



Slodderwetenschap Times Seven: Sloppy Science and Scientism in the COVID-19 Era

Keynote speaker: **Michael Lissack**

Trust in science is undermined when science is sloppy. Slodderwetenschap ("sloppy science") is a carelessness characterized by a willingness to tolerate scientific shortcuts and more. When scientism (the fetish-like belief of all that is labeled as "science" is good) combines with Slodderwetenschap, the mistakes and shortcuts which characterize the sloppiness can carry over into decision making. The public, the media, and relevant decision-makers were all too often misled by the many instances of sloppy science and scientism encountered as the world dealt with the unfolding of the COVID-19 pandemic. Bad decisions with huge costs were the result. COVID-19 demonstrated that good science seldom comes from taking shortcuts or relying on "truthies". Good science, instead, demands that we continually ask what about a given factoid, label, category, or narrative affords it meaning - and then to base further enquiry on the assumptions, contexts, and constraints so revealed. This talk will describe seven types of Slodderwetenschap, relates them to the very processes by which science makes use of abductive reasoning, and suggests how the risks of "sloppiness" can be mitigated. COVID-19 examples will be used throughout.