

# **The role of scientists in public policy decisions: The case of drought planning**

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# Cultural Divide

- Does a cultural divide separate scientists from the broader community in which they live?
- Proposition tested in the area of state drought policy
- Interviews conducted with scientists and state officials engaged in developing state plans

# Study Design

- Three groups interviewed:
  - Research scientists
  - Intermediary organizations (NDMC, NCDC, NCEP, JAWF...)
  - State officials in 10 states with new or updated plans since 2000
- Telephone interviews conducted between Summer 2004 and Spring 2005
- 51 individuals interviewed
- Examined three aspects of communication:
  - Preferred Methods of Communication
  - Forms of Interaction
  - Communication Processes Model

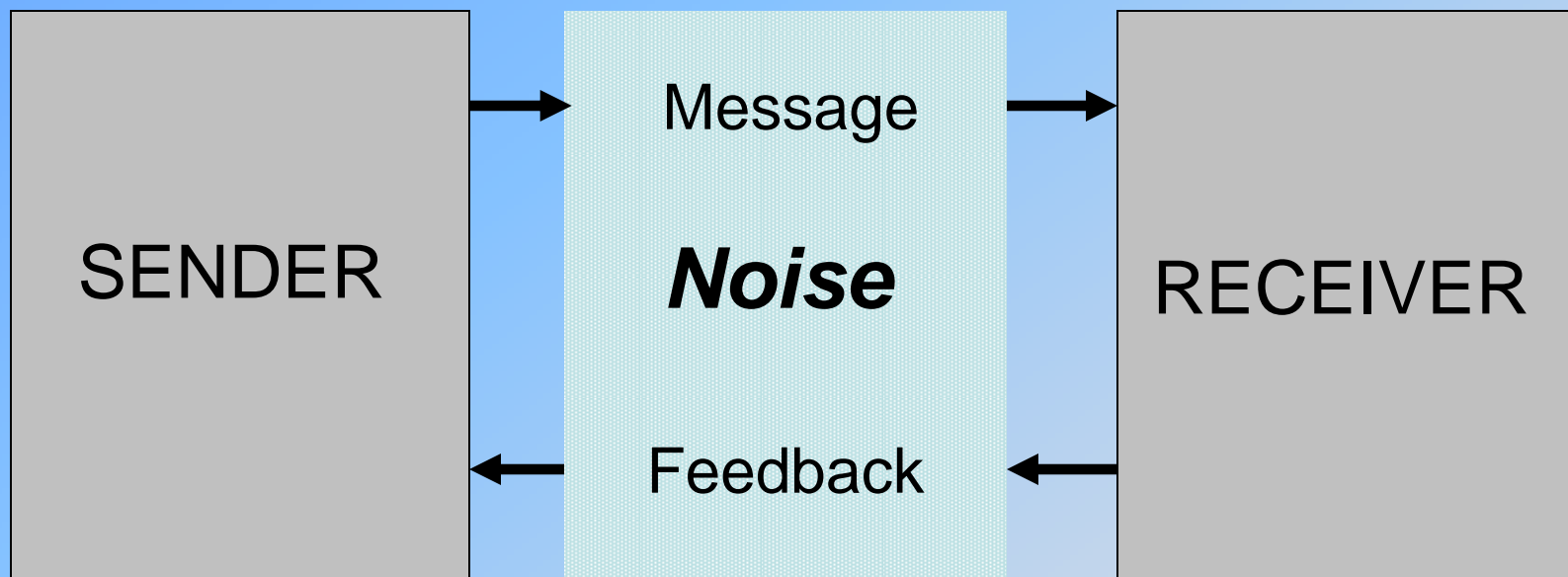
# Methods of Communication

- **Direct Contact**
  - Most effective
- **Meetings**
  - Scientific, public presentations
- **Collaborative Activities**
  - Boards, planning activities
- **Written Communication**
  - Journals, reports, books
- **Indirect Communication**
  - Websites, media, e-mail

