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Knowledge Democracy and Epistemic In/Justice: Reflections on A Conversation

Budd Hall, Baptiste Godrie and Isabel Heck Knowledge Democracy and Epistemic In/Justice: Reflections on A Conversation

Abstract

The focus of the article is on how knowledge is created, who creates knowledge, how is knowledge co-constructed, whose knowledge is excluded and how is knowledge being used to challenge inequalities and strengthen social movement capacity? This article grew from a fascinating conversation that the three of us had in Montreal in September of 2019. We decided to share our stories about knowledge and justice with a wider audience in part as a way for us to reflect further on the meaning of our initial conversation, but also to invite others into the discussion. The three of us are Baptiste Godrie works in a research centre (CREMIS) affiliated with Quebec's health care and social services system, Isabel Heck with the anti-poverty organization Parole d'excluEs, both affiliated to universities, and Budd Hall from the university of Victoria and the Co-Chair of the UNESCO Chair in Community-Based research and social responsibility in higher education.

Introduction

Discourses of knowledge democracy (Hall and Tandon, 2017), knowledge equity (Chan 2009, 2018), epistemic inequalities (Godrie and Dos Santos, 2017; Godrie, 2019a), cognitive justice (Piron, 2017), decolonization of knowledge (Santos, 2014) and cognitive imperialism related to Indigenous knowledge in North America (Battiste, 2011) are at the centre of contemporary re-examinations about knowledge. How is knowledge created?, who creates knowledge?, how is knowledge co-constructed?, whose knowledge is excluded and how is knowledge being used to challenge inequalities and strengthen social movement capacity?

This article is based on a conversation amongst three persons, two from Montreal, Isabel Heck from Parole d'excluEs, Baptiste Godrie with CREMIS. Both of these organisations are community-university research partnerships. Budd Hall is the Co-Chair of the UNESCO Chair in Community-Based Research, a partnership between the University of Victoria and Participatory Research in Asia based in New Delhi, India. All of us work within a knowledge democracy or an epistemic justice framework. We are sharing our diverse and similar understandings of knowledge democracy and epistemic justice and discuss the implications for practices of participatory research. Our conversation was fascinating as we listened to each other's stories and ideas. We regret that we have not been able to capture that enjoyment in this article as much as we would have liked. We hope that others will feel free to join and broaden this initial conversation.

Who we are and how/when did our interest in questions of epistemic justice begin?

Baptiste Godrie: I am a European immigrant who has been living in Quebec for 16 years. As a sociologist, I'm studying social inequalities, and epistemic inequalities in particular, that I do not

experience daily because of my social status of white man, belonging to an economically privileged minority and holding a PhD that gives me an instant credibility in my social interactions. . This calls for me to stay vigilant in two respects. First of all, regarding the institutionalization, even the appropriation, by some academics of concepts that have been forged in militant contexts by intellectuals from the South and the North, particularly women, indigenous people and members of racialized groups. This appropriation erases their local context of production as much as it serves the careers of those who appropriate them, which is a tangible example of epistemic injustice. Secondly, regarding the privileges associated to my point of view and knowledge as an academic, working with people who are experiencing epistemic inequalities. The ambiguities, discomforts and sometimes creative tensions caused by this position as an ally are a driving force and an important source of reflexivity in my work.

As an activist, involved during my studies in sociology and philosophy in the student movement and later on in the global justice movement, I felt the need to deepen my understanding of social inequalities. This is why I trained in the field of social and epistemic inequalities, and participatory methodologies and epistemologies so that my work might contribute to reducing unequal social relationships.

In 2006, I began my intellectual training at the CREMIS which occupies an off-centered position with respect to the university: it is both an academic research center on social inequalities and a center designated by Quebec's health and social services system to help rethinking the health care and social services and reducing the social inequalities experienced by social groups receiving these institutional services. The core values of the CREMIS are the complementarity and non-hierarchical relationships of the knowledge held by people receiving services, professionals working in public institutions and academic researchers. These values raise a whole set of epistemological, methodological and ethical challenges since we particularly work with marginalized groups of the population located in downtown Montreal (Godrie *et al.* 2018).

In my first participatory action research project (2007-2008), conducted with two colleagues and a team of social workers and nurses in the field of homelessness, I discovered the Latin American criticisms of positivism in the social sciences. By positivism, I mean an academic posture of exteriority in relation to the research object and a set of research practices carried out to extract and decontextualize the knowledge and worldviews produced locally by a variety of actors (Escobar, 2018; Godrie, 2017). From the very beginning, research appeared to me as a relational work with different people occupying a whole range of knowledge and worldviews that are essential to create a better understanding of a situation (Reiter, 2018). This relational work therefore implicates a social relationship of power during the research process itself and raises questions at the center of my research practice: How can we not speak instead of or on behalf of someone, but with him or her? How can we investigate together a reality, taking this plurality of worldviews and knowledge into account, without folding this diversity toward one unique knowledge or worldview?

