Towards A Knowledge Democracy Movement: Contemporary Trends in Community-University Research Partnerships

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Background

In the city where I live, Victoria, Canada, a wealthy city in a wealthy country, there are 1500 women and men (in a population of 250,000) who do not have a place to sleep at night. In spite of the creation of the Coalition Against Homelessness, the numbers of people who suffer from poor health, violence, substance abuse as a result of poverty and homelessness continues at about the same level.

In India one of the fastest growing economies in the world, 600 million people live without literacy, adequate water and sanitation, poor health facilities and insecure food security.

Indigenous people in North and South America, Africa and Asia have dramatically lower life expectancy and higher levels of health difficulties than the non-indigenous members of their communities. Their languages are disappearing daily and with the languages, extraordinary parts of our human knowledge base and culture.

Climate change is having a more dramatic impact on the poor and marginalized persons in all our communities; one only has to look at the earthquake in Haiti or the floods in Pakistan to see how natural disasters impact the poor.

Concerns with the protection of the wealthy from risk, the protection of access to non-renewable resources and water occupy the minds of vast numbers of the world’s inhabitants and a dramatically disproportionate level of government budgets.

The neo-liberal global economic machine produces wealth in historically unheard of quantities but exacerbates the gap between the rich and the poor both within nations and amongst nations.

These situations exist in spite of bodies of recent quality research on the impacts of inequality in our lives at both local and global levels. Richard Wilkinson and Kate Pickett's exhaustive study of inequality and its impacts around the world is but one of the many technically competent and evidence-based studies which illustrate what many of us see in our work in communities on a day-to-day basis. According to Wilkinson and Pickett, on almost every index of quality of life, or wellness, or deprivation, there is a strong correlation between a country's level of economic inequality and its social outcomes. Almost always, Japan and the Scandinavian countries are at the favourable "low" end, and almost always, the UK, the US and Portugal is at the unfavourable "high" end, with Canada, Australasia and continental European countries in between. What is so powerful in their research is evidence that both the rich and the poor fare better in societies with less inequality. And this is true whether one speaks of mortality and morbidity, educational outcomes, mental health, obesity, violence, or the status of minorities. (Wilkinson and Pickett, 2009)

It is the unequal world however that we live in. It is a world where greed continues to be celebrated and economic growth stubbornly put forward time and time again. This is the world that our work as researchers, as teachers, as activists, as scholars and intellectuals, as Higher Education administrators must address. Gandhiji used a Sanskrit word in his teachings to say that we must measure the success of our work in terms of how it serves 'Antyodaya', the last person. This is the challenge of our generation.

Introduction

The purpose of this paper is to explore some of the discourses and trends in Higher Education Institutions expressed by such concepts such as engaged scholarship (Boyer, 2006), community-based research (Strand et al, 2003), community-university research partnerships (Hall, 2009, Hart et al 2007), community-university engagement (Watson, 2006), civic engagement (University of Victoria strategic plan), or knowledge mobilization and knowledge impact (Levesque, 2008)? What are the driving forces behind or within these trends? What kinds of structures and networks are emerging to support this work? What are the opportunities and dangers implied? Can these structures support the traditions of liberatory and transformative pedagogies and practices inspired by Freire and the early work done in participatory research? How do these trends relate to the broad contemporary discourses of action research or participatory action research? Does the space that

is opening within Universities provide an opportunity to recognize alternative sites of knowledge construction such as social movements, community organizations, the poor, homeless, and the excluded themselves? Does the focus on knowledge examine the contributions of broader ways of knowing such as Indigenous Forms of Knowing? Is there a possibility of a global knowledge movement? If so what would have to happen? In this piece, I focus on the dimensions of the higher education and engagement trends worldwide with a particular focus on research partnership and knowledge exchange developments, some of the dimensions of the community-based research movement within Canada, a look at the University of Victoria's Office for Community-Based Research and some thoughts on the potential emergence of a global knowledge movement.

The limitations of this paper may be obvious. An older white settler-heritage male who is living and working in Canada writes it. The paper does not do justice to the full range of work even in Canada, let alone other parts of the minority world and can only hint at what the response could or should be coming from a majority world perspective. My hope however is that some of what I write will be sufficiently useful that it will encourage more broadly experienced and more diverse persons to take it forward or put it aside.

A Knowledge Movement?