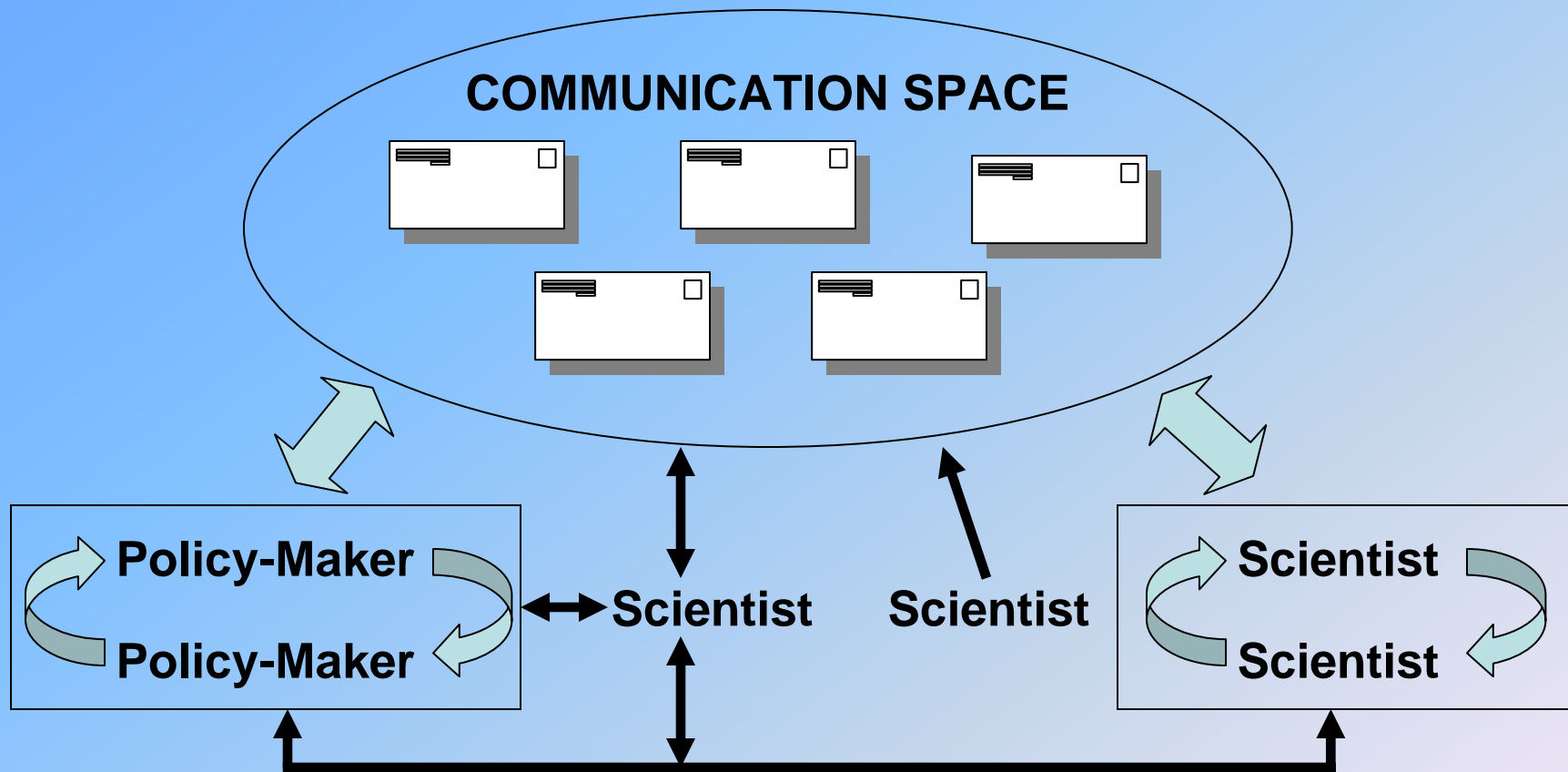
# Forms of Interaction

<b>Expectations</b>	<b>Style of Engagement</b>	
	<b>Active</b>	<b>Passive</b>
<b>Information Used / Interpreted Correctly</b>	Collaborators	Consultants
<b>Information Misused / Misinterpreted</b>	Educators	Critics

