Challenges in the Co-Construction of Knowledge: A Global Study on Strengthening Structures for Community University Research Partnerships

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Introduction

The sharing of knowledge between universities and their communities has been a prominent feature of the field of adult education in Europe since the establishment of the extra-mural division of Cambridge University in 1873. The Extra-mural tradition has found counterparts in most of the universities of Europe as Continuing Education, Extension services and so forth.

The most recent developments in higher education and community engagement have taken different organisational forms. Science Shops have proliferated in European universities, inspired by the Dutch examples from the 1970s. Community University Partnership Programmes have been initiated in England. Offices of Community Based Research have surfaced in Canada and elsewhere.

The UNESCO Chair in Community Based Research and Social Responsibility in Higher Education, a chair shared between Rajesh Tandon at PRIA in India and Budd Hall at the University of Victoria initiated a global study with the support of the International Development Research Centre on facilitative structures used by universities and community groups to create and support effective community based participatory research partnerships.

The Many Discourses of the Engaged University

The literature on community-university engagement is vast and diverse. Nonetheless, a closer look at the literature reveals many significant gaps, disconnects and even contradictions. Facer et al argue that these gaps contribute to engagement's struggles as an emerging field of theory and practice because of a lack of a coherent knowledge base upon which to draw (2012). Engagement spans many disciplines, institutions and contexts. Language is often vague and various discourses exist which do not interact with each other because of differences in terminology (Facer et al 2012; Hall and Tandon 2014). In practice commonality exists between the various sub-genres of outreach, community service, service-learning, community engagement, civic engagement, community-based research and community-university research partnerships. Although some overlap in intentions does clearly exist, these various discourses do implicitly carry different theories of change for making an impact in the world. Outreach, service and service learning frequently focus on volunteerism and charitable action (GUNi, 2014). Community engagement tends to have a community development focus, while civic engagement frequently frames engagement as way of moulding university students into active citizens. Community-based research and community-university research

partnerships focus more on the role of academics and the knowledge production capacities of universities as a means to creating social and structural change.

These different, embedded theories of change about why and how universities should engage result consequently in different conceptualizations of how to institutionalize engagement within university structures and processes. For the service-focused genres, student-oriented programs, which enable student service with marginal group, are sufficient as infrastructure. Service-learning and civic engagement anticipate institutionalization at a deeper level which impacts course design, classroom pedagogy and available fields of study (Tapia et al 2005; Bertomeu et al 2010; Butin and Seider 2012; Tandon & Hok Ka Ma, 2014). Discourses, which focus on research as a core component of engagement, posit that institutionalization should challenge and transform how universities produce knowledge, inasmuch reassessing the very question of 'what is a university for' (Watson 2005).

Knowledge Democracy through Knowledge Co-generation

We have been drawn to the discourse of knowledge democracy in thinking through the issues of community university research partnerships. Appadurai notes that "there is the sense that social exclusion is ever more tied to epistemic exclusion and concern that the discourses of expertise are setting the rules for global transaction even in the most progressive parts of the international system have left ordinary people outside and behind"(2000:2). De Sousa Santos (2007, 2014) and Visvanathan (2009) write about the need for cognitive justice and for epistemologies of the South. De Sousa Santos goes so far to say that the dominant western knowledge systems have perpetuated an epoch of 'epistemicide', killing off excluded, subaltern and Southern knowledges. Shultz and Kajner argue that "the scholarship of engagement requires an epistemology that enables going beyond the 'expert' model to one of 'collaboration'" (2013:14). Even 'northern' scholars have noted these inequities. Watson et al note "There is a serious asymmetry in the power, influence and resulting priorities of the North and South" (2011: 240). This call for democratization of knowledge is even clearer within African universities, where "institutions of learning in the former colonies continue to be used by the political North to promote their agenda of subjugation, which is meant to obliterate the knowledge that Africa can identify with" (Modise and Mosweunyane, 50).