John Gaventa, a theoretician on power and citizenship, a pioneering participatory research leader, Chair of Oxfam UK and Senior Scholar at the Institute of Development Studies at the University of Sussex was the first person in my experience to speak of social movements using a 'knowledge strategy' as their core political organising strategy. (Gaventa and Cornwall, 2008) His early work at Highlander Research and Education Centre in Appalachian Mountain region of the United States involved among other things the support of citizen researchers to go to local courthouses to find out the ownership of local coalmines. Absentee landlords owned all of the mines in question from as far away as New York or London. And while profits were good, taxes were very low for these absentee landlords so that resources were not sufficient to cover the costs of good schools, health services or other social services to allow the mine workers and their families to flourish. These citizen researchers using what John a "knowledge strategy" for organizing pooled their knowledge across six or seven Appalachian states and produced an important study on mine ownership, which had an impact on changing tax structures in some of the states in question. Highlander and Gaventa were later

to move into a campaign for environmental justice using many of the same principles (Cable and Benson, 1993)

Gaventa's linking of knowledge with the organizing of a people's movement was similar to what the late Mwalimu Julius K. Nyerere of Tanzania used to say and what we learned from Paulo Freire as well. Nyerere said, "Poor people do not use money for a weapon". He was speaking of a way of thinking about development and community and betterment, to the building of a national movement in his country that did not depend on external financial investment. Nyerere said poor people needed to use 'ideas and leadership'. Freire, the spiritual guide for this journal, and someone with whom I also worked and was influenced by, articulated a faith in the embedded knowledge of people who are living lives of poverty, exclusion, oppression, disadvantage and more. His central theme was that the ability to understand and articulate the experience of lives of struggle was not only possible, but was a necessary condition for organizing and transformation. He did not speak of a knowledge movement per se, but his poetic illuminations of the role of dialogue and learning based in the daily-lived experiences of people looking for more, gave us tools and approaches to support a knowledge movement.

How can we understand a concept like a 'global knowledge movement'? First I am working on an assumption that social movements remain at the heart of local and global change; that they are critically important sources of power to shift the way that people imagine various relations of power. With that argument I am building on the very long tradition of learning and social movement theory and practice including much that I have written about in earlier forms (Hall, 2009). I am not referring to engaged scholarship or HE and community engagement itself as a movement, although there are movement elements to the ways in which community university partnerships are expanding. I am also not thinking of the access to knowledge movement on its own either (Ostrom and Hess, 2006; Joranson, 2007). I am also not using other words to speak about the 'knowledge economy'. The knowledge economy specifically links knowledge production of certain types and skill development in certain ranges of skill development to global capitalist production and distribution mediated often through the digital technologies.

A 'global knowledge movement' is an action-oriented formation that recognizes, gives visibility to and strengthens the knowledge that is created in the context of, as Marx said, people trying to 'change the world'. A Global Knowledge Movement would recognize, value and support the recovery and deepening of indigenous ways

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of knowing (Wangoola, 2000; Williams and Tanaka, 2009). A global knowledge movement would recognize the epistemic privilege of the homeless themselves as a key to taking action on issues of homelessness. It would celebrate the intellectual contributions of young people who are differently abled. It would honour the early work of Engels gathering the insights of workers in the 19th century factories of Manchester, England or Marx's work in the Moselle river valley of Germany learning from workers in the vineyards. It would recognize that the Gay and Lesbian movement and the HIV/AIDS movements have been built fundamentally on the knowledge of Gay and Lesbian citizens themselves.

A knowledge movement or a movement that uses knowledge as a key mobilising and organising strategy is centred within the lives and places of those who are seeking recognition of their rights, their land claims, access to jobs, ecological justice, recovery or retention of their languages. Knowledge itself within such a movement formation is most likely place-based and rooted in the daily lives of people who increase their knowledge of their own contexts and by sharing what they are learning with allies and others like themselves move, as Paulo Freire says, towards being agents in the naming of the world. The proliferation of discourse and practices within the world of community-university knowledge partnerships, in this conceptualisation, would be contributors to the broader knowledge movement. The extensive and important access to information developments would also be supportive of and a contributor towards a variety of knowledge movements, but neither the access to information developments nor the community-university engagement advancements form a global knowledge movement by themselves, but would be part of the necessary conditions for knowledge movements to gain footholds and flourish.

The central question in this article is what is there in the current trends in Community-University research partnerships that contribute to the strengthening of local or global knowledge movements?

