Learning from community-university research partnerships: A Canadian study on community impact and conditions for success

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This article reflects the growing interest and significant socio-economic contributions culminating from Community-University Research Partnerships (CURP) across Canada. It is based on a series of in-depth interviews conducted with community and university partners funded by Canada's Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council. The research partnerships represented various partnership arrangements and thematic sectors reveals the significant value inherent in partnership research in solving community problems, building institutional capacity, new ideas, management of skills and new technologies, while extending current, and new areas of research. These partnerships provide evidence that collaborative learning and action can accomplish much when they are able to pool diverse resources, skills, and forms of creativity. Partnerships also provide important opportunities for students to learn about community problems first hand, while developing leadership, communication, and research skills. The 'spill-over' affects of these partnerships are substantial, as articulated by those interviewed for this study: in terms of informing policy, leveraging additional funding, the development and maintenance of new projects, and in building strong relationships and social capital between university and community. This research was conducted by the Centre for Public Sector Studies at the University of Victoria between March and April 2012 using background documents supplemented by interviews with select award holders across Canada representing the various nationally funded partnership arrangements. The projects highlighted took place both in urban and rural settings across various sectors and forms of intervention

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including building age friendly communities, affordable housing, promotion of the social economy and social entrepreneurship, revitalizing rural economies, adapting information technology for disabled persons, labour research, local food production, and Aboriginal language and culture revitalisation. The authors draw on the emerging concept of knowledge democracy as a helpful theoretical discourse for understanding community based research and community university research partnerships.
Our article further points to a number of emerging trends in Canada in how communities and universities are working together and building a new architecture of knowledge. These include: creating a more dynamic and relevant curriculum in Higher Education; recognition of the roles of regional, sectoral and national research alliances and networks; increased recognition of partnership research as a measure of academic excellence; and increased recognition of the diversity of knowledge cultures to be drawn on by communities and the academy when working together.

~~**Key wo**~~ ~~agency work, flexibility, flexible organization, labour market flexibility, staffing strategy, temporary agency workers, temporary work agency~~

1. Introduction: the emergence of a new architecture of knowledge

There is evidence of an impressive array of impactful knowledge creation and mobiliszation through community university research partnerships in virtually every sphere of public activity to improve social, economic, health and environmental conditions and outcomes in Canadian society. This approach equitably partners university academics and community members in the co-construction of knowledge to inform research design, implementation and dissemination, requiring an investment in team building, sharing of resources and mutually exchanging ideas and expertise. Increasingly, universities are engaging in research partnerships with communities and their various sectors (business, non profit organisations, local governments, Aboriginal and First Nations organisations) to enhance the value and relevance of their research and increase learning opportunities for their students. In the context of complex inter-related challenges that involve social, economic and environmental

considerations in desired outcomes for Canadian society such as poverty reduction, health promotion and environmental sustainability, it is not surprising that governments, research councils, public agencies, universities and civil society organisations are coming together to strengthen their relationships and opportunities for partnerships.

There has been a plethora of literature on community-university engagement around the world, and of the social relevance of universities in a time of major social, economic and ecological challenges (Hall, 2012; Hall & MacPherson, 2012). Harkavy (1998) agues that given this context, universities are under increasing pressure to be relevant to 'real world' challenges, and are responding by adopting a community-oriented lens towards research activities and forming partnerships with communities. There is no arguing that knowledge and its creation and flow is linked to economic development, but it is also the most active ingredient in our thinking about acting in our world to deepen democracy, promote inclusion and build just and sustainable communities (Hall, 2012). Indeed, "*the changing nature of knowledge production, global issues, and the role of education is affecting the intellectual strategies, relationships, societal roles and expectations that we attribute to our universities*" (Holland & Ramaley, 2008; p.33). The objectives of this collaboration are both to serve and create support from the public by connecting teaching and research to help solve community problems, while contributing to capacity-building, sustainability, economic, environmental and social development (Prins, 2006; Ramaley, 2002; Kellogg, 1999). These partnerships envision creating a better future through an iterative process of learning, reflection and action, whereby the process and results are useful to both community members and university partners in a wide range of areas developing social equity and creating positive social and institutional change (OCBR, 2012).

In the 2008 report *Momentum*, the Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada (AUCC) highlights the importance and breadth of community-based partnership research in Canada. Universities are working with communities on research programmes and projects across Canada in a number of key areas including policies and planning, physical services and social services. Universities also work with a wide range of community partners in research

aimed at addressing social issues and improving social services, in areas such as affordable housing, homelessness, crime prevention and public safety, addiction and substance abuse, poverty, immigrant settlement and adaptation, neighborhood improvement, public health, and services for youth and for the elderly.

> Community partnerships help universities to define and scope the research questions and provide access to research participants and sources of local expertise, as well as additional funding and in-kind contributions. In turn, universities provide communities with access to wide-ranging and in-depth knowledge and national and international expertise that informs and addresses community challenges and opportunities in a meaningful way. As universities and communities work together on research projects, they strengthen their collective capacity to solve current and anticipated problems, while contributing both to community development and to the advancement of the disciplines concerned…Many communities see universities as key to the growth of the local/ regional economy, and are working to develop effective strategies to leverage universities' engagement in research and talent development to maintain or enhance quality of life (AUCC, 2008, p. 90-91).