We argue that community-based research and community-based research partnerships are a key mechanism for addressing the inequities in academic knowledge production. We have created, and are still creating, a situation in social science research which effectively denies recognition of the knowledge-generating abilities innate to every human being in the world. In our search for techniques for adding to the body of knowledge, we have lost sight of objectives of our work: people. Science is not a bag of tricks that one learns by being trained to remove oneself even farther from reality. We have created an illusion and we have come to believe in it-namely, that only those with sophisticated techniques can create knowledge. This should remind all social scientists of the crucial need not to forget that, whatever they do, they must keep a steady eye on their own values. This is specially so of participatory research workers (Hall, 2002). A transition to the participatory approach requires some basic attitudes on the part of the researcher or the

activist, as the case may be. If he practices participation in his own work, it is much more likely that he will be able to facilitate participation of the people in various research efforts (Tandon, 2002).

Organisation of the study

The study was carried out through two main methods, an internet based global survey of both universities and civil society organisations and a series of national case studies written by persons based in the region, but following a common framework for ease of comparative analysis. The country case studies included national policies, examples of community university partnership structures, and examples of work with civil society organisations. Countries included in the case studies were of two types. Some countries were seen to have strong national policy frameworks for community university engagement or community university research partnerships. Other case studies came from countries that were seen to be in transition. It should be noted that the field of community university engagement is fast moving and considerable progress has been made by countries in the later category. The countries included: Ireland, India, USA, Canada, United Kingdom, Netherlands, Uganda, South Africa, Indonesia, Brazil, Argentina and Jordan.

Survey results

1. While there is obviously no common term across all languages, it is noteworthy that community based (CBR) and community based participatory research (CBPR) has have emerged in many parts of the world as a common way of naming these kinds of knowledge partnerships. A strong interest in the provision of training in these fields is a key finding.

2. We have been surprised that at least amongst the respondents to this survey, that some kinds of facilitative research partnership structures have been in place for a longer time and across a wider range of HEIs than we had previously thought.

3. In spite of extensive efforts in translating our survey and making use of various networks, data from the global South, with the exception of India and South Africa, has been very hard to obtain. There is much more work needed and more creative and effective ways to be found to dig deeper into these parts of the world.

4. Consensus would seem to be developing around the need for institutional investment in the creation of some kinds of facilitative structures if CBR or CBPR is to be 'mainstreamed'.

5. There is strong evidence suggesting that the 'knowledge cultures' of civil society organisations and HEIs are very different. The uses of knowledge, the kinds of knowledge needed, methods used, links to social change and advocacy are understood and practiced very differently. These differences need to become more transparent if deeper partnerships are to become effective.

6. There is, we suggest, an emerging contradiction between professed commitment to co-construction of knowledge and partnerships with communities, and the actual practice of origins of projects, sharing of resources and building of community capacities. A significant finding is that less than 15per cent of the research questions or projects originated at the CSO or community level.

7. Linked to this is the relative apathy in CSO and Community organisations about continued efforts to partner with HEIs, the difficulties entailed, and the frustrations of past experiences in moving the practice beyond the rhetoric. There is an expressed need for building community capacity to play equitable roles in the research partnerships

8. Finally, in part because our survey did not contain language around these dimensions, the lack of a discourse around what some call knowledge democracy, attention to excluded or marginalized knowledge leaves us with further work to do in this critical area.

Community University research partnership structures

In Argentina, at the *Universidad Catolica de Cordoba (UCC),* outreach activities institutionalized with the creation of the Area of University Social Responsibility (AUSR), depending on Vice-Rector of Mission and Responsibility. In 2011, the Area acquired a higher organizational status, being transformed into the Secretary of University Outreach & Social Responsibility (SUOSR), depending on the Academic Vice-Rector. Thus, social function at UCC is equated in terms of organizational hierarchy and relevance to teaching, training and research functions, already consolidated in the university. SUOSR promotes training workshops for designing and outreach projects within the UCC, teacher-training seminars for raising awareness about S-L, and methodological training. Along with the Research Secretary, SUOSR has also established an evaluation system to assess the relevance of S-L projects submitted by faculty members. The *Universidad Nacional de General Sarmiento (UNGS)*, in order to promote CURP activities has institutionalized a service Centre intentionally designed to connect students, faculty members, and a variety of stakeholders through the management, promotion and dissemination of local and regional development projects. The Centre depends on the Rector office.

