Towards a New Architecture of Knowledge: The Office of Community-Based Research at the University of Victoria

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Although researchers are successfully integrating their efforts at a European level and even global level to address the increasing complexity of scientific inquiry, there appears to be a yawning gap between science and society at large.
--Rainer Gerold, Science and Society Director, Research Directorate-General, European Commission

Sometimes the ring road of the University of Victoria appears to those of us in community agencies as a kind of moat…keeping the University from reaching us and us from ease of entry into the University.
--Victoria Community Agency Member

Community-based research (CBR) offers higher education a distinctive form of engaged scholarship and a transformative approach to teaching and learning
--Kerry Strand et al (2003).

Introduction

This chapter reports on the creation of the Office of Community-Based Research in 2006-2007, its key activities and ways of working and challenges that it faces in carrying out its mission. In doing so, we very strongly dissociate our work from any notion of a "Third Mission". Community Engaged Scholarship is in fact an integrating function that cuts across the older notions of a separation of research, teaching and service. Trying to understand the work taken up by the Office of Community Based Research and the many other emerging university structures through a 'third mission' lens does serious damage to our capacity to understand current global trends in Higher Education.

Strategic emergence of Community university research partnerships

There is a wind of change sweeping our research communities. There is a pervasive energy for something that is described variously as knowledge mobilisation, knowledge exchange, knowledge translation, and knowledge transfer or knowledge application. What most of these concepts are responding to is the notion that significant social, political and economic investments have been made in the creation and/or accumulation of knowledge based in or with universities. In this context, knowledge is understood as a state of understanding, feeling or awareness based on experience or study. Knowledge is the state of knowing. Universities are often seen by society as institutional repositories of knowledge. Scholars, students and faculty are all understood to be creating

knowledge through their research activities. The accepted understanding is that the process of research creates knowledge. Scholars or researchers are regarded as the facilitators of these processes and thereby the creators of this knowledge. This kind of knowledge is put into peer-reviewed journals, professional reports, books, CDs, DVDs, podcasts, blogs and other internet-based products. Much of this knowledge remains in the minds of the researchers, on shelves in libraries or in journals that may remain invisible to persons working on the practical side of social, economic, ecological or health challenges in our communities.

The various modifiers associated with the concept of knowledge all have in common an aspiration that the formal research processes facilitated by university-based scholars will produce ideas, concepts, frameworks or even solutions which can be used in the improvement of the lives of people. Knowledge mobilisation speaks of an active process of moving knowledge into the hands of those who can use the knowledge. Knowledge translation and transfer recognizes that academic research, in order to engage with community knowledge, needs to be deliberately or intentionally worked with so as to facilitate its use by non-academic groups. Finally, knowledge exchange recognizes that knowledge is created in community, workplace or social movement settings and that there is or could be an exchange of knowledge between those who create knowledge in both formal academic and other settings. All of these contemporary ideas of knowledge have been expressed 30 or 40 years ago by others using terms such as feminist research, participatory research, action research, decolonizing research, indigenous research and so forth. What is exciting about current times is that funding agencies and universities alike are recognising that research is not complete without acknowledging its application, use, capacity for change, social transformation or some other forms of engagement.

In the 1970s in the Netherlands, a structure called Science Shop was created to link academic research to community needs (http://www.livingknowledge.org). In Tanzania, India, Latin America and elsewhere, a new research approach called "participatory research", which recognized the knowledge creating capacities of community, organisations and social movements, was also gaining visibility (Hall, 1975). Flash forward 40 years, and we have the emergence of a second or third wave of research and knowledge mobilisation initiatives that build on the early work of the Science Shops, the Participatory Research practitioners and others. It is promoted and supported by a new set of networks and structures such as Sciences Citoyennes in France (http://sciencescitoyennes.org); the Living Knowledge Network based in Germany (http://www.scienceshops.org); The Popular Education Network based in Scotland (Crowther, 1999); Community Based Research Canada (http://uvic.ca/ocbr); Campus Community Partnerships for Health in the United States (http://depts.washington.edu/ccph/); as well as the National CBR Networking Initiative (http://www.bonner.org/campus/cbr/home.htm) and the University-Community Partnership for Social Action Research Network (http://www.igloo.org/ucpsarnet). Additional networks and structures include the Society for Participatory Research in Asia (http://www.pria.org); The Global University Network for Innovation of Barcelona