Over the years, I have been inspired by various research traditions, among which: 1) The work of Orlando Fals Borda and his colleagues from La Rosca on participatory and emancipatory research in Colombia; 2) The *Institute for Development Studies*, including the contribution of Robert Chambers and the participatory rural appraisal approach; 3) The epistemologies of the South

(Walter Mignolo, Boaventura de Sousa Santos) and feminist epistemologies (Sandra Harding, Donna Haraway, Nancy Hartsock or Dorothy Smith among others), especially the standpoint theory and the concept of epistemic privilege. Their work criticizes the dominant knowledge practices that renders invisible people in subordinate positions, or that reinforces gender and other social hierarchies. Dominant knowledge practices also denigrates subaltern epistemic authority, alternative cognitive styles and other marginalized worldviews and ways of knowledge.

Isabel Heck: As a woman with a mixed European and Middle-Eastern background, I took the diversity of values and ways of thinking and living as granted as long as I can remember and was used to adapt to norms and hierarchies of different sociocultural contexts, with more or less questioning. Trained in the North American tradition of cultural anthropology in the early 2000s, I have been exposed to the importance of emic, local and indigenous knowledge (Geertz, 1983), and the need for reflexivity of the researchers to situate oneself socially and epistemologically (Ghasarian, 2002). Collaborative research and polyphonic texts (Clifford and Marcus, 1986), where voices beyond the ones of academics are heard, the lack of recognition and the confinement of “native anthropology” (Kim 1990, Kuwayama, 2003) were issues linked to epistemic justice and knowledge democracy that intrigued me during my graduate studies. This stirred my interest for alternative ways of knowledge production where excluded voices are heard and valued.

It is through my involvement as a researcher within an anti-poverty organization in Montreal over the last six years that I came more closely to understand the power dynamics in knowledge production and more generally decision-making, and became engaged to work towards knowledge democracy and epistemic justice. Indeed, Parole d'excluEs is based on the assumption that those experiencing social exclusion and poverty have to be involved in the development of programs and solutions for a more inclusive society. Their analysis, experience and aspirations are not only valuable but necessary to effectively fight poverty and exclusion. The organization, largely inspired by social movements and research traditions from the Global South (in particular the work of Paolo Freire, the Landless Peasant Movement and the Technological Incubator for Popular Cooperatives in Brazil), has developed an action model where citizens, practitioners, managers and researchers come together to codesign innovative projects based on the needs and aspirations of those living in poverty and exclusion. So far, a number of projects such as an alternative food system, a community-based daycare, transformed urban spaces, artistic productions to reduce discrimination and prejudice and a community health space have been developed through this model.

In these projects, citizens in low-income neighborhoods are recognized as agents who reshape their living environment according to what is important to them, as partners who collaborate with local authorities, as bearers of knowledge considered in decision-making. This model also transforms the role of researchers, as they help to produce knowledge according to what is needed to trigger social and territorial change. Research priorities are identified collectively with actors in the field. Knowledge is produced and mobilized to inspire and orient action, to co-develop projects, models and practice, to systematize and transfer them as well as to enhance reflexivity (Heck, 2017). Researchers integrate projects horizontally, not as leaders, but as partners, along with the other stakeholders. We thus work both on concrete projects as well as on methods to democratize knowledge production.

Throughout these years I have been working closely with the Parole d'excluEs and the CRISES (Center for research on social innovation), both of which have strong traditions of co-construction of knowledge with people outside the academia and participatory research. Among others, Jean-Marc Fontan, with whom I am directing a university incubator affiliated to the CRISES, Marlei Pozzebon and Sonia Tello Rozas with whom we have engaged a north-south dialogue, and more recently Baptiste Godrie through the seminars on epistemic justice at UQAM and our shared interest for social research outside universities. As a researcher anchored in a community organization, an ongoing dialogue with academics, practitioners and citizens in other settings, locally and internationally, through field trips, workshops and conferences, seems essential to me in order to go beyond the very local context of my work at Parole d'excluEs not only to nourish our practice, but also to contribute to a larger transformation. Over the past years, such conversations have influenced my discourse and practice more than the reading of academic articles to which my access is, for practical reasons, more limited than for researchers based in institutions.

Budd Hall I am excited to be part of this conversation. I have written about my early work in Tanzania in several places (Hall, 1975). But to engage with both of you in this conversation let me share my reflections now looking back some 50 years. Although quite a bit older than you two, I note that we share some common inspirations. I think Isabel said on the telephone that we have all come to our ideas about knowledge and action from the 'outside' of traditional academic discourses. I am a settler Canadian of English heritage. I am an older white straight male whose great grandparents became middle class Canadians in the 19th Century through the illegal acquisition of Halalt First Nations territory on Vancouver Island on the west coast of Canada. I have benefited directly from the taking of this land and am privileged to live and work not far from Halalt First Nations territory on the traditional territory of the Lekwungen speaking people which includes the Esquimalt, Songhees and W̱SÁNEĆ First Nations whose relationship to the land continues today.

