

# COMMUNITY-UNIVERSITY ENGAGEMENT IN 2030 A SCENARIO

## PERSPECTIVES FROM THE "BIG TENT" GLOBAL DIALOGUE ON COMMUNITY-UNIVERSITY RESEARCH AND ENGAGEMENT ON OCTOBER 17, 2010

This is the second global statement by the "Big Tent" group of international community university research and engagement networks. This statement has been facilitated by the PASCAL International Observatory and the Global Alliance on Community Engaged Research, in collaboration with: the Asia Pacific University Community Engagement Network, Centro Boliviano de Estudios Multidisciplinarios, The Commonwealth Association of Universities: Extension and Engagement Network, Global Universities Network for Innovation, Living Knowledge Network, National Coordinating Centre for Public Engagement in Higher Education, Participatory Research in Asia, and the Talloires Network.

### BACKGROUND

*Around the world, three phenomena have suddenly gained attention of political, economic and social leaders of our times.* The first, of course, is the intensified, vocal, visible and powerful citizens' movement—from Senegal, Thailand, India, Tunisia, Egypt, UK, Chile and the USA—everywhere. At the base of these movements are young people from all strata and spaces of society. The message from these citizen movements is clear— young citizens want to be engaged in the political and social transformation of their nation and local communities.

*The second phenomenon is the increasing—rapidly increasing—demand for post-secondary education in all its myriad dimensions, forms and contents.* Millions of aspirants are queuing up for enrolment, but among the constraints are cost, quality and delivery. Educational administrators, planners and policy-makers have yet to figure out how to respond to this surge and the diversity of demands from all societies.

*The third phenomenon is the expression of need for a deep transformation of society in all areas of activity and all issues related to how we organise ourselves as a collectivity.* Issues such as sustainability, poverty, peace, or social justice cannot be treated in isolation in the call for a new era for humanity.

*A common element in these phenomena—* citizens' movements, the call for deep transformations and demands for post-secondary education—is the youth of today. Irrespective of the percentage of young people in a society's population, the young are a thinking differently, feeling and taking action in new ways. Most existing institutions in modern societies—governments, businesses, universities and colleges—are not able to understand or fully respond to the aspirations of the young.

## WHAT DOES THE FUTURE HOLD FOR COMMUNITY UNIVERSITY RESEARCH AND ENGAGEMENT?

Several interesting developments are happening at this time. First, many *national governments and policy-makers* are beginning to think of devising appropriate supportive policies in this regard. The Planning Commission, Government of India, has recently constituted a task force to make recommendations to 'strengthen community engagement of Higher Education Institutions' for the 12th Five Year Plan. There have been similar initiatives in Malaysia, South Africa and Tanzania.

The government funders of research in the United Kingdom, for example, published a "*Concordat for Engaging the Public with Research*" in 2010, stating the clear expectation that UK research organisations make a strategic commitment to public engagement and that researchers be recognised and valued for their involvement with public engagement activities.

Importantly, several networks and alliances have emerged which are exclusively and largely focused on community-university partnerships. *The Talloires Network* of university presidents began in 2005 to promote civic engagement of universities; it now has more than 230 universities from 60 countries as its members. Its new publication—*The Engaged University*—includes case studies of community-university partnerships from around the world. In June 2011, the Talloires Network convened 180 member universities in Madrid to advance discussions about civic engagement.

A series of dialogues and conferences on themes of civic engagement of universities have been announced. *The Global University Network for Innovation* (GUNI) is planning its annual conference and book on this theme for 2012; the *British Council* is convening an international conference supporting these themes in March 2012.

*The Asia-Pacific University-Community Engagement Network (APUCEN)* was launched in July of 2011 with the Vice-Chancellor of the Universiti Sains Malaysia as President. They will organize their second conference hosted by Thammasat University Jan 9-12, 2012 in Chiangmai, Thailand with the theme "University-Community Engagement for Empowerment and Knowledge Creation."

