

RE-IMAGINING RESEARCH RELATIONSHIPS CO-CREATING KNOWLEDGE IN A DEMOCRATIC SOCIETY

5th Living Knowledge Conference: May 10 - 12, 2012 in Bonn, Germany
Science Shop Summer School, 8-9 May 2012 in Bonn , Germany

Over the past 10 years Science Shops and community-based research have found their place on the agenda of science policy-making. The forthcoming focus on innovation to guide research requires to re-imagine research relationships and see how knowledge co-creation can be advanced over the coming years. Where do we need to focus and which coalitions need to change? How can civil society fully participate in the current co-creation of knowledge. There is an ongoing interest in and attention given to the participation of citizens in community-based research in science-based policy processes and decision-making procedures. Consequently as a next step citizens and their organisations have to engage with research as equal partners and providers of knowledge and expertise. But how?

In 2007 the European Research Advisory Board advised researchers to take "societal questions and concerns more into account." The benefit would be better adapted innovations and more reliable information on future needs. Recommendations given by the Board were to expose researchers to other perspectives of research and innovation by integrating engagement with societal actors into the university curriculum and to encourage engagement as a factor influencing a researcher's career prospects. It also recommended to develop further mechanisms for societal actors to improve their research capacities, to encourage structures for partnerships between researchers and societal actors in research dialogue and to integrate societal actors into the various stages of research.^[1]

The 5th Living Knowledge Conference will focus on different themes to get more insight into processes, and develop specific policy recommendations that resonate with public concerns and articulated research needs. It will build on the experience and know-how of the previous LK Conferences in Leuven, Seville, Paris and Belfast. The conference will be an opportunity to bring together some of the key thinkers and practitioners both from civil society partners and the academic/research community in the area of community based research, university/community partnerships and Science Shops, and aims at providing options and opportunities for collaboration, and ensuring that this area of work is prioritised on policy agendas both nationally and internationally.

The 5th Living Knowledge Conference will also be a platform to exchange and discuss findings and results from the first half of the PERARES project¹. PERARES strengthens public engagement in research (PER) by developing multi-annual action plans, involving researchers and Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) in the formulation of research agendas and the research process. It uses debates on science to actively articulate research requests of civil society.

Hosted by the Wissenschaftsladen Bonn, a founding member of the International Science Shop Network, the conference will provide an opportunity for policy makers, academics and civil society organisations to consider current practice and future opportunities in the field of research partnerships.

¹ 'Public Engagement with Research and Research Engagement with Society' is a project which has been awarded financial support by the European Commission as coordination action through the **contract no. 244264** in FP7 (Area 5.1.2.1 Broader engagement on science-related questions, SiS-2009-1.2.1.1 Structuring public engagement in research (PER))

A pre-conference Science Shop Summer School on developing researcher/civil society collaborations by using the Science Shop model will be organized from 8-9 May 2012. This is relevant to those that have no, or very limited experience with science shops or community-based research, or those that want to have a more structured overview of this work, or are planning to start a science shop or similar intermediary service themselves.

CONFERENCE OBJECTIVES

- Evaluate strategies for embedding community engaged research in universities
- Strengthen the participative and empowering communication culture as a basis for healthy knowledge societies
- Influence international research policies and priorities
- Advance the way Science Shop like initiatives can engage CSOs and researchers in collaborative research activities
- Encouraging co-operative and partnership working
- Exchange, disseminate and evaluate results of the first half of the PERARES project
- Bring Science Shops to the policy agenda in Germany

The 5th Living Knowledge Conference will be an opportunity to bring together some of the key thinkers and practitioners in the area of community based research, university/community partnerships and Science Shops. The conference aims to provide opportunities for collaborations and to ensure that this area of work is prioritised on policy agendas both nationally and internationally.

It will also be a platform to exchange and discuss findings and results of the first half of the PERARES project. The Programme Committee who have extensive experience in the area of Science Shops and community based research will built on the experience and know-how of the previous LK Conferences in Leuven, Seville, Paris and Belfast.

The conference is hosted by the Wila Bonn, a founding member of the International Science Shop Network and will provide an opportunity for policy makers, academics and civil society organisations to consider current practice and future opportunities in the field of research partnerships.