My curiosity about the relationship between knowledge and justice began many years before I came across the discourses of knowledge democracy or epistemic in/justice. It began as a young researcher working for the Institute of Adult Education in Tanzania between 1970-1975. While studying in the USA for my PhD at UCLA in the field of International Education and African Studies, I met the Director of the Tanzanian Institute of Adult Education who was on a study tour of the USA. He invited me to apply for a position as a research fellow in the Institute of Adult Education. My training in research was in the variety of approaches to survey research methodology. It was a competent preparation as a positivist researcher with an emphasis on research design, statistical competence and grounding in the knowledge created by other researchers.

I was the first full-time researcher hired by the Institute of Adult Education. 1970 was officially designated as Adult Education Year by the Government of Tanzania. The late Mwalimu Julius K. Nyerere, an adult educator and President of Tanzania had developed a political ideology based on African community centred values. Labelled as African Socialism by scholars of the day, *Ujamaa na Kujitegemea* working together in self-reliance put all the women and men of the country at the centre of plans for moving forward. The assumption was that people making their livings as farmers in rural Tanzania had a deep reservoir of experiential knowledge that should be the

foundation of future developments. Participation by people in their own learning, health care, agriculture, business development was being promoted in all sectors of the state.

But what about research? The positivist research approaches that I had been taught placed an emphasis on expert knowledge, on rigour of methodological design within a knowledge framework of what other scholars and experts had said about a specific situation previously. Research questions came from the literature and the mind of the researcher. People were sources of data, responses to questions generated by the research expert. And for me, an expatriate researcher with little experience of any kind, the contradictions between the research discourses that I had been trained in and the Nyerere assumptions about people having rich bodies of knowledge derived from their daily lives began to grow. There was a small group of Tanzanian and expatriate researchers who shared their work and their common concerns about what we began to think of as colonial research approaches including Marja-Liisa Swantz from Finland, Marjorie Mbillinyi, a feminist educator, and Yusuf Kassam, an adult educator. In 1971, Paulo Freire, the Brazilian author of *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* paid his first visit to Tanzania. I was assigned to look after his visit and accompany him on his visits, including a meeting with President Nyerere. Paulo gave a talk to our Institute of Adult Education on the research methods that he had used in the cultural circles in his home in Northeastern Brazil. His ideas closely related to those of Mwalimu Nyerere. His detailed scholarly elaboration of his ideas of conscientization and the inherent capabilities of ordinary people to shape their own futures added external validation our own thinking about participatory research. Over several years, the discourse which was first formally articulated as participatory research emerged (Hall 1975). The principles of participatory research at the time were elaborated as:

1. PR involves a whole range of powerless groups of people-exploited, the poor, the oppressed, and the marginal;
2. It involves the full and active participation of the community in the entire research process;
3. The subject of the research originates in the community itself and the problem is defined, analysed and solved by the community;
4. The ultimate goal is the radical transformation of social reality and the improvement of the lives of the people themselves. The beneficiaries of the research are the members of the community;
5. The process of participatory research can create a greater awareness in the people of their own resources and mobilize them for self-reliant development;
6. It is a more scientific method or research in that the participation of the community in the research process facilitates a more accurate and authentic analysis of social reality;

After leaving Tanzania and having spent a year at the Institute of Development Studies in Sussex, I took up a job as a Research Officer with the International Council for Adult Education located at the time in Toronto. With the support of the ICAE and growing interest around the world from grass roots organizations and social movements we launched the International Participatory Research Network (IPRN) in 1978. Rajesh Tandon from India became the Coordinator of the

network which had active support from Orlando Fals Borda of Colombia, Francisco Vio Grossi of Chile, John Gaventa of the USA and a strong Participatory Research Group in Toronto led successively by Edward Jackson, Deborah Barndt, Lynda Yanz and Alfred Jean Baptiste. What is important to note is that interest in the approaches to knowledge creation articulated by the IPRN came almost exclusively from community-based organizations, social movements and international development groups.

In 1991, I left the International Council for Adult Education and joined the Adult Education Department in the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education. It was there that I edited the first North American collection of perspectives on participatory research (Hall *et al.*, 1993). But aside from being able to teach a course in participatory research, my several efforts to create a community-university research centre failed. During the years between 1993 and 2005, I became discouraged about the capacity of universities to have the humility, interest or ability to think about knowledge creation in the ways that we now call knowledge democracy or epistemic justice. In 2001, I took up the position as Dean of the Faculty of Education at the University of Victoria. I did not imagine that I would find the support that I had been missing over many years for concepts and practices that I now refer to as knowledge democracy. In 2006, the University of Victoria created an Office of Community-Based Research which I was invited to initiate. As a way to build international support for our work at UVic, we created an international advisory board headed up by my long-time colleague Rajesh Tandon of PRIA in India. From the University of Victoria platform, Community-Based Research Canada and the UNESCO Chair in Community-Based Research and Social Responsibility in Higher Education have emerged.

