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**Title**

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**Abstract**

This article analyzes the concept of “grand challenges” as part of a shift in how scientists and policymakers frame and communicate their respective agendas. The history of the grand challenges discourse helps to understand how identity work in science and science policy has been transformed in recent decades. Furthermore, the question is raised whether this discourse is only an indicator, or also a factor in this transformation. Building on conceptual history and historical semantics, the two parts of the article reconstruct two discursive shifts. First, the observation that in scientific communication references to “problems” are increasingly substituted by references to “challenges” indicates a broader cultural trend of how attitudes towards what is problematic have shifted in the last decades. Second, as the grand challenges discourse is rooted in the sphere of sports and competition, it introduces a specific new set of societal values and practices into the spheres of science and technology. The article concludes that this process can be characterized as the sportification of science, which contributes to self-mobilization and, ultimately, to self-optimization of the

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participating scientists, engineers, and policymakers. (HRK / Abstract übernommen)