Re-emergence of community university engagement

Cristina Escrigas, the Executive Director of the Global University Network for Innovation that produced the 2008 encyclopedic and visionary report on Higher Education in the World, Higher Education: New Challenges and Emerging Roles for Human and Social Development, says that it is time to," review and reconsider the interchange of values between university and society; that is to say, we need to rethink the social relevance of universities" (Taylor, 2008 p xxviii). Humanity, she

goes on to say, “is now facing a time of major challenges, not to say, serious and profound problems regarding coexistence and relations with the natural environment. Unresolved problems include social injustice, poverty and disparity of wealth, fraud and lack of democracy, armed conflicts, exhaustion of natural resources and more” (p xxiv).

Martha Piper, former President of the University of British Columbia in Canada brings the question much closer to home when noting, “…even as we pride ourselves on our achievements, there are those who argue our influence in the world stage is waning. A walk down Hastings and Main in Vancouver is a sober reminder that poverty, homeless and drug abuse lie, in the heart of one of the most affluent cities in the world, steps away…something is wrong” (2003, 128)

Contestation for influence within Higher Education

Community-university engagement is one of the strongest trends cutting across our university campuses these days. There has been a veritable explosion of writing on community-university engagement over the past five to six years. Ernest Boyer laid down the conceptual foundations with his development of the concept of “engaged scholarship” (1996). The Kellogg Commission on the Future of State and Land-Grant Universities (Kellogg Commission 1999) shifted the terms research, teaching and service to the words discovery, learning and engagement. Susan Ostrander from Tufts University did a study of civil engagement on five campuses in the United States during 2001, which resulted in the articulation of a number of necessary components for effective engagement. (Ostrander, 2004). David Watson former Vice-Chancellor of Brighton University initiated a robust Community-University Partnership Programme (CUPP) at his university, but in addition is an eloquent spokesperson for the links between lifelong learning, communities and university engagement. (Watson 2007; Watson and Maddison, 2005; Watson 2008; Watson 2009). Angie Hart, current academic director of CUPP has added much to our understanding of how community engagement works and some useful ideas about how to evaluate the impact of this work (Hart, Maddison and Wolff 2007; Hart, Northmore and Gerhardt, 2007). Barbara Holland and Judith Ramaley of University of Western Sydney and Winona State University respectively have reviewed community engagement approaches in the UK, Spain, Germany, India, Japan, Vietnam, Thailand, Philippines, Australia, USA, Canada, Mexico, Argentina, Brazil and South Africa and have created a typology of how Universities approach the change associated with the community-university change agenda. They identify the

planning, leadership, engagement strategies, accountability frameworks and more of institutions taking routine, strategic or transformative approaches to the engagement process. (Holland and Ramaley, 2008). Lorraine McIlrath and Iain Mac Labhrainn of the National University of Ireland, Galway and leaders of the Community Knowledge Initiative have pulled together a very useful collection of papers of international perspectives on Higher Education and Civic Engagement. The strength of the collection is on the depth of analysis of how student engagement or 'service learning' as it is referred to in the United States is working to transform higher education (McIlrath and Iain Mac Labhrainn, 2007).

There are so many examples of recently created community university structures in other parts of the world. Spain for example has seen the Instituto Paulo Freire; a national community-university research network has its organizational base in several Spanish Universities including Valencia, Gerona and Sevilla (www.institutpaulofreire.or). CREA, the Centre for theories and practice in Overcoming Inequalities, was one of the sources of inspiration for the University of Victoria when it started its Office of Community-Based Research. CREA is located in the Scientific Park at the University of Barcelona (http://creaub.info). Professor Emilio Lucio-Villegas holds the Cátedra Paulo Freire at the Universidad de Sevilla. The Cátedra located within the Faculty of Education, is a hub for community-university participatory research throughout the region.

Not all of the structures or organizations that facilitate the creation of community-university partnerships are located within universities. It is critically important to note that much of the early history of community-based research, participatory research and similar approaches originated within and/or were supported by civil society organisation. If we look at the Science Shop Movement in Europe for example one will find a majority of the Science Shops are based in Universities, but not all. The Bonn Science Shop is a cooperative non-governmental organisation that had its origins in a university, but found that it had much more freedom for progressive research and social action when located as an independent community organisation. It works nevertheless as do other Science Shops, linking university students and researchers with community activists and organisations that need research to be done.

