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Mutual Learning and Empowering Support: the Role of Networks in Achieving Glocal Engagement

7.1. Mutual Learning and Empowering Support: Networks and Balance between Local and Global Demands

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Abstract

Community-University Engagement (CUE) networks and research partnerships may be particularly useful for advancing sustainable social and ecological development as they can mobilize the knowledge, skills and assets of both Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) and communities. In this chapter, we present a series of principles for stakeholder engagement and partnership at HEIs, showcase key global CUE networks committed to strengthening the civic roles and responsibility of HEIs, and propose recommendations to help policymakers and practitioners use networks and partnerships as a practical tool to engage with global and local pressing problems.

There is growing evidence that indicates a large aggregate trend to unite civil society, HEIs and networks in common efforts to co-create knowledge, mobilize it to inform practice and policy, and enhance the social, economic and environmental conditions of people, communities, nations and the world.

1. Introduction

Sustainable human and social development has emerged as a central concern in the face of global ‘wicked problems’ (Rittel and Webber, 1973) – such as global warming, the degradation of vital natural resources and the loss of biodiversity – which are innately complex, uncertain and resistant to any linear formulation of scientific analysis. The challenges posed by socio-ecological and political uncertainties in sustainable development bring new knowledge horizons into consideration and require concerted efforts to explore alternative approaches to progress and to human wellbeing (UNESCO, 2015). Whether we are speaking of ending poverty, reducing inequality, achieving gender justice or dealing with climate change, we require new knowledge creation strategies to achieve these ambitious ends.

Knowledge generation and dissemination in universities and university action is indeed needed to tackle global challenges, as outlined in the Sustainable Development Goals put forth by the United Nations (2015). In this sense, **global and local networks are providing important spaces that encourage collaboration, trust, knowledge sharing, capacity building, and innovation between HEIs and several different kinds of agents – including civil society, government, municipalities and the private sector.** Community-university engagement networks and research partnerships may be particularly useful for

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sustainable social and ecological development as they can mobilize the knowledge, skills and assets of both universities and communities (Spilker et al., 2016). Such institutional arrangements can use rigorous research, community leadership and university expertise to democratically find solutions to contemporary challenges (Popp et al., 2013). The evidence provided by two recent global studies on co-creation of knowledge and community-university engagement (Hall et al., 2015; Tandon et al., forthcoming) show that **democratic knowledge partnerships, where community action is united with academic knowledge,**

have the potential for social transformation in ways that the narrow application of university scientific knowledge solutions cannot achieve.

One of the main challenges associated with networks and partnerships, however, is the lack of strong evidence about how these solutions might be built into a number of policy actions. Claims about the effectiveness of networks and partnerships in dealing with sustainability problems tend to be theoretical and/or conceptual rather than empirical. As a consequence, there is a considerable discrepancy between the acclamation and attention networks receive in the literature, and the lack of empirical knowledge and understanding of the processes and dynamics of partnerships and networks’ overall functioning (e.g. the process by which certain network conditions lead to various network-level out-

comes). In this chapter, we present a series of principles for stakeholder engagement and partnership at HEIs, showcase key global networks committed to strengthening the civic roles and responsibility of HEIs, and propose recommendations to help policymakers and practitioners use networks and partnerships as a practical tool to engage with global and local pressing problems.

2. Principles for networks for global-local engagement of HEIs

Building on the work of Andeweg and van Latesteijn (2011) and van Latesteijn and Rabbinge (2012), we propose five principles that help understand how the construction of network-based governance systems and community-university engagement contribute to the achievement of the UN 2030 agenda for sustainable development through system innovation.¹ Meeting the 17 Sustainable Development Goals and 169 targets will require a concerted effort of strengthened global solidarity and collaboration, focused in particular on the needs of the poorest and most vulnerable and with the participation of all countries, all stakeholders and all people. The principles that we are proposing here are flexible and simple enough to be readily translated into effective network strategies and practices in geographically, politically and culturally diverse contexts.

1) Sustainable development requires system innovation

In order to achieve sustainable development, all the involved actors need to develop new modes of production and new institutional and organizational arrangements to allow these new modes of production to flourish (Bouma et al., 2011). **Knowledge creation for system innovation is increasingly becoming a process of engagement between researchers and other actors who have traditionally been outside of the knowledge production system.** As explained in further detail below, Multi-Stakeholder Engagement (MSE) is critical in this regard to bring process legitimacy to the co-created knowledge (Peterson, 2013).

