

# Blurred boundaries in the production of science news

## Analysis of a large scale citizen science project on air quality

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Panel contribution to 'Contesting the news: towards a postfoundational media linguistics'

### Abstract

This paper investigates the increasingly fluid agenda and credibility of journalists, scientific experts (Fahy & Nisbet, 2011) and political stakeholders in the production of science news. To do so, we take a postfoundational stance in which boundaries are blurred and certain foundations are questioned (Macgilchrist, 2016).

The production process of science news can be seen in light of a larger mediatisation of society, where media is central to various aspects of social life (Briggs & Hallin, 2016). The production process is not a linear effort where scientific knowledge is produced by scientific experts and then transferred to a non-scientific public through the media (Maesele, 2013). This is, however, a multi-layered process in which science cannot be seen as separate from society and multiple social actors are at play when it comes to defining what science means and how it is represented in the media (Briggs & Hallin, 2016; Maesele, 2013).

One of these social actors are political stakeholders. Science news often covers societal problems that are linked to science and technology (Peters, 1995), where science is presented as the problem or solution (Murcott & Williams, 2013) and scientific results are frequently used by political stakeholders as a legitimising tool in political decision-making (Weingart, 1983).

This paper presents a linguistic ethnographic analysis of a large scale citizen science project on air quality set up by a newspaper, university and governmental agency in Flanders. During this collaboration journalists, scientific experts and government officials reflect on their role in the production process of knowledge claims, how expertise is constructed, how the audience views this expertise and how the blurring of boundaries affects their own professional routines.

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