AIMS

- Review and update PER action plans
- Exchange platform for projects under science for society calls and beyond
- Create new and strong links to other networks
- Enable Science Shop like initiatives to engage CSOs in research activities
- Offering examples of practice and training for new and emerging Science Shops
- Providing opportunities to discuss future collaborations
- Exchange, disseminate and evaluate results of the first half of the PERARES project

OUTCOMES

- Reviewed and updated action plans for public engagement with researchers
- Strengthen the exchange platform for projects under science in society calls and beyond
- Creation of new and strong links to other networks
- Examples of practice and training for new and emerging Science Shops. Additional examples and insights in good practices and lessons learned from mistakes
- Strengthen strategies for building community/researcher partnerships

The conference will lead to the presentation of a large variety of experiences from across Europe and worldwide. Beyond that it will reflect the social utility, the innovative power and the scientific value of these initiatives. It will also reflect on the actual societal context in which top-down science is increasingly contested.

TARGET GROUPS

The conference is aimed at people active in or interested in community based and participatory research (citizens, researchers, students, civil society organisations, administrative officers, policy makers, research funders, etc.). Our intention is to build bridges, explore ideas, and discuss strategies in order to empower one another. The conference aims to share best practice amongst community based and participatory action research networks.

CONFERENCE THEMES

1. Setting shared research agendas by CSOs and Research Institutes
2. The role of Higher Education in creating knowledge with communities
3. Communities and students learning together
4. Evaluation and quality improvement: New lessons learned on measuring the value of community engagement and collaborative research
5. Developing partnership working for research - civil society engagement
6. Policies to support collaborative research relationships

Within all themes we welcome both Good Practices and Dead Ends: the insights in mistakes made and lessons learned are equally important as success stories!

1. Setting shared research agendas by CSOs and Research Institutes

Civil society organisations show an increasing interest in research activities in domains such as sustainable development, food safety, public health and wellbeing, renewable energy, discriminations, and conflict resolutions. CSOs are also sources of knowledge, know-how and innovations. Now, how can we build stronger connections between CSOs and the 'traditional' research world? Can we reap the benefit of existing good intentions, and create win-win situations in joint knowledge creation, or is there a need for awareness raising and capacity-building of actors to get engaged in co-operative research and research policy? The challenge for NGOs, Science Shops and similar intermediaries, particularly due to their diminutive size, is to have a greater and more long-term influence on any institute's research agenda.

Keyquestions:

- How can events such as Science Festivals or Science Cafés, or any face-to-face or web-based dialogue event on knowledge/science/technology, be used to articulate research questions to follow-up upon?
- How to strengthen CSO interest in research? What do CSOs need to reflect on research and research policy?
- What are the long term benefits of cooperating with CSOs? What new knowledge is generated? Can there be a genuine co-creation of knowledge?
- How to create opportunities and incentives for researchers for engaged research? What capacity building is required and what can be offered?

2. The role of Higher Education in creating knowledge with communities

Research and education are going to play a central role during the transformation process towards a knowledge society, as the realisation of the necessity for restructuring the world economy has been triggered mainly by scientific knowledge. Society should therefore decide on actions that are not a direct response to recently experienced events, but motivated by foresight and precaution. For this purpose, the debate between science, politics and society should be far more structured, more obligatory, and livelier, to ensure a constructive discourse about the best ways to achieve sustainability.

Keyquestions:

- How can problem-based approaches and transdisciplinarity be encouraged?
- How can a relation of mutual trust between researchers and CSOs be developed?
- How can career opportunities for young researchers engaging with communities be improved?
- How can universities and research institutions give researchers and students more opportunities to reflect about the societal consequences of their work?

3. Communities and students learning together

Universities worldwide are already engaged in service-learning, and employ multiple student outreach/engagement activities, with various target groups, for various reasons. There are also examples of courses to prepare students to work in partnership with civil society, and to encourage them to reflect on their learning in this partnership.