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2) System innovation is a non-linear, social learning process

Social learning is a circular and cross-boundary process that allows stakeholders on various levels and settings (i.e. public sector, academia, civil society, etc.) to integrate new scientific knowledge with local ecological knowledge. It collectively develops new knowledge by making use of the diversity of perspectives and understandings at hand (Sandstrom, 2010; Segrave et al., 2012). **Tolerance of uncertainty, ambiguity and diversity of knowledge and values is important to harness and integrate social, environmental and economic considerations at the local and regional level** (Everingham, 2012).

3) System innovation needs Multi-Stakeholder Engagement (MSE)

MSE is a process based on mutual understanding and co-creation of solutions that can lead to shared responsibility, system innovation and social learning; making sustainability challenges more manageable (Peterson, 2013). Stakeholder engagement is key to providing results that would never have been developed by either of the involved parties individually. MSE is therefore critical for partnerships

¹ System innovation refers to an executable and replicable way of setting up new and improved configurations with the surrounding physical and social environment in situations where sustainability and/or sustainable development does not allow for traditional ways of executing a more standard project approach (Andeweg et al., 2011; Bouma et al., 2011)

and networks to be effective in promoting and stimulating co-creation of knowledge among HEIs and other social actors. It allows the integration of various value sets and orientations, and creates the conditions for developing a participatory environment, shared responsibility, collective learning and commitment. Such engagement encourages governance arrangements – such as networks – that are different from a purely instrumental managerial logic and a traditional approach to research and knowledge creation (Schmitt, 2010; Andeweg and van Latesteijn, 2011; Pieters et al., 2012; Peterson, 2013; Bos et al., 2013)

Engagement vis-à-vis Higher Education

In thinking about higher education more specifically, engagement means a mutual exchange of knowledge between universities and communities in an attempt to produce outcomes that are of benefit to the larger society (UNESCO Chair CBR-SR, 2015). Such **engagement is possible through the teaching and research function of the university, as much as it is through its service function.** It is worth noting, however, that **community-university engagement at HEIs deviates from the normal outreach/extension functions to an approach that is participative, mutually beneficial and committed to the creation and sharing of knowledge.**

4) Multi-stakeholder engagement requires trans-disciplinary collaboration and co-creation of knowledge

Trans-disciplinary cooperation among HEIs, entrepreneurs, civil society organizations and government – each with different interests, goals, and value judgments – is critical to develop new modes of production and effective responses to socio-ecological problems in the field of sustainable development. In this type of knowledge production, multiple engaged stakeholders bring together a great variety of skills and capabilities in order to create or construct knowledge, transgressing boundaries between disciplines and fields of expertise. **Global, national and local actors need to be involved early in the process as co-developers of ideas and institutional structures that help knowledge-driven innovations to flourish.**

Promoting the creation, acquisition, validation and use of knowledge as a collective societal endeavour allows such knowledge to be used for developing basic language and communication skills, solving problems, and developing higher-order skills such as logical thinking, analysing, synthesizing, inferring, deducting, inducting, and thinking hypothetically (UNESCO, 2015).

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5) Networks are catalysts for trans-disciplinary collaboration and co-creation of knowledge

There is growing consensus that the role of universities is changing. Universities are no longer ivory towers, but innovation engines and learning environments in contemporary societies (Carayannis and Campbell, 2006; Youtie and Shapira, 2008). As the international community focuses on defining the strategies to achieve sustainable development at the global and local levels, there is an opportunity

to consider the role of higher education in advancing these shared development aims. In this context, **networks for global-local engagement of HEIs can be seen as local catalysts that give visibility to and strengthen local action, support funding opportunities and research partnerships, and aim to better connect academic work to community needs.** Empirical evidence shows that the required interaction and communication between involved actors to make social learning possible can be organized through the **institutionalization of stakeholder engagement in collaborative processes and the creation of partnerships** between stakeholders, policymakers, researchers and scientists (Sandstrom, 2010). It also shows that **building long-term trust among partners facilitates systemic practice, integrative ways of working and learning across and within diverse social groups** (Allan, 2012; Everingham, 2012).

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3. Practical examples of key global networks

Worldwide we see a momentum to rethink the way we acquire, produce and utilize academic knowledge (Kieboom, 2016). We are witnessing initiatives from both inside and outside academia that are transforming the academic system to be more responsive, permeable and responsible, such as new institutional structures and funding architectures to support community-university research partnerships (Hall et al., 2015), increased open access to knowledge (Willinsky, 2006), greater recognition and value for engaged scholarship within the university and the role of students as ‘change agents’ in higher education (McRae, 2012).

