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Response to Bradshaw and Borchers 2000. "Uncertainty as Information: Narrowing the Science–Policy Gap"

Some Reservations about the Gap Concept

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Although Bradshaw and Borchers (2000) have made an admirable attempt to conceptualize the myriad problems of scientific uncertainty in policy, I have some serious reservations about the representation of the science–policy gap as a lag in public confidence. Recent developments in science studies have shown that to know science is not necessarily to love it.

The authors point out the importance of the different value sets used by government and science, but ignore the importance of the diversity of the values and knowledge held by society in general. We have seen many cases in which the broadening of a scientific consensus has led to a fall in public support, rather than a lagged increase (nuclear power might be one example). To aim to show the level of likely public confidence is to misunderstand the role of the public in scientific debate. As noted by Funtowicz and Ravetz (1990), the public continues to serve as a vital ingredient that aids in the recognition of complexity and the representation of previously unconsidered views.

RESPONSES TO THIS ARTICLE

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LITERATURE CITED

Bradshaw, G. A., and J. G. Borchers. 2000. Uncertainty as information: narrowing the science–policy gap. *Conservation Ecology* 4(1): 7. [online] URL: <http://www.consecol.org/Journal/vol4/iss1/art7>

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