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Does Science Communication Need a Common Ground?

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Science communication as the communicative interaction – and friction – between science and society is challenged on many levels nowadays: I.e. some high-level politicians act and speak without referring to any factual evidence or even overtly deny the relevance of truthfulness. And debates on vaccines, climate change or gender-sensitive language end up in highly polarized positions. In both cases, shared basic assumptions (= a common ground) seem to be lost: Shared assumptions on the relevance of truth or truthfulness in public discourse and on good scientific practice are at stake. In this talk I give an outline and insights in our research on common ground in science communication (www.kokokom.de) from a linguistic and rhetoric point of view, asking: What is common ground, and what is its relevance for communication? Does science communication need common ground – and if so, what kind of common ground? And are there any remedies when common ground is lost?

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