Currently there is a wave of research and knowledge mobilization initiatives that build on the early work of the European Science Shops and the Participatory Research practitioners from the 1970s (i.e. Paulo Freire, Orlando Fals Borda) and many others. This work is promoted and supported by a growing number of networks and institutional arrangements, such as those showcased in Table 1, which play important regional roles while connecting to and advancing this global movement.

The ‘Big Tent’ Global Communiqué

One platform where several of these global networks are convening and taking action in response to global and local issues is the ‘Big Tent’. This is an initiative of the UNESCO Chair in Community Based Research and Social Responsibility in Higher Education (CBR-SR) in partnership with sixteen national, regional and global networks that share a focus and co-produce action statements on CUE and the social responsibility of HEIs. The most recent 6th Big Tent communiqué, released in October 2015, positions universities as central to addressing huge global challenges: environmental sustainability, peace, economic instability, exploding inequality, poverty, youth unemployment and lost identity, health and mental illness, ageing and the massive movement of peoples. “This can be done through collaborating with civil society to create powerful knowledge that seeks to make sense of these complex processes, and through their role to support education – through their graduates, and through a wider role in supporting community learning”.

In this section we feature seven global networks all sharing a common aim to deepen, consolidate and advance the research, practice and policy for civic engagement as a core element of higher education's role in society. The following table summarizes the role, services, operation and geographical scope of seven networks we have identified as 'good practices' and examples of community-university networks: the UNESCO Chair in CBR-SR, the Global University Network for Innovation (GUNI), the Talloires Network, the Living Knowledge Network (LKN), the Society for Participatory Research in India (PRIA), the Asia-Pacific University-Community Engagement Network (APUCEN) and the Committee of Public Entities in the Struggle against Hunger and for Life (COEP). We include the Community-Campus Partnerships for Health (CCPH) as a further example that demonstrates the strong innovation value specific to policy development around health-related issues in the United States.

Table 1. Practical examples of networks for global and local engagement of HEIs

Network	Role	Services	Mode of Functioning
UNESCO Chair in CBR-SR Secretariat: New Delhi, India and Victoria, Canada Website: http://unesco-chair-cbrsr.org/ Members/Geographical scope: UNESCO Chair in CBR-SR is an open space, present on a virtual platform	Promotes knowledge democracy by sensitizing academia and global civil society towards community engagement and social responsibility in higher education.	» Knowledge production and mobilization; » Policy advocacy; and » Training and capacity enhancement.	Strives to reach out to more networks and expand the linkages between academia and civil society. It vigorously engages in advocacy at the personal and the institutional level, in an attempt to influence academia, global civil society and funding agencies alike, towards the importance of this area of work, and thereby to engage in it.
GUNI Secretariat: Barcelona Website: http://www.guninetwork.org/ Members/Geographical scope: Currently composed of 208 members from 78 countries; Regional offices in Asia and the Pacific, Latin America and the Caribbean, Sub-Saharan Africa, the Arab States, and Europe and North America (USA and Canada).	Encourages HEIs to redefine their role, embrace the process of transformation and strengthen their critical stance within society.	» Encourages the dynamic involvement of a wide range of actors in higher education in its activities. » Fosters cooperation, promotes debate and the creation and exchange of knowledge on higher education worldwide through both onsite and online activities. » Promotes exchange of resources, innovative ideas and experiences in emerging higher education issues, while allowing for collective reflection and co-production of knowledge.	Focuses its research and activity on one specific topic related to the contemporary challenges higher education is facing, such as financing, accreditation, human and social development, sustainability and engagement. Its website, monthly newsletters, international conferences, world report on higher education, academic seminars and research programmes are the various means for achieving its objectives.
Talloires Network Secretariat: Tufts University, Medford, Massachusetts, USA Website: http://talloires-network.tufts.edu/ Members/Geographical scope: 350 universities and institutions spread across Africa, East Asia and Pacific, Europe and Central Asia, Latin America and Caribbean, Middle East and North Africa, North America and South Asia	An international association of institutions committed to strengthening the civic roles and social responsibilities of higher education.	» Provides visibility for members' civic engagement activities by featuring them in its publications. » Assists member institutions by bolstering the civic engagement network by building capacities through training, exchange meetings, conferences etc; » Promotes an engagement agenda at the 'glocal' level, via excellent communication, bridging institutions and providing opportunities for networking and learning.	Implements and supports a variety of programmes, such as MacJannet Prize; Youth Economic Participation Initiative; University Volunteer Program; Faculty and Staff Professional Development Program; Action Research Program, and Global Conferences.

