



Beyond Epistemicide: Knowledge Democracy and Higher Education¹

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Introduction

I would like to acknowledge that we are meeting on the traditional territory of the Treaty Four First Nations. Further I want you to know that I am a Settler Canadian of English heritage and that I live and work on the traditional territory of the Coast and Straits Salish First Nations, specifically on the unceded territory of the Lekwungen and Esquimalt Peoples. When I acknowledge the traditional territory where I stand now and where I live and work it is more than a case of protocol or respectful behavior. I am standing here today as a Professor from the University of Victoria as a direct result of my great grandparents obtaining 200 acres of Halalt First Nations traditional territory on Vancouver Island through illegal or immoral means in the last quarter of the 19th Century. Prior to the acquisition of this rich and productive land, my settler ancestors were landless and poor having travelled from England to Australia and then to Eastern Canada finally to Vancouver Island in search of a way to support themselves and their children. Those 200 acres of Halalt Traditional territory transformed my family into the middle class and all of my great grandparents children on down to myself have had the opportunity to study and achieve positions of importance in their lives. The taking of that land created poverty amongst the Halalt First Nations Peoples that persists until today.

I want to share some knowledge stories with you today. I want to speak of past and continuing cultural genocides, linguicides and epistemicides. And I want to speak about both the complicity of the modern university in maintaining unequal knowledge hierarchies. I also want to provide evidence of a possible turning in the world of higher education.

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Dispossession and knowledge

The geographer David Harvey has elaborated the concept accumulation through dispossession to explain how capital, the basis of our dominant economic system, began to be accumulated (Harvey 2006). Dispossession of people of access to their land he suggests lies at the heart of early capital accumulation. The story of my family's transformation through the dispossession of the lands of the Halalt First Nations on my Island is a perfect example. Harvey draws attention to the processes in 14th-17th Century England, which removed people from their land through what has become known as enclosures. He tells us of wealthy landowners who used force and even arms to transform the traditional open fields and communal pastures into private property for their own profit. A similar process similarly affected the clans of Scotland, which was so widespread that their dispossessions were known as the clearances. Each of these acts of dispossession left the majority of people without access to land and allowed for wealth to accumulate to those who were now known as private landowners. New categories of people were defined, the landed gentry, the workers in the estates and the land and the landless.

Lest you think that these acts went on unnoticed, let us recall the words of an English rhyme from the period.

The law condemns the woman or man

Who steals the goose from off the common

But leaves the greater felon loose

Who steals the common from the goose

A year or so ago, I had the opportunity to spend a few days in one of the Oxford Colleges, a college that was created at the same time as the enclosures. I entered the college through a low doorway only accessible to students and fellows and their guests. The college was walled in and only accessible through one or two guarded entryways. While staying in the college, the linkage between the enclosing of previously common land for private purposes and the creation of walled places for learning became disturbingly apparent. The act of creating Oxford and the other medieval universities was an act of enclosing knowledge, limiting access to knowledge, exerting a form of control over knowledge and providing a means for a small elite to acquire this knowledge for purposes of leadership of a spiritual nature, of a governance nature or a cultural nature. Those within the walls became knowers; those outside the wall became non-knowers. Knowledge was removed from the land and from the relationships of those sharing the land. The enclosing of the academy dispossessed the vast majority of knowledge keepers, forever relegating their knowledge to witchcraft, tradition, superstition, folkways, or at best some form of common sense.

These new academies came into being as well at the time of the rise of European science and through improvements in navigational aids and the wealth generated by the

enclosures and the exploitation of silver and gold from Latin America, the hegemony of mostly white euro-centric knowledge spread around the world. Just as colonial political practices carved up the globe in the 18th and 19th centuries, knowledge, the intellectual energy by which humans operate became colonized as well. The process of dispossession of other knowledge is a process that Boaventura de Sosa Santos, a Portuguese sociologist, has called epistemicide, or the killing of knowledge systems. I will come back to how epistemicide, linguicide and cultural genocide have been a product of western modern higher education, but first I want to continue my remarks with some stories about knowledge.

