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FERN.Lab: Increasing scientific literacy of non-experts in the field of remote sensing and earth observation

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Remote sensing and earth observation (EO) data has long been used outside of academia in the agriculture and forestry sectors for monitoring and forecasting activities. The last 5 years has also seen important financial sectors such as environmental liability insurance and environmental regulatory compliance adopt remote sensing data into their workflows. This is pushing remote sensing and EO data to the main stream. This rapid growth has resulted in a large knowledge gap for government agencies, NGOs and companies looking to use remote sensing data in their operations. The benefits of using the data are clear but many entities don't know where to begin. The number of available sensors and the spatial and spectral resolution of those sensors can be overwhelming to non-experts and the handling and creation of actionable information from these data is not trivial. FERN.Lab, a working group dedicated to Knowledge and Technology Transfer of remote sensing research within the department of Geodesy at the Helmholtz-Zentrum Potsdam, Deutsches GeoForschungsZentrum (GFZ), is uniquely positioned to fill this knowledge and needs gap. A key competence of FERN.Lab is capacity building through the creation of training and teaching materials for non-expert audiences. FERN.Lab activities include supporting the creation of the FERN.Lern platform, a suite of German language materials (videos, handbooks, seminars and forums) that provide foundational information on remote sensing science and applications; the creation of topic-specific MOOCs; and product specific training for remote sensing tools for public agencies and NGOs. These activities are fundamental to increasing scientific literacy between research disciplines and the general public. Not only that, they are key to promoting best practices and standardization across sectors.

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