Euroscience Biennial Assembly

6 - 8 July 2000
Freiburg in Breisgau

ORGANISING A SCIENCE CAFE : WHY AND HOW ?

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WHAT IS A SCIENCE CAFE ?

- **A Science Café is a public-scientists meeting:**
  - **it is not a conference**

  - **it is an exchange of questions/answers starting with public questions**
  - **it is an opinion exchange where the public and the scientists should be considered as equal**

- **A Science Café takes place in a public convivial place :**
  - **a public café**
  - **an association meeting room**
  - **a cultural place**
  - **an outside public space**
  - **a lycée**
  - **etc.**

- **A Science Café :**
  - **happens 1 to 2 times a month**
  - **assembles 40 to 80 persons**
  - **lasts about 1.5 hour**
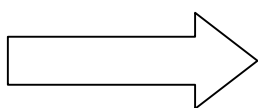
WHAT IS A SCIENCE CAFE ?

- **A Science Café session starts with :**
  - a very short introduction about the invited speakers (who ? what ? – 2 minutes)
  - a question of the public

- **One never knows in advance what will happen during a Science Café Session :**
  - it goes into many directions
  - some people intervene all the time
  - some people make long comments
  - a general survey of the topic is usually not done

- **One never knows exactly what communication process is going on :**
  - <u>France Inter :</u> lonely auditors, affective relation
  - <u>France Info :</u> giving information, the auditor does not exist
  - <u>France Culture :</u> lonely auditors looking for knowledge sharing, intellectual pleasure
  - <u>Science Café :</u> all the publics
    - ⇨ what relation ?
    - ⇨ what discourse level ?

MANY SCIENCE CAFES TODAY

Annecy (F)	**1998**	**University + MJC**
Berne (CH)	**2000**	**Fondation Science et Cité**
Besançon (F)	**1998**	**Projet Aurore**
Caen (F)	**1998**	**SFP + CCST**
Geneva (CH)	**1999**	**Association Bancs Publics**
Geneva (CH)	**1999**	**Association Euroscience Léman**
Ile de France (F)	**1998**	**SFP + CCST**
Leeds (UK)	**1998**	**University**
Lyon (F)	**1998**	**Association Loi 1901**
Montpellier (F)	**1999**	**University + CCST**
Nancy (F)	**1998**	**CNRS + Ecole des Mines**
Paris (F)	**1997**	**SFP**
Strasbourg (F)	**1998**	**University + Partnership**

CCST = Centre de Culture Scientifique et Technique
CNRS = Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique
MJC = Maison des Jeunes et de la Culture
SFP = Société Française de Physique

And many other ones for sure…
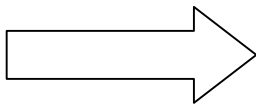
⟹ **A real developing success**
Why ?

SCIENCE CAFES, WHY ?

- **Recent events seem to further reveal a public attitude against science :**
  - **BSE**
  - **Genetically Modified Food**

- **Does this « Against Science » attitude really exist ? Or is it something else ?**

  - **Science Cafés Development indicates a big interest toward science**

  - **Who does the public trust/distrust ?**
    - **Doctors : +80%**
    - **Teachers : +80%**
    - **Professors : +70%**
    - **TV Newsreaders : +54%**
    - **Scientists : +35%**
    - **Gvt Ministers : -50%**
    - **Journalists : -62%**

  - **« People have lost their faith in science »**
    (New Scientist, 18.03.2000)

SCIENCE CAFES, WHY ?

« People don't just want to listen. They want to participate and be heard on equal terms with the scientists. »

(Nature, 13.05.1999)

 Science is facing a public attitude against the way science is communicated

- **Science communication process has to take into account and to use as a basis :**
  - **What does the public want to know ?**
  - **What does the public knows about science ?**

- **Scientists should better :**
  - **promote aquisition of science knowledge (real aim)**

            than
  - **promote science (badly received : marketing, lies)**

SCIENCE CAFES, WHY ?

- **Generally speaking, the main aim of Science Cafés is to :**
  - bridge the gap between city and science (to favour a dialogue)
  - allow face to face meetings between citizens and scientists (to humanize this dialogue)

- **More specifically, one can also define three main functions to Science Cafés :**
  - **For the public :**
    - to improve their knowledge about science
    - to realize they are not « science zeros »
    - to realize scientists are citizens

  - **For the scientists :**
    - training about other scientific topics
    - training about science communication
    - to become more aware of the public questions and knowledge

  - **For the politicians :**
    - training about scientific topics
    - to become more informed about citizen questions, wishes and concerns

SCIENCE CAFES, HOW ?

PLACE	SPEAKERS

• **convivial**
 • **public**
 • **to avoid platform (no hierarchy)**
 • **to avoid overhead projector**
 • **dialogue / discussion**
 • **microphone and audio system (to record the session)**
	• **3 or 4 maximum (no mass effect)**
	 • **different aspects of the thematics**
	 ex : Mad cow topic
	   - **public health**
	   - **economy**
	   - **virology**
	 • **not necessarilly famous scientists (accessible if local)**

THEMATICS	**PUBLIC**

• **public concerns**
 • **scientific actuality**
 • **recent science books**
 • **explicit title (question)**
 • **small glossary if many complexe words**
	• **newspapers**
	 • **posters (public places, colleges, etc.)**
	 • **flyers**
	 • **e- mail list**
	 • **web site**
	 to go further
	   - **web links**
	   - **book references**

SCIENCE CAFES, HOW ?

Thematic examples

- « Le climat et ses caprices »
- « Quelles nouvelles de la vache folle ? »
- « Les origines du progrès »
  (book)
- « Que mangerons-nous demain ? »
  (1999 French science week)
- « Les multimédias au quotidien ; pour quoi faire ? »
  (1999 French science week)
- « La Terre sous contrôle »
- « Nicollier dans l'espace : à quand mon tour ? »
- « Y a-t-il des races ? »
- « Marée noire, Tchernobyl : deux catastrophes écologiques à méditer »
- « De la vie dans les nouvelles planètes ? »
- « Industries et environnement »
- « Le génome humain, et après ? »
- « Science et Spiritualité »
  (book)

SCIENCE CAFES, HOW ?

- **Session Preparation :**
  - **to find a thematics**
  - **to find its sub-thematics**
  - **to find speakers**
  - **to read and discuss about the thematics**
    => information for press communiqués and posters (J – 21)
  - **to print posters and flyers**
    => posters and flyers ready (J – 14)
  - **to distribute posters, flyers and e-mails**
    => public informed (J – 7)

- **Session Development :**
  - **to welcome public (2 mn)**
  - **to introduce speakers : who ? what ? (2 mn)**
  - **Q1 / A1, Q2 / A2, etc.**

- **Animator role :**
  - **to distribute questions**
  - **to avoid big discussion shifts**
  - **to ask for definitions of complexe words**

- **Session Exploitation :**
  - **retranscription of the session on the web (no exhaustive rewriting : oral & written media)**
  - **enhancement of public questions (web entries)**