

## Abstract

Dick Kasperowski: *Vetenskap, media och allmänhet: En konstruktivistisk studie av forskningsöversikten som ämne och resurs* [Science, Media and the Public: A Constructivist Study of the Research Review as a Subject and a Resource]. ISBN: 91-628-5096-2. Doctoral Dissertation in Swedish. Department of History of Ideas and Theory of Science, Göteborg University, 2001.

The main purpose of the present dissertation has been to reconstruct how research overviews get crafted, what motivates them and how they are used in building up and legitimating new avenues of research or criticising and reconfiguring existing traditions. With the help of concepts developed in recent studies of science such as boundary object, symmetry, translations, interests, reflexivity and stabilisation I argue that the success of overview texts depend on their ability to *translate* interests between different actors and in this way *stabilise* a field of research.

As a case study I have chosen an area where researchers are concerned with the study of science, media and the public (SMP). After a comprehensive search through the relevant literature, I found that overviews on SMP-research has been more frequent in two periods: 1979-1983 and 1988-1995.

In the first period researchers who were close to science journalists and natural scientists wrote overviews. During this time results of research on the public takes on the function of a boundary object at the level of the subject matter. Overview authors show that journalists, SMP-researchers and natural scientists have problems and goals that can be solved by increasing the interest in the field for research on the public. The work of overview authors can be situated in the waxing conjuncture or veritable boom of popular science in the US during the end of the 1970s and beginning of the 1980s. It is this proliferation especially that triggered the way overview authors defined problems and goals on behalf of the journalists. When it comes to the problems and goals facing natural scientists, these can be traced further back into the past, with roots in the anxiety over public understanding and appreciation of science that was sparked by the advent of the Soviet Sputnik and its repercussions in the US.

During the second period (1988-1995) overviews are concentrated around new problems, goals and solutions on a conceptual level. Overview authors take positions that stand in opposition to traditional research in the field. In the process of writing overviews authors now critically recast attempts at diffusion as well as so-called deficit approaches as a boundary object at the conceptual level. In this way the overview authors translate interests between SMP-researchers, media, the public and natural scientists. Work with overviews during this period is coloured by the controversies – Science Wars – that were prompted within scientific communities by reductions and redistributions of resources to research. Who has the right to speak on behalf of the scientific community in the public arena in these days of crisis? – This is a question on which the overview authors developed an active standpoint in their work.

**Keywords:** research overview, public understanding of science, science and the media, scientific literacy, accuracy, constructivism, actor-network theory, strong programme, symmetry, reflexivity, translation of interest, stabilisation, reflexive stabilisation, black boxes, topic and resource, Sputnik, Science Wars.