PRIA

In the late 1970s a young Indian academician by the name of Rajesh Tandon, educated in the elite universities of India and the USA found himself deep in rural Rajasthan working as a researcher with Tribal farmers on rural development issues. He found on every issue of rural development that he encountered, that the unschooled women and men in rural Rajasthan were more knowledgeable than he, not marginally, but deeply so. A few years later when he had the opportunity, he created the non-governmental research organization that today is known as PRIA, the Society for Participatory Research in Asia, with the aim of supporting the development of grass roots knowledge with the urban and rural poor for social change.

Honey Bee Network

In the late 1980s in the state of Gujarat in India, a knowledge network was created dedicated to countering what they noted as a pernicious culture of knowledge asymmetry. Knowledge asymmetry occurs when the people who provide knowledge do not benefit from the gathering and organizing of that knowledge.

“Knowledge”, they said, “has been extracted, documented without any acknowledgement to the source. The documented knowledge has not been communicated to the knowledge holder for feedback. These practices have not only impoverished the knowledge holders by pushing them further down in the oblivion, but also have hampered the growth of an informal knowledge system, that is robust in nurturing creativity”.

They called their project the Honey Bee knowledge network, based on the in the metaphor of the honey bee which does two things that scholars, often don't do. It collects pollen from the flowers without exploiting or hearing a complaint and it connects flower to flower through pollination so that in the end life itself continues.

Mpambo Afrikan Multiversity

In the late 1990s, a Ugandan intellectual and civil society activist, Paulo Wangoola returned home to his Kingdom of Busoga after 25 years of work in various parts of Africa and abroad to report on the state of the world as he had experienced it. His message to his Elders was this.

“You sent me out, one of the lesser young people of my generation, to gain Western knowledge and to work in the structures and organisations of the Western world. I have been to their universities, have worked with their governments, have created Western style organisations here in Africa and now I have come home to share what I have learned. I have come to tell you that we, the children of Busoga Kingdom, the children of Afrika will never realize our full potential as people in our communities and as contributors to the global treasury of knowledge if we continue to depend wholly on the content and ways of knowledge of the European peoples. Our way forward must be linked to the recovery, replenishment and revitalization of our thousands of years old Indigenous knowledge.”

With those words came a decision by Wangoola to withdraw from the western world economic structures, to return to a subsistence life style and to dedicate himself to the creation of a village-based institution of higher education and research that is today known as the Mpambo, Afrikan Multiversity, a place for the support of mother-tongue scholars of Afrikan Indigenous knowledge.

Mpumalanga Traditional Knowledge Commons

Early in the 21st century, eighty traditional healers living in Mpumalanga province in South Africa, women and men whose health and medical knowledge has been learned through traditional apprenticeships created a biocultural knowledge commons for the systematic sharing of their knowledge amongst each other for purposes of better serving the health needs of the people living in their province. In doing so they described knowledge as, “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” (Abrell 2009)

University of Abahlali baseMjondolo

In 2005 in Durban South Africa some of the inhabitants of the tin-roofed shacks of the city created a blockade on Kennedy Road to protest the sale of land originally promised to the poor for house building, to an industrialist for commercial purposes. This movement of those living in these shacks has grown into, Abahlali baseMjondolo, the shack dwellers movement. But what is unique to this social movement is that they have created their own University of Abahlali baseMjondolo, a space for the creation of knowledge about survival, hope and transformation where the shack dwellers themselves are the scholars, the Professors and the teachers. They create and share knowledge through song, ‘live action debates’ and discussions and document the knowledge in a web based archive.

Languages of the land

My final story begins with a young Indigenous woman from the Lil'wat First Nation in British Columbia. In the 1960s she was chosen by her community to work as a research guide for a non-Indigenous linguist who had expressed an interest in working on the development of an alphabet for the St'át'imcets language. She was successful in this challenge and her people have made use of this alphabet since that time.

