Call for Papers – Symposium at the Museum für Naturkunde Berlin – 5-6. October 2026

Building Knowledge Together: Citizen Science, Communication, and Trust

Symposium of the project "Trust in Citizen Science (TiCS)", funded by the German Ministry of Research, Technology, and Space (BMFTR), in cooperation with the Public Communication of Science and Technology Network (PCST), and the German Citizen Science Platform mit:forschen! *Gemeinsam Wissen schaffen*.

Participation is one aim of science communication and has evolved from a set of different scientific and science communication practices (Metcalfe, 2022), among them citizen science and participatory science communication. A defining feature of "citizen science projects" is the active participation of people, who usually don't have an institutional affiliation to science (Bonn et al., 2021): These "citizens" contribute to scientific knowledge production in various ways and on various levels of involvement, reaching from the collection of data to the development of research questions for a project (Strasser et al., 2019).

On the one hand, citizen science is instrumentally beneficial because it makes data collection more efficient (Bonney et al., 2016). On the other hand, citizen science has been advocated as a tool to democratize science and include diverse perspectives and local knowledge in scientific practices (Lewenstein, 2022; Wynne, 1991), as well as to make science applicable to societal transformations (Hecker, 2022). Consequently, public participation in science has been connected to a wide variety of effects and promises. Citizens' participation in scientific practices has the potential to enhance people's understanding of science and, thus, increase their trust in scientific practices and results. Research suggests that participation in science may not only increase trust in science and research for those citizens already involved, but also for a wider local community (Bedessem et al., 2021, 2023; Bonney et al., 2016; Metcalfe, 2022). However, citizen science and science communication research have also addressed potential negative effects that public participation may have on public understanding of and trust in science, for example, when citizens' contributions are not considered fair (Lewenstein, 2022), useful, or voluntary (Riley & Mason-Wilkes, 2023).

Many questions about trust in and within citizen science (communication) remain. This symposium invites original research and practice contributions providing some insights on the role of trust in science as an enabling condition, as a side effect, or as (threatened) outcome of citizens' participation in scientific projects. We furthermore invite investigations of different perspectives – citizens', scientists', and enablers' perspectives, as well as that of a broader public. Contributions may also address the role of science communication–*within* and *about* citizen science projects–in fostering trust in science.

In this symposium, we look for contributions that help advance theoretical, empirical, and practical insights to citizen science research. **The symposium will be hosted by the Museum fuer Naturkunde Berlin.** It is part of the project consortium "Trust in Citizen Science", funded by the German Ministry of Research, Technology, and Space (BMFTR), granted to Technische Universität Braunschweig, Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität Munich, and Museum fuer Naturkunde Berlin.

Key questions for the symposium will include the following:

Research Perspectives:

- Can trust in science be fostered through participation in science and related science communication?
- How does citizens', scientists', and enablers' mutual trust evolve in citizen science projects?
- How do the social dynamics (between project members) in citizen science projects change over time, and how do these changes influence trust?
- What are features and effects of science communication about citizen science?
- How do citizens, scientists, journalists, politicians, and other stakeholders evaluate evidence from citizen science projects?

Practice Perspectives:

- What are best practices regarding communication strategies for fostering trust within citizen science projects?
- What are best practices regarding science communication about citizen science projects?
- What role can scientific institutions and organizations play in supporting public trust in citizen science?

Submission and Review Process

To submit a contribution to the symposium, please use the following submission portal: https://ifkw.rz.tu-bs.de/citizen-science-communication-trust-2026/cfp.

The deadline for submissions is April 17, 2026.

Invited are abstracts of up to 5000 characters (including spaces and footnotes, excluding references, tables, and figures) in German or English.

Note: The symposium can accommodate only a limited number of original research or practice talks. All submissions will therefore be reviewed with regard to their fit to the goals and expectations as described above. The outcome of this review process (i.e., acceptance or rejection) will be communicated by May 18, 2026.

Call for presentations

We invite scholars and practitioners to present research and practice insights on citizen science (communication) and trust.

Format

The Symposium is thematic and regional in its scope in line with PCST Symposia, but contributions from all over the world are welcome.

The Symposium emphasizes interactivity. Presentation formats will include keynotes, paper sessions, roundtables, and discussions about practices and experiences from a research and practice perspective.

Social events will be arranged in Berlin.

Fees

Participation is free of charge.

Participants will be responsible for covering their own travels, accommodation and local transportation.

Venue

The Symposium is held in the Museum für Naturkunde Berlin – right in the center of Berlin, close to the main train station and major sights.

Contacts

For further information please contact us at ifkw-tics@tu-braunschweig.de

Organising Committee

- Marlene Altenmüller, Leibniz Institute for Psychology
- Katharina Dürmeier, LMU Munich
- Anne Forstmann, TU Braunschweig
- Ana Godinho, European Spallation Source (ESS), PCST
- Mario Gollwitzer, LMU Munich
- Lars Guenther, LMU Munich, PCST
- Susanne Hecker, MfN Berlin
- Friederike Hendriks, TU Braunschweig
- Fabien Medvecky, The Australian National University, President of the PCST
- Jakob Meyer, MfN Berlin
- Joshua Schlichting, TU Braunschweig
- Monika Taddicken, TU Braunschweig

Also, please see our Website for more information: https://lnk.tu-bs.de/shzcgy

With funding from the:

Federal Ministry
of Research, Technology
and Space

DLR Projektträger

About the BMFTR-funded research project Trust in Citizen Science (TiCS).

Trust in Citizen Science (TiCS) is a three-year project (2023-2026) funded within the Science Communication Research funding line by the BMFTR (Federal Ministry for Research, Technology and Space) in Germany.

The team (based at Technische Universität Braunschweig, Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität Munich, and Museum für Naturkunde Berlin) investigates trust in citizen science from three perspectives: a) trust within citizen science projects, b) (mediated) public trust in citizen science, and c) scientists' trust in citizen science.

https://www.tu-braunschweig.de/en/fourc/drittmittelprojekte/trust-in-citizen-science-tics

About Museum für Naturkunde Berlin

Besides hosting a spectacular collection of natural history exhibits, the museum stands amongst Germany's leading institutions for citizen science, co-hosting the national platform mit:forschen! and the European Citizen Science Association (ECSA). It serves as a hub for science-public interaction, coordinating activities in science communication, public participation in science, and citizen science.

https://www.museumfuernaturkunde.berlin/en

About PCST

The International Network on Public Communication of Science and Technology (PCST) is one of the first and widest international networks for science communication.

The aim of the network is to multiply opportunities for exchange and co-operation among both researchers and professionals who work in the many diverse but complementary fields of public communication of science and technology.

www.pcst.network

About mit:forschen! Gemeinsam Wissen schaffen

mit:forschen! Gemeinsam Wissen schaffen (formerly Bürger schaffen Wissen) is the central platform for citizen science in Germany. The platform presents, connects and supports citizen science projects since April 2014. The platform's main goals are to give an overview of citizen science projects, to inform about the concept of citizen science and strengthen its visibility and acceptance, to further develop the citizen science landscape in Germany and internationally and to contribute to current debates on participatory science.

mit:forschen! is a joint project by Wissenschaft im Dialog and Museum für Naturkunde Berlin, funded by the German Federal Ministry for Research, Technology and Space since November 2013.

https://www.mitforschen.org/en