**Budd Hall interview transcript 11/9/16**

**CH: What countries are leaders in higher education community-based research?**

BH: Thank you for that question, Carla.

The US is one of the leaders. The work that Burt and Hi have done around getting that Engaged Scholarship Consortium going, which brings a lot of people together, 6-700 people at a time, obviously is highly visible.

Canada is well known for its work in community-based research, particularly since the late 1990s when our Social Science and Humanities Research Council created special funding opportunities for partnership research.

Indonesia probably has the most forward-looking higher-education community-based research policies on the books of any country. We learned that through a study that Rajesh and I have just done. Indonesia is a big one.

Brazil, because of its history—that’s where the great Brazilian educator Paulo Freire came from, and he was a pioneer in this kind of work in Brazil.

Where else would I say is a particularly juicy spot for this kind of work—I would say that if you look at the Netherlands, they’ve got what they call the “science shop movement,” and this is really a community-based research movement that’s been going on for 30-40 years now. It started in the Netherlands and there are now science shops in Germany, in France, Northern Ireland, and so on.

If we think about Africa, South Africa is probably the place where we see the most work in this area.

**CH: That sort of moulds into the second question. Parts of it you’ve already answered, but when we talk about how the landscape for higher education has changed you mention some of the work being done in Canada since the late 1990s and in the Netherlands with their science shop movement—How else do you see the landscape changing, globally or specifically, to different regions that affects community-based research and the way that education has to do business?**

BH: If you look at higher education around the world there’s a number of trends, and contradictory trends, so higher education first of all is a space like all human institutions, it’s a space of contestation.

There are different interests in society that would like to see higher education fitting in much more closely to their particular interests. So, business and industry have their ideas about the kinds of students they’d like to see, and the governments in some places have their ideas about the kind of curriculum that would really be helpful to building the particular vision they have of their society.

But in the last number of years, the communities themselves have begun to say—particularly in places where taxpayers are paying for public education—they’re starting to say hold on you guys (University of Victoria), you’ve got all these students, you’ve got all those research dollars, you’ve got professors and labs, and how are you contributing to the City of Victoria? It’s great that you’ve got some famous lab that people come and visit about oceans and so forth, but what are you actually doing for Victoria? And politicians hear that kind of thing, and so in the midst of this term, which people talk about as accountability, public accountability of institutions—some of that’s more the bean-counting type of accountability, which we never like—but some of it is actually quite legitimate. People in communities are saying, you live and work here. Obviously you contribute to the economy, because you buy houses and buy food and all of that, but what about your capacity to help us with some of the issues—unemployment, housing affordability, aging population, some of the things that we’re facing—and you find that in a lot of parts of the world.

As I say, there are different trends and they’re kind of contradictory in a way, but this theme of engagement and this theme of partnership research and so forth is a strong and ongoing trend internationally, right around the world.

**CH: I’m going to hop over the current global challenges because you’ve pretty much addressed that in Question 4. That leads me to ask then, is that what you mean by decolonization of knowledge and higher education in your talk today?**

BH: It relates to it. When I use a word like decolonization, what I’m referring to is the fact that if any of us would drop in to a university in Indonesia or India or Brazil or Portugal or something, certainly Canada—Aside from the language and maybe some history courses, the content of those universities, we would feel comfortable, we’d know. There would be an anthropology department, there would be a sociology department, there would be a political—and many of the theorists that we learn here at MSU or at U Vic are being taught all around the world.

And what is that body of knowledge? That body of knowledge is essentially what some people refer to as the Western canon, and basically that means it’s the body of knowledge that originated in Western Europe about 500, 550 years ago with the development of—Francis Bacon and so forth—called the scientific method.

For a variety of reasons which I’ll go into a bit more this afternoon, that knowledge has spread around the world. But it spread around the world, and in the way in which it’s made it drowns out other knowledges and other knowledge systems.

So in a place like Africa for example, where I’ve spent a lot of time, when European knowledge and Western schools and all of that came, which isn’t that many years ago, really about 150 years ago, people didn’t come in and say we’ve got some important ideas in thinking about the world but we’d like to hear what your ideas are and maybe we can work together, figure something out—It didn’t happen that way.

What happened is that people went in, usually the missionaries first, and they said we’ve got some ideas but in fact ours are *the* ideas. Ours are the best ideas, and not only are they the best ideas but your ideas are either really old-fashioned, or witchcraft, or hocus-pocus, or at best some kind of common sense. So the traditional knowledges, the heritage, the treasury of different ways of knowing, has been sort of covered over by this layer of what’s called the Western canon.