The Society for Participatory Research in Asia (PRIA) based in New Delhi, India is nearing 30 years of operations. Its motto is 'knowledge is power'. It is legally structured as a non-governmental civil society organisation. PRIA carries out research with communities of excluded and oppressed people. It provides capacity-

building workshops and training opportunities for local government workers and grass roots NGO workers in participatory research and evaluation. It works on issues of citizenship and governance, on health and safety in the workplace, on sustainability and local economic development and in local planning. Because of its long-term skills and reputation for ethical and democratic research approaches, universities in India have sought PRIA out to provide teaching and field placement opportunities for students who are going in to work in rural areas, in fields of social work or as community-based researchers. They broker community-university research partnerships but from the community side of things.

In Canada, the Community Based Research Centre was established nearly 25 years ago as a local non-governmental organization. It has grown over the years to have a staff of 25-30 persons working on behalf of community organisations to serve their research and evaluation needs. They work on issues of anti-racism and multicultural health, employment and cultural issues. They draw on the resources of several universities in the Waterloo region of Ontario (about 1 1/2 hours west of Toronto). In May of 2011 they will host the 4th Community University Exposition (CuExpo 2011) a national and international space for community and university partners to meet to share with others (www.cuexpo2011.ca).

Let us be clear that the relationship between knowledge and power has not been lost on global capitalism itself. “Market forces” are often held out to be at both a global level and local level to be almost magical in their abilities to shape social needs, including learning needs. Indeed the rise of interest in the role of higher education in our societies over the past 30 years is illustrated by the emergence of concepts such as the ‘knowledge economy’ or the ‘knowledge society’. The knowledge economy is an economy in which much greater strategic importance is given to the allocation of resources in: Research and Development; Education and Training; management of information; social networking and organization of markets on rights of knowledge. (Foray, 2006) Universities in the Global North were urged to create technology transfer and business incubating structures some 30 years ago by the private sector. Pharmaceutical companies, Engineering and Science industries, computing and information technology companies are strongly linked to their counterparts in Universities. A very useful 2010 study on University-Enterprise partnerships within the European Union provide 10 case studies on the ways that these structures are working (Mora et al, 2010) Global competitiveness is the game, we are told, amongst cities, regions, and nations with success being dependent on the creation and support of large numbers of well educated,

disciplined and flexible workers and managers. In this scenario certain types of knowledge are privileged of course, but for purposes of our examination today what is important is the critical role that knowledge plays within our contemporary contexts.

It is also critically important to note that over the past 25 years we have seen the dismantling of many of the structures put in place in our universities as early as the late 19th century for the sharing of knowledge with communities. In England, Liberal Education is a song sung by increasingly nostalgic voices. The independent funding of Extra-mural Studies in England was similarly eliminated some years ago and the many historic Departments of Adult Education and Extra-Mural Studies have disappeared from Manchester, from Leeds, from Hull, from Nottingham and elsewhere. In Canada Continuing Education units in our universities have moved nearly totally into a revenue recovery and market oriented world.

Canadian Developments

In Canada, Edward Jackson at Carleton University has conceptualized what he calls the “CUE (Community-University Engagement) Factor”. He writes of the dynamic triangle of community-university engagement being, community-based experiential learning, community-based research and community-based continuing education. He calls on universities across Canada to, “increase their CUE factors by deepening and broadening their teaching, research and volunteering activities with the external constituencies that have the greatest need for sustainable solutions to the challenges they face every day”(Jackson).

One of the three legs of the Jackson’s CUE Factor, community-based research (CBR), has a particularly strong Canadian history and specificity. In the mid-1970s a group of researchers based in Toronto and associated with the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education and the International Council for Adult Education created a group called the participatory research project. Hall, Jackson, marino, Barndt, Conchelos and others had a variety of community-based research experiences in Canada and other parts of the world. They were supported by the late Drs. J. Roby Kidd and James Draper who were Professors in the Adult Education Department at OISE and in the case of Dr. Kidd, the Secretary-General of the newly launched International Council for Adult Education (Hall, 2005).

The term community-based research (CBR) that is in use at the University of Victoria encompasses a spectrum of research that actively engages community

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members or groups to various degrees, ranging from community participation to community initiation and control of research. From a university perspective, community-based research refers to a wide variety of practices and is supported by several academic traditions: Academic or scientific knowledge put at the service of community needs; Joint university and community partnerships in the identification of research problems and development of methods and applications; Research that is generated in community settings without formal academic links at all; Academic research under the full leadership and control of community or non-university groups; Joint research, which conceived as part of organizing, mobilizing or social advocacy or action.