(http://www.guni-rmies.net); the Sub-Saharan African Participatory Research Network in Senegal; the Developing Research on Citizenship network based at the University of Sussex (http://www.drc-citizenship.org); Observatory PASCAL on Place Management, Community Engagement and Learning Regions (http://www.obs-pascal.com); the Australian University Community Engagement Association (Temple et al, 2005); and many other emerging networks. Between August of 2006 and present, representatives from many of these networks have been engaged in conversations about how best to support this emerging theory and practice of higher education community based research. We now have an emerging space for the systematic sharing of experiences that did not exist in earlier years.

Local communities in Canada face unprecedented challenges to their social, economic, cultural and environmental futures. These challenges range from growing poverty and homelessness in urban centres (Mackinnon, 2008; Brown et al 2008, Cunningham & Walker, 2008; Cowan & Khandor, 2008; Walsh et al, 2008) to agricultural and rural decline (Neufeld, 2008; Barry et al, 2008) and from climate change impacts on northern communities to declining health in Aboriginal and First Nations communities (Cairo, 2008; Reading, 2002). Community based research (CBR) has become a major focus of several groups, including: community groups attempting to advance action on systemic change (Hall 2005) post secondary institutions concerned to advance knowledge to inform responses to challenges (Holland & Ramaley, 2008; Barnet, 2008), government agencies concerned to develop evidence-based policy (Shields & Evans, 2008; Israel et al, 1998), and philanthropic donors in the private sector concerned about investing in ways that will produce results (Maxwell, 2006). Recognition of the role of CBR in universities at an international level can be seen in the Talloires Network (http://www.tufts.edu/talloiresnetwork), the Global University network for Innovation (http://www.guni-rmies.net) web site, the Living Knowledge Network (http://www.sci-enceshops.org), the Community University Partnership Programme (http://www.bton.ac.uk/cupp), as well as The Global Alliance on Community-Engaged Research that has recently been launched (http://web.uvic.ca/ocbr/cuexpo/index.html).

What does it mean for universities?

The interest and support for community based research and knowledge mobilisation is an important component of the broader trend of increased attention to community or civic engagement in all Canadian universities. As the current generation of university strategic plans in Canada is released, it is notable that language around community university engagement has become more prominent. The University of Victoria speaks of "civic engagement"; other universities use a variety of other expressions from "social responsibility" to "local and regional engagement". The notion of a "third mission" for higher education (teaching, research and community service) with its narrower and separate realm of community service is being replaced by a variety of ways of expressing engagement with the community, which cut across both the research and the teaching functions.

Ted Jackson at Carleton University has conceptualized what he calls the "CUE (Community University Engagement) Factor" (Jackson, 2008, p.1). He writes of a dynamic interaction of community university engagement that includes community based experiential or service learning; community-based research and community based continuing education. Community based learning, service learning, experiential learning and community service learning (the preferred term in Canada all refer to opportunities for students to have placements or engagements with community organizations. Community service learning as a concept often includes an aspect of social change or transformation as part of the intention. Experiential learning is a more neutral concept placing the value on learning through experience, with less emphasis on 'service' or transformation. Community engagement is about the interaction of a variety of forms of engagement both with each other and with the academic mission of the universities. Continuing education is the grandmother of all forms of community engagement and arguably still represents the deepest set of community partnerships. It is as diverse and multi-faceted as the human imagination. Service learning, community service learning or experiential service learning has seen considerable growth across the country over the past ten years. Service learning is experiential learning for students who learn off-campus through action projects with community groups. UBC's Learning Exchange, where undergraduate students have opportunities to work in Vancouver's downtown east side, is one of the better known programs, but the Canadian Alliance for Community Service Learning lists 26 service learning programs in universities and colleges in every region in the country. Jackson calls on universities across Canada to "increase their CUE factors by deepening and broadening their teaching, research and volunteering activities with the external constituencies that have the greatest need for sustainable solutions to the challenges they face every day" (Jackson, p. 1).