In 2015 this woman is a leading authority on Indigenous Languages in Canada. Her name is Dr. Lorna Williams. She has become the leading scholar of Indigenous language revitalization, but the fate of the language of her community and the fate of most of the Indigenous languages of Canada have not fared well. The impact of colonial domination of western language traditions has resulted in linguicide, the death or near-death of these carriers of our global cultural heritage.

Knowledge is the star

In each of the stories that I have just shared with you knowledge is central. Knowledge is the star of each drama. Knowledge is dynamic, active, engaged and linked to social, political, cultural or sustainable changes. PRIA's co-constructed knowledge is linked to a variety of social movements in India. Mpambo's mother tongue scholars are stimulating an unprecedented reawakening of Afrikan spiritual knowledge and sharing in Uganda. The shack dwellers of Durban and beyond have boldly taken the word university as their own and turned the knowledge hierarchies upside down in the service of justice for the poor. The Indigenous language champions working with the First People's Cultural Council have staked a claim to epistemological privilege over the western trained non-Indigenous linguists. The healers from South Africa have staked their claims to knowledge superiority not to settle any epistemological scores with western science, but in their commitment to better serve the health needs of their people. These knowledge innovators have all facilitated various means of creating, sharing and accessing knowledge that is not part of what is often called the western canon. For a variety of justice, cultural, spiritual, environmental, health reasons, the application of knowledge from the western canon in each one of these stories was seen as insufficient. The contexts, conditions, values, uses, politics of knowledge in each of these stories called for an opening outwards of our comfortable assumptions about whose knowledge counts and what the relationship between knowledge and life might be.

The four epistemicides of the long 16th Century

I am grateful to the work of Grosfoguel and Dussel who in addition to de Sousa Santos have helped me to understand how the ideas of white men from just a few countries of Italy, France, England, Germany and the USA came to dominate the world of knowledge (Grosfoguel 2013, Dussel 1993). How and when were the colonial structures of knowledge created? How we have arrived at this point in time when any of us could be parachuted into any university in the world settled into a social science lecture and be at home with the authors and ideas being discussed?

To understand that we have to look at what Grosfoguel has called the, “Four Genocides/Epistemicides of the Long 16th Century” (Grosfoguel 2013). It seems that the story of dispossessing the people from the ownership of their ideas in the medieval universities that brought ecclesiastical power to the new universities was just the start of our knowledge story. Grosfoguel pulls four distinct stories of epistemicide, stories almost always treated as separate historical processes, together. In doing so we learn in a powerful manner how intellectual colonization has emerged. The four epistemicides are the conquest of Al-Andalus, the expulsion of Muslims and Jews from Europe, the conquest of the Indigenous Peoples of the Americas started by the Spanish, continued by the French and the English and still underway today in the contemporary Western Hemisphere. The creation of the slave trade that resulted in millions killed in Africa and at sea and more totally de-humanized by enslavement in the Americas was a third genocidal knowledge conquest. Finally the killing of millions of Indo-European women mostly through burning at the stake as witches because of knowledge practices that were not controlled by men. These conquests transformed Europe from itself being at the periphery of an earlier dominant Islamic centre of intellectual power to taking centre stage. But in an historic irony Spain and Portugal, the leading military and intellectual powers of the 15th Century have been shut out of the post 16th Century Northern European monopoly of knowledge.

What is important for us to understand is that these four conquests were both military and epistemological/ideological. At the height of the Al-Adalus Empire in Europe, the city of Cordoba had a 500,000-book library. This was at a time when other intellectual centres in Europe would have had libraries of 5-10,000 books. The Spanish burned the library in Cordoba and elsewhere. They destroyed most of the codices in the Mayan, Inca and Aztec empires as well. Women’s knowledge, which was largely oral was simply silenced as was the knowledge of Africa. African slaves were portrayed as non-humans incapable of Western style thought. Hegel for example in commenting on Africans says, “Among negroes it is the case that consciousness has not attained even the intuition of any sort of objectivity...the negro is the man as beast (Lectures 218)” (as quoted in Dussell 1993:70). The continued linguicide of Indigenous languages in North America and throughout the world today is evidence that the patterns established through conquest in the 16th Centuries is still deeply entrenched in our own minds and most certainly in our higher education institutions.