The University of Victoria uses a modified definition published by Kerry Strand and others in their 2003 article, “Principles of Best Practice for Community-Based Research”:

Community-based research (CBR) involves research done by community groups with or without the involvement of a university. In relation with the university CBR is a collaborative enterprise between academics and community members. CBR seeks to democratize knowledge creation by validating multiple sources of knowledge and promoting the use of multiple methods of discovery and dissemination. The goal of CBR is social action (broadly defined) for the purpose of achieving (directly or indirectly) social change and social justice. (P 5)

Inspired in part by Canada’s early work in participatory and community-based research and by the experience of the Science Shops in the Netherlands, the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council created the SSHRC-Community University Research Alliance (CURA) funding structure. The CURA model has become known widely throughout the world and has resulted in rise of a unique meeting space called the Community-University Expositions (CUexpos) which have now taken place in Saskatoon in 2003, Winnipeg in 2005 and Victoria in 2008. Out of this combined energy has come the recently created Community-Based Research Canada (CBRC) and the Global Alliance for Community-Engaged Research. (http://www.uvic.ca/ocbr). John Loxley recipient of the 2008 Canadian Association of University Teachers Distinguished Academic Award in his acceptance speech on *the Interdisciplinary Intellectual and Public Policy Research* the model of research, requires, joint development of research proposals and results which in the case of his work with Aboriginal Community Economic Development with concrete

contributions to combating poverty in those communities (Loxley, 2008). Within our universities, CBR has begun to become institutionalized. The University of Victoria in January of 2007 created the Office of Community-Based Research as a university-wide structure reporting to the Vice-President of Research (http://uvic.ca/ocbr). The Harris Centre at Memorial University in Newfoundland serves a similar function throughout Newfoundland and Labrador (Fitzpatrick 2008). The Trent Centre for Community Education, the Institute for CBR at Vancouver Island University, the Community University Partnership Programme at the University of Alberta, the Centre for Community-Based Research in Kitchener, the Centre for Community Research, Learning and Action at Wilfred-Laurier University in Waterloo, the Services aux Collectivités at the Université de Québec à Montréal and others have sprung up across the country.

The maturation of an identifiable field of CBR adds to the extremely strong work done nationally in community-based service learning beginning formally in 1999 with the funding by the J.W. McConnell Foundation of the Service Learning programme at St. Francis Xavier University. As service learning rapidly grew across Canada, a non-profit alliance grew to support the theory and practice which is now based at Carleton University in Ottawa and called the Canadian Alliance for Community Service Learning (CACSL) http://www.communityservicelearning.ca. CSL has, like CBR taken on a particularly Canadian flavour. From their web site above, CACSL defines community service learning as, “an educational approach that integrates service in the community with intentional learning activities. Within effective CSL efforts, members of both educational institutions and community organizations work together toward outcomes that are mutually beneficial”.

Community-based research and community service learning add to the rich and varied resources, skills, capacities and imagination already present in the Canadian Continuing Education field. In spite of recent pressures on the historic structures of continuing education that have resulted in the demise of continuing education units at the University of Saskatchewan and Trent University, the Canadian Association for University Continuing Education remains the most robust of the three legs of the dynamic triangle of community-engagement. We still have hundreds of thousands of adult learners taking a bewildering array of courses that include such direct social justice offerings as University 101 at the University of Victoria or it’s many sister programmes across the country where street people and marginalized persons are taking university level courses for the first time in their lives. There are stories of institutional courage, imagination and effective community engagement in every

single continuing studies unit across this country.

The Office of Community-Based Research at the University of Victoria

The Office of Community-Based Research at the University of Victoria exists to facilitate collaborative community-university research partnerships that enhance the quality of life and the economic, environmental and social well being of communities. It is located administratively within the office of the Vice-President, Research and has a Steering Committee that is co-chaired by the Vice-President, Research and the CEO of the United Way of Greater Victoria. The OCBR is a small unit with a part-time Director who is a senior academic, a part-time Associate Director with a community organising background and a full-time administrative coordinator. It has a working motto that is necessitated by both size and philosophy: it will do nothing that someone else is already doing and it will do nothing on its own. It has two formal functions (1) The facilitation of community-university research partnerships and (2) The support and visibility of students and faculty who are engaged in or interested in community-based research.