Partnerships between universities and communities need to identify genuine needs on both sides, provide mentorship to the student(s), staff and CSOs participating on the project, and contribute assets towards completing a project. In a successful partnership, both sides will give to and benefit from the project. In order for this partnership to be successful, clear guidelines and support structures for all parties must be in place for a successful partnership.

Keyquestions:

- How can students be prepared for, and supported in research and learning with civil society? How can we advance their learning?
- How can student work with civil society best be incorporated in their curriculum and how can these projects contribute to their diploma/degree and broader graduate requirements?
- How can experiences in service learning and community-based research strengthen each other?
- What can the community bring to the learning experience of the student?

4. Evaluation and quality improvement: New lessons learned on measuring the value of community engagement and collaborative research

There is a huge body of work around different types of community and public engagement with science as scientists more and more respond to societal needs and constraints. Interdisciplinary research groups sometimes include lay representatives, notably in sustainability and health issues. But most discussion of the public value of research focuses on economic value. Research institutes' interaction with civil society and its organisations has other benefits and community engagement needs tools to measure this value more comprehensively.

Under this theme the conference will review models and instruments for evaluation of different types of public engagement with science and technology developments. There will be discussion of a framework for evaluation of science shop activities that focuses on effectiveness and equity.

Measures of effectiveness will in this case concern CSO and public influence on the direction and application of research.

Keyquestions:

- How can engagement with society be valued by scientific institutions, policy makers, politicians and CSOs?
- What indicators determine the influences of CSO and public participation in the development of scientific knowledge?
- What evaluation models and instruments have been successful for other institutions and partnerships?
- How can community partners be included in audit and evaluation groups and how can their involvement be sustained and have a long-term effect?

5. Developing partnership working for research – civil society engagement

Many actors are involved in “public engagement with research”, throughout institutions, states, and at the European and global level. We recognize that in the Higher Education sector, the term “knowledge transfer” commonly refers to linkages between universities and industry; structurally such posts are located within research and enterprise departments. Even though this activity focuses on another part of society than that which is usually coined under the term ‘civil society’, it is interesting to see where both worlds can meet, and to see if broader networks of stakeholders can work together on civil society issues. And to see where we can learn from each other’s approaches as well.

Keyquestions:

- What can researchers and practitioners in industry-researcher co-operations and in civil society-researcher co-operations learn from each other?
- How can a broad range of different stakeholders work together on civil society issues?

6. Policies to support collaborative research relationships

The funding of cooperative research activities is subject to various challenges and often is driven by policy. But the support of government and its research councils has been recognizable and crucial for the development of the field of Participatory Research, and highlights the key role of research and education policy-makers, who impact on researchers and HEIs, but also the key role of policy-makers who impact on CSOs. Under this theme, we can identify particular incentives for research bodies and appropriate rewards for researchers to encourage their engagement with public and civil society and to compare existing models of support by Research Councils (both good practices and bottlenecks), and offer an arena for dialogue and discussion among funders of research. By exchanging experiences and sharing of best practices, among funders and receivers of funds and identifying research projects that could be submitted to research councils, barriers could be cut down.

Keyquestions:

- What alternative routes are there for Research Councils to take into account civil society's wishes in their research agenda setting? How do these compare with funding joint research?
- How can CSO partnered research be included in the regular activities of research institutes and vice-versa?
- How can structures for permanent funding of PER be set up?
- How/should a research project be structured to fulfill the requests of funding organisations?
- Open Access publication is becoming more and more a criterion to receive funding. What are the experiences so far? Should we extend this requirement with the requirement to deliver a popular summary with every published paper?

CALL AND DEADLINES

- The call will be opened on 3rd October,
- Deadline for submission of abstracts for workshops and presentations is **30th November**,
- Acceptance notification will be sent by **15th December**
- Accepted papers can get request to focus on specific aspect of paper during presentation, for coherence and suitability for conference and its participants.
- Non-accepted papers might be transferred to poster presentations
- Call for poster presentations is open until **1st March**. Acceptance notices for this second tier of submissions will be sent by **15th March** (posters submitted before 30th November will have been notified by 15th December).

For information about the conference please have a look at www.livingknowledge.org or contact michaela.shields@wilabonn.de