

Hi everyone,

summer is over – time to get busy! A clear sign of that is our events section which is crowded with must-go events on science communication via web video for your autumn's delight. The fake news debate is not ebbing, too, this time we're putting a spotlight on fake video views – time to rethink if it's only views that count.

Also join us in thinking about whether (cinematic) storytelling conflicts with (scientific) truth telling. And finally: If you are a science YouTuber and would like to be more successful, we give you reasons to start cooperating!

Feel free to share the newsletter. If your friends and colleagues would like their very own version they can sign up [here](#).

Thilo Körkel, Kerstin Hoppenhaus and Sibylle Grunze

What's going on

The manipulated currency of »view count«

With view count being the currency of YouTube in determining the relevance for search engines and the popularity of videos it is also a target for manipulation. For his article, a New York Times reporter bought fake views for his videos to determine how easily it can be done and if it is successful. In short, it is very easily done and mostly successful.

The article is a sore reminder for me that YouTube like other social media platforms has its place in the fake news debate. »Fake news videos« can easily be washed up to the top of search results with bought fake views, which then in most cases leads to an increase in real views as a consequence.

It was also a reminder that with our own videos and campaigns we must identify other factors than just »view count« to determine success. For me, the parameter of »view retention« is just as important (if not more) in figuring out how relevant and successful my video is with my target audience. (sg)

Read more:

NYTimes: [The Flourishing Business of Fake YouTube Views](#), August 11, 2018

Truth-tellers or storytellers?

The answers to the question what makes a good science video almost always comprise the advice: It must tell a good story! Indeed, storytelling is a central element of video, and there is an ongoing discussion whether scientists should engage in storytelling, or rather stay away from it. Stories tend to tell things from a subjective perspective, they give meaning or even multiple meanings to situations and events, they structure things in a suitable way to thrill and emotionally engage people. But what scientists strive for is different: They seek the most accurate approximation to objective truth.

A few weeks ago, however, Nick Enfield, Professor of Linguistics at the University of Sydney, [argued in The Guardian](#) that »Science can't exist without storytelling. The question is not, whether we should use it, but how we should use it best.« He concedes that there are conflicts - stories tend to have a preferred result and an end, whereas science has neither (or shouldn't have). But he also argues, that people's brains have not evolved for dispassionate thinking. So if scientists want to engage with people, they have to find ways into those brains. And storytelling happens to be a pretty good hack for that. In [this podcast](#) Enfield discusses the issue in more detail with a screenwriter, a theater maker and two scientists.

And while we are at it, here are two German posts that debate similar issues: In June, the Fraunhofer Institute for Medical Image Computing (MEVIS) had invited film and media creators for a [workshop about the future of artificial intelligence in medicine](#). Among other findings, the extensive workshop report that can be downloaded on the site (in German) points out that films are able to focus on exactly those negative collateral effects of new technologies that are often dismissed by too optimistic perspectives on new technologies.

Meanwhile, on the blog of our colleague Jan-Martin Wiarda, former head of communication of the German research organization Helmholtz-Gemeinschaft, [Isabella Hermann argues](#), that science fiction movies are civic education. This is, of course, not exactly news to sci-fi-fans. For them, »1984«, »The Left Hand of Darkness«, or »The Parable of the Sower« are valid and instructive commentary on current and potential political and social developments. (But we are always pleased when the establishment catches on ;)

Hermann is scientific coordinator of the interdisciplinary working group »Responsibility: Machine Learning and Artificial Intelligence« of the Berlin-Brandenburg Academy of Sciences and Humanities and a member of the jury of the Berlin Sci-Fi Filmfest. In her text, she mentions not only well-known blockbusters, but also interesting »smaller« films, like the documentary »Pre-Crime« about predictive policing.

The least we can learn from these discussions: Science and storytelling may have different methods and different goals. But if done right, they are both, in their very own ways, seeking as well as telling the truth. (kh, tk)

Do collaborations between YouTubers work out?

You want more views and more subscribers for your YouTube channel? So go and find other channels to cooperate with! While this insight isn't new, it has now been quantified – based on video statistics over three months for 7942 international channels. A (not peer-reviewed) study published in May and conducted by researchers at Technische Universität Darmstadt, Germany, found that »collaborations are in many cases significantly beneficial in terms of viewers and newly attracted subscribers for both collaborating channels«.

Especially interesting: Networks of YouTubers strongly drive the establishment of collaborations. The researchers state that collaborations most often happen inside large so called Multi Channel Networks (MCNs) or between members of an MCN and non-members.

However, the study's value for institutional science communicators still has to be proven. Its data base comprised channel categories like entertainment, people, cars and gaming, while science & technology topics formed only a small part. More importantly: Researchers focussed on highly popular channels organized around one or several YouTube presenters. But videos with presenters aren't typical for scientific institutions nor are their channels highly popular.

Still, the value of cooperation should be high even for scientific institutions' channels. While they cannot exchange presenters, they might consider creating playlists of other institutions' videos or add hints to each other in their videos. Or even change the game – and hire a presenter.

