Knowledge, democracy and action

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Preface

This book is about the potential of community–university research partnerships to contribute to poverty reduction and sustainability strategies. Our work is framed within three questions: what are the changing roles of knowledge in society? What are the roles of higher education in society? What can we say about the contributions of community–university research partnerships to societal well-being? Our book draws on a selection of the literature in this field of study and on an analysis of original case studies drawn from around the world, summarized in this book. Our collection also includes reflections on and recommendations about policies and practices of community–university research partnerships. Finally, we attempt to understand the role of community–university research partnerships within what we identify as an emerging knowledge democracy movement. The origins of this book are to be found in a comparative international study of the potential of community–university research partnerships funded by Canada’s International Development Research Centre (IDRC) and the Canadian Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC).

The evidence generated by the study itself responded to the following questions: what examples of community engagement and research involving higher education institutions (HEIs) and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) exist in different parts of the world that demonstrate excellence and success in practices, outcomes and evidence-based policy development? What are the institutional arrangements working within higher education institutions to sustain successful partnerships? What policies are needed by national and international organizations and government agencies to support these kinds of arrangements?

We drew on a variety of methods for the original study, including mapping of community–university research partnership structures; an organizational review of diverse institutional structures supporting community–university research partnerships; case studies of research partnerships; a review of how some of the facilitative structures of community–university research partnerships have found support from a variety of policy environments (with a focus on science shops in Europe); a review of training materials used to build community–university research capacity and ways in which higher education curriculum has been impacted in several different university settings. Finally, we offer several approaches to evaluation and measurement of the impact of research partnerships.
PREFACE

The book is a project of the Global Alliance on Community Engaged Research (GACER), brought to life through the generosity of the PASCAL International Observatory, the editors of this series of books. GACER is a ‘network of networks’. It is a loose twenty-first-century space composed of several independent global and regional networks that focus on community-based research, community–university research partnerships and research and knowledge creation linkages between communities and social movements and higher education institutions. The main objective of the Alliance is to facilitate the sharing of knowledge and information across continents and countries to enable interaction and collaboration to further the application and impact of community-based research for a sustainable, just future for the people of the world.

The key international and regional networking partners at January, 2011 were: Asia Pacific University Community Engagement Network (Penang, Malaysia); Centro Boliviano de Estudios Multidisciplinario (CEBEM–La Paz Bolivia); Community–Campus Partnerships for Health (CCPH–USA, Canada); Global University Network for Innovation (GUNI–Barcelona, Spain); Living Knowledge Network (Bonn, Germany and Groningen, Netherlands); African Participatory Research Network (REPAS–Dakar, Senegal); and Society for Participatory Research in Asia (PRIA–New Delhi, India).

Additional research partners involved in the original study that produced this report include the Office of Community-Based Research at the University of Victoria; the Community University Partnership Project of the University of Brighton; the Faculty of Public Affairs at Carleton University, the President’s Office at PRIA; the Social Economy Project at the Université du Québec à Montréal; the Institute of Development Studies, University of Sussex; the Science University of Malaysia.