These partnerships are building on practices and traditions linking our communities and our universities that have deep roots. We honor the memory of Henry Marshall Tory who founded the University of Alberta, the University of British Columbia and Carleton University who called for 'Knowledge to be used in the Service of the People". We draw on the history of Guelph University that has been an integral part of the lives of farmers and their families through Agricultural Extension. We draw on the work of St Francis Xavier University and its work in the 1930s and 40s modernizing the fishing industry through the creation of credit unions and we recognize the pioneering work in Quebec, which created the "Service aux Collectivités" at UQAM and elsewhere throughout that Province.

The increased awareness of the critical role of knowledge has found new forms of expression within our academic communities. We have learned from nearly 30 years of technology transfer experience linking cutting-edge ideas with the worlds of business and are now looking at a deep transformation as we build a new partnership generation based on working together across all

sectors of society. We speak now of 'engaged scholarship', of 'engaged universities' of 'knowledge mobilisation', of 'knowledge exchange' of 'participatory' and 'community based research', of the co-creation of knowledge, of Indigenous ways of knowing, of 'partnership research' and much more. We have seen the creation of new higher education institutional structures such as the Knowledge Mobilisation Unit at York University, the Institute for the Study and Innovation of Community University Engagement at the University of Victoria, Participatory Research Unit in Medicine at McGill University, the Harris Centre at Memorial University of Newfoundland and community controlled research centers such as the Centre for Community Based Research in Kitchener-Waterloo.

The 2009 report '*The funding and development of community-university partnerships in Canada'* (Hall *et al.* 2009) showcases the significant investments in community-university partnerships in Canada and points to the growing national and international networks supporting this movement such as Community-based Research Canada, the Talloires Network, the Global University Network for Innovation, the Living Knowledge Network, and the Global Alliance on Community-Engaged Research. In '*Measuring the impact of community-university research partnerships: a global perspective'*, Lall (2012) reveals the important function these partnerships serve in creating greater participation, opportunities, access and impact among the most vulnerable of communities around the world. The 2014 *Higher Education in the World Report* has a focus on Community Engagement and transformative knowledge, highlighting the various trends and experiences around the world. The report provides a current thematic map of how Higher Education Institutions are engaging with society, how we are managing knowledge, the different ways it is created and the social uses for addressing the current emerging issues and pressing problems. In summary, the Report proposes integrating community university engagement into all institutional, teaching and research activities, and provides a toolbox on how to move forward. This Report is indicative of the global movement towards collaborative research and the co-creation of knowledge for social change.

The Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC) of Canada has been a critically important partner/leader in recognising the increas-

ingly strategic role that knowledge plays by providing funding opportunities and visibility for a remarkable variety of new models, methods, practices of partnership research that have emerged and are emerging from the social sciences and humanities and quite frankly across the entire spectrum of knowledge creation and management. Findings from SSHRC studies have indicated that there is significant demand in the public and private sectors for social sciences and humanities research. According to a 2010-11 study by the Impact Group, traditional grant-funded research is critical for establishing the foundation of knowledge that external customers and clients draw on, generating positive impacts on government, not-for-profit organizations and the private sector, creating real value in terms of additional learning opportunities for researchers, students, institutions, and communities. It was estimated that third party contracting in the social sciences and humanities at postsecondary institutions could represent as much as $100 million of activities per year. Over 50 per cent of this contracting was commissioned by the public sector on such issues as law reform, demographic change, macro- and micro-economic analysis, security, and telecommunications policy. Through such contracts, SSHRC funding is leveraged and dispersed throughout the economy via knowledge creation, wages and stipends, purchase of goods and services, etc. Such impacts contribute significantly to the economies of smaller centers and areas that rely heavily on the economic activity generated by institutions.

In 2011-12 SSHRC introduced new programme architecture and funding opportunities within the three umbrella programs of Talent, Insight and Connection. The Partnership Development Grants and Partnership Grants competitions were the first funding opportunities to be launched as part of this new programme architecture, replacing the CURP programs that are highlighted this paper. These new programmes provide support for partnership activities with new or existing partners; to design and test new partnership approaches for research and/or related activities and to support initiatives that advance research and/or knowledge mobilisation in the social sciences and humanities. SSHRC funds up to 45 partnership development grants a year to Canadian and international partners from many different sectors. Preliminary statistics suggests strong partnerships with not-for-profit

organisations, between postsecondary institutions and with federal, provincial or municipal governments. As well, there is evidence of growing partnership activities with the private sector. Many applications also featured the development of international collaborations with a broad variety of partners.

From a theoretical perspective, it is clear that a growing sophistication of research methods as co-construction of knowledge has taken its place in the panoply of academic work. This new architecture of knowledge has recently been described as Knowledge Democracy (see Hall, Gaventa, Tandon and others) Knowledge democracy "*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 marginalised 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 to deepen democracy and to struggle for a fairer and healthier world. Knowledge democracy is about intentionally linking values of democracy and action to the process of using knowledge"* (Hall, 2014, pp. ???).

2. This study

This article draws on the experiences of select research grant recipients across Canada representing the various SSHRC funded Community-University partnership arrangements (*CURA, Strategic Knowledge Clusters, INE Research Alliance, Public Outreach Grants, Knowledge Impact in Society, Social Economy Strategic Initiative*). A total of twenty in-depth interviews were conducted with university and community award holders representing a group of diverse projects of community-university partnerships across Canada, diverse in terms of context, structure and scope. The case-study projects take place both in urban and rural settings across Canada, some representing regional and national networks in scale. Some of these arrangements have taken the form of short-term projects, while others have

taken the form of programmes, regional nodes, and national alliances. The context of these case studies varies considerably: including human rights using oral history, building age friendly communities, housing, promotion of social economy and social entrepreneurship, revitalising rural economies, information technology for disabled persons, labor research, and local food production. The structures of the partnerships are also very diverse and include a web of actors representing academia, community, industry, and government. In most cases, but not all, these partnerships include multiple actors from various sectors, are interdisciplinary across multiple universities, and include local, regional, national and international networks.

