

Recontextualizing Knowledge

Situation in Science Communication

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Alte Aula
University of Tübingen

Rhetoric Department
Research Center for Presentation Competence

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Science and knowledge communication are crucial tasks in today's globalized knowledge societies. Scientists and educators are able to use a multitude of platforms to disseminate knowledge to a wide range of audiences. At the same time, if they want their positions to be heard, they must adapt to the varying situational requirements of these platforms. Ranging from informative podcasts to inspirational TED conferences, immensely popular formats have emerged that require a specific handling of the communicative situation, not least because the audiences have dramatically changed. With this conference, we aim to analyze the communicative situations involved in science and knowledge communication, their settings and audiences, and the process of the recontextualization of knowledge for these specific settings and audiences.

Science and knowledge communication cannot longer address uniform peer groups of fellow academics watching and listening, but are confronted with heterogeneous and diverse audiences consisting of individuals, each bringing their own educational background, motivation and interests into the situation. In addition, traditional settings of science communication such as lectures, scientific conferences and papers, or journalistic sections and programs have expanded. New approaches to the discussion and dissemination of scientific insights have been established: Barcamps and Knowledge Cafés as well as digital learning environments from YouTube channels to sophisticated MOOCs, to name a few. At the same time, schools and universities are reacting to the socialization of knowledge, adapting innovative methods of knowledge dissemination into their curricula. Both developments show the recontextualization of knowledge, a process that has often been regarded negatively as reductionist, but has to be understood as an adaptation of the representations of specific knowledge to specific situations. With the examination of the factors audience and setting, which, together, make up the communicative situation, this conference is trying not only to retrace the processes of recontextualization but also to explore them further on an analytical as well as a practical level.

With this, the aim of this conference is to discuss the consequences of adapting knowledge to different situations: in what ways does the understanding of content change when it is recontextualized for different audiences and settings? Moreover, we will examine the audience's expectations toward knowledge communication and its experiences with new settings of science communication. In order to achieve that, an interdisciplinary approach to the examination of the communicative situation is needed. Rhetoric and communication studies will access the processes of adaptation from the point of view of the communicator and analyze innovative formats of science and knowledge communication such as TED or Science Slams. Fruitful insights could also be provided by the broad field of audience

studies, for example empirical methods such as eye tracking, as well as the psychological technique of perspective taking or linguistic analyses of expert-lay-communication. In addition, with topics such as the digital divide or citizen science projects, the mutual influence of society and knowledge communication on each other could be discussed from the point of view of sociology. Pedagogy and empirical education research could shed light on the ongoing transformation of knowledge dissemination in schools and universities, such as the effects of social media and cross-media communications.

The conference proceedings will be published.

For consideration for a 30-minute presentation, submit a 300 word abstract and a short biography to Markus Gottschling [markus.gottschling@uni-tuebingen.de] by December 15, 2016. For further information, contact Markus Gottschling or Olaf Kramer.

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