

Co-Creating Knowledge – Civil society and science as equal partners

5th International Living Knowledge Conference, 10th-12th May 2012 at Bonn, Germany

Universities and civil society actors engaging in service learning and community based research will introduce themselves on the 5th International Living Knowledge Conference.

In the interplay between science and society communication plays a decisive role. Passing on scientific findings to society in an understandable form has to be done by science in a sustainable manner, but society groups also need to be listened to by scientists as regards their problems, requirements, and fears. Communication must not be a one way street.

And it isn't. In the current PERARES Project (Public Engagement with Research and Research Engagement with Society) 25 Science Shops, research institutions, and civil society groups from 17 countries have come together since 1st May 2010 in order to improve the structure of public participation in research in a four-year project.

The Conference

Current experiences with regard to structuring equal partnerships between civil society and science, international networking and the exchanges between activists from all areas of engagement between universities and society - from service learning to community based research - are on the agenda of the Living Knowledge Conferences in Europe every two years.

In 2012 the venue for the 5th International Conference of this series – now for the first time in Germany – will be Bonn. It is entitled "Re-imagining Research Relationships – Co-creating Knowledge in a Democratic Society" (in German: "Gemeinsam Wissen schaffen – Zivilgesellschaft und Wissenschaft als gleichberechtigte Partner"), sponsored via the PERARES Project and supported financially by the *Foundation for International Dialogue of the Bonn Savings Bank*. *Wissenschaftsladen Bonn* as its host will organize the conference from 8th-12th May 2012 at the *Gustav Stresemann Institute*, Bonn, for approx. 300 delegates from more than 25 countries. Amongst them will be students, academics, university lecturers, teachers, colleagues from Science Shops and similar institutions, representatives of civil society groups, staff from universities and academic institutions, scientists and political decision-makers.

The Bonn conference offers a platform to actors from national and international institutions, universities, projects and networks for the collation and exchange of different approaches and experiences and for working out strategies for further development.

The five-day Living Knowledge Conference can be divided into two parts. At the beginning of the Conference (8th/9th May) the delegates are offered two days' training (Summer School). The Summer School's focus is on passing on the concept and manner of working of Science Shops and comparable institutions concerned with 'Community Based Research'.

The main part of the Conference is from 10th-12th May 2012. During that time there will be talks, panel discussions, and workshops concerning the challenges encountered with regard to cooperation between research and civil society groups. Reports of practical experience and project presentations from service learning to community based research will show how community groups and students can learn and carry out research together.

Many actors from institutions - on a national, European, and global level - are already involved in some form of "Public Engagement in Research". In the sector of university education the term "knowledge transfer" generally relates to links between universities and industry; structurally, such transfer set-ups can be found in the respective research and company departments. Although this activity concentrates on a different part of society than that normally understood by the term 'civil society', it is interesting to see where the two worlds can meet and where networks of special interest representatives can work together on civil society questions – and to see also where we can learn from the respective different approaches. The development of partnerships – also (and especially) international partnerships - is therefore an opportunity which is offered by taking part in the Living Knowledge Conference.

A detailed description of the conference subjects, the extensive conference programme and other useful information concerning registration can be found under www.livingknowledge.org/conference.

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The Living Knowledge Conference is part of the output of PERARES (Public Engagement with Research and Research Engagement with Society) – which has been awarded financial support by the European Commission as coordination action through 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))