2.1 Community impact

This research documents significant positive impacts for the communities participating in CU collaborative research projects across Canada. These impacts are broad in scope and range from improving services for individuals at the community level, building capacity and organisational structure for service providers and community organisations and in creating strong partnerships between community-university-industry and government.

Developing and strengthening community-university relationships

Strengthening inter-and-intra community dialogue among and between members of the CU partnership was highlighted as a significant outcome to the community. These partnerships provide opportunity to develop and strengthen relationships between community and university, within communities themselves and increased inter-university linkages. Theorists such as Putnam (2002) have noted the importance of building social capital through enhanced social relationships leading to enhanced benefits derived from cooperation and collaboration between individuals and groups. Clearly partnership approaches contribute to the building of this social capital, of which has been argued to be a producer of civic engagement, strong democracy, broader community health, and economic growth (Fukuyama, 2002).

An example is the Montreal-based project "*Life stories of Montrealers' displaced by war, genocide, and other human rights violations'*, in which

community groups and university researchers co-conducted over 450 life story interviews with survivors of human rights violations', of which Dr. Steven High, co-director of the project from Concordia University, highlighted as a very tangible and real outcome. *"This becomes a catalyst for creating space for reflection, dialogue for political action and its really deep and its really fundamental, so your seeing all this work within communities, so intrapersonal communication and intra family dialogue but also intercommunity dialogue, so the communities are actually learning from each other so its not just community university, it's community-community…we have all kinds of circles in this project."* Dr. Jeff Dixon, Associate Director at the Monieson Centre, Queen's School of Business also reflects on this unique opportunity for relationship building: "The whole act of engagement and interaction, at a human level, we have to remember that these are networks of community and university that never used to cross, they were very much silos. Just the simple act of meeting, connection really has created a relationship not just a partnership that has developed."

Partnerships with local governments are also proving how collaborative problem-solving can respond to local needs. Vickey Toews from the Manitoba government highlights the important connections made in the CURA project '*Building age-friendly communities, promoting active aging'* as a key to the success of the project. "*I think that without the partnerships we have all created, between the center on ageing, the seniors organizations, the municipal government, the chamber of commerce, and the community this could not have happened. The political will made a big difference. It is kind of unique and I think people reacted different to that and there was so much value and common interest."*

Building community sector organizational capacities

Community organisations are often stretched for time, staffing, and funding, and with the added obligation of regularly performing management planning tools, such as strategic planning, needs assessments, programme evaluations, or market demand forecasting, strain limited resources (Wetta-Hall et al, 2004). Collaborations between universities and community organisations can

result in the development of successful management planning tools through training, the development of new skills and knowledge, and enhancing personal confidence and empowerment of community partners. This organisational capacity produces enhanced effectiveness and credibility, leading to new funding and partnerships. Collaborations with universities can enhance partner-organisations capacity to more effectively serve the needs of community and meet program goals by providing a foundation on which the organisations can build. By developing a skill-building template, needs assessments and program evaluations can be replicated for future use. The university can share methods that can identify the community needs of interest to the organisation.

An example of how community organizations are building capacity through training and new skills can be seen in the CURA funded project '*Complex skills training for people who have intellectual disabilities: a multi-systemic, interdisciplinary approach'*. This partnership program in the Niagara region of Ontario has worked to develop and demonstrate the effectiveness of a human rights educational programme for persons with Intellectual Disabilities (ID) and their community agency care providers. This project focused on the training of 8 agencies and the support staff in their region to better serve the community of person affected by ID. "*Up until this training, most of the staff did not have to be involved in the training itself, they did not have to have any increased knowledge of rights about the people they were serving. Before that the people that were in the system, if they would exercise their right the support people would take a more parental approach and not necessarily recognize that it was their right to exercise that right. This approach makes the support staff to stop and rethink that. So for us, from a community perspective was a very important change."* (Barbara Vyrostko, Executive Director, Community Living Welland Pelham). The training that was done with the staff of the organizations was a big part of the organizational development. According to Dr. Frances Owen from Brock University, this training changed the policy for all the agencies, including how they dealt with things such as challenging behavior. "*We are seeing the lived policy changes, student research is showing us how the experiences of people and how their relationship has changed with the person they support, so we are looking at how these policies are playing out in the day to day lives of people."*

Further experiences highlight the important skills being developed and the impact at the community in the KIS funded '*Revitalizing rural economies by mobilising academic knowledge'*. Craig Desjardins, a community partner highlights the important improvements in their community organisation, and across their partner organisations, in the analytical skills and understanding of policy, governance and project management. *"We are just starting a project with the federal government in a month and without the modeling skills you get when you are associated with the university, we would not have had those skills and knowledge to apply that to this application, which is close to 20 Million in funding. We would not have been successful in that funding if we didn't know how to apply for it and the detail the government looks for."*

In many of the cases, successful institutional building for community organizations has taken the form of new accreditation to apply for Tri-Council funding. The Canadian Co-operative Association (CCA), one of the partner organizations in the *Social Economy Strategic Initiative*, for example, became an authorized applicant for SSHRC funding as an outcome of the capacity development. "*On the research side, the Canadian Co-operative Association (CCA) got a SSHRC research grant, and that was because we tested the model called 'measuring the co-operative difference', it encouraged some of the practitioner organizations to think of themselves as researchers, none of them had thought of the research councils as potential funding as a means to mobilize knowledge and affect change. So it built new connections, which is highly productive in terms of mobilizing knowledge in new ways, and new outcomes outside of the academic sector."* (Sarah Amyot, Social Economy Research Hub). Likewise, *for the KIS project,* the training and skills developed through the partnerships helped two organizations in the Niagara region to become accredited.

