Knowledge Democracy on the Move[1]

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In 2011 I wrote an article with the title "Towards a Knowledge Democracy Movement" for the open access journal *Rizoma Freireano* (2011) In there I asked the question about whether a global knowledge democracy movement was emerging. I defined a global knowledge movement as,

> "an action-oriented formation that recognizes, gives visibility to and strengthens the knowledge that is created in the context of, as Marx said, people trying to 'change the world'. A Global Knowledge Movement would recognize, value and support the recovery and deepening of indigenous ways of knowing (Wangoola, 2000; Williams and Tanaka, 2009). A global knowledge movement would recognize the epistemic privilege of the homeless themselves as a key to taking in action on issues of homelessness. It would celebrate the intellectual contributions of young people who are differently abled. It would honour the early work of Engels gathering the insights of workers in the 19th century factories of Manchester, England or Marx's work in the Moselle river valley of Germany learning from workers in the vineyards. It would recognize that the Gay and Lesbian movement and the HIV/AIDS movements have been built fundamentally on the knowledge of Gay and Lesbian citizens themselves." (2011: 9).

I continued on to note that,

> "A knowledge movement or a movement that uses knowledge as a key mobilising and organising strategy is centred within the lives and places of those who are seeking recognition of their rights, their land claims, access to jobs, ecological justice, recovery or retention of their languages. Knowledge itself within such a movement formation is most likely place-based and rooted in the daily lives of people who increase their knowledge of their own contexts and by sharing what they are learning with allies and others like themselves move, as Paulo Freire says, towards being agents in the naming of the world." (2011:9).

Creation of our UNESCO Chair

In 2012, Rajesh Tandon and I were been appointed as joint Chairs of the UNESCO Chair in Community-Based Research and Social Responsibility in Higher Education. The objectives of our Chair have been to a) build research capacity in the global South and the excluded North in the theory and practice of community based research and to play an advocacy role in response to

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policy development in Higher Education, research funding and international development sectors. We have been guided theoretically by a continued deepening of our learning about knowledge democracy. But in 2011, we had not yet come upon the works of de Sousa Santos, Visvanathan, Connell, Bivens, Dussel and so many others. Our instinctive thoughts on the possibility of understanding the role of knowledge in emerging social movements was drawn from our own earlier work in participatory research dating back to the 1970s and to our attraction to the emergence of structures within universities for the facilitation of community-university research partnerships. As we have continued to work framed by these principles, our thinking has deepened and the circles of discourse and practice within which we work has widened. We are generously nourished by both the discovery of new academic sources as well as by social movement and practitioner-led framings.

Our initial work under the aegis of our UNESCO Chair was to initiate and carry out two major international studies on the state-of-the-art in CBR. In pursuit of those studies we have been working with a number of well-known community-university engagement networks including the Talloires Network, the Global University Network for Innovation, the Asia Pacific University Community Network, PASCAL and the Living Knowledge Network. Our close relationship with these networks continues. Our first study is, [Strengthening Community University Partnerships](#) and the second, [Knowledge and Engagement: Building the Capacity of the Next Generation of Community Based Researchers](#). Both are free and downloadable under creative commons copyrights. Our current priority is the launching, training and supporting of the network of local participatory knowledge hubs, the Knowledge for Change (K4C) Global Consortium. The K4C Consortium is a series of local training hubs located in various parts of the global South as well as serving the excluded North. First hubs are scheduled for start-up in October-November, 2018 in India, Cuba, Colombia, Indonesia, South Africa and Sardinia, Italy. Other hubs are foreseen for East Africa, Francophone West Africa and with an Indigenous hub in Canada.

Significant New Energies On the Scene

Since my coming to London for several months, I have been encouraged to the emergence of a newer set of networks operating largely in the global civil society world. My colleague Rajesh Tandon has been involved earlier in some of the early foundations of some of these networks. All I have come across share a vision of activism, social and environmental justice and an interest in knowledge and capacity-building as a critical element in mobilisation for change. We are indebted to Jude Fransman (Open University), Kate Newman (Christian Aid) and So Jung Rim (Social Innovation Exchange) for their drawing our attention to some of this widening number of global networks. Cornish, Fransman, and Newman (2017) have published under creative commons a discussion guide and toolkit to prompt potential academic-NGO research partners to reflective critically on the nature of 'evidence' and its relationship to 'participation' in their partnerships. The resource is based on their major study of UK academic institutions

research partnerships with UK based international NGOs. The importance of this seminal study is that it acknowledges civil society as a location of knowledge production and highlights the challenges of partnerships between universities and NGOs as framed by specific contexts of policy and research funding (in this case, the UK context). So Jung Rim, who coordinates a fascinating gathering called the "unusual suspects festival" introduced us to the Social Innovation Exchange (SIX), a global network in the field of what is called 'social innovation'. Social innovation is a broad concept that seems to mean quite a few things, but in the hands of the activists associated with the SIX, it means working across silos and boundaries in new ways to advance agendas of social justice and sustainability. Included in their thinking are new forms of partnerships between social movements and universities, new forms of knowledge.

