

# Call for Proposals

**Living Knowledge Conference, Copenhagen, 9-11 April 2014**

## **An Innovative Civil Society: Impact through Co-creation and Participation**

**Venue:** Hotel Scandic Sydhavnen, Copenhagen

**Host:** Center for Design, Innovation and Sustainable Transitions, Aalborg University Copenhagen

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### **Introduction**

The time has come to recognize civil society as producer of knowledge, and have civil society organisations accepted as partners in research and innovation directed towards public interest, but also have civil society's own activities recognised as research and innovation. There is today some interest in participation of citizens and civil society organisations in community-based research and in policy processes and decision-making. However, there is still a long way to go before citizens and civil society organisations are fully accepted as equal partners and providers of knowledge and expertise to solve societal challenges, despite the many innovative ideas and initiatives, which communities and civil society organisations develop and organise.

Researchers and students can be exposed to societal perspectives of research and innovation by integrating engagement with societal actors into university curricula and into research. There is also a need for structures for partnerships between researchers and societal actors as part of research activities, including as part of research planning. At the same time there is a need for mechanisms which enable civil society actors to develop their research capacities.

The 6th Living Knowledge Conference will seek to explore experiences with research and innovation for, with and by civil society, and develop policy recommendations and articulate research needs within community-based research and research focusing on societal challenges.

The conference will build on the experience of the previous Living Knowledge Conferences in Leuven, Seville, Paris, Belfast, and Bonn. The 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, provide opportunities for collaboration, and try to ensure that civil society's role in research and innovation is prioritised on policy agendas, both nationally and internationally.

The 6th Living Knowledge Conference will also be a platform for exchange and discussions of findings and results of the PERARES<sup>1</sup> project among policy makers, researchers and civil society organisations. An important objective of the PERARES consortium is to move dialogues between researchers and civil society "upstream", and develop proposals for which direction new research and innovation activities and programs should take.

The conference is hosted by Aalborg University's Center for Design, Innovation and Sustainable Transitions in Copenhagen and is organised by researchers who were among the founders of the international science shop network, Living Knowledge. Aalborg University has also a strong record in problem-based learning as part of its curricula.

A pre-conference Science Shop Summer School on developing community-based research based on the Science Shop model will be organized 7-8 April 2014.

**The conference themes are:**

Theme 1: Social innovation – empowering civil society?

Theme 2: How to involve multiple users in design of assistive technologies?

Theme 3: Co-operation in multicultural contexts - North-South cooperation

Theme 4: Sustainable development: from vision to transition

Theme 5: Developing competences through problem-based learning with civil society

Theme 6: Developing the university – civil society interaction

Theme 7: How to organize and manage science shops and community-based research units?

Theme 8: Governance of science and technology with civil society

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<sup>1</sup> PERARES (**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)).

## **Conference themes and guiding questions**

Proposals for sessions, individual papers, plenaries, posters, open spaces, labs and other types of contributions are welcomed within the themes described in the following. We welcome and encourage researchers, science shop members, students and policy members to submit proposals.

Guiding questions for contributions are given within each theme underneath. Some themes are mostly focusing on specific societal issues and some themes are mostly focusing on structures and methods within civil society and innovation.

### **Theme 1: Social innovation – empowering civil society?**

Social innovation is one of the more recent innovation concepts. It is defined in many different ways ranging from civil society organizations' and grassroots organizations' development of solutions to societal problems to social entrepreneurs' and social enterprises' development and supply of products and services. Furthermore, the recent economic crisis and austerity has created civil society initiatives aiming at delivering social care, health care, environmental protection etc. when public institutions make cut down. At the same policy-makers seem to expect increasing civil society responsibility.