Leslie Brown, director of the Institute for the Study and Innovation in Community University Engagement at the University of Victoria and previous director of the CURA funded *'The social economy and sustainability: innovations in bridging, bonding, and capacity building'* expressed the impact at the personal and professional level for all involved in the partnership. An outcome of this collaboration was the direct resources, skills and contacts that the organisations can now draw on for other work, and connec-

tions with government that they didn't have before. "*In some cases the community had stronger ties with government and the academics were able to learn from that."*

Craig Desjardins, Executive Director of Prince Edward/Lennox & Addington and community partner in the Knowledge Impact in Society '*Revitalizing rural economies by mobilizing academic knowledge'* project notes that the CU partnership has made a significant impact on the capacity of their organisation. The initial skills and training provided has launched their organisation to build new relationships and resulting projects with other universities and colleges leading to 'self-actualised growth'. "*It is interesting to note the type of interactions we have with universities, it has moved beyond the capacity building that was needed at the start of our relationship, and we have really moved into innovation and commercialization and that is really exciting and in line with government policy and priorities. From the community side, our involvement with colleges and universities has grown, by partnering with a very prestigious school like Queens University it opened the doors to others. We are doing a lot of work at the college level and again in the past we tried to do work with them: when you are working with the best, everyone tries to gravitate towards you. And that has been incredible in terms of getting that snowball rolling and moving forward…that credibility that we now have, because of the KIS project and those partnerships has led to self actualised, a real growth as a community entity in approaching colleges and universities."*

Evidence from the Canadian Social Economy Hub and Partnerships programme also speaks loud and clear to these outcomes. The network helped to "*strengthen the community of practice amongst practitioners to create social and economic outcomes at various levels by building a knowledge mobilistion platform for practitioners. The Community Economic Development network (CEDNet), as a practitioner-based organisation, was able to use the programme to inform from the research activity."* (Rupert Downing, co-director of the Social Economy Hub). A lot of the networks that were formed during the research partnership continue to exist in one way or another. In Ontario the Social Economy roundtable is still active, and engaged in policy work and government relations to get policies developed. In addition to the

national networks are the international connections among practitioners. Links made with Social Economy practitioners in Europe and Latin America through the Hub are extremely valuable, and are still very active today, evolving into networks and further collaborations.

Personal transformation and empowerment through co-creation

There is substantial research culminating from community development and social science literature that reinforces aspects of personal and community empowerment through the process of participation (Tremblay & Gutberlet, 2010; Sidorenko, 2006). Although award holders interviewed did not specifically identify empowerment as an outcome, it is evidenced in the experiences and surely demonstrated within the process of participatory approaches. Dr. Leslie Brown, professor at Mount St Vincent University and director of the CURA funded '*The social economy and sustainability: innovations in bridging, bonding, and capacity building'* partnered specifically with individual grassroots organisations so that the nature of the partnership was affected by that, and building their capacity and empowerment was an important element that emerged from that. *"I would say that when we recruited people we were doing it in the context of what we might do together in preparing the application, a number of the partners that came on really early were involved in that process. When we got funded, the agreement that the academics and the organisations would together decide on research questions within the framework of the application. The partners were not subjects, they were in fact interested in and wanting the questions that were being asked, so immediately there was that impact, because they wanted the research and were going to use it: so I think in that sense all the projects would have had some impacts in that way."*

Dr. Steven High at Concordia University also shares similar experiences from the Montreal based CURA '*Life stories of Montrealers displaced by war, genocide, and other human rights violations'*. With the production of over 35 radio documentaries, "*we have these digital stories with the idea of how do we share authority, so our methodology really evolves as it became co-produced, so personal transformation. There have been over 350 people*

who have been involved in the project, over 500 people have done an 8-hour course, and people have come from all over the country to take that course."

Improvement to services

Community-University partnership research is specifically tailored to respond to the direct needs and challenges of the community, in an approach that values their knowledge, and culture, ultimately improving services and accessibility. A wonderful example of this outcome can be seen in the INE Research Alliances funded project *"New technologies and people with disabilities research alliance*", hosted at the University of Manitoba. The project used an inclusive approach that creates partnerships among people with disabilities, government, industry, service providers and academic researchers in the region. The outcomes of this collaboration has been the creation and dissemination of high-quality, innovative research on Information Communication Technology (ICT) that is having a direct impact on public policy direction, has influenced the creation and development of emerging technologies, and improving the ability of all Canadians, not only those with disabilities. Communication technologies are emerging so quickly, according to Deborah Stienstra, project director, that "*what often happens are accessibility issues getting left behind if they are not created inclusively. We wanted to be able to create capacity for the disability organisations to be more knowledgeable, to have more information access with government to adapt to those rapid changes and we were successful in that."* The evidence to this project's success is illustrated in changes made by the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission (CRTC) adopted in 2008. "*This new accessibility policy and the disability community organisations that had been involved took on intervening in that process to help adopt this new policy, based on the disability rights framework. Barriers to Information Technology are the equivalent to discrimination to the rest of society, so that was a big shift" (*Deborah Stienstra, University of Manitoba).