I returned in my thinking about knowledge and justice, to epistemology and hope, ideas which were sparked during my years in Tanzania, but which I had left aside in some ways. My intellectual engagement has been sparked in these past 15 years by the simultaneous movement of community-university engagement that we have witnessed in Canada and other parts of the world and by the scholars working on issues of knowledge and justice. I have been influenced by Canadian Indigenous scholars including Drs. Lorna Wanosts'a7 Williams, Marie Battiste, Jeff Corntassel and STOLCÉE John Elliot of Tsartlip First Nation. My 40 years relationship with Wangoola Wangoola Ndawula of Uganda has influenced my thinking through his work on African Indigenous knowledge as has the work of Catherine Odara-Hoppers and C. Ezeyanya. Some of the Western scholars who have influenced me include Darlene Clover, Enrique Dussel, Cristina Esgrigas, Ramon Grosfoguel, David Harvey, Florence Piron, Boaventura de Sousa Santos and Rajesh Tandon. The concept of epistemicide as articulated by de Sousa Santos is currently an important concept at the centre of my current thinking (2012). Epistemicide refers to the historical erasure of non-European knowledge systems that occurred in conjunction with the colonial expansion of Europe beginning in the 16th century. In Canada, epistemicide has occurred most powerfully in the context of the cultural genocide resulting from our colonial foundations which attempted to erase Indigenous languages, knowledges and cultures. But epistemicide is also at work, in more nuanced ways in the denial of legitimate knowledge status to youth, women and men living in poverty, with different abilities or other aspects of social stigma which the work of Isabel and Baptiste illustrates.

What do we understand by the concepts of epistemic justice or knowledge democracy?

Baptise Godrie: Since 2007, academics have tended to restrict the reflection on these inequalities to Miranda Fricker's useful theorization and distinction between testimonial and hermeneutical injustices (Fricker, 2007). But as Budd Hall pointed out, the reflection is much older and richer. Let's think about the critics of the colonization of minds by Frantz Fanon, going back to the 1950s (Fanon, 1952), about many contributions in the fields of education, for example, the sociology of social reproduction through education institutions since the 1970s, or about the feminist work we mentioned earlier since the 1980s.

I define them in a broad sense as a type of inequality in the access, recognition and production of knowledge and different forms of ignorance (Godrie et Dos Santos, 2017). These inequalities hinder the development of the full potential of human beings' worldviews and knowledge and contribute to relationships of economic and epistemic oppression. I use the expression epistemic inequalities to emphasize that the difference in credibility accorded to the worldview and knowledge of social group members results from their location in the hierarchy of credibility and legitimate knowledge, that is, from unequal social relationships between minorities and majorities. In some cases, these inequalities are produced through discriminations, i.e. the illegitimate and unfair treatment of a person's speech or knowledge because he or she belongs to a historically marginalized social group through the discredit or exclusion by dominant social groups members. In other cases, the internalization of these inequalities leads people to exclude themselves from an interaction, for instance, or minimize their cognitive potential.

Epistemic inequalities are tied to economic and social inequalities, for example, not being able to afford an education of quality, having limited or no access to the Internet or to a library due to geographical remoteness or lack of public services. These situations should not be neglected. In practice, epistemic and economic and social inequalities are often reinforced: some topics are little known because there is no adequate funding to investigate them or because some realities are not considered sufficiently interesting by dominant groups. For example, male contraception has not been explored, not because of a lack of technology, but because of the gender inequalities and sexist bias that women have the responsibility to manage contraception.

I'm particularly interested in the epistemic inequalities of epistemological nature, i.e. related to the hierarchies between knowledge, to unidirectional and humiliating educational models (criticized by Paulo Freire (1968) and Jacques Rancière (1987) for instance), to the disregard of local and traditional knowledge and worldviews, to epistemic alienation in colonial contexts and to the hegemony of certain regimes of discourse (entrepreneurial, biomedical, etc.) that naturalize and legitimize the existent social order (for example, the idea that people at the top of the social ladder owe it solely to their own individual intelligence and knowledge).

Not all epistemic differences are perceived as inequalities. I consider so when they are perceived as injustices by the people who experience them and or by their allies, and when they give rise to individual and/or collective resistance. That's where participatory research can play a part and help raising the awareness about the type of inequalities as outlined earlier by Isabel and Budd. In some context, with or without the involvement of researchers, epistemic injustices can lead to resistance, at the level of the individuals or in the form of social struggles, which José Medina describes as "epistemic resistance" (2013). But what is or is not experienced as an injustice does not come from

an innate sense of justice: this experience is precisely influenced by the social context and, of course, by the epistemic inequalities.