#### **Key questions:**

- What are the experiences from civil society organizations' and grassroots organizations' innovative activities: planning, implementation, impact, embedding, transfer and dissemination, etc.?
- What are the experiences from social entrepreneurship and social enterprises? How legitimate are the products and services provided? How are citizens and civil society organizations involved?
- How is the economic crisis and austerity changing the roles of civil society, governmental institutions and businesses in social care, health care, environmental protection etc.?
- What are the roles of science shops, university research and education in enabling, organizing, embedding, and disseminating social innovation?
- What methods are used in organising the temporary spaces (pop-ups) in social innovation processes? How do the applied methods influence the focus and the impact of the social innovation processes?

### **Theme 2: How to involve multiple users in design of assistive technologies**

In the recent years assistive technology has come high on the political agendas in Europe, and many new product designs are currently being implemented in the healthcare sector, which present designers with the new challenges involved in socially innovative design, where multiple users are in focus. Among these multiple users are disabled persons, disability associations and other civil society organizations, as well as public institutions, health care workers and their trade unions, relatives, and industry. The challenge to be discussed within this theme is how to involve multiple users and integrate their different concerns in socially innovative design of assistive technology.

Key questions:

- How are partnerships between multiple user groups, public institutions and industry created? How are socially valuable groups given voice in these partnerships? And how is the co-operation performed and shaped?
- How are the multiple users represented in the designers' scripts with the designers' understanding of the problem in focus and how it can be solved?
- How are the multiple users' different types of experience and knowledge translated into concepts, mock-ups etc.?
- What are the experiences with the use of design or re-design of assistive technologies and systems based on involvement of multiple users?

**Theme 3: Co-operation in multicultural contexts – North-South co-operation**

During the recent 15 years there has been a big increase within activities in engineering, design and development performed within multicultural contexts. Several organizations have provided support to poor communities in solving their problems and building up capacity. This new wave of activity is characterized by an approach that can be summarized as Design *for* People. This approach tends to believe that only Western academic knowledge is the legitimate basis for developing solutions for poor communities. However, there is a need for efforts where the experiences and competences of the different participants are considered equally important and where co-creation among the participants is a core principle; an approach which can be characterised as Design *with* People.

Key questions:

- What are the experiences with development and learning from approaches and methods for multicultural co-creation processes where different stakeholders (civil society organizations, universities, local governments, donor agencies etc.) are involved in activities that imply the use of established and new technologies and designs in a multicultural context?
- How to develop new methods and *common* tools to gather data, co-design, visualize and stage a design process in a multicultural context?
- Co-operation in a multicultural context often challenges all partners involved in coordination and communication (informal, formal and technical). Which competences are needed and how to create these competences in order to operate successfully across cultures in a multi-organizational and multicultural design project?

**Theme 4: Sustainable development: from vision to transition**

While there often is wide national and international agreement about long-term visions for sustainable development like a fossil-free society or sustainable consumption and production, transition processes towards such visions are often controversial. Disagreements about experiments, investments, etc. and their sustainability aspects are frequent. An example is the controversies about the future roles of bioenergy and the impacts on food supply, nature, climate etc. Civil society organisations and researchers initiate many types of projects at local, national or international level, including experiments with new ways of production and consumption. Some civil society organisations build alliances with local or national

governments and some with businesses in order to obtain influence. Civil society organisations and researchers are also members of program committees, commissions etc. The theme focuses on critical reflections from efforts for a more sustainable development, including the roles of navigation, governance structures, visions and plans, experiments, and transfer of experiences from one context to another.

Key questions:

- What learning have different stakeholders obtained from sustainable development projects in terms of conditions and strategies for future sustainable transition processes?
- What potentials and barriers have been experienced with transfer of experiences with sustainable transition processes among communities, cities, regions and nations?
- What are the experiences with integration of environmental, social and economic aspects of sustainable development in sustainable development projects?
- What are the experiences from cooperation between civil society and researchers with respect to knowledge production, capacity building, and empowerment?