The work that the OCBR has given the most attention to during its first years of activity include linking researchers, activists and policy makers engaged in issues of community critical needs such as homelessness and housing affordability, local food production and distribution, Indigenous language revitalization, health and adult learning needs. The OCBR has a regular series highlighting Indigenous Research Methods with community researchers as key. It also works with instructors at the University of Victoria to facilitate sharing of how best to teach community based research in the undergraduate and graduate levels. There have been five CBR Institutes to build research capacity at grass-roots levels. It also serves as the Secretariat for a number of Island, national and international networks.

The Vancouver Island Community Research Alliance (VICRA)

VICRA is an alliance of the five post-secondary educational institutions located on Vancouver Island. They are united via a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) signed by the respective President’s of each of the five institutions. The five campuses include: The University of Victoria, Royal Road’s University, Vancouver Island University, Camosun College and North Island College. The MOU calls on the group to: (1) identify priority research issues with an island wide focus:(2) develop

and implement a process to identify relevant and available knowledge, information, skills, and capacities both in the Parties and in communities (3) identify and develop research partnerships and share information on best practices that can be shared with others;(4) promote the engagement of the Parties' students in action research projects identified by communities/community members; (5) build capacity for community-based research and evidence-based planning among the spectrum of organisations and agencies that work to address the needs of Vancouver Island residents and communities;(6) build on each other's experiences and expertise, drawing on lessons from local, national and global networks/projects.

During 2008 and 2009, we worked with communities up and down the island to see what common issues there were that our VICRA team might be able to address. Three areas emerged from these consultations, Aboriginal Health disparities, and lack of affordable housing and concerns about the sustainability and security of our food sources. In June of 2010, with a grant from the Canadian Social Science and Humanities Research Council, our VICRA team began work on a Local Food Production and Distribution Action Plan, a project that we proposed calling "Bringing the Food Home". VICRA will support the development of five "Local Food Production and Distribution" tables in various parts of the Island. With student CBR research interns from each of our campuses and research support from a team of distinguished food policy researchers, business people, organic farmers, chefs, food distributors, local government folks and others will sit together to decide how to remove the obstacles to local food production and distribution. Actions envisaged are the creation of a venture capital pool for small-scale farm producers, new solutions to food inspection sites and regulations, support for farm markets, better links to food wholesalers, and more.

Community-based Research Networks

Community-Based Research Canada (communityresearchcanada.ca) is an evolving open and inclusive network of people and organisations engaged in and supporting community-based research. It was born during the Community University Exposition 2008 that was hosted by the City of Victoria. Its first major policy effort was the publication of a report on the funding and development of community-based research in Canada for the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (Hall, 2009). This report made a series of recommendations to the granting councils, the universities and to community research groups. The study and the desire to follow-up with some of the recommendations in this study led to the

launching of a national conversation on Knowledge and Society that is framed within the discourse of a new Knowledge Commons (Hall, 2010).

At the Global level, the European-based Living Knowledge Network, the Society for Participatory Research in Asia and Community-Based Research Canada have come together with a number of other regional CBR networks to create the Global Alliance on Community Based Research (GACER). GACER has initiated four key activities to date: a launch of the statement of principles; advocacy within the United Nations World Conference on Higher Education; a global study of the potential impact of community-university research partnerships on issues such as poverty and sustainability and the creation of a global communiqué on the role of community university research engagement as a strategic element in the development of higher education everywhere.

The Canadian Knowledge Commons Initiative

Have we in the creation of formal academic structures of knowledge production created both an extraordinary body of scientific knowledge that has benefited large parts of humanity, but also constrained the flow of knowledge excluding many from recognition as producers of knowledge? And in doing so have we made the consideration of knowledge solutions to complex issues more difficult to achieve? These are questions which have brought together a broad alliance of parties in Canada over the past 18 months including Community-Based Research Canada, Community Alliance for Community Service Learning, The Canadian Federation of the Humanities and Social Sciences, the International Development Research Centre, and others. They held a national conversation on the creation of a knowledge commons in Montreal, Quebec in June of 2010. The Knowledge Commons process is open and participatory and welcomes interest through it social networking site (knowledgecommons.ning.com).