Similar outcomes have been made in the CURA funded '*Building age-friendly communities, promoting active aging'* project, where community consultation processes have resulted in improvements to services for the

aging community, such as better sidewalks and more housing for example. The structure of this project involves the creation of committees representing community organizations integrated with municipal government. "*It's providing a framework for discussions on how to make communities better for older adults, and its creating that dialogue and engaging individuals to have that conversation, it opens that door of conversation*". (Vicky Toews, Community partner).

The largest community impact of the CURA funded *'Taking culture seriously in community mental health'* is in service provision, bringing awareness and connecting the community on this issue. The creation of a Punjabi community mental health center, for example, now receiving local funding through the Ministry of Health, is a direct result of that community's participation in the CURA project. "*The Punjabis are about 45 per cent of the population in Brampton, so now they have a place to go to for mental health issues, because we are talking about mental health and that is taboo in their culture so now they have a place they can go to because they were not going to the Canadian mental health services."* (Rich Jenzen, Centre for Community Based Research). Another example highlights the networking and institutional capacity building of organisations to provide improved services to communities with mental health challenges. "*All the immigrant associations in the Waterloo area now collaborate together on what they call the 'Navigator' project where they recruit 3 people from each of those communities, and for a year went through training to become aware of mental health issues and services in the region and how to talk about mental health in their community, and in the second year the mental health system in our region. In a lot of these communities they did not talk about mental health, so the training was on how to start the conversation on mental health in your community and run support groups, and how local services can adapt to these diverse communities"* (Rich Jenzen, Centre for Community Based Research).

Another example is the CURA funded '*Social business and marginalised social groups'* project hosted at the University of Toronto which works with fourteen social businesses in the Toronto area, addressing the needs and providing employment for people suffering from poverty, disability, and some of whom are survivors of gendered violence. The project provides

support for community partners to really look at their business and how they are contributing to the community. "*Business are getting a more systematic evaluation of the type of service they are providing and really trying to pry apart what would be financial or social benefit, so for one of the social businesses: what hss come out is actually the social benefit is far more important for these people than the financial benefit."* (Sherida Ryan, University of Toronto)

Some other examples from the case studies include:

- Improved well being for 4.4 million Canadians with disabilities (14.3%) (CURA – The social economy and sustainability: innovations in bridging, bonding, and capacity building)
- 5% of $650 million for specialised services *(CURA – The social economy and sustainability: innovations in bridging, bonding, and capacity building).*

Policy and legislative impacts

Research culminating from Community-University partnerships can have effective policy and legislative impacts. The projects presented in this article have made contributions to policy framework changes at various levels of government as well as within academic institutions and community organisations. These changes are a result of strategic and well-established relations with and between university, government and community partners. In most cases, government partners have been directly involved in the research process, and have used research findings for informing and creating public policy that are addressing the needs of communities. Subsequently, it has become common for community and university partners to be involved in advisory and steering committees for municipal and provincial community planning as a result of their experience.

There are a number of concrete examples pointing to policy impacts:

- Supreme Court Decision on telecommunications deferral funds *(INE Research Alliance – New technologies and people with disabilities research alliance)*

- Creation of Disabilities & Information Technologies Research Alliance (Dis-IT) *(INE Research Alliance – New technologies and people with disabilities research alliance)*
- The extension of Broadband to rural Ontario through private and public funding culminating to over 175 million investment *(KIS – Revitalizing rural economies by mobilizing academic knowledge)*
- Facilitated the creation of the Local Health Integration *Network (CURA – Taking culture seriously in community mental health)*
- Financial instruments developed through the Canadian Social Economy Research Partnerships in supporting the Social Economy in BC are being used by the Community Council in Victoria, BC *(Social Economy Initiative)*
- PEI launched a financing policy modeled on the CED Investment Fund (CEDIF), a direct outcome of the Social Economy Network. *(CURA – The social economy and sustainability: innovations in bridging, bonding, and capacity building)*
- Community Counts initiated in NFLD, a strategy of collecting data that covers community level activities and assets, not just financial ones. Nova Scotia and PEI have followed and developed their program and NB is also in development *(CURA – The social economy and sustainability: innovations in bridging, bonding, and capacity building)*
- The Community Council in NFLD and Labrador, which was one of the CURA partners, are continuing their public policy work with the local government *(CURA – The social economy and sustainability: innovations in bridging, bonding, and capacity building)*
- Project director Leslie Brown and colleagues invited to serve on the committee, '*conversation group on social enterprise'*, invited to be part of the planning department in Nova Scotia, and became a member of the mayoral advisory committee on a New Economic Strategy for Halifax (*CURA – The social economy and sustainability: innovations in bridging, bonding, and capacity building*)

– 'Manitoba Age friendly' provincial initiative as a direct result of the CURA research (*CURA – Building age-friendly communities, promoting active aging)*

Jeff Dixon, Associate Director at the Monieson Centre, Queen's School of Business speaks to the legislative impacts as an outcome of the KIS project, but also highlights the important institutional capacity development and relationship building as a necessary ingredient for strong policy impact. "*In terms of legislative changes, we worked on a project as a result of the KIS project, its a project on biomass and investment models for biomass energy production, and we haven't seen legislative change happen yet, but the community has been using that research to lobby the government so we are hoping to see some changes as a result of that, and that's a spin off from the KIS project. And that speaks to the institutional capacity as well, by building those relationship and building networks of researchers in the university with some similar interests that's given the university greater capacity to make an impact like that. A project like that drew on researchers from engineering, business, geography, policy studies and so those networks have really been facilitated in the university and with community partners. Without the KIS project neither of those networks would have been there, so a project like that wouldn't have happened."*

The Canadian Social Economy Research Hub and Partnerships, supported under the *Social Economy Initiative*, had significant impact on policy development across the country. The research program in Manitoba and Quebec for example was used to inform the policy development process and to transfer evidence of impacts of particular programs in Nova Scotia and PEI. Practitioners in Nova Scotia were also involved in developing the governments social enterprise policy framework – a policy and practitioner level of outcome.

