Taking part in the 7th Living Knowledge Conference was a great experience for me. I’m very grateful to the organizers for the bursary which allowed me to be there! As a former biology student and current Ph. D. Candidate in communication, I am used to being the outsider regarding what I believe sciences should be and what scientists should do. For once, I find myself fitting right in. To be around so many scientists who do science with communities and community members who do science with academics was invigorating even if I had a bad flu at the time. To hear criticisms about how communities were not involved enough, to take part in discussions concerning ways to increase long-term effects in community empowerment was refreshing.

I believe the greatest challenge we are facing is to convince other scientists, policy makers and the public of the usefulness of the community-based approaches. As I was presenting the political propositions that my non-profit organization – Association science et bien commun – had made during various Canadian (federal and provincial) public consultations, a colleague, Marc Vanholsbeeck (ReSIC, Université Libre de Bruxelles) suggested that we should have propositions regarding science communication and should involve science communicators such as science journalists in the process.

We had propositions regarding:

1) Science Policy Process (Make debate visible and elicit participation in many ways)

2) Scientific Institutions’ and Scientists’ Social Involvement (one Community Service such as science shops by university and college; one Science Citizen Panel by region; Grants and Scholarships’ selection criteria including outreach activities and science communication)

3) Open Access to science publications and data

4) Scientists Reflexivity and Integrity (Ethics training for all science students including notions in sociology, history and philosophy of science; National standing committee on ethical issues in science and technology; a Law on conflict of interest)

5) Plurality of voices in research (Evaluate quality over quantity; Share funds – less prestige funds, more basic allowances without competition; Facilitate collaborations).

As Marc made his suggestion, I realized we had not thought about science communicators. We had addressed science communication to some extent, but did not make it a major goal. I am now convinced we all should.

I believe we need to communicate science in ways that are more in tune with co-construction, community-based studies, collaborative research and so on. I believe we should do it with science journalists and other science communicators. We also need to increase visibility of great projects and organizations, such as Science Shops and the projects they conduct: they should be

1 http://www.scienceetbiencommun.org/
2 http://www.editionscienceetbiencommun.org/?p=188
one of the images that come to people’s mind when they think of research and knowledge production (construction). At least, it’s one of the messages I have taken home.

The LK7 has also influenced the way I am planning conferences and other reunions. I appreciated the flexibility of presentation forms – both in terms of time and purpose. It was great as a speaker and as a member of the audience or discussion/workshop participant.

I also realized the difficulty in mobilizing fellow scientists. With the “Association science et bien commun” we are working toward a form of ethical engagement for scientists. An oath, a manifesto or a personal letter of engagement are currently being considered. The goal is to bring researchers to consider the social and environmental aspects of their work and to act in consideration of these aspects. We want the opinion of scientists and people who interact with them, but it is not that easy! Even when you ask conference participants to answer a survey... So I am asking again! Please, give us your opinion at: http://semato3.uqam.ca/guidexpert-ato/pledge/formu/formu1.asp?c=ok (in English, or in French at: http://semato3.uqam.ca/guidexpert-ato/serment/formu/formu1.asp?c=ok), and ask your colleagues to also complete the survey!

Hoping to see (or read) you again!

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