In Brazil, Community University Engagement activities at the *University of Sao Paulo* are coordinated by the Office of the Dean of Culture and University Extension, under the Vice-Chancellor's Office. Its objective is to foster community university engagements through research and outreach. This office has the directive to organize, strengthen and regulate community-oriented activities within all faculties. Under this office the Technological Incubator for Popular Enterprises (ITCP-USP) was created in 1998, with the mandate to promote solidarity economy. ITCP encourages and supports community enterprises in various economic activities such as food production, clothing and tailoring, urban agriculture, production of cleaning and hygiene products, services and technical assistance in data processing, among many other fields. The Office of the Dean of Culture and University Extension, in association with ITCP coordinates Community university engagement activities. Different faculties, such as the Faculty of Architecture and Urbanism, Faculty of Education etc, undertake joint projects between the community

and the university. The *The Federal University of Rio de Janeiro* (UFRJ) in Brazil has a strong institutional commitment to civic engagement with a central office of the Dean of extension reporting to the VP for academic affairs. The office develops policies, evaluates programs, and provides funding for civic engagement initiatives in the university. CUE activities at UFRJ take the form of department/faculty imitated joint projects with the community. Herein, the Graduate Faculty of Engineering (COPPE), and the Technological Incubator of Popular Co-operatives, founded by it has been carrying out a number of significant projects in this regard.

In Canada, at the University of Victoria (UVic), CURPs are institutionalized with the creation of the Office of the Community Based Research (OCBR), which enjoys an important institutional status within the university. Additionally, a new research centre, the Institute for studies and innovation in Community-University Engagement (ISICUE), plays the role of a 'think-tank' to extend the work of OCBR, nurture innovation in community based research and to study community engagement. At the *Universite du Quebec a Montreal (UQAM)* in Canada, The Service Aux Collectivities (SAC) builds capacities for community CURPs that addresses concerns brought by the communities. Additionally, a Board of Community Services is also established, as part of the mandate of SAC. SAC promotes, co-ordinates and facilitates training and research activities to be carried out by the faculty members in collaboration with NGOs. The Board of Community Services provides recommendations on community university engagement and evaluates research and training projects that are presented for institutional support.

In India, the *Bhagat Phool Singh Mahila Vishwavidyalaya (BPSMV)* has institutionalized community engagement initiatives through a formally operational structure, known as the 'Centre for Society University Interface & Research (CSUIR)'. It functions as an independent and stand-alone unit in the university. The Centre offers a number of add-on courses, which add to the skills and employability of the students, who in turn act as anchors in the process of societal development. The component of 'research' is clearly found to be inbuilt in the course on 'Folk Medicine'. This course is based on the premise that indigenous knowledge residing within the communities is valuable and needs to be properly documented. Therefore, '*this knowledge which can be used for the well-being of the people is tapped by the students going into the communities and documenting indigenous medicines and methods of treatment to ailments. They are often herbs/plant based effective remedies known to village women. Here, the latter function as teachers to the students who come to them to learn about the traditional system of medicine and the associated treatment methodology. This therefore, becomes to a reversal of knowledge flow and helps in preserving the indigenous knowledge in a documented form.*'

The Directorate of Research manages community Engagement in the University of Indonesia and Community Engagement operated under the co-ordination of Vice Rector for Research, Development, and Industrial Co-operation. This sub-directorate is a specialized institution managing community engagement activities. The Directorate co-ordinates activities such as consultation services, trainings, workshops, seminars, applied research, and/or the organization of courses, along with encouraging innovative and creative attitudes. Along with this, the Institute manages Community engagement at the University of Gadjah Mada for Research and Community Engagement (founded in 2006).

It is under the co-ordination of Vice Rector for Research and Community Engagement. Some of the activities under the institute include the KKN programme, which serves as the means for transformation of knowledge into skill and trains the students to use their creativity for providing innovative solutions to social problems. The basis of the programme is co-creation, win-win solution, co-finance, sustainability and flexibility.

At the *Queen's University* in Ireland, Community engagement activities take place under the banner of Science Shops, based within Academic and Students Affairs Unit. It functions as a separate, independent entity, within the university. Science shop works with civil society organizations to develop research projects based on their research needs, which are suitable for students within the university, to carry out as part of their degree programs. The community engagements at the *Dublin Institute of Technology (DIT)* programs are coordinated by the Directorate of Student Services, part of the university's Access and Civic Engagement office. The Students Learning with Communities Programme supports community based learning, or service learning, as well as community based research, which focuses on research output.