Economic contributions

CU partnerships contribute significantly to additional economic growth and development for communities. Leveraging additional funding has been a direct impact resulting from the partnership projects. In each of the projects examined in this article, there has been at least some minor, and in most cases

major, additional funding for related and on-going projects. These partnerships not only leverage additional funds from granting councils, government and the private sector, but once these partnerships are established also serve as platforms for multiple future purposes.

The Strategic Knowledge Cluster project '*Canadian Labor Research'*, hosted at the University of British Columbia, for example obtained significant additional funding from their partner Human Resources and Skills Development Canada (HRSDC). This was considered a major success and outcome, funding an additional 6-8 research projects of similar interest. Through launching the '*Manitoba Age friendly'* initiative, the CURA '*Building age-friendly communities, promoting active aging'* project, in collaboration with the Seniors and Healthy Aging Secretariat branch of the provincial government of Manitoba, secured just "*under a million/year that goes directly to senior serving organizations or to the age friendly communities directly in capacity building and age friendly related projects. That's an important connection"* (Vickey Toews, Director, Seniors and Healthy Aging Secretariat).

Another significant example can be seen in the Knowledge Impact in Society (2008-2011) funded '*Revitalizing rural economies by mobilizing academic knowledge'* project hosted at Queen's School of Business in Ontario. Student consultation in the rural communities was seen as such a value to the community organizations that the Ontario government continued funding those travel grants once the KIS funding ended. Another initiative, such as the community workshops continues to be funded by the federal government through another project. Indeed, there have been numerous catalytic spin-offs as a result of these arrangements. "*When you look at the progress that has been made as an outcome of the KIS project in terms of additional funding from the Rural Secretariat, from MAFRA, from other organizations, the eastern Ontario Network, its quite amazing. The snowball affect of this KIS project is in the tune of Millions of dollars now and that is a dramatic impact. We started with 300 K for a 3-year project and we are approaching the 2 Million mark total for projects relating to this network of rural communities in Southern Ontario and research academic related initiatives"* (Dr. Yolande Chan, Project Director, Queen's School of Business).

3. Conditions inherent for successful CURP

There are a number of conditions or elements of partnership research that were identified as inherent or necessary for success by the award holders interviewed in this research. Creating a *governance structure* based on consensus-decision making that maintains parity between community and university partners at all levels needs to be a priority in true collaborative research. The partnership needs to be supported by a governance structure that facilitates meaningful engagement from all stakeholders throughout the project. A national US study by Lamb-Parker *et al.* (2002) also found that high levels of shared decision-making among partnership members led to more "*openly expressed and valued differences of opinion, better defined roles among partners, higher levels of concern for cultural sensitivity and for the protection of participant rights, as well as greater participation by community partners in all phases of the research project"* (p.357). Dr. Leslie Brown from Mount St. Vincent University provides seven valuable foundational principles that were developed from the partnership research. These principles included inclusivity, accountability, transparency, relationship building, mutual respect, consultative process, participatory and collaborative project governance, and research processes (Brown, 2012). These principles were operationalized by drafting, reworking and signing a Memorandum of Understanding, which included commitments, roles and responsibilities, procedures for dealing with conflict, and information on conflict of interest. In the project reviewed, having a clear MoU between the university and community partners was not only a valuable process in the development of the partnership but provided a clear framework outlining the motivations, goals, and expectations of each party. Partners need to have a clear understanding of what they wish to achieve, what their strategies will be, what each partners' role will be, the decision-making process, and how disagreements will be resolved. For Jean-Marc Fontan, director of the CURA's '*Economie Sociale'* in Montreal, having the roles and responsibilities of each partner clearly defined was extremely important at the inception of the project.

An important element for successful partnerships, like any relationship, is *mutual respect and trust* for each partner. Each partner must be able to trust the other partners to exercise good judgment, keep the others' interest in

mind and work for the success of the partnership (OCBR, 2012). This trust stems from the assumption that multiple sources of knowledge are valid and essential and that each partner brings a valuable contribution as an expert in their own lives and experiences. For Deborah Stienstra at the University of Manitoba, mutual benefit is a bottom line, in which "*each partner has to give something and get something from the partnership and it needs to be something that they value. It doesn't help to get something you don't want. So that notion of mutual benefit and mutual contribution is really important piece of that."* Investing in the listening process also contributes to strengthening the relationship as Yolande Chan, co-director of the KIS project stresses, *"the project involves discovery workshops and those were opportunities for community to speak and for academics to shut up and listen and there was a sense of respect. The culture was one of you have something to say and we need to listen, go away and come back with helpful suggestions to address the challenges that your community is dealing with. So we listened and we responded and that whole communication and following with action was part of the whole success of this project."* Communicating clearly and active listening are essential to developing and maintaining strong partnerships. Although conflicts inevitably arise, they can be resolved through clear and careful communication.