In my work, I study epistemic inequalities in two contexts. First, I study participatory mechanisms and the ideology of participation in terms of power relations between knowledge holders, particularly in the field of mental health (Godrie, 2019b et 2019c). Public institutions tend to practice a selective incorporation of testimonies and knowledge from marginalized groups, especially the ones that do not challenge the decision-making monopolies of managers and health professionals. I also studied the mechanisms by which people undermine the credibility of the relatives with mental health problems (Godrie et Rivet, 2020) and the growing presence of peer support workers in mental health institutions. The latter are employed because they have experiential knowledge of mental health problems and don't have diplomas or professional training in social intervention or health care. But their experience of poverty, mental suffering and health care treatments is not recognized as a professional experience by these institutions, which emphasizes university degrees as a source of legitimate knowledge. Second, my work focuses on epistemic justice in participatory knowledge production. Universities are one of the places where the hierarchy of knowledge is historically produced and validated. The exclusion of historically marginalized groups from the process of knowledge production and access to results can exacerbate the social and economic violence they otherwise experience (Godrie, 2019a). But the research process can also be a space conducive to questioning and creating of fairer and more egalitarian social relations in the production of knowledge.

Isabel Heck: I relate very much to Baptiste's understanding, although my interpretation of these concepts is informed more by practice than theory. I understand epistemic justice and knowledge democracy broadly as two concepts helping us to work towards more equality in the production, recognition and consumption of knowledge globally (between the global North and the global South) and locally (within a given society). The concept of epistemic justice is used to reveal inequalities seen as discriminating in the perception and recognition of what someone says (information, understanding, concepts), on the basis of the speaker's attributed origin, gender, level of education, professional and social status, age or even health. It draws attention to the fact that, generally, words from people perceived as lower on the social ladder are less valued. I understand knowledge democracy as a much wider concept which can qualify, in a given context, people's ability to produce, share and consume information and understanding acquired by education or experience. This can refer to scientific production, spread of theories or categories through journals and other outlets, but also to influence and decision-making in public policies, as well as the access to knowledge. To achieve epistemic justice and knowledge democracy, knowledge needs to be produced and consumed in a diversity of ways, by people representing different experiences and backgrounds. I consider Florence Piron's work on cognitive justice and open science impressive in this regard (Piron, 2019).

Why is epistemic justice and knowledge democracy important? From an ethical and political point of view, it means a step forward towards equal rights and greater social justice. It can foster empowerment, active citizenship and participation. Scientifically, it helps conserve otherwise lost knowledge and can contribute to the emergence of new paradigms. In a more pragmatic manner, it can lead to more appropriate and effective solutions and can help strengthen social cohesion and bonds.

Budd Hall: I very much appreciate the diverse ways that the three of us speak about knowledge, power, action, justice and so forth. The multiplicity of concepts helps us to get to the heart of what are complex and contextual relationships. Knowledge democracy in the way in which Rajesh Tandon and I refer to it is 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 concepts of both openness and protection of ownership of knowledge. We support open access for the sharing of knowledge so that everyone who needs knowledge will have access to it without cost. But we also support the OCAP principles developed by Indigenous communities in Canada. OCAP refers to principles of ownership, control, access, and protection in the context of Indigenous Knowledge. It is important to note that power relations and knowledge authority differs with Indigenous communities as in all communities. But general principles of respect for ownership of Indigenous knowledge emanating from research projects are critical. To my mind these same principles should be applied to knowledge work with other excluded communities and excluded epistemologies. Knowledge democracy is about intentionally linking values of justice, fairness and action to the process of using knowledge. (Hall and Tandon, 2017)

Challenges we have experienced in working the discourses of knowledge democracy and epistemic in/justice?

Isabel Heck: I would like to point out four challenges I have experienced in working within this framework. First, one of the most important and obvious systemic challenges is the lack of institutional and political recognition of more democratic practices linked to the production and dissemination of knowledge, which has a strong impact on available resources and funding and therefore on the number of people and organizations engaged in it. Despite some innovative research programs (such as SSHRC's former CURA program, its Partnership grants, or the FRQ's Engage pilot program), support for knowledge democracy and epistemic justice are still marginal, locally and globally, inside and outside academia; reaching a critical mass in order to scale their impact is an essential step for a systemic transformation.

Second, opening organizations to bearers of non-dominant knowledge requires adaptation from both sides. Making spaces available for the marginalized and inviting them is rarely enough. Organizations need to adapt their usual ways to produce knowledge, develop projects and make decisions to ensure a full participation. This often means adapting content, language and animation, adjust timelines and schedules, but also being ready to convene meetings outside institutional settings. While researchers and facilitators engaged in action research might more easily show such flexibility, organizations and multi-stakeholder groups often face more institutional barriers to such changes.