LKN Secretariat: Bonn, Germany Website: http://www.livingknowledge.org/livingknowledge/ Members/Geographical scope: Representatives of organizations working with missions that generally fit the definition of a science shop; Individuals or representatives of organizations that want to start science shop-like activities.	Contributing to research excellence and innovation outcomes that meet the wishes and demands of civil society.	» Promotes community-focused co-operation between civil society and higher education. » Provides citizens with public relations tools for advanced access to and use of science and technology, such as journal of community-based research, newsletter, etc. » Educates funders, governments, media, and universities about community-based research/science shop activities; played an important role in shaping European funding programmes, such as 'Science with and for society', etc.	Activities range from strategic networking, to providing skills-based training, in addition to mentoring practitioners in public engagement in research. Most of these are done via projects initiated by Science Shops and supported by the European Union. Some examples include, Enhancing Responsible Research and Innovation through Curricula in Higher Education (EnRRICH) and Public Engagement with Research And Research Engagement with Society (PERARES).
PRIA Head Office: New Delhi, India Website: www.pria.org Partners: A number of higher educational institutions, civil society organizations and governmental representatives across India and beyond	Promotes the realm of participatory research and works towards empowerment of the excluded through capacity building, knowledge building and policy advocacy.	» Builds capacities of voluntary organizations, and community-based development professionals through multi-sector training programmes. » Pursues advocacy role through association with agencies like ASPBAE, ICAE, CIVICUS etc. » Spearheads research studies on the challenges of civil society in the new millennium, the non-profit sector in India, and civil society and governance.	Plays an instrumental role in bridging the gap between institutions, especially academia and civil society, and also the government, in certain instances. This has been done in a number of ways such as joint research studies, provision of learning opportunities to students in the form of internships, knowledge sharing on topics related to 'participatory research', joint-conduction of practitioner-based courses, etc.
APUCEN Secretariat: Malaysia Website: http://apucen.usm.my/index.php/en/ Members/Geographical scope: Approx. 73 members across 18 countries, viz., Australia, Bangladesh, Brunei, Cambodia, Fiji, Germany, Hong Kong, Japan, Laos PDR, Indonesia, India, Malaysia, Nepal, Pakistan, Philippines, Taiwan, Thailand and United States of America	Promotes the culture of CUE in a proactive, holistic, inclusive and participatory way.	» Creates capacity building opportunities for community-university partnerships. » Disseminates information, knowledge, resources and good practices in community engagement. » Collaboratively develops resources to support regional CUE projects.	Mobilized and shared expertise and resources to implement impactful CUE projects (carried out by network members) at national and international levels. For example, the Saraphi Health Model Project aimed at community education carried out in Thailand. It is also the leading network promoting service and volunteerism in the Asia Pacific region. Some of initiatives have been 'Rebuild Nepal', 'Coaching4Fun Against Quakes' etc.
COEP Secretariat: Brazil Website: http://www.coepbrasil.org.br/portal/publico/home.aspx/ Members/Geographical scope: More than 800 organizations, 38,000-plus individuals, and nearly 100 communities	Strives to eradicate hunger and poverty; strengthen human rights, social participation and active citizenship; and, support communities which are vulnerable to climate change.	» Mobilizes organizations and people, promotes partnerships, encourages the practice of innovative projects and builds capacity for social action. » Supports hundreds of development projects, consolidating links between COEP members, communities and their organizations. » Helped its members to become more socially active and responsible.	Bridges individuals and institutions across Brazil and beyond, thereby mobilizing both human and financial resources. Encourages public institutions to collaborate with their counterparts and to use their resources to support community development initiatives. It has also developed a range of capacity-building activities for its networks, such as seminars, lectures, courses and workshops, etc.

Source: Author's own creation

Community-Campus Partnerships for Health

Secretariat: Seattle, WA

Website: <https://ccph.memberclicks.net/>

Members/Geographical scope: More than 1,800 CSOs, universities, colleges and individuals.

CCPH promotes health and social justice through partnerships between communities and HEIs. It leverages knowledge, wisdom and experience in communities and in academic institutions to solve pressing health, social, environmental and economic challenges. It builds the capacities of communities and academic institutions to engage in partnerships that balance power and share resources. CCPH's international conference brings together stakeholders from around the world to enhance learning and highlight partnerships and research collaborations. It disseminates promising practices and lessons learned through papers and reports, monthly newsletters, etc.