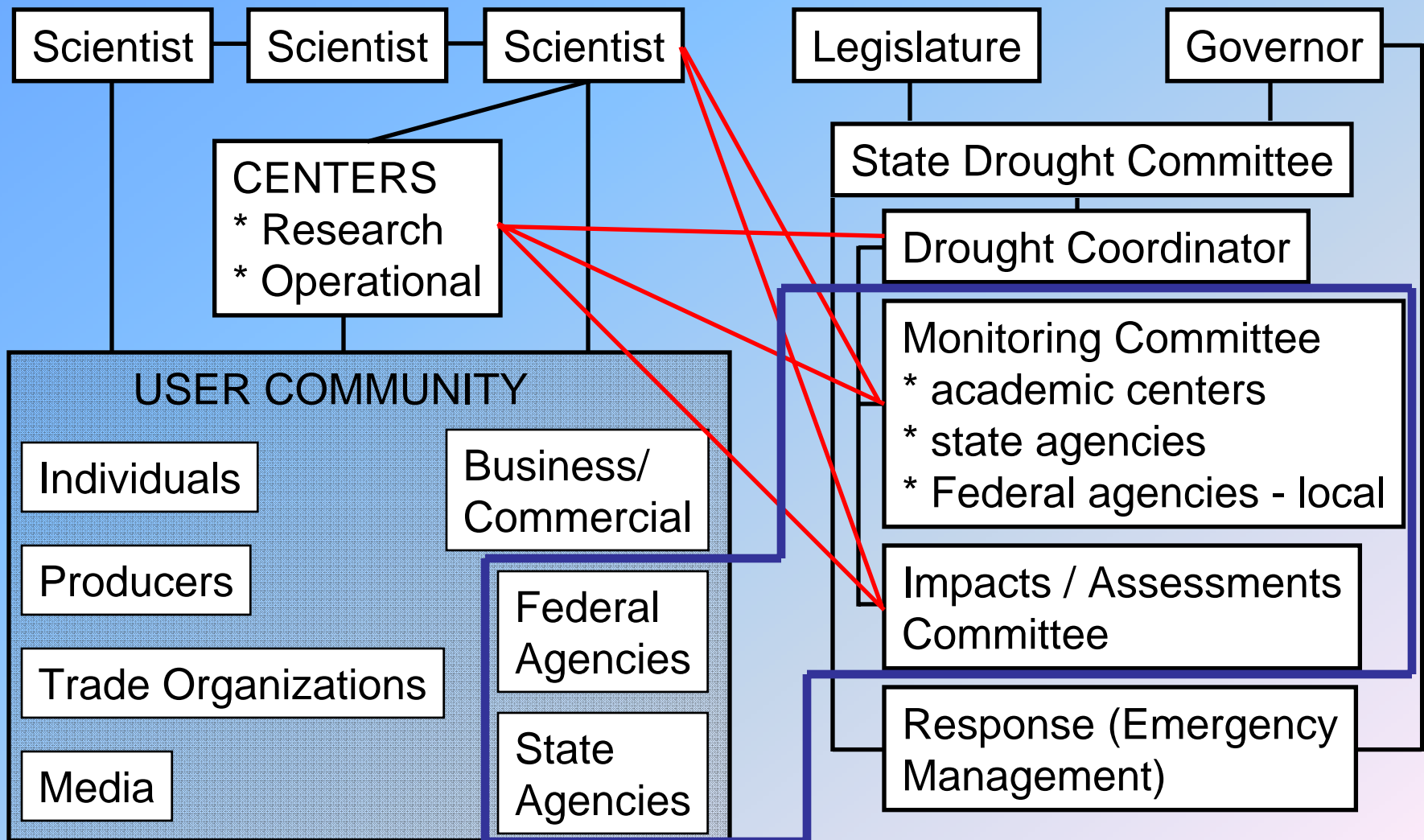
# Classical Communications Model



# Post-Modern Communication



# Communication Between Scientists and Policy-Makers



# Key Findings

- (1) There is no substantial Cultural Gap.
- (2) Policy-Makers have little difficulty accessing, understanding, and utilizing scientific and technical information.
- (3) Intermediaries are more likely to be engaged in federal initiatives, and earlier in the process, than research scientists.
- (4) Research scientists are as likely to engage decision-makers as are intermediaries, but in more local arenas.

# Key Findings

- (5) Both research scientists and intermediaries tend to be passive.
- (6) The organizational structure posed more of a barrier to communication than did the technical nature of the material.
- (7) Internet communication is a key feature of a drought knowledge community.
- (8) Implementation issues are more important than communication issues.

# Final Thoughts

- It's the process, not the content
- Established Connections provides conduit for transfer of information
- Plenty of interaction among experts and stakeholders, but lacks coordination
- Need an effective means of communication and something to bring people to the community

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