Read more:

blog.multimedia-communications.net: [YouTube oder die schwierige Frage, wer mit wem kooperiert](#), June 6, 2018

Original source:

Christian Koch et al., [Collaborations on YouTube: From Unsupervised Detection to the Impact on Video and Channel Popularity](#). arxiv.org. First published 1 May 2018

Upcoming events

[Already running: »Science In Presentations«](#): On September 26-28 the symposium »Science in Presentations« organized by a young researchers group at Karlsruhe Institute of Technology (KIT) will be held (in German language). The focus is on »multidisciplinary perspectives on central presentation formats of science communication«. Obviously, science videos will play an important (but not dominant) part in the symposium.

[»Seeing Science«](#): As part of the Zurich Film Festival (September 27-October 7) this exhibition will show a selection of visualizations from the subject area »Knowledge Visualization« of the Zurich University of the Arts. Also showing is a unique virtual reality tour through the human body, created by the University of Basel with the University of Zurich and ETH Zurich. Furthermore, visitors can learn from VR experts how virtual reality inspires research and film.

[Beyond Festival 2018](#): On October 3-7 the Beyond Festival will take place in Karlsruhe, Germany. It is a festival of films and audio-visual installations, exploring the »triad of science, art and technology« with the aim to design the future. An accompanying symposium »exhibits new forms of art and media, such as 2D, 3D, artificial intelligence, virtual-, mixed- and augmented reality«.

[Fast Forward Science 2018](#): On October 15 the German science webvideo competition will announce the winners of this year's round.

[PariScience 2018](#): On October 26-31 the science film festival PariScience will take place at the Natural History Museum in Paris. It extends from documentary films to webvideos and from debates to virtual reality experiences. A focus lies on the intricate relationship between science and (political) power. Around 10.000 visitors are expected.

[InScience](#): International science film festival Nijmegen, November 7 to 11, 2018, Nijmegen, Netherlands.

Reading material

»Science meets Fiction - Science and Gender in Science-Fiction and Sitcom-Formats«

New brochure, published on September 1st by MINTEEE – Foundation for MINT-Entertainment-Education-Excellence (German language version only, sorry.)

[Download here](#)

»Science and Culture: Raw data videos offer a glimpse into laboratory research«

[Article](#) based on a conversation with Alexis Gambis, filmmaker and executive director of the nonprofit Imagine Science Films (ISF). PNAS September 11, 2018

Videos only look good if you watch them

Storytelling – It's all about the details



Chicago Pile 1: Der erste Kernreaktor
By Brick 101

When the Lego figures bring out the paper cups you know there is a good storyteller at work. The details in the storytelling are fun and make it worthwhile watching. (Plus Lego animation always reminds me of my very favorite [Izzy Izzard Lego animation sketch](#)). (sg)

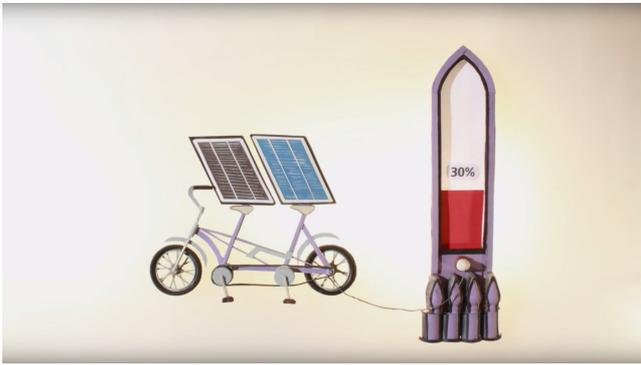
MC Storytelling – When lyrics make the science stick (very pathogääänig ...)



MYCOSYNVAC feat. MC Grease (da disease)
By Biofaction

Because the visuals of this video are nothing out of the ordinary and the music isn't mine it took me a second watch to catch on to what is so great about this video (so give it a chance!): The lyrics are quite original and make the story stick. My favorite: »I'm in pathogenic prison ... called da petridish!« Also, this is serious stuff and not the worst way to communicate about a European Horizon 2020 funded science project. (sg)

Traditional narrative combined with individual design



**Explainer Series »Energy materials«
By Hoppenhaus & Grunze Medien**

Our own (sg, kh) recently published explainer series »Energy materials«: While the tone and narrative of these explainers is traditional, our client (Helmholtz-Zentrum Berlin) specifically asked for a very individual design. So we picked Tine Kluth, animator, artist and our longtime collaborator to design and animate them. The result ... see for yourself! (German language version only, sorry.)

The [YouTube playlist](#) comprises:

Spintronik - Daten verarbeiten mit weniger Energie

Perowskit-Solarzellen - Effizient und günstig

Solarer Wasserstoff - Sonnenenergie chemisch speichern

Bessy II - Ein Teilchenbeschleuniger als Mikroskop

Science & Video is a newsletter for science communicators. Here [Thilo Körkel](#) (tk), [Kerstin Hoppenhaus](#) (kh) und [Sibylle Grunze](#) (sg) pool their long-standing expertise in the field of science communication and moving images. We joyfully welcome the effects of digital disruption, are committed to defend high quality standards, and grasp to be part of a future in which science communication via digital media has an increasingly powerful impact on society. Contact us at koerkel@spektrum.de, hoppenhaus@hgmedien.com, grunze@hgmedien.com.

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