CCPH stands out from other networks because of the broad range of interventions it undertakes and the influence it has on internal institutional policies. It mobilizes knowledge, provides training and technical assistance, conducts research, builds coalitions and advocates for supportive policies in each of these areas such as Community Based Participatory Research, Community Engaged Scholarships, Community-Institutional Partnerships, Service Learning, Research Ethics and Anchor Institutions. Furthermore, CCPH responds to US federal government requests for comments on research peer-review, research resources, funding priorities, ethics policies and has also submitted testimony to the NIH Council of Public Representatives. CCPH has also developed and shared policy positions on community engagement in the CTSA programme with the National Institutes of Health and the Institute of Medicine.

4. Discussion

The rise and development of network governance and partnerships as solutions to problems in the field of sustainable development have neither been easy nor uncontroversial. The literature shows a strong bias that tends to conceive partnerships and networks as naturally better, or even ideal, and certainly more promising forms of governance, without paying attention to the complex reality where such solutions have to be embedded and the dialectical development of partnerships. In fact, a variety of obstacles can hamper the effectiveness of engaged institutions and networks, for instance: rivalry and competition among global, national, regional networks, coalitions or alliances all claiming status in particular policy areas; different temporal objectives that can be impossible to reach under limited financial, physical and human resources; insufficient funding opportunities; fundamental spatial and political disparities; and 'partnership fatigue' and lack of interconnectivity that lead to confusion, inaction and/or networks where information is not fully shared and common interests are hard to agree.

Another related problem is that engagement and trans-disciplinary collaboration among stakeholders are, per se, difficult processes. In part, this is explained by the lack of additional value indicators for 'horizontal' participatory research as compared with the classical 'vertical' approach, and the indiscriminate application of value criteria for basic research to horizontal approaches.

Finally, it has to be also noted that in recent years a higher number of non-state actors have been involved in education, at both national and global levels. According to UNESCO (2015), this diversification of partnerships is blurring the boundaries between civil society, state and market, posing serious practical challenges for the democratic governance of education and HEIs. From this perspective, therefore, "the governance of education cannot be separated from the governance of knowledge" (UNESCO 2015: 80). However, evidence of duplication, overlap, and areas of unaddressed needs has grown in recent years, creating confusion, wasted effort, and missed opportunities in this field.

The work of the UNESCO Chair in CBR-SR indicates a large aggregate trend to unite civil society, HEIs and networks in common efforts to co-create knowledge, mobilize it to inform practice and policy, and enhance the social, economic and environmental conditions of people, communities, nations and the world. However, these efforts are fragmented and face many unnecessary barriers.

5. Strategies and recommendations for researchers, policymakers, and practitioners

We propose the following recommendations and considerations for stakeholders involved in achieving sustainable development through networking and CUE:

1. **Support networks that promote and enhance your values and commitment** to local and global sustainable development by becoming 'active members', which provides an opportunity to participate in international conferences (Talloires); visibility by contributing to their newsletters/journals (GUNi); skills-based training and mentoring practitioners (LKN), capacity building of communities/institutions (CCPH), and resource mobilization (COEP);
2. **Liaise with and across network members** to accrue true benefits of collaboration and partnerships in order to achieve shared objectives;
3. **Change the perception of civic engagement as a philanthropic activity to one of reciprocity** by recognizing the value and diversity of knowledge both in the university and community;
4. **Create core senior positions and facilitative structures, practices and policies** (e.g. Vice-President of Engagement) linked to local civil society organizations, and conduct collaborative research and engaged learning that responds to local needs;
5. **Create locally relevant and context-driven assistance** by developing partnerships between regional networks and funders – thereby curating a local culture of philanthropy. Funding

models for networks tend to be hybrids receiving funding from a variety of sources that require constant renewal;

6. **Jointly pursue a strong advocacy role to influence funders and policymakers** on areas such as community engagement and the social responsibility of HEIs. Successful examples are LKN and CCPH, which have demonstrated strong advocacy abilities in educating/influencing funders and policymakers;
7. **Share good practices by supporting a community of practice (CoP):** a CoP is group of people who regularly interact with one another to share and learn based on their common interests;
8. **Promote collective action to address larger-scale challenges** (e.g. the UN Sustainable Development Goals), rather than university-specific efforts, and serve as an action platform for advocacy and policy;
9. **Demonstrate and articulate the high value of multi-stakeholder collaboration** and community university partnerships to university administration via rich cross-institutional learning; research on community impacts that support investments in these partnerships; access to funders; and national recognition via CUE accomplishments; and
10. **Devise and advocate for legislation that encourages universities to partner with regional/global networks** to address local/global problems.

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