*The Global Alliance for Community Engaged Research* is just completing a book on the 'Knowledge Democracy Movement' where community-university research partnerships from around the world are analysed. In Europe, the Science Shop movement has grown and has its own international space—the Living Knowledge network. *The Living Knowledge Network* will host the 5th Living Knowledge Conference May 9-12 2012 in Bonn, Germany on the theme "Re-imagining Research Relationships-Co-Creating Knowledge in a Democratic Society." The *PERARES* project of the Living Knowledge Network has recently received a grant of 2.7 million Euros for a joint community -university research agenda.

*The PASCAL International Observatory* is turning its attention to matters of particular resonance to young people. It has also conducted studies across the world on the role of universities in regional engagement, including focused work conducted in Africa. A notable recent project supported by PASCAL and funded by the European Commission is to build community engagement capacities amongst six universities in Palestine.

## COMMUNITY UNIVERSITY RESEARCH AND ENGAGEMENT IN 2030 A SCENARIO

### A WORLD OF KNOWLEDGE DEMOCRACY

*There is universal recognition of our communities as a source of knowledge production.*

*Respect for and recognition of knowledge contributions* of all parts of the world and all linguistic groups, of Indigenous Peoples, the poor, those differently abled and those who were considered 'excluded' in the early 2000s

*A 'knowledge commons' of open access to all forms of knowledge representation* now functions all human knowledge belongs to all people

*The research and partnership capacities of community organisations* have been dramatically strengthened for them to be effective partners.

*The idea of an "Intelligent Society" has gained recognition*, which is to say; we have passed from a society of intelligent individuals to an intelligent society capable of supporting resilience and well-being

*Community University Engagement and the co-construction of knowledge with community partners is now mainstream:* supported by globally accepted developmental ranking systems that prioritise engaged scholarship

*Half the countries of the world, and all G20 countries, have formal policies* that support and finance Community University research and engagement

### THE IDEA OF THE UNIVERSITY IN 2030

The 'unreached' of the early 2000s are now included in our universities.

The Millennium Development Goals of the early 2000s have been met, but universities are still focused on remaining issues of inequality and justice for all

Social responsibility is a universal element in the understanding of university functions

Sustainability, fairness, respect for religious diversity, peace and non-violence are integrated into the full teaching and research functions of the university.

There are permanent clusters, ad-hoc clusters or complementary networks in which interdisciplinary partnerships can be formed for specific projects.

They Higher education institutions have become post-cosmopolitan centers of social thinking renewal creating cultural and social capital and active citizenship.

## STRUCTURES AND MODELS SUPPORTING COMMUNITY UNIVERSITY ENGAGEMENT

*Large scale and on-going collaborative dialogue structures* between community partners and universities on critical and complex issues are now part of the way that we do business

*Community-Based Research Units, Science Shops* and similar structures providing brokering support and action research engagement are part of the knowledge architecture of all universities.

*All students* have opportunities for engaged experiential learning in community settings.

*All academic staff* are now trained in principles of effective community engaged scholarship and civic engagement

*Large scale and on-going collaborative dialogue structures* between community partners and universities on critical and complex issues facing our communities are now part of the way that we higher education institutions do business.

*Excellence in Community University research and engagement* is recognized for merit and career incentives for students, academic staff, and administrators.

*There are national and international networks* providing communities of practice and coordinated advocacy for Community University Engagement including benchmarking processes to support excellence in Community Engagement that replace the simplistic comparative rankings of earlier years.

*Journals showcasing theory and practice* have proliferated and both university-based and community-based practitioners and scholars publish together.

*Research funders provide support to projects that have both scientific and societal impact* and give special attention to joint research projects between civil society organisations and traditional research institutes.

*International funding agencies* supporting higher education in lower-income countries place a high priority on helping to strengthen university-community engagement channels

*Research funding policy incorporates concerns, needs, and knowledge from civil society* and its organisations in research agendas; there are programs and facilities for joint agenda setting.