Closely linked to the previous is the third challenge addressing the importance of listening to the interests of the marginalized bearers of knowledge. Some advocates of participatory action research and participatory approaches to decision-making expect continuous participation of the stakeholders. While such a commitment might enrich projects, it does not necessarily match with the interests and priorities of stakeholders. For instance, in a film we co-created with marginalized young adults to fight against the stigmatization of their neighborhood, group members were unable to commit to regular participation. While this was at first difficult to imagine for the artistic project leader, she accepted and worked with their proposition that one of the group members can make decisions in the absence of their peers. Listening to the interests of people and adapting our methods require much flexibility, but reinforces epistemic justice and emancipation.

Finally, while working towards knowledge democracy and epistemic justice we, as action-researchers and practitioners, are sometimes confronted with an ethical dilemma where we favor some excluded voices over others. What to do with voices that discriminate others? Through dialogue and conscientization, some of us try to change their views. However, if we introduce a moral criterion on what to listen to and what not (beyond obvious racist and hate discourse), there is a risk to reproduce discrimination between valued and discarded knowledge, which has been the very reason behind epistemic injustice.

Budd Hall: I would divide challenges that I have faced into three broad categories: the struggle for recognition of participatory research within academic circles, institutionalising structures of community-university research partnerships and the decolonisation of the architecture of knowledge. Personally, the period between 1971-1989 was characterized by a challenges for academic recognition of knowledge gathering practices that were centred on the experiences of persons excluded from leadership in mainstream society. In our case working in Tanzania, those excluded from 'legitimate' knowledge discourses included women farmers, persons who did not read, cattle owners and herders. Our early work within the International Participatory Research Network claimed that everyone created knowledge. We recalled Gramsci's words, "All men are intellectuals, but not all men have in society the function of intellectuals"(1971). Our early work on participatory research was taken up by social movements and by many working in the international development sectors. I was personally attacked by some mainstream adult education researchers for my advocacy of participatory research in both print and in some public conferences. In spite of my willingness, I was not given a chance to teach a course in a Canadian University on participatory research until 1989, when the Faculty of Environmental Studies at York University made such an invitation. From 1989 onwards, I have been able to teach participatory research both at the University of Toronto and the University of Victoria and I have seen teaching of participatory research grow substantially across Canada and in other parts of the world.

The second set of challenges that to some extent we are still working through have to do with the creation of structures to facilitate community-university research structures. While in Quebec the Service Aux Collectivités within UQAM emerged thanks to strong trade union and community movement support, in the rest of Canada similar structures did not emerge until the first decade of the 21st century. In my case, I was invited to become the Director of the Office of Community-Based Research in 2006. But I soon realized that our ability to influence the research cultures in our own university as well as other universities depended on similar community university research structures being created across Canada and elsewhere in the world. Co-construction of

knowledge needed to be seen as a substantial trend, and not just an accepted practice of a few individual activist scholars. The major study that we undertook to both understand challenges to the establishment of community university research structures concluded that the formal creation of such structures was critical to support principles of knowledge democracy and new forms of community-university research partnerships. As someone working outside Quebec, it has seemed to me that there has been additional funding of participatory research from the Quebec government than in counterpart provincial governments in the rest of Canada. But nearly all Canadian universities have by now created their own structures for community-university research partnerships. An important networking space largely for Canada outside of Quebec has been Community-Based Research Canada, the network which promotes CBR and which is responsible for the bi-annual Community Campus University Expositions (C2UExpo).

The biggest challenge that we currently face from my perspective is the decolonization of the architecture of knowledge. Participatory research, epistemic justice, knowledge democracy, feminist standpoint epistemologies, Indigenous ways of knowing and more are all responses to a colonized architecture of knowledge that is racialized, patriarchal, classist and Euro-centric. While we have certainly made inroads towards the acceptance of many of our ideas within the academic world, have we really made any fundamental changes to the structures of knowledge either within higher education or within the wider world? It is true that many of us within the academy who have advocated for and carry out participatory research have been able to establish good careers. But what about researchers who work within social movement structures, community organizations or non-governmental?

Baptiste Godrie: I share very much what has been said by Isabel and Budd. In my opinion, in a democratic society, there is a responsibility from public authorities to support the development of forms of knowledge that have historically been removed from the public space as legitimate. Epistemic justice is a political as well as an epistemological ideal that aims at the development and free circulation of socially relevant knowledge throughout the world (Piron, 2017). This ideal supports the emergence and development of ecologies of knowledge defined as non-oppressive ways of articulating the different modes of knowledge (scientific, practical, poetic, symbolic, etc.) that give space to the plurality of ways of seeing the world and acting, whether through rational thought or through the body, emotions, narratives (Santos, 2014).