**Theme 5: Developing competences through problem-based learning with civil society**

When students as a part of their education participate in science shop projects or other types of community-based research in co-operation with citizen groups it can be seen as “community-based learning” in an authentic learning environment. This kind of learning has advantages by making connections between abstract concepts learned in the classroom and real applications in the world outside. Furthermore community-based learning enables learning through a cycle of action and reflection. The developed competences are useful in the students’ later professional careers.

Key questions:

- What are the strategies and experiences from incorporating science shop projects and other community-based projects into different types of curricula?
- How are experiences from community-based learning and research influencing competences and careers as professionals?
- How to assess students’ competences gained in authentic learning environments like community-based projects?
- How to ensure the quality of learning in authentic learning environments like community-based projects?
- How to stimulate the learning and reflection of the students in community-based projects?

**Theme 6: Developing the university – civil society interaction**

Many national and regional governments are developing strategies and policies for more interaction between universities (and other higher education institutions) and civil society. In some cases the increased strategic focus on interaction with society primarily develops into increased cooperation with businesses, in other cases cooperation with citizens, communities and civil society organisations get an important role. There is need for knowledge about what role civil society plays in the increasing focus on interaction between higher education institutions and society.

Key questions:

- What strategies are universities and higher education institutions using to develop cooperation with society and how is this influencing research and education?
- What are the roles of communities and civil society organizations in co-operation between universities and higher education institutions, and society?
- What are the challenges for developing strategies and policies to support university-civil society interaction?

**Theme 7: How to organize and manage science shops and community-based research units?**

The vision of community-based research and science shops is to support civil society actors in gaining impact on societal issues they are concerned about. Some activities focus on the need for documentation of problems, some on gathering knowledge about new social challenges, and some on design of new systems and services. Science shops and community-based research units are organized in different ways with respect to roles they have in the cooperation with civil society, reaching *from* primarily mediation of knowledge needs from civil society to researchers and students *to* participation in research with civil society and attempts to ensure actual civil society influence. There is a need for more knowledge about how the ways, which science shops and other types of community-based research units are organized and work, co-shape citizens' and civil society organizations' societal influence.

Key questions:

- How are science shops and community-based research units organized in terms of competences, economic resources, organizational structures, roles in cooperation with civil society actors etc.?
- How does cooperation with different types of science shops and community-based research units impact civil society's influence?

**Theme 8: Governance of science and technology with civil society**

The contribution of participatory research projects to policy-making, and the participation of civil society and citizens in research policy-making are not separate issues in the governance debate. Though the scales and mechanisms are different, the governance tools available can be seen as part of a continuum that goes from attempts at better informing policy-makers of civil society's realities, needs and priorities, to finding new ways in which civil society directly participates in policy-making.

Key questions:

- What are the experiences with different participatory methods, like public debates, public hearings, consensus conferences, citizen conferences, citizens' juries, etc. with respect to the framing of the participatory process, the empowerment of civil society actors and the influence on societal development?

- What are the experiences from participatory research projects with involvement of civil society actors, policy-makers, etc.? What are the experiences with respect to project shaping, research organisation, knowledge production, societal influence, etc.?
- What are civil society organisations' research needs and agendas? What are the experiences of thematic forums and platforms etc. with researchers, civil society organisations, policy makers, etc.?
- How to raise civil society organisations' awareness about research opportunities and make them familiar with the concept of participatory research?
- What can funders do to incorporate CSOs and CSO needs in planning of research programmes, calls for proposals, and the conditions for funding proposals?

### **Deadlines and submission**

*What to submit:* Extended Abstracts (2500 characters including space)

*When to submit abstracts:* At the latest October 1, 2013.

*Notice of acceptance:* End November 2013

*Opportunity to submit accepted revised abstract until:* February, 1, 2014

*Opportunity to submit full papers and work-in-progress papers until:* March, 1, 2014

*Where to submit:* [www.livingknowledge.org/lk6](http://www.livingknowledge.org/lk6)