The late Ernest Boyer at the Carnegie Foundation laid down some of the early conceptual foundations with his development of the concept of "engaged scholarship" (Boyer, 1996). More recently the Carnegie Foundation has offered what is the most widely adopted definition of engagement: "Community engagement describes the collaboration between institutions of higher education and their larger communities for the mutually beneficial exchange of knowledge and resources in a context of partnership and reciprocity" (Boyer, 1996). An emphasis can be seen on the concept of reciprocity. The Kellogg Commission on the Future of State and Land-Grant Universities (Kellogg Commission 1999) shifted the terms research, teaching and serve to the words discovery, learning and engagement. This is a strikingly different approach to the mission of the university as it creates ideas, which are no longer separate realms of knowledge creation. Discovery happens in all aspects of university work, from basic sciences to new approaches to HIV/AIDS. It happens in classrooms, laboratories, and businesses and in not-for-profit organisations. Learning is the same.

What does it mean for communities?

The United Way of Greater Victoria has established a series of 'impact councils' to make informed, research-based and evidence-based recommendations on what kinds of funding interventions show the most promise for permanent impact on issues of poverty, mental

health and addition, family services other areas of need the greater Victoria area. The creation of the OCBR facilitated the identification of university scholars who could sit on these impact councils and bring their academic knowledge and experience to the table shared by local business and government partners. The Downtown Business Association of Greater Victoria has initiated a lunchtime speaker's series in collaboration with the Office of Community-Based Research and the Division of Continuing Studies to bring academics with practical and policy and business ideas to the attention of the downtown businesses. The Municipality of Saanich, one of the 13 smaller municipalities that make up the Greater Victoria area approached the OCBR with a request for help with a community mapping and citizen's consultation process for planning urban development. The Halalt First Nations, an Indigenous community about an hour north of Victoria has asked the University of Victoria for help with planning some agricultural initiatives, with legal help regarding threats to the regional aquifer and with documenting their history.

All of these are examples of the new community-university research partnerships that have emerged from the creation of the University of Victoria's Office of Community-Based Research. They illustrate what is happening across our communities in Canada and elsewhere. There is a new relationship between institutions of higher education and their communities being negotiated through practice. The emergence of these new partnership structures is a critical step in providing the capacity for partnership development. Relationships lie at the heart of community-university research partnerships. Neither brilliance, good intentions, need, passion nor charismatic leadership will work to assure success if relations of respectful and mutual understanding are not established early in a research partnership. Many individuals in both the community and the university have been aware of this, what is different is that this kind of thinking is being taken up at an institutional level.

The CBR tradition at the University of Victoria

The first formal step by the University of Victoria in exploring the extent of community-based research as a model of academic practice at the University came in April of 2005 in the form of a university-wide forum on community-based research. The forum was in part stimulated by a Master's project written in Public Administration by Janet Dunnett (Dunnett, 2004) that documented many aspects of community-based research at UVic. The forum addressed the question of to what extent do University of Victoria scholars identify their work as falling within the broad understanding of community-based research? It was also designed to solicit opinions from within the University community on the value of creating a formal organisational support structure for community-based research.

The CBR forum was a success as over 80 academics answered to the description of community-based research. The President of the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council at the time, Dr. Marc Renaud, in his closing remarks, threw out a challenge to the University of Victoria to take up a leadership position in this field as he felt that we were ideally suited to do so. There was strong support from the participants as well as from some 40-50 additional persons who could not attend the forum in person. On the basis of this strong support, Peter Keller, Dean of Social Sciences, Budd Hall,

Dean of Education and Kelly Bannister of the POLIS Project (a legal-environmental research centre) were asked to develop a proposal for a structure and to extend the preliminary thoughts through further consultations on campus. We added Maeve Lydon to lead the community consultation phase of the process and Peter Levesque of Knowledge Mobilization Works! as an external consultant. The report was submitted in June of 2006 and the President of the University announced the creation of what was to become known as the 'Office' of Community-Based Research in November of that year with the formal launching in January of 2007.