There needs to be *flexible partnership arrangement* to fit the needs of the various capacities of the community organizations involved. One way to respond to this is to create a range of partnership options, in terms of engagement and financial commitment. Learning from the KIS project, Jeff Dixon, Associate Director of the Monieson Centre, suggests a new structure for meeting these various needs of community. "*For our new partnership we have a much more formal arrangement structure so there is a leadership team that entails a financial commitment and quarterly meetings, a steering committee, with a less financial commitment meeting twice a year and then there is a larger more general partnership network, with no financial commitment but are connected to the project and are connected by email and help promote the project. And so it creates some flexibility from highly engaged, to those that are perhaps lacking financial resources. So we created a range of partnership options."* Leslie Brown, Mount St. Vincent University, also outlined flexibility to be an important component. "*The autonomy*

that groups were given, leaving it up to the level of the project to work out that relationship was critical – you don't want to force community partners to engage beyond what they want in a given time and you also need to leave room for change – and that's really important. Individual projects changed, the network itself made adjustments trying to respond. It is a challenge for the funder to give networks the freedom to change and not specify everything in the application."

Applying *Participatory Research (PR) approaches* throughout the entire research project is an incredibly valuable condition for creating successful and equitable partnerships. PR methodologies are described as a "*process of producing new knowledge by systemic inquiry with the collaboration of those affected by the issue being studied, for the purposes of education and taking action or affecting social change*" (McAulay et al., 1999, p. 76). This approach requires that trust and a mutual vision between the partners is nurtured, often were a history of collaborating, although not absolutely necessary, has been established. This involves the co-creation of the research project from the development of the application, implementation and process of the research framework, data collection, co-ownership of the results and how the knowledge will be translated and disseminated. PR aims: 1) to produce knowledge and action directly useful to the community being studied, and 2) to empower people through the process of constructing and using their own knowledge (Barnsley & Ellis, 1992). "*To me it's a shift from just collecting data to actually thinking about the curating process, where the fieldwork is actually the project itself, where you are inviting people rather then getting researchers out and I think that is a fundamental shift. So the sharing authority language gave us a way to describe that and justify that and I think the real strength of the project is its diversity – its research in partnership in a really fundamental way"* (Steven High, Concordia University).

Sharing an equal *balance of power* in a partnership is critical. In order to achieve this, partners need to be reflexive and recognize positions of relative privilege, and work to ensure that collaboration is equitable and power sharing is taking place. Steven High, from Concordia University, highlighted that the approach of 'shared-authority' between the partners was at the heart of what made the collaboration so successful. "*Our partners were all co-*

applicants, we didn't make a distinction between university co-applicants and community collaborators, so it was really about building capacity within the communities and so the community people are involved in every step". One of the points made by High as a useful strategy to create equality among the partners is to have the budget tied to the working groups not any individual, which tried to break down hierarchies. One strategy to enhance and nurture equal power structures is to host the project at the partner community organization. According to Dr. Frances Owen at Brock University, "*there are real advantages to having the project based in the community. It really made a difference for people to have a face to the research. Many of those people that were involved at the university have made relationships with the people that were involved in the training so I don't know how you measure that, but in talking with the different professors there was a change in their mind set in not only the abilities of the people that were involved but also a connection."* Likewise, for Leslie Brown (2012) the decentralized participatory structure allowed for issues to be addressed face-to-face within project teams, which was absolutely fundamental.

Being able to *share resources*, particularly funding, is an extremely important component to embracing equal power structures and partnerships. For Deborah Stienstra, University of Manitoba, one of the things that worked well was to "*move money into the community organizations to facilitate the participation and that meant that they could free up resources to contribute. We put a community research coordinator in the community, so they were based there, so he had a presence there and that was important for his work*".

In any collaborative research approach, *the process* is just as important as the outcome. CU projects from a community perspective can be frustrating and difficult if they do not understand the research process. Community partner, Barbara Vyrostko, suggests that having a seminar with community partners at the inception of the project that outlines the research process would be highly beneficial. "*We don't quite get it from a community level. To have that understanding at the beginning is important."* Likewise, for community partner Craig Desjardins, Executive Director at Prince Edward/ Lennox & Addington, understanding the motivations, language, goals, and expectations of each party was important. "These were two silos that never

overlapped, and they bumped. It wasn't until we really became partners, collaborators and friends that you understood. The community didn't understand the whole notion of publishing as a key advancement for the academy. If you don't understand that is an important metric for doing the work then that's a big barrier. Doing community work the way the system is designed is not a big motive; unfortunately, it takes the extra time to do that. Communication in terms of language, understanding, on the ground language and academic language and that translation component that was really part of the KIS, all of a sudden we speak the same language and that's a process, you have to learn the language you don't just all of a sudden understand."