There are so very many examples of how the western monopoly of knowledge has distorted our higher education institutions, that I could take a look at each and every university in Canada starting with my own University of Victoria and carry on for days. But simply for illustrative purposes let me share some thoughts from several African scholars about how they see the situation. Lebakeng, Phalane, Dalindjebo (South Africa), Odara-Hoppers (South Africa-Uganda), Wangoola (Uganda) and Ezeanya (Rwanda) have written/worked extensively on the importance of the recovery of the intellectual traditions of the continent. “Institutions of higher education in South Africa were (and still are) copycats whose primary function was (and still is) to serve and promote colonial Western values” (Lebakeng 2006). Similarly Ezeanya adds, “In Africa, the research agenda, curriculum and ‘given’ conceptual frameworks should be

continuously re-examined ...with the aim of eschewing all manifestations of new-colonial underpinnings and emphasizing indigenous ideas) (Ezeyanya 2011)

Ecologies of knowledge and cognitive justice

Boaventura de Sousa Santos' has a narrative that begins with his observation that in the realm of knowledge we have created an intellectual abyss, which hinders human progress. Abyssal thinking, he notes,

"Consists in granting to modern science the monopoly of the universal distinction between true and false to the detriment of ... alternative bodies of knowledge" (2007:47).

The global dividing line that he is referring to is the one that separates the visible constituents of knowledge and power from those who are invisible. Popular, lay, plebeian, peasant, indigenous, the knowledge of the disabled themselves and more cannot be fitted in any of the ways of knowing on 'this side of the line'. They exist on the other side of the 'abyss', the other side of the line. And because of this invisibility they are beyond truth or falsehood. The 'other side of the line' is the realm of beliefs, opinions, intuitive or subjective understandings, which at best may become, "objects or raw material for scientific inquiry" (52). De Sousa Santos makes the link between values and aspiration tightly in saying, "Global social injustice is therefore intimately linked to global cognitive injustice. The struggle for global social justice will, therefore, be a struggle for cognitive justice as well."

Shiv Visvanathan contributes to this discourse expanding the concept of "cognitive justice".

He notes that,

The idea of cognitive justice sensitizes us not only to forms of knowledge but also to the diverse communities of problem solving. What one offers then is a democratic imagination with a non-market, non-competitive view of the world, where conversation, reciprocity, translation create knowledge not as an expert, almost zero-sum view of the world but as a collaboration of memories, legacies, heritages, a manifold heuristics of problem solving, where a citizen takes both power and knowledge into his or her own hands.

These forms of knowledge, especially the ideas of complexity, represent new forms of power sharing and problem-solving that go beyond the limits of voice and resistance. They are empowering because they transcend the standard cartographies of power and innovation, which are hegemonic. By incorporating the dynamics of knowledge into democracy, we reframe the axiomatics of knowledge based on hospitality, community, non-violence, humility and a multiple idea of time, where the citizen as trustee and inventor visualizes and creates a new self reflexive idea of democracy around actual communities of practice. (Visvanathan 2009)

The problem that arises from the domination of the Western knowledge system is not only that the ways of knowing, the cultures and the stories of the majority of people of the world are excluded, but that given the Western knowledge narrative that links some

forms of knowledge with progress, science and the future, it looks as though colonialism has disabled the global North from learning in non-colonial terms. Is the global North stuck in a rut in histories' path that does not allow for the existence of histories other than the universal history of the West?