In Netherlands, at the *University of Groningen*, among various outreach structures, co-operative research with and for community organizations are taken care of by Science Shops at six different faculties: Mathematics & Natural Sciences; Economics & Business Management; Languages, Culture & Communication; Educational Studies; Medicine & Public Health and Applied Philosophy. The Science Shop coordinates various community based research projects, in addition to organizing public lectures and science cafes. Likewise, in the *Wageningen University* as well, the key provision to enable community based research within the university is the Science Shop. The Science Shop co-ordinates community based research projects, which are carried out in association with the students, supervisors and paid researchers. *'The Science Shop works with Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) to develop research projects based on their research needs which are suitable for students within the university to carry out as part of their degree programmes. Its projects are therefore examples of co-created research, with community organisations bringing their specific needs and knowledge, and students bringing their research training and skills. Organisations typically receive a piece of research that they do not have the resources to carry out, whilst students get the experience of doing a piece of research in a real life situation which benefits both their learning and their career development.'*

In South Africa, the *University of Cape Town's* Senate's Social Responsiveness Committee (chaired by the deputy vice-chancellor, and inclusive of senate and faculty representatives, representatives from key support departments and students), is responsible for promoting and strengthening Social Responsibility (SR) at UCT. The Social Responsiveness Committee generates new knowledge, promotes knowledge integration and application of an academic scholarly/professional expertise for intentional public purpose/benefit. Another South African University, Rhodes University's current policy on community engagement is carried forward by the Community Engagement Management Committee, chaired by the Deputy Vice Chancellor: Academic , Students and Community Engagement and includes broad representation from each faculty, students and staff, the Director, community engagement as well as external CE

partners/NGOs, among others. The *Rhodes University* Community Engagement Directorate (RUCE) was established as a separate entity, reporting directly to the deputy vice-chancellor in 2009. The community engagement management committee meets quarterly and plays a planning and monitoring function for community engagement at Rhodes. RUCE's role is to support community engagement as a core responsibility of the university by developing a CE strategy and coordinating, facilitating and quality assuring CE activities. It also encourages and supports service learning/outreach programmes, volunteerism, student leadership development and various kinds of partnership between the university and the external partners.

At the *Gulu University* in Uganda, community university engagement functions, termed as 'Community Outreach Services', is placed under the Dean of Student's Office, who is responsible for the implementation of planned activities. The Dean is expected to form an Outreach Services Committee, which formulates the CUE policy under the guidance of Deputy Vice Chancellor Academic Affairs. The Committee is also responsible for developing quality assurance criteria for assessing CUE activities in the University. Community Outreach Services undertaken at the university has a number of objectives. The most important among such objectives is the development and strengthening of community outreach programmes. In relation to the same, the university promotes traditional conflict resolution, training of trainers in peace building and conflict transformation. Also, CUE activities form a part of the commitment of the academic staff's efforts in fulfilling the third mission of the university. For this, the staff engages in a number of community outreach projects, such as Community Outreach peace Project (COPP), Capacity Building for Local Government project, Epilepsy Project etc.

Although the *University of Wisconsin-Madison* in USA, has no formal office for community engagement, or other centralized support structure, it has developed multiple unique centres across campus with a focus on community based learning (CBL) or CBR that supports faculty and graduate students. The Wisconsin Collaborative Network facilitates relationships amongst educators, researchers, education leaders, and community members to collaboratively create new pathways for innovative teaching and learning practices. CCHE builds lasting partnerships and engaged university and community partners in collaborative teaching, research, and service initiatives to improve health equities in underserved communities of Wisconsin. Another US University, the *Loyola University*, has instituted a Centre for Urban Research and Learning (CURL) an innovative, non-traditional, collaborative university-community research centre housed within the university. In association with community leaders/organizations, CURL completes research, starting from its conceptualization, to research design, data collection/analysis, report writing and dissemination.

Importance of Networks and networking

In Canada, there are four national networks that support CBR efforts. They are, '*Research Impact,* founded by York University and the University of Victoria and based at York University with a focus on knowledge mobilization, *the Community Engaged Scholarship Partnership* based at Guelph University that works on university policies such as career advancement, credit for work in the community, etc, *the Canadian*

Alliance for Community Service Learning based at Carleton University linking community and university groups working with student's experiential learning in community, and *Community Based Research Canada(CBRC)* based at the University of Victoria and the Centre for CBR in Kitchener Waterloo linking universities and community groups to expand and strengthen investment, quality and impact in the field. CBRC, in particular, has been playing a coordinating, convening and enabling role in harnessing research resources and assets to facilitate and build collaborative relationships. It also organized biennial gatherings of national CBR community, what are called as the Community University Expositions or CU Expos. '*CU Expos are the places where good practices are shared, new funders met, project ideas tried out, good work celebrated and individual learning flourishes. It is a wonderfully creative space where the arts, Indigenous ceremonies, spoken word and more are found.* Its impact can be adjudged from the statement that *'without CU Expo there would be no CUE movement in Canada'*.

In Indonesia, many faculty members who often run a community engagement program, have lately realized that there is need to provide the program further momentum, through interaction and networking with others from different universities. In line with the same, in July 2011, five Regional FlipMas founded FlipMas Indonesia. The word FlipMas (Forum Layanan Ipteks bagi Masyarakat) is a forum for community engagement practitioners in Indonesia. Currently, there is 27 Regional Flipmas founded. UI is the secretariate for FlipMas Region Jakarta, Depok, Bogor, Tangerang & Bekasi. In November 2014, University of Indonesia also coorganized the 2nd Asia Engage Regional Conference. It served as an international forum for scientists, delegation from ASEAN universities, lecturers, and community engagement practitioners in a collaborative environment to present and discuss issues relating to community empowerment in ASEAN, Asia and beyond. Such platforms for knowledge sharing played a very important role in furthering the cause of community engagement and providing it with further momentum. As regards monitoring mechanisms, evaluation processes for such programs are an integral process of community engagement initiatives in Indonesia. Every year, the university conducts monitoring and evaluation programs during 'site-visits'. Herein, the university representatives would take feedback from the community, the feedback was discussed with the reviewers and the program evaluated accordingly. Such effective monitoring mechanisms played an important role in establishing the credibility of such CE activities amongst the community, leading it to greater success.

In India, although a monitoring mechanism which can fix accountability on Universities, for ensuring community engagement is missing, one of the latest initiatives at the policy level looks to somewhat streamline this process in the academic circles. The Ministry of Human Resources Development has come up with a scheme on *National University Rankings* for the HEIs in India, with an objective to incentivize the respective HEIs. This innovative scheme on rankings will include a University's social contribution and its social responsibility as a crucial parameter that will ultimately decide its respective rank, at the national level. The basic idea behind this innovative ranking system is an attempt to devise more relevant rankings, and moving away from the usual focus on international students/research collaborations, and publications.

Although the legal framework in Netherlands does not provide for monitoring

mechanisms, the universities are expected to come up with indicators to measure their *'valorization'*, a term used to *'denote creation of added value from research, be it economic or societal. They should justify about 2.5% of their budget based on these indicators.'* In 2016, this exercise should have been tested and implemented broadly. In the coalition agreement that the Dutch association of universities (VSNU) has signed with Deputy Minister of Research Zijlstra in December 2012, it was agreed that universities will develop indicators that can be used to measure effort/input and results/impact of valorization. The framework 'valorization indicators' describes the process by which the Dutch universities develop a set of indicators for valorization of research (both economic and societal value-creation). The idea is that the universities take responsibility to develop these indicators, in the coming years, in an open and experimental development form. This will help to make "impact" measurable and can give legitimization and even incentives to engagement. In the assessment of research, 'societal impact' (economic or non-monetary) is a criterion. Engagement can help create and demonstrate this impact, as a result of which, scores of individual programs are influenced.

In South Africa, new regulations for annual institutional reporting for the universities, published in June 2014, require the university councils to report on 'how a public higher education institution has both positively and negatively impacted on the economic life of the community in which it operated", whereby some of the substantive matters to be included in the report would the "*inclusivity of stakeholders; innovation, fairness, and collaboration; [and] social transformation*". In addition, included in the reporting of university management is a provision to report on "*relationships with the community, both academic and service*".

It is clear that national or provincial networks on research partnerships and promotion of CBPR methodology in research can stimulate greater mutuality between communities and HEIs in designing and conducting research. Such networks act as platforms for influencing the practices of individual HEIs, thereby generating a pressure for, and providing exemplars of, good practices in co-construction of knowledge in research partnerships.

Conclusions

A study of this nature, which purports to provide a look into the state of institutionalisation of community based research at a global level, is hard to summarize. Institutional change, particularly institutional change within higher education institutions is often described more common to the movement of glaciers than that of fast flowing rivers. And while, if you take part in meetings of the various national and global networks promoting aspects of community or public engagement, you may have the idea that change is happening everywhere, the reality on the ground, on the campuses, in the communities and in the classrooms is different. So based on the evidence generated through our survey and case studies, what can we say?

National Policies

The positioning of HE within national systems as well as the history of a given HEI makes a substantial difference to readiness to move into engagement strategies. The fact that the UK government as created a structure to encourage public engagement in HE, the NCCPE, clearly makes a difference. The recent decision by the University Grants Commission in India to allocate significant funds to the creation of a new generation of Centres for Community University Engagement is another example. Put simply When national policy creates formal expectations to promote CE, HEIs tend to show greater readiness; earmarked funding for CE further facilitates CE by HEIs.

Although it may seem obvious, evidence from our study shows that top leadership of Ministries and HEIs can have huge impacts on the promotion of CUE in general, and research partnerships in particular.

Higher Education Institutions

The culture of the academy and the dominant political economy of knowledge production within HEIs continues to denigrate community knowledge and practitioner expertise. The old question of 'whose knowledge counts?' remains answered by a vast majority of academics and many in authority as being those forms of knowledge assembled by disciplinary scholars in time tested methods. Methodological heterogeneity is certainly growing, but While inspirational stories and practices exist in all parts of the world and amongst all the countries that we have studied, the sheer weight of dominant approaches to knowledge generation and collaboration means that we are at the beginning of a lengthy period of questioning and reform. Widespread systematisation of practitioner knowledge and sensitisation of next generation of researchers can make a difference

We have found that even when engagement is highlighted as part of the mandate of the HEIs, it is only rarely that research is explicitly mandated as a part of CE; earmarked research funding for CURP is rarer, but can make a crucial difference in readiness amongst HEIs to build CURPs

Within the institutions, we have found that the middle level leadership—Deans, Chairs, Unit Heads and Centre Directors, play critical roles. They are the persons who mediate between the academic staff and students and the higher levels of administration. Their openess to change, their leadership and support, when available can make a remarkable difference. The professoriate, the lecturers , the research leaders and research staff are at the heart of the engaged scholarship process. And while the academic mode of production may still be more restrictive than we advocate, nearly every department, research centre, HEI that we know of has a few persons who are on the cutting edge of CURPs. Providing visibility for them is an excellent way to accelerate change.

While a preponderance of change drivers may come from governmental or funding circles or from within the organisational culture of HEIs themselves, we feel that community and civil society organisations have a right to call on the research related and other resources of the HEIs that are located within their

Monitoring of results and impacts of CE (and CURP) is typically from the lens of the community; impacts on the HEI (its faculty, students, administrators, pedagogy, curriculum, research methodology etc) are rarely analysed, documented and reported in public domains

Formal boundary-spanning structures in HEIs—dedicated to build linkages and partnerships—are essential; however, co-governance of such structures is not a common practice today

Long-term commitment to CE and CURP is required to institutionalise such practices as a part of the institutional cultures of HEIs; support for such 5-10 year partnerships is critical

Investing in CB of students and faculty at HEIs (and in community and civil society) to learn about partnerships and CBPR methodologies is critically missing, and needs to be made if CURPs have to make mutually beneficial impacts in society

Community and civil society

Even when reporting and monitoring mechanisms exist within HEIs and with funding agencies and government departments, accountability to communities and reporting to civil society is not a common practice at all.

Networks of civil society, and independent capacities in CBPR in civil society, can make enormous difference to the quality of partnerships and engagements in co-production of knowledge; however, such networks and institutions do not exist very widely today

In general, civil society has shied away from demanding greater responsiveness and accountability from HEIs and the system of higher education in various countries around the world; mobilisation of civil society's 'eyes, ears, and voice' on higher education system is urgently required for CE to work for larger public good

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