

Subject

The Science Café model is an open and dialogical method of science dissemination which fulfils the needs of public participation and is also able to acknowledge new conceptions of knowledge. This year the Budapest Science Café has been launched for the first time in Hungary. This initiative opened up new questions and challenges. The main question is how appropriate is this model for the Hungarian political and cultural context?

Rationale

Introducing the term scientific citizenship in a post-socialist context to investigate what kind of identity constructions can emerge around science and science dissemination.

Objectives

The Science Café can further develop the two way communication model between science and the public. Originally these kind of arrangements incorporate models of the 'ideal' scientist and citizen. In a post-socialist context there are very different identities, practices and social roles associated with science and science dissemination. To reflect on these challenges different models are presented from the history of the Hungarian science dissemination.

Relationships between science and citizens

1. Science as strange, distant, beyond everyday reality. *No direct connection between science and citizens.*
2. Science as unquestionable set of facts. Large amount of factual knowledge should be acquired. *Citizens as students.*
3. Science as an experimental trade. Mingling and tinkering and the socialist economy of scarcity. *Citizens as possible users of knowledge.*
4. Science as dialogue. The agenda and themes are framed by the questions and interest of the public. *Citizens as interested and engaged actors.*

Hungarian Science Dissemination

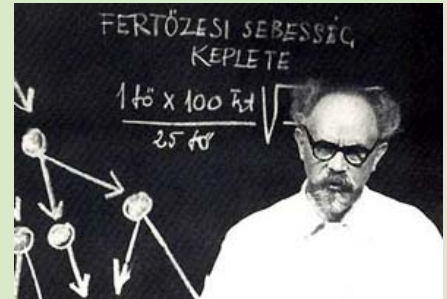
1. Delta: science and the 'world outside'



one way

Science in the media

3. Professor Öveges: science and 'everyday reality'



dialogic – participatory



2. Classrooms: science 'as it is'

Scientists face-to-face



4. Science Café: science 'a la carte'

Political background:

Societal circumstances of participatory arrangements and science-society interfaces are very different from those in the places of their origin. Hungary has a liberal-representative political culture with a strong withdrawal into private spheres. Before the transitions a systematically depoliticised public life turned people's attention to their own economic enrichment by providing space for small, private enterprises. As a compromise between the public and the permissive political elite the everyday life in the 'fridge- or goulash-communism' already incorporated some consumer ideals in a socialist context. Clearly, this cultural-political context is an obstructive factor in every initiative based on ingenuity, interactivity and creativity of the citizens.

The paradox of Hungarian participatory arrangements is how to 'pre-construct' the engaged citizen in a non-dominant and non-coercive way before the actual processes starts. A participatory science dissemination also needs self-reflexive fields of scientific knowledge being asked in public about human ends and demanded to reflect on implicit visions of public good and of the citizen built into the scientific culture.

References:

Science Café Budapest: <http://www.cafescientifique.org/budapest.htm>
Civic engagement, community outreach: <http://www.scienceshop.hu/>