Drawing on the second challenge identified by Isabel a step in that direction is to open spaces that are usually closed (universities and symposium only reach a small percentage of the population), but without replicating the already existing epistemic inequalities (or, at least, being aware of their existence because I don't think it's possible to erase relationships of power). In an academic symposium on epistemic inequalities in Namur (Belgium) in February 2019, the co-organizers and I decided to open the submissions and audience to practitioners in the field of health and social services and to members of community-based organizations. We also offered mobility grants to support the participation of students from the South, gave financial contributions to compensate for the time, energy and knowledge of people experiencing poverty that were invited. The event was free of charge and we designed the plenary sessions to encourage small group exchanges and collective discussions.

Despite our efforts, some people – even experienced professionals used to speak out in public – felt they were less listened to than the researchers. I think it's partly because our mind is socially trained to give less credit to ideas when they are expressed in the language of everyday life than when they are expressed in the codes of science (sometimes characterized by authority reference and name-dropping, abstract thinking and apparent objectivity that are giving small or no spaces to storytelling and emotions). Professionals and members of community-based organizations were more often referring to life stories and narratives, which may be perceived as anecdotes and therefore less relevant by the other participants. What I want to illustrate with this example is that if we want a dialogue between the different experiences, testimonies, knowledge and worldviews, it seems to me that we have to move away from the seminar or colloquium type of exchange to experiment more creative ways of interacting that includes narratives and arts for instance. I would like to experience doing things together (walking, cooking, etc.) rather than just talking together which makes researchers comfortable, but can make other participants feel ill at ease.

On the epistemological level, many concepts and theoretical resources Isabel, Budd and I mentioned above are useful to understand how inequalities between different modes of knowledge and worldviews came (and still come) into existence and are maintained. But we still have a long road to implement knowledge ecologies: What would it mean, for example, to experiment non-oppressive ways of articulating the different knowledge and worldviews about health in a hospital? Local participatory action research projects conducted in this direction would be very instructive as well as politically subversive. Regarding this issue, the persistence of the normative framework of science that pushes university researchers towards conservatism/*status quo*, and well described by Budd is another challenge. The often long and bumpy road to be hired as a university professor, and then obtain a permanence, hinders the ability to question the hierarchies of knowledge and works toward articulating creative ecologies of knowledge.

Practices and achievements?

Budd Hall: These various perspectives on knowledge are all reflected however imperfectly in the current focus of the work on Rajesh Tandon and myself. Our current focus is on providing learning opportunities for a new generation of students and community workers to learn how to do community based participatory research or participatory action research. We do this through the Knowledge for Change (K4C) Global Consortium on Training in Community Based Participatory Research. Drawing on principles of participatory research and working within a framework of knowledge democracy, we have created a 21 week training programme that consists of 19 weeks on-line learning and a two-week intensive face to face residency. Key concepts which we emphasize are: an orientation to ethics and values, understanding power in partnerships, using multiple modes of enquiry, Praxis-the balance of theory and practice and seeing the researcher as a facilitator. The concept of our K4C Consortium is based on support for the emergence of K4C hubs or training structures. Each hub must be a formal partnership between a university or a part of a university and a community organisation(s). Priority based on our mandate as a UNESCO Chair is given to supporting K4C structures in the majority world or the global South and the excluded North. Our course provides training to middle level experienced mentors, women and men with substantial experience working within in a social justice framework with communities. The mentors are responsible for leading the training of new generations of researchers in the locations where the hubs exist. By the early 2020s we have trained over 70 mentors who in turn

teach in 15 hubs in Canada, Colombia, Cuba, India (2), Indonesia, Ireland, Italy, Malaysia (2), South Africa (2), Tanzania and Uganda. Each hub undertakes a pledge to develop locally relevant training materials in local Mother tongue languages. As well each hub prioritizes work in line with one or more of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals.

Baptise Godrie: That the CREMIS still exists after 16 years as a space of experimentation at the interstice of the universities, public institutions and community-based organizations ! However, maintaining our balance between these universes is exhausting because we constantly have to prove to our academic peers that we produce scientific knowledge and to our partners in the community that we produce knowledge that supports and enables action. The two pitfalls always lie in wait: on the one hand, being absorbed by a mainstream way of doing research and losing our roots (and sometimes credibility!) into the institutions and the community; on the other hand, being absorbed by top-down and bureaucratized health and social services institutions that tend to be wary toward critical and autonomous research, and participatory one in particular.

I think of my work as contributing to the diversity of tactics we have to rely on to make structural changes in knowledge production: bringing the plurality of knowledge into the universities to transform them into pluriversities (Boidin, Cohen and Grosfoguel, 2012 ; Santos, 2012) ; and acknowledging and supporting the scientific research (especially in the social sciences) already carried out outside universities, in institutional and community practice settings, but without the proper recognition and legitimacy.

Part of my work as a sociologist is to support the development of critical thinking of non-academics about scientific knowledge and, in some cases, to involve them in developing scientific knowledge and other forms of knowledge socially pertinent. I'm now increasingly approached by community-based organizations who want support to conduct their own research projects. I'm helping them to get rid of me!