Mission and objectives of the Office of Community-Based Research

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

<u>Facilitating Community-University Research Partnerships</u>

- Strengthening our systems and tools for brokering
- Building partnership and CBR Skills
- Supporting Community-driven research alliances
- Policy development and networking

<u>Supporting Faculty and Students</u>

- Increased recognition of excellence in CBR for merit and promotion
- Support to teaching, learning and curriculum development
- Enhancing Science, Engineering and Business Engagement
- Mobilisation of resources for CBR
- Enhancing student engagement in CBR
- Support for Indigenous-Centered Research
- Publication support for CBR scholars

The Vancouver Island Community Research Alliance (VICRA)

The city of Victoria is situated on the southwest corner of Vancouver Island. Vancouver Island is the largest island off the west coast of North America 500 kilometers long and 100 kilometers wide and about the size of Holland. There are about 800,000 people living here with the bulk of the population in the southern third of the island on the Saanich

peninsula and in the city of Nanaimo. The southern communities are for the most part well to do with excellent educational and health services. The coastal communities on the Northern and Western sections of the island have been hard hit by the loss of the commercial fishery (a dramatic decrease in the salmon stocks), a decline in forestry and the global economic slowdown of the 2008-2011 period. There are a large number of First Nations communities and a substantial number of Indigenous citizens living in our urban areas. With a decline of the resource industries and the natural tendencies of global capitalism, poverty continues to be produced as we have a growing number of persons who are unhoused living in many parts of the Island. Issues of sustainability, food security, health disparities are also of concern up and down the island.

In addition to the University of Victoria, there are four other post-secondary educational institutions on our island: Vancouver Island University in Nanaimo; Royal Roads University (a largely distance university) in Victoria; Camosun College (a community college) in Victoria and North Island College in several of the North Island communities. We have a total of about 60,000 students, 10,000 staff and about $150 million of research/year when we combine the assets of all five of our institutions. A memorandum of understanding was signed between our five campuses to work together to use research partnerships as a way to respond to the aspirations and needs of the communities that we live in. The OCBR is the provides the organizational base for the work and the University of Victoria and Vancouver Island University are co-conveners of the network. Vancouver Island is one of the most beautiful places in the world. It has been consistently voted the "best island in the world" by various travel magazines. The richness of natural life and ecological diversity are almost mind-boggling. We believe that if our higher education institutions can work together more effectively, we can make strong progress on the stubborn and persistent social and economic challenges that hold us back from becoming what we are capable of being.

VICRA is an alliance of the five post-secondary educational institutions located on Vancouver Island. They are united via a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) signed by the respective President's of each of the five institutions. The five campuses include: The University of Victoria, Royal Road's University, Vancouver Island University, Camosun College and North Island College. The MOU calls on the group to: (1) identify priority research issues with an island wide focus:(2) develop and implement a process to identify relevant and available knowledge, information, skills, and capacities both in the Parties and in communities (3) identify and develop research partnerships and share information on best practices that can be shared with others;(4) promote the engagement of the Parties' students in action research projects identified by communities/community members; (5) build capacity for community-based research and evidence-based planning among the spectrum of organisations and agencies that work to address the needs of Vancouver Island residents and communities;(6) build on each other's experiences and expertise, drawing on lessons from local, national and global networks/projects.

During 2008 and 2009, we worked with communities up and down the island to see what common issues there were that our VICRA team might be able to address. Three areas

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

Building the curriculum of community-based research within the University of Victoria

Given the large numbers of faculty involved in community-based research at the University of Victoria, it was a natural step for the OCBR to think about how it could strengthen sharing of the experiences amongst these knowledgeable scholars and between them and students in the University. The goal is to make CBR at the University of Victoria the very best anywhere; to build on the commitment and experience of so many at the University of Victoria.

