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Communicating Science in the Age of Telecommunications Convergence

The paper points at a dilemma. On the one hand, telecommunications convergence produced a media space characterized by some features that are almost identical with the communication requirements set up by a new kind of science called post-normal science. On the other, science, in general, complains about public ignorance, negligence of its latest results and the impossibility of passing the communication barrier existing between the scientific community and the public. The dilemma emphatically emerged in some fields, such as environment, climate, GM plants, and others. In these fields science, business, local communities and politics must cooperate with each other on a day-to-day basis. Negotiations between these interested parties are indispensable. The arguments of all sides have equal values; scientific knowledge has no unique position as compared with the stakeholders. In these situations, science cannot communicate its content in the traditional way of popularization. Popularization of science has been a one way process. The scientist spoke to the lay audience that passively listened and learnt. Traditional printed texts, oral lectures, radio or television broadcasts are adequate means for the popularization of science because they secure a one way information channel from someone who knows something to someone who is ignorant. Telecommunications convergence, however, provides interactivity, multimedia information, and communication networks, connects local with global and establishes personal relations between parties in the negotiations on all kinds of subjects. These features seem congruent with features of post-normal science. Yet, scientists complain.

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