Relationships take a long time to nurture. Building collaborative relationships entail trust, and cant move forward until partners have fostered a deep sense of common values, and a common vision of where the project is going. True to all the projects in this review, the initial seed funding was paramount in bringing people together to find that common vision. It is for this reason that the partnership was so successful, explains Dr. Frances Owen, Brock University, "*the fact that we had a history together made a good partnership, and that we shared common values. Many of us have known each other and have worked together for years in one way or another and so we came from a place of trust and respect for each other so that made the process much easier. The community organizations were very accommodating in terms of ethics and delays, that trusting relationship was really a foundation for everything we did."* Having face-to-face contact is an important element in fostering a strong partnership connection. "*Even in the 21st century*", stresses Yolande Chan, "*for a CU alliance to be successful you cant rely on the Internet and telephone conversations, you do need face-face, and we did that a lot in the project."*

Community-university partnerships entail interactions between human, managerial and operational factors within complex policy organizational, physical and social settings. A consistent theme from the literature is that the interactions necessary for successful partnerships are dependent on *quality leadership* (El Ansari & Phillips, 2001; Kegler & Wyatt, 2003). Leadership based on positive relationships improve CU partnerships' funding and sustainability by mobilizing community support and resources. Supportive

leadership styles promote involvement, increase members' satisfaction and participation, resolve conflicts, and encourage commitment, different viewpoints, and group achievement. A strong leader requires "*strategic thinking, knowledge, contributions, management, communication, and partnering skills help to coach, develop and select talent, inspire trust and steer partnerships' goals*" (El Ansari 2010, p. 502). A study by McCallum and O'Connell (2008) reveals that social capital in addition to human capital (*attitude, decision processes etc*) is an important component of a leader's skill set, particularly in the context of enhancing relationships. Strong leadership was identified as a key condition for a successful partnership by the award holders presented in this paper.

Central to the concept of leadership is the relationship between leaders and followers. Chemers (2002) suggests that "*leaders must focus on their credibility and legitimacy with followers, the development of a relationship via identification of followers needs and motivations, and deploying resources as to draw out the best of followers in order to meet established goals"* (p.153). Indeed a strong tenant of what makes a good partnership is the trust and credibility of the leaders, as highlighted in the case studies of this review. "*I think this is critical; the coordinator role is absolutely critical."* (Jeff Dixon, KIS project). Barbara Vyrostko, Executive Director of Community Living Welland Pelham also stressed the importance of having a history, shared common values, and respect as a vital value inherent their success. "*Many of us have known each other and have worked together for years in one way or another and so we came from a place of trust and respect for each other so that made the process much easier."*

It is also important to take the time to allow for new forms of collaborative leadership to evolve. Partnership research is not easy and finding the right rhythm and style that will work in each situation requires an attention to leadership that differs from traditional curiosity driven research.

4. Challenges remain

While we are seeing the emergence of a new architecture of knowledge in many cases in Canada, it is still true that the dominant research approach

remains disciplinary, curiosity driven by academics and engaged with the community for limited times depending on funding. It is also true that academics engaged with community university research partnerships find it very time consuming and often difficult to defend from a career advancement point of view. Community based research thrives in interdisciplinary and multisectoral settings when the work is directed or genuinely co-directed by community or civil society actors. We are also concerned with the relative inequality from a research capacity perspective of civil society organisations (csos). For a truly vibrant and respectful practice of co-creation to exist, civil society organisations have also have dedicated research and evaluation staff. If the CSOs remain the source of knowledge and the academics the analysts, we will not make any changes.

The impacts highlighted in this paper demonstrate however that we are moving from the historic phase of engaged scholarship based largely on the work of a number of committed individual scholars and their personal connections to community to an institutional approach with the creation of many centres, some wholly located in communities themselves, and new structures to facilitate the creation and facilitation of community university research partnerships. And from a theoretical perspective, we see evidence of a growing sophistication of research methods as co-construction of knowledge has taken its place in the panoply of academic work.

This article also demonstrates the benefits of our higher education institutions engaging in the geographic locations where they are located. Excellence at a world level also comes from making a difference in the lives of those living in our communities. Furthermore whether dealing with issues of climate adaptation, support for community business, creating more affordable housing and local jobs, having better quality local food, research partnerships between communities and the higher education institutions located there are working. Universities, through partnership research practices are becoming ever more active partners with local governments, non-profits, businesses, and service providers enabling significantly stronger regional development.

We also underscore the critical importance and emerging evidence that multi-stakeholder community university research partnerships on the role of networks are effective. The Social Economy Hub, the Rural Economies work,

work with persons with different abilities, Indigenous recovery of language and culture, the Vancouver Island Community Research Alliance all provide evidence that the best way to effect change in service delivery, policy development or even legislative provisions is through support for and working together. Local government, community environmental, social, cultural and economic interests co-constructing knowledge together works.

The evidence in this research also demonstrates that the benefits to community accrue in direct proportion to the quality and longevity and trust developed between academic and community partners. Whether from the Montreal social economy scene or community partnerships with immigrant communities in Kitchener-Waterloo, Food Action Groups on Vancouver Island, Rural Communities elsewhere, the full benefits of the new architecture of learning emerge and grow in ability to deliver as we integrate these partnerships into the our normal ways of working.

We also underscore what may be obvious, but bears re-stating. The 'knowledge cultures' in community settings, community agencies, local governments and so forth are different. We need to learn from each other. Community partners need to know that we have a duty to share our work in the world of peer-reviewed spaces as well as with them. As academics we need to know that the real needs of people who are struggling in our communities are urgent and that solution-oriented knowledge is the gold standard for community impact. We both have to learn that in an emerging world of knowledge democracy and co-creation, that excellence can be increasingly understood within the context of mutual respect.

Much work is underway within individual academic departments, within Faculties and in some cases across full university structures to broaden concepts of excellent academic scholarly performance for purposes of obtaining tenure and promotion and in the interest of annual merit reviews. While still uneven with substantial variability amongst disciplines, professional schools, Faculties and Universities, partnership research has served to stimulate a broader conception of excellence in scholarship that shows every sign of becoming a national trend.

Finally, the authors welcome exchanges with readers about this article and the issues that it raises. Dr Crystal Tremblay www.crystaltremblay.com

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