To support the reflection on participatory research and epistemic inequalities, some colleagues and I have been organizing seminars in Montreal since the end of 2017 to elaborate a research program on this topic. In particular, we have developed a self-assessment guide (which is a work in process) to promote the epistemic inequalities' lens as a systematic analytical framework for questioning participatory research processes. If this type of research is done to have an impact on epistemic inequalities existing between participants of the research process or on the epistemic inequalities experienced by socially oppressed group members, we should be able to appreciate the nature of this impact.

Isabel Heck: Our practice and achievements are on quite different levels. I would like to get back to some achievements and changes in the roles of both citizens and researchers participating in the Parole d'excluEs model outlined above. These changes occurred gradually and are still ongoing, with movements back and forth, with people coming on board and others leaving. What seems to remain is a reconfiguration of roles and power, of knowledge production and decision-making in the mindset of many of those who have participated. This means that citizens experiencing poverty and exclusion are part of those who produce knowledge and make decisions, and that researchers engage in action and forms of knowledge mobilization beyond studies *per se*. Both changes

contribute to knowledge democratization and epistemic justice as understood above. Now, how is this done?

Parole d'excluEs together with an organization in social housing establishes itself in a low-income neighborhood and opens an animated community drop-in where people can get together, socialize and organize. The research team (from a university incubator dedicated to that model) leads a participatory action study blended with ethnographic methods to understand how the residents of the neighborhood perceive their living environment and their priorities for change. The results are then presented and validated in a citizen's assembly and the participants are invited to form a group to take action. It is thus the citizens who decide upon the priorities, not the staff of the organization nor policy-makers. Participatory research here leads to the recognition of challenges important to citizens that may otherwise be kept silent (*cf.* Heck, René et al., 2016). Once the priorities identified, the elaboration of action starts. Citizens, supported by a facilitator from *Parole d'excluEs*, get together in the community drop-in and often work along with practitioners, managers and researchers on projects. Similar to the ATD Quart Monde method (ATD Quart Monde, 2009), the experiential, practical and academic knowledge merge together, complete each other and ensure for both adapted and feasible solutions. Researchers step out of their role where they lead research: they contribute as partners in knowledge mobilization for projects led by *Parole d'excluEs* and the citizens. For example, they might bring into discussion academic literature of how people have resolved similar problems in other contexts. And when they carry out further studies, these are pragmatic and action-oriented, which places them in a more horizontal position vis-à-vis the other stakeholders. The ongoing presence of researchers in the field and their positionality further contributes to proximity and trust which reduces the social distance. This reconfiguration illustrates a more egalitarian way of knowledge production, recognition and access to knowledge.

Concluding remarks

Our conversation illustrates three different ways to work towards knowledge democracy and epistemic justice. Isabel works as a researcher for a social movement anti-poverty organization, Parole d'excluEs and is directing a university incubator. **Baptiste** is located in a jointly led community-university research centre. **Budd** works these days through the UNESCO Chair in Community-Based Research which focuses on providing learning through community-university training hubs for young students and community workers to get started in participatory research. Interestingly we all started our work institutionally speaking on the margins of academia or even outside academia. We note that being located in different parts of the knowledge universe makes a difference to our ways of working, communicating, acting and even writing. We feel that a conversational space where we can share our different ways of working outside of the bounds of what usually constitutes academic discourse is essential.

One of our conversations related to the questions of references. References are of course the standard way that academic conversations are located, placing them in one discursive area or another. But when one takes into account the power of experiential knowledge, the conversations for example where street-involved youth share their knowledge or when people experience diverse issues of mental health, how do we acknowledge these forms of knowledge? Academic referencing privileges those mostly full-time, rich country, predominantly white and

disproportionately male persons who have the time and support to write books, produce articles and take part in conferences. If we are looking for a decolonisation of the architecture of knowledge, are there new practices of acknowledging knowledge sources that we need to find? As you have read through our strands of conversation, you will have noticed diverse approaches to referencing. This is intentional.

What about the present climate for the kinds of issues that the three of us raise? Budd has shared his stories of the struggles to achieve recognition for the concepts of participatory research by the academic world. Working in English speaking Canada, he thought that the 'grass was greener' in Quebec because of some of those he had met in the early days. Baptiste and Isabel however feel that the deeper questions about knowledge equity and knowledge democracy are still not as central as they need to be. We all agree that much more open sharing of our knowledge work experiences as activist scholars, community workers using knowledge as a tool and Indigenous knowledge keepers needs to happen across French-speaking and English-speaking Canada, but also much more across the global boundaries that try to keep us apart.

Finally, we would like to invite all of those reading this article to engage in these issues with us. We are contributing to a centuries old conversation about knowledge, life and hope. This is a movement that is growing and we all have a place in moving things forward.

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