In order to do this, we developed a speaker's series called, "Promises and Perils of Teaching CBR at the University of Victoria". It was developed by the OCBR in collaboration with the Learning and Teaching Centre. Dr. Catherine Etmanski, a respected CBR scholar working with the Faculties of Education and Public Administration, coordinated the series. The topics covered included: An Introduction to the Growing World of CBR; Indigenous Approaches to Research; Making Community-University Partnerships Work; From Research to Action in CBR; Using the Arts in CBR; Ethics in CBR and Creating Multi-disciplinary Courses for CBR.

The series that was initiated in the 2009-2010 academic year was extremely popular, welcoming about 300 participants attending one or more of the sessions. There were 28 academics and community resource persons that participated in the first year of the series, which also proved to be very popular with graduate students. The idea that the series might have become a space for academics themselves to share amongst each other was less successful. While several faculty members took part in the sessions, most of the professors only turned up at the sessions where they were speaking. This is fairly typical in university life, but remains a challenge when we are striving to deepen the theory and practice of CBR within our University. We have followed up the series with a proposal to produce a collaborative book on teaching CBR in higher education settings with the engagement of many of these same faculty members. We hope that producing this collaborative publication will strengthen the exchange of ideas amongst the authors involved.

An interactive and web-based moodle site supported the series as it got started and we hope that this will continue to grow as a way of building dialogue, support and learning. Christopher Bowers has been working with the OCBR as its resident "story catcher". His specialty is doing short three to four minute interviews of CBR participants to 'catch' the essence of their thinking. Many of the speakers in the CBR teaching series have been caught and can be seen on at http://ocbrinstitute.blip.tv/

Networking to strengthen local action: National and international spaces

Universities are structured in such similar ways there is really only one global university. In practical terms this means that when we wish to create a new service or new structure within our own universities, it is important that we do two things: take a look at what other universities are already doing along these lines and either get connected with already existing networks or work with others to create a network. This is the approach that we have taken at the University of Victoria. We have taken initiatives regarding the founding of a Vancouver Island Community Research Alliance (VICRA), Community-Based Research Canada (CBRC) and the Global Alliance for Community Engaged Research (GACER).

Community-Based Research Canada (www.communityresearchcanada.ca) is an evolving open and inclusive network of people and organisations engaged in and supporting community-based research. It was born during the Community University Exposition 2008 that was hosted by the City of Victoria. It held its first national seminar in May of 2009 in Ottawa (www2.carleton.ca/newsroom/news-releases/recession-to-renewal) with a focus on how CBR can contribute to the solution of complex economic and social issues. Its first major policy effort was the publication of a report on the funding and development of community-based research in Canada for the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (Hall, 2009). This report made a series of recommendations to the granting councils, the universities and to community research groups. The study and the desire to follow-up with some of the recommendations in this study led to the launching of a national conversation on Knowledge and Society that is framed within the discourse of a new Knowledge Commons (Hall, 2010). The first national summit on the Knowledge Commons was held on June 2, 2010 in Montreal.

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

Challenges

The OCBR has found remarkably fertile soil for germination. It is located at a University that puts high value on civic engagement and where a substantial number of its faculty members have a preference for conducting this kind of engaged scholarship. At the same time for some good reasons (genuine interest in working with university students and faculty) and political realities (substantial budget cuts to social services in the region) the community interest in making better use of the University for research purposes is high. However, challenges are significant and include: trying to respond to demand; turning partnerships and interest into research projects; getting credit for engaged scholarship for faculty tenure and promotion purposes; becoming a permanent part of the university structures.

Our experiences at the University of Victoria have given us much hope. We can see new ways of understanding knowledge and get some glimpses of what a new architecture of knowledge might look like. The University of Victoria as well as other universities has not yet come to full grips with what this means for the administrative and knowledge mobilisation structures of the University. Getting a full return on the public investment in our universities in Canada means paying for the facilitation and brokering services that will make the connections with the substantial needs in our communities, in our country and in our troubled world.

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