Knowledge Democracy

A discourse of knowledge democracy has been emerging in recent years to help us to understand the relationship of knowledge for a more equitable world for at least two reasons. First we have found the use of the concepts of the knowledge economy and knowledge society to be wanting from the perspective of justice. Second we have seen a more general loss of confidence in the capacity of western white male euro-centric science to respond to the profound challenges of our times. As Tony Judt writes in the first sentence of his book, *Ill Fares the Land*, "Something is profoundly wrong with the way we live today"(2012:1)

Knowledge democracy refers to an interrelationship of phenomena. First, it acknowledges the importance of the existence of multiple epistemologies or ways of knowing such as organic, spiritual and land-based systems, frameworks arising from our social movements, and the knowledge of the marginalized or excluded everywhere, or what is sometimes referred to as subaltern knowledge. Secondly it affirms that knowledge is both created and represented in multiple forms including text, image, numbers, story, music, drama, poetry, ceremony, meditation and more. Third, and fundamental to our thinking about knowledge democracy is understanding that knowledge is a powerful tool for taking action in social movements and elsewhere to deepen democracy and to struggle for a fairer and healthier world. And finally knowledge democracy is about open access for the sharing of knowledge so that everyone who needs knowledge will have access to it. Knowledge democracy is about intentionally linking values of justice, fairness and action to the process of using knowledge.

Knowledge democracy in action: stories of the turning in Higher Education?

There are those who say that we are in the midst of a great turning. David Korten speaks of such in his book *The Great Turning: From Empire to Earth Community*(2006). The evidence can be seen in the emergence of the Occupy Movement, the Canadian Idle No More Movement, the growth of the anti-austerity movements in Europe, as well as the extensive research on inequality from Thomas Piketty (2014), Oxfam (Hardoon 2015), Wilkinson and Pickett (2009) and the International Monetary Fund (Dabla-Norris et al 2015). And surprisingly we have a Pope who has described global capitalism as the 'dung of the devil' and calls for a turn towards a communitarian economy. When do we look to the world of higher education for evidence of such a turning?

Marta Gregorcic has drawn my attention to the concept of *potencias*, the knowledge creating power of revolutionary movements of historically subjugated peoples. Potencias can be seen at the heart of self-determining communities engaged in creating new social economies and other means of community development outside the dominant political structures of their locations and times. She gives examples from the Zapatistas in Mexico, the *Caracazo* in Venezuela, the Chhattisgarh Liberation Front of 1970 in India

and the *empobrecitos* of Bolivia. The solidarity economies at the centre of these struggles offer concrete ideas about alternatives to global capitalism. She adds that , “scientists or experts for the sake of objectivity and neutrality of our work, we should not and cannot – or will not-exempt ourselves any more” (Gregoric 2011:164)

It is time for those of us working in higher education time to move beyond our already strong ability to critique. Our intellectual task requires reflection and critique. We are so very skilled in those first two stages of intellectual work. But we must now make the move from reflection and criticism to creation. We can create in our own lives in terms of what we choose to read and share with others. We can create in the organization of new types of courses. We can create new research and learning partnerships with community activists and social movements. We may have a chance to create new academic programmes. Some of us may create new higher education structures. As we move towards creation we will find much to draw inspiration from.

Emergence of new higher education narratives

The Barcelona based network, Global University Network for Innovation (GUNi) is related to UNESCO and the UN University. It has produced a series of world reports on higher education. In 2014, it brought out its latest report called Knowledge, Engagement and Higher Education Contributing to Social Change: World Report on Higher Education 5 (GUNi 2014). What was unique about this report was that it framed the challenges to higher education within the context of deep global issues such as the destruction of the planet, inequality, violence against women and so forth. It called for a new approach to the creation and understanding of knowledge, a turn towards knowledge democracy. This report was launched in 34 locations in the world, contained examples of promising practices from 70 nations written by 60 authors. It is the first attempt to create a new global narrative for a higher education based on communitarian values rather than market priorities.