When I talk about decolonizing knowledge, or decolonizing our institutions of higher education, I’m talking about creating spaces, opening up our institutions to finding out about and learning from the variety of ways of knowing that there are historically. People talk about biodiversity and how important that is to the health of the planet, the more species, so we’re quite concerned when we learn that there’s a bird or a fish that’s going extinct. Because we know that the more biodiversity there is, the healthier, the better indicator it is of the health of the planet. The same thing is true of the diversity of knowledges. There are hundreds and thousands of ways of knowing and we need those ways of knowing, because one way of knowing is important, but it’s not sufficient to understand the kind of complex world that we have.

**CH: Very nice! I don’t know if this is an appropriate or relevant follow-up then, but when you talk about this, and you talk about “Decolonizing Knowledge in Higher Education,” then it’s, colon, “New Approaches to Community.” Is that a fresh perspective? Is that a new methodology?**

BH: It could be all of those. What I mean by that, and particularly after the colon, the new approaches to community, is that we’re approaching community not simply as a place where we all live and take our kids to school and recreate and buy our food and so forth, but we’re looking at community also as a source of knowledge.

That means, for example, that in my town of Victoria, a town of about 300,000 people, we have about 1,500 people who every night are not quite sure where they’re going to sleep. They talk about them as street-involved or homeless, folks like that.

You can look upon those folks in the community as something we’ve got to solve, and what are we going to do for them—or you can actually look on those folks as part of the solution. Think about what is it that they know, what have they learned. Because I can guarantee you from doing work with homeless people in Victoria, and I’m sure this is true anywhere, is boy they’re clever. In order to survive—

**CH: Resourceful—**

BH: Oh yeah, really resourceful. And they know who’s who, what the issues are, they know better than—we’ve got a number of very good academics in this area—but they actually know in more granularity, as they say, more detail. The same is true if you think about older people in the community and what contributions they could make. Not just what are we going to do with them, they cost too much money because they’re getting old, their health is bad.

If we start looking at the community as a location and as a source of local knowledge that in combination with knowledge that we may bring from the academy, it’s a different way of looking at the community than just as a place where, kind of fix it up or just looking at it from a straight “how’s the economy” kind of a picture. I don’t know if that—

**CH: It does answer my question. But actually that just leads to something else from my own extrapolation from what you said. There are two things that can happen when you’re working with community to approach a problem. Number one, you learn that they don’t think there’s a problem. Or number two, you learn that the problem is a constellation of problems that requires even more approaches. So, does community-based research have the capacity to address those kinds of initial outcomes? I mean those aren’t final outcomes, those are sort of budding-stage relationship-building kinds of things.**

BH: That’s certainly been my experience. The most ideal situation for a community-based research intervention would be a situation where a number of community groups have already identified issues. It could be aging or it could be safety issues, places that are safe or unsafe, or it could be different kinds of health issues. And they have decided—these are the providers, these are the practitioners, these are the front line workers in your community—and they’ve identified an issue and they’ve agreed that they want to take some action on it.

They approach my University of Victoria, but they’re not interested in just meeting the community health people. They’re not interested in some random sociologist, because what they know is exactly what you’re saying: that issues in communities are multi-sectoral and they overlap. So issues of poverty link up to issues of health, link up to issues of food security, link up to issues of housing—All of those things have got kind of a connection.

And what is the connection? The community has a pretty good sense of that. What they need from the university is an interdisciplinary response. And that’s why you need structures to facilitate this. Because I’m a person in education. So if you came to me, and I hadn’t known anybody else, I’d think about it as a learning issue and get some friends who are interested in learning this that and the other. But no, it’s also a health issue, it’s also a community economic development issue, so you need spaces like what you’ve got here at MSU, this office of engagement and so forth, because you have a picture of all the different parts of the university. You can help identify people from the university who could work on those issues with the community in a way that if I just go to the college of health or a discipline it wouldn’t be satisfactory.

**CH: One of the things that I’ve seen—and this is just commentary because one of the primary duties of my job is to interview faculty and write about their research with community partners—observationally speaking, I have seen that scholars have the ability to identify and suggest problems to other community decision-makers that gives them the impetus to invite other people to the table and to broaden the network of people working on a problem. Is that something that you’re able to do also at the University of Victoria?**

BH: Yes, of course. But the first thing is, and you’d know this from interviewing and working in this environment here, the most important thing is the establishment of the relationship of trust and mutual respect. That’s the part that takes time. It’s lumpy, you can’t rush it.

Once that’s established, let’s say an individual faculty member has established—I’ll give an example of a friend of mine who is a prof in food security, a leading national scholar in that, and he has a relationship with the regional food security network that’s made up of activists and local government people who are interested in food security. He’s worked with them for four, five, six years. They’ve become friends, so if he’s got a student who has a particular interest or if somebody comes in from another place, or when he’s meeting with people in the community, they’re free to talk. Because it’s no longer us and them. It’s not I’m the university guy, you’re the community guy. You become people, you become part of a community of inquiry where they’re all part of the same team. So yes.

**CH: That’s great. We’re going to slightly veer now on topic, but given your global perspective working with UNESