have the opportunity to meet and exchange ideas with renowned experts in the field, and to receive valuable feedback on their work and advice for their careers. Overall, with this preconference, we plan to map, integrate, and consolidate science of science communication research as an inter- and transdisciplinary field – resonating with the ICA 2022 conference theme and its call to reflect upon the networks, “oneness,” and interdependencies of scholarly communities.

Keynote Speakers (subject to change due to potential modifications of the final schedule)

- [Dominique Brossard](#) (University of Wisconsin-Madison)
- [Dietram A. Scheufele](#) (University of Wisconsin-Madison)
- [Shirley Ho](#) (Nanyang Technological University Singapore)

Organizers

[Sven Engesser](#) (University of Dresden, Germany), [Sarah Kohler](#) (Karlsruhe Institute of Technology, Germany), [Niels Mede](#) (University of Zurich, Switzerland), [Andreas Scheu](#) (University of Muenster, Germany), [Franzisca Weder](#) (University of Queensland, Australia) in cooperation with [Lisa Bolz](#) (Sorbonne University, France), and the [Environmental Communication Division](#).

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Call for Papers

We welcome a broad spectrum of theoretical, methodological, and empirical contributions from all sections of the ICA dealing with science communication from a theoretical, conceptual or empirical perspective. This preconference is co-organized by the environmental communication division, and collaborates with the Journal *Environmental Communication*. Contributions should address at least one of the following aspects:

- 1.) Demarcation of the science of science communication
- 2.) Science, Risk and Environmental Communication
- 3.) Theories of science of science communication
- 4.) Methods of science of science communication
- 5.) Empirical research considering
 - a. (new, emerging) communicators,
 - b. messages,
 - c. (digital, social) media formats,
 - d. reception,
 - e. and/or effects of science communication from various theoretical and methodical perspectives
- 6.) Universities, science communication, professionalism – the question of “skills”
- 7.) New and innovative approaches to communication about science – arts, NGOs/campaigning, activism, social movements, etc.
- 8.) Public discourses, “new norms”/normalization of sustainability as normative frameworks

Submission Guidelines

We welcome regular and PhD-submissions. All conference submissions must include a separate **cover page** and **extended abstract**. The cover page should provide title of submission, author information, 3–5 keywords and, if applicable, a note identifying the submission as a “PhD paper” (PhD-student led paper). Extended abstracts must be **fully blinded** for reviewing and be limited to a maximum of **800–1.000 words** plus references, tables, and figures.

Please send your **conference submissions** (cover page and anonymous extended abstract) to scienceofsciencecomm@gmail.com.

Deadline for submissions is **January 23, 2022**. Submissions will undergo blind peer review, and acceptance notifications will be sent out on February 11, 2022.

Date

Authors of accepted extended abstracts will be able to present their papers live in Paris on **May 25, 2022**.

Conference venue

The conference venue is beautifully located, in the middle of Paris. You can walk to the venue from the Metro stop “Odéon” (Lines 4, 10) or “Saint-Michel” (Lines 4, B, C):

Sorbonne University

Maison de la Recherche

28 rue Serpente 75006 Paris

<https://www.sorbonne-universite.fr/sorbonne-universite-maison-de-la-recherche>

Publication of conference papers

All contributors of the preconference have the opportunity to submit their work to two Special Issues: A special issue on the science of science communication that we plan to publish in *Public Understanding of Science* (<https://journals.sagepub.com/home/pus>) and a special issue focused on the communication of environmental sciences in *Environmental Communication* (<https://www.tandfonline.com/toc/renc20/current>).

Literature

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