The Multiworld Network, based in India under the leadership of Claude Alveres of India and with support from Prof Dzulkipli Abdulrazak of Malaysia is a growing association of people from Asia, Africa and South America, all joined together in a common objective to restore the diversity of learning that existed from times immemorial. Multiworld welcomes people infected with a similar spirit and conviction to join this enterprise and to fight to restore a world in which many worlds are once again warmly embraced. The issue of “decolonising” academic curricula and ridding them of Eurocentric biases has occupied centre-stage in six international conferences organised by the Multiworld network in which scholars from diverse countries located in Asia, Africa and South America have been involved (<http://multiworldindia.org>). The work of this network has received support from the Ministry of Education in Malaysia. Decolonising the University: The Emerging Quest for Non-European Paradigms is one of the texts emerging from this active and inspiring network (Alvares and Farugi 2012)

Decolonisation in established Universities

I expect that there are elements of a knowledge democracy discourse, a decolonizing practice emerging at least in small ways in most of our universities. The fact that the

higher education group in the Faculty of Education at the University of Regina has organized an international conference to look at transformative approaches to higher education is a case in point.

At the University of Victoria, we have seen a steady growth in efforts to either indigenize the University or decolonize our university. We have built a First People's House in the centre of our Victoria campus. Indigenous Community leaders and Indigenous Faculty and staff at the University jointly manage this house. We have created a position as Director of Indigenous Academics and Community Engagement. But perhaps the most powerful contributions have been in the creation of Indigenous academic programmes in Law, Social Work, Education, Nursing, Governance, Humanities, Indigenous Counseling and Linguistics. The most recent programmes that have been created are BA and MA degrees in Indigenous Language Revitalization. What has gone along with the development of Indigenous academic programming has been a deepening of relations between the University of Victoria and the surrounding Indigenous communities in our part of Vancouver Island.

Universidad Nacional de General Sarmiento (UNGS)

The UNGS is a small-size public university created in 1992 to meet local and regional education needs that were not covered by traditional academic offerings. Its main campus is in Malvinas Argentina, a locality in the Province of Buenos Aires marked by high levels of poverty and other related conditions. Since its inception, the UNGS has facilitated the convergence of research, teaching and community services to contribute to the socio-economic development of the local communities. The relationship with the local context is a key component of the UNGS identity, and has determined its origin, strategic project, institutional design and on-going development (see www.ungs.edu.ar/ms_ungs/).

In order to promote research partnerships and engagements, the UNGS has established the Community Services Centre to manage, promote and disseminate local and regional development projects that connect students, faculty members and a variety of stakeholders (governments, private firms and CSO) in an institutionalized manner (see www.ungs.edu.ar/ms_centro_servicios). This unit integrates the S-L and outreach initiatives presented by UNGS professors that have an impact on key academic functions. Thus, the three principles that structure the institutional identity of the UNGS (i.e., research, teaching and community services) are embodied in the development of training courses and diplomas for non-academic stakeholders, external consulting services, basic and applied research, and local development projects that contribute to the strengthening of science and technology. These community services are offered to achieve two critical goals: (i) to provide solutions to problems identified by civil society actors; (ii) to improve the entire process of knowledge production and the existing training and teaching practices within the UNGS.

Creation of alternative universities/social movement partnerships

Te Whare Wananga O Awanuiarangi – Aotearoa, is a Maori University headed by Sir Hingangaroa Smith, a distinguished Maori scholar. The mission statement of this visionary institution is as follows:

We commit ourselves to explore and define the depths of knowledge in Aotearoa, to enable us to re-enrich ourselves, to know whom we are, to know where we came from and to claim our place in the future. We take this journey of discovery, of reclamation of sovereignty, establishing the equality of Māori intellectual tradition alongside the knowledge base of others. Thus, we can stand proudly together with all people of the world. This is in part the dream and vision of Te Whare Wānanga o Awanuiārangi. (<http://www.wananga.ac.nz/about/vision>)

Dayalbagh Educational Institute, Agra India

Associated with the Radhasoami Sect of Hinduism, Dayalbagh Educational Institute (DEI) is located in Agra, India within the heart of a colony of 3000 followers of the Radhasoami faith. The colony provides a space for living together irrespective of caste, creed, colour and the following of a devotional life integrating meditative practices, collective labour in the farm and dairy, use of solar power electricity and cooking, a collective kitchen, rain water harvesting, free medical services in both allopathic and Indian systems of medicine. The DEI is a value based and holistic education institution that combines work related vocational and crafts teaching with leading edge scientific programmes. It is an institution where the holistic values based teachings of Radhasoami Hinduism live in respectful harmony with western scientific knowledge. In Dayalbagh we see an attempt to establish a new order where women and men live and work in harmony for the service of humanity.(factbook of Dayalbagh. Agra Dayalbagh n.d.)