The concept of the Knowledge Commons (Ostrom and Hess, 2006; Joranson, 2007) to mean a conceptual space where the boundaries between diverse locations of knowledge creation, forms of knowledge and uses of knowledge are diminished in the interest of enhancing knowledge strategies for the application of complex economic and social issues that confront us in Canada and around the world. The proposition is that lowering the barriers that separate knowledge is desirable. Dialogues, discourses and practices of a knowledge commons have attracted increased interest and visibility in academic, policy, civil society, philanthropic and private sector settings in recent years. These discussions are spoken and written

about in many ways. We speak, in Canada, of many concepts with related meanings such as social innovation, community based research, engaged scholarship, community service learning, récherche partenarial, knowledge mobilization/translation/exchange, indigenous research approaches, open or democratic knowledge sources and more. What has emerged is the recognition that knowledge creation is not a monopoly of academics. It is created and co-created in community agencies working on green economic alternatives, in health clinics supporting persons living with HIV/AIDS, in engineering departments working on adaptive technologies for children with special needs, in financial institutions innovative new ways to create affordable housing, in classrooms in first nation's controlled adult education centres where indigenous languages and cultures are being sustained and revitalized, in cities and towns using techniques of community mapping, applied theatre and just plain talking to plan healthier and more liveable communities and so much more.

Elements of a Knowledge Democracy Movement

There is unmistakable evidence of two major institutional trends within the world of knowledge generation and use. The first is the emergence of the 'knowledge access movement'. These developments are driven in part by the professional worlds of information technology located within libraries and digital repositories and in part by the explosion of digital information technologies. The Public Knowledge project based at the Universities of British Columbia, Simon Fraser University and Stanford University is one such expression. The research and software development of the Public Knowledge Project, which provides software for open access globally accessible electronic journals, is focused on improving the scholarly quality of publishing processes. It also seeks to expand the realm of public education by improving social science's contribution to public knowledge, in the belief that such a contribution is critical to academic freedom, the public use of reason, and deliberative forms of democracy. Its research program is investigating the social, economic, and technical issues entailed in the use of online infrastructure and knowledge management strategies to improve both the scholarly quality and public accessibility and coherence of this body of knowledge in a sustainable and *globally accessible form* (http://pkp.sfu.ca).

The second is the emergence or re-emergence of new discourses, practices and structures for knowledge mobilization, engaged scholarship, community-based research, and community-university research partnerships as illustrated by the work

being done in Canada and the specific case of the University of Victoria. These newer developments are part of a broader turn of attention by Higher Education institutions all over the world to the impact of their presence in the communities and regions where they are located. Community or Civic engagement is becoming a normal aspiration to be mentioned in the strategic plans of universities. Vice-Presidencies for Engagement, Offices of Community Outreach, Office of Community-Based Research, Knowledge Mobilization Units, Community-University Partnership Programmes are but a few of the ways that these approaches are being institutionalised.

The strongest tendency in both these knowledge democracy developments is to see as a central value, the dissemination and impact of scholarly, academic, scientific or expert knowledge. Research granting agencies want to make sure that the public investments being made in research produce tangible results for society. Most of the stakeholders, whether academic staff or students, university administrators, or research funders operate from the assumption that knowledge is produced by scholars in universities and research institutes and that the benefits of this knowledge production, as a point of public morality or public accountability needs to benefit society. And it is critically important to support and acknowledge the extraordinary value of fundamental science to our understandings the way the world works whether in fields of physics or medicine or engineering or environmental science. The purpose of this argument is not to argue against this role of science or this role of the university. But if we are to see the advancements of a global knowledge movement or increased support for knowledge strategies within social movements, there is a third dimension that is needed.

The third leg of a knowledge democracy movement if it is to emerge more strongly has to be recognition that critically important knowledge is created in different ways and in different locations. As Eyerman and Jamison have noted in their study of social movements social movements are formations that create what they call ‘cognitive praxis’ (reference). Peter Levine speaks of the creation of public knowledge“…The process of creating public knowledge as an additional good, because such work builds social capital, strengthens communities and gives people skills that they need for effective citizenship. If this is correct then we should aim to include as many people (and ways of knowing) in the collaborative creation of “free or open access knowledge…ordinary people should be recognized as knowledge creators.” (2007, p).