Before leaving for Amnesty International, Kumi Naidoo and others brought together a broad coalition of African social movement and trade union activists, human rights groups, development thinkers, women's organisations from all parts of Africa to create a new structure, a Pan-African movement called Africans Rising for Justice, Peace and Dignity. Meeting in Arusha, Tanzania near the slopes of Mt Kilimanjaro, they crafted the Kilimanjaro Declaration. Among other statements in the Declaration are that:

- Africans have a diverse, rich and powerful heritage (and knowledge – added) that is important to heal ourselves and repair the damage done by neoliberalism to our humanity and environment.
- We are committed to a decentralised, citizen-owned future that will build support and solidarity for local struggles, empower local leadership and immerse our activists in grassroots work of building social movements from below and beyond borders.

And many others!

And then we have the work of the South-South Exchange Programme on the History of Economic Development with academics such as Claudio Penheiro from Brazil who writes on 'decolonizing thought' and Raewyn Connell from Australia who writes of a "democratic world knowledge economy" and an "epistemology of solidarity". Two recent Doctoral thesis are important: Ceri Davies writing on the concept of "Cognitive Justice" drawing on work being done in the UK and Denis Bussieres of Quebec with a powerful thesis on "Recherche Parteneriale". Florence Piron's breakthrough work on Open Science in collaboration with African scholars in Francophone West Africa has influenced us. CIVICUS, the global civil society organisation that my co-Chair, Rajesh Tandon helped to found, has launched a new initiative called DataShift. DataShift is an initiative that builds the capacity and confidence of civil society organisations to "produce and use citizen-generated data to monitor sustainable development progress, demand accountability and campaign for transformative change". Ultimately, their vision is a world where people-powered accountability drives progress on sustainable development. Greenpeace has created what it calls its mobilization lab or Molab. It's

focus is on Networked Learning as it posits that, "Knowledge exists across networks; it's not concentrated in any one group or individual. That's why we embrace and facilitate learning through peer practitioners".

And the Indigenous Resurgence

Coming from Western Canada where I am reminded daily that I live on the territory of the Lekwungen and Sencothen speaking Peoples, the First Nations who have been here for at least 10,000 years, I have benefited from the emergence of a generation of Indigenous scholars (Battiste:2005, Corntassel:2014, Tuck: 2014, 2015, Williams:2009). And Indigenous leadership in a knowledge democracy movement is not limited to Canada of course with now classic work in decolonizing research from Maori scholar Linda Tuhiwai Smith (2013), Ugandans Ndawula Ndawula Wangoola, founder of the Mpambo Afrikan Multiversity, Catherine Odara-Hoppers (2002) and Rwandan Ezeanya (2011).

Building visibility for the movement

What we are calling a knowledge democracy movement has clearly reached a new stage of maturity. Whether it is the community-based participatory research and engaged scholarship we see now in many university-community partnerships, the growth of open science and citizen's science initiatives, the recognition of multiple subaltern epistemologies, the Indigenous resurgence or the citizen-led and movement-led networked learning within global civil society, the role of citizen-led, knowledge has escaped the confines of the academy and is being understood as key to transformation needed when facing the complex and wicked problems in our cities, regions and world. It might be said that a movement springs to life when those who are working in one part of the movement become aware of others who are also sharing many of their values and perhaps some of their ways of working. Another thought is that a movement becomes such when those outside of it catch a glimpse. Clearly the visibility of multiple sites of knowledge production has been noticed. It has been noticed by those working in our movements for progressive change around the world, by policy workers in higher education and development circles, by funding bodies and of course by academics across virtually all disciplines. This moment presents us with many questions. What are the differences in the knowledge cultures found in our varied contexts? How do we expand networked learning? What are the implications of the knowledge democracy movement for the attainment of the UN Sustainable Development Goals? We are at a breakthrough point for both of these cases; we see that there are many more of us with many more transformative ideas and networks than we thought. And it is clear that even the academic world is recognising that the academic monopoly on knowledge production is over. As always we welcome responses, ideas, additional stories and partnerships in this work.

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