The Committee of Entities in the Struggle Against Hunger and for a Full Life (COEP)

COEP is a national social mobilization network established in Rio de Janeiro in 1993 to mobilize institutional and public action in support of the popular movement against hunger and poverty. The network's membership now includes more than 1000 member organizations including public enterprises, non-government organizations, private-sector firms, and government departments. COEP was created by a small group of activists led by sociologist Herbert de Souza, known as 'Betinho'. Together with Luis Pinguelli Rosa of the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro, and André Spitz of Furnas, the electricity utility, Betinho invited the presidents of the major public entities to discuss their integration into the 'Struggle against Hunger and Misery'. Soon over 30 enterprises, representing sectors such as banking, energy, telecommunications, health, agriculture and education, declared their membership.

Each year COEP focuses on a specific theme for social development at a national level, aiming for collective impact at the community level throughout Brazil. Currently, major themes throughout the networks are climate change and poverty. An agenda concerned with both preventing and addressing the effects of climate change has been constructed, with the intention of informing dialogue and public policy as well as implementing specific initiatives (Guthberlet & Tremblay, 2014).

The community university engagement (CUE) movement

The UNESCO Chair in Community-Based Research and Social Responsibility in Higher Education, co-directed by Drs. Rajesh Tandon and Budd Hall has recently published an open access book on measures taken around the world to strengthen community-university research partnerships (Hall, Tandon, Tremblay 2015). This book, the result of a global study with survey data, case studies and analysis is the product of many contributors from around the world.

Community university engagement refers to a combination of practices that are having an impact on many of our higher education institutions, our own scholars and on our students. CUE refers to new approaches to the co-construction of knowledge that links community activists to university researchers, and to the engagement of students in community action projects or movements. New structures such as the Institute for Study and Innovation in Community University at the University of Victoria, and similar community university research partnership arrangements in other parts of Canada, Europe, Asia and Latin America have much transformative potential. Our students are demanding a new way, a transformative and real world learning opportunities through CUE, that values community and alternative knowledge CUE, grounded in principles of CBR, provides an important space to create how we want to be together – the very practice of listening and understanding our differences is decolonizing the institutions that have long been closed. As my colleague, Dr. Crystal Tremblay notes, “Transformation happens, I believe, when you realize your potential and act on it in authentic way. Methods such as CBR, PAR and other CUE approaches often inspire these types of inner discovery, and mutual learning – changing the way we see oneself and each other, and in the end value other knowledge”.(email 7/13/15)

Some questions for myself

1. How do I ‘decolonize’, ‘deracialise,’ demasculanise and degender my inherited ‘intellectual spaces?’i
2. How do I support the opening up of spaces for the flowering of epistemologies, ontologies, theories, methodologies, objects and questions other than those that have long been hegemonic, and that have exercised dominance over (perhaps have even suffocated) intellectual and scholarly thought and writing?
3. How do I contribute to the building of new academic cultures and, more widely, new inclusive institutional cultures that genuinely respect and appreciate difference and diversity – whether class, gender, national, linguistic, religious, sexual orientation, epistemological or methodological in nature?
4. How do I become a part of creating the new architecture of knowledge that allows co-construction of knowledge between intellectuals in academia and intellectuals located in community settings?

Poets and idealists

In closing I draw from the Indian Nobel prize-winning poet and founder of his own decolonizing university, Rabindranath Tagore. As you read this take into account that it was written in 1916.

“I know what a risk one runs...in being styled an idealist in these days when the sound that drowns all voices is the noise of the marketplace, and yet...I feel that the sky and the earth and the lyrics of the dawn and the day fall are with the poets and the idealists and not with the marketmen...”

Thank you so very much for your kindness and attention.

Haichq’a

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