From a study of a biocultural approach to a Traditional Knowledge Commons

established by 80 traditional healers living in the Mpumalanga province in South Africa we have the following, “Knowledge is an outcome of virtuous relationships with the land, the plants and the animals. It is not property to be bought and sold. It is simultaneously cultural and spiritual and its movement and application promotes a kind of virtuous cohesiveness”.

The Honey Bee Network that originated in India and is designed to document and share indigenous theory and practice has spread to 75 countries. This knowledge movement builds on the metaphor of the honeybee that collects pollen without impoverishing the flowers, and it connects flower to flower through pollination. The idea is that when we collect knowledge of people we should ensure that people don’t become poorer after sharing their insights with us.

The gift giving cultures of the Western Canadian Indigenous peoples demonstrate that we grow and benefit an economy where wealth moves through our communities as a continuously flowing gift. Just as the objective of a gift economy is to increase value through the movement of wealth, the objective of a knowledge movement is to increase value and well being through the continuous gifting of knowledge.

They work through what I have referred to as ‘social movement learning’ (Hall, 2009, *Interchange*). As Gramsci said so many years ago, “all human beings have the capacity to create knowledge, but only a few are recognized as intellectuals”. In the context of Canada, the most powerful expression of knowledge located outside the academy is in the recognition of Indigenous knowledge. At the University of Victoria, recognition of these ways of knowing has taken the form of the creation of a Canada Research Chair in Indigenous Knowledge and Learning. There is also an Office of Indigenous Affairs and elements of Indigenous Studies within Field of Education, Law, Social Work, Nursing, Humanities, Geography, Public Administration, Indigenous Governance and Business. In the Kingdom of Busoga within East African nation of Uganda, Elders and allies have over the past number of years created a special institution to support the deepening of Afrikan traditional knowledge. This village-based institution of Higher Education and Research is called Mpambo, the Afrikan Multiversity. (www.mpambomultiversity.org)

Another example of how a knowledge movement or a social movement using a knowledge strategy is functioning comes from the work being done on Vancouver Island in Canada in the area of food security and sustainability. Vancouver Island, while agriculturally rich, produces only 3 per cent of the food that it needs to feed

all of the people on the Island. If the Island were to be cut off from ferry access from the mainland of Canada, there would only be food for three days. In the name of health and safety all eggs laid by hens on Vancouver Island have to be shipped to the mainland for inspection and then returned to the island for sales. This results in a very high carbon footprint for eggs consumed by Islanders. A strong food security and sustainability movement is growing on the island that links a preference for organic farming, local or artisanal food production, local distribution and processing. The heart of this movement is made up of farmers, urban food growers, artisanal food producers, food distributors, and chefs in restaurants, shopkeepers, and consumers of quality food. The combined knowledge of this food security movement is enormous and critical. The University of Victoria has a number of scholars whose work is focussed on food security issues. They also have useful knowledge and knowledge resources and skills. They have access to kinds of data that the local food movement does not have, but the local food movement has access to data about how the food economy operates on a day-to-day basis that the university does not have. Under these circumstances, the Office of Community-Based Research was able to respond to interests from the food security movement on the island and find some research funds to allow the food movement knowledge workers to collaborate with the academic food scholars in a project designed to produce a Local Food Production and Distribution Action Plan (www.uvic.ca/ocbr).

We will not realize a transformative knowledge movement either locally or on a global scale, until recognition of the knowledge generating spaces outside the academy are recognized, until non-university organizations are able to access research funding, until the research and knowledge mobilization capacities of local community organisations and social movements are strengthened and until a larger voice from the community, the movements or democratic society can be heard within the development of the many institutional forms of knowledge and engagement that are evolving, but I believe that a strong argument can be made that pathways towards a knowledge democracy movement are being made. Civil society and non-governmental research bodies such as the Canadian Community-Based Research Centre in Ontario, the Bonn Science Shop in Germany, the Centro Boliviano de Estudios Multidisciplinario in Bolivia, the Society for Participatory Research in Asia and the Mpambo Afrikan Multiversity in Uganda are important examples of the kinds of organizations that are needed.

Regional and international networks such as the Global Universities Network for Innovation based in Barcelona (GUNI), the Talloires Network based in the USA, the

Living Knowledge Network (Europe), the PRIA network in India and South Asia, the Association of Commonwealth Universities Extension and Engagement Network and the Global Alliance on Community Based Research itself all have important potential in supporting the full emergence of the kinds of movements that the world needs to be able to tackle the complex and challenges that lie ahead.

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