

The public understanding of science, in its many forms, has serious implications for the ways in which scientific knowledge may play a role in social practices that are (ideally) aimed at the common good, such as formulating public policy and governance more generally. Facilitating this understanding, however, faces many widely appreciated challenges. In this paper, I seek to extend some recent thinking in the history and philosophy of science regarding the phenomenon of “knowledge transfer” – situations in which forms of representation of specific targets in the world are effectively transposed into entirely different areas of scientific inquiry – to the problematic of transferring knowledge from expert confines of science to broader social settings. I will address some complications arising from the fact that this knowledge frequently incorporates abstractions, idealizations, and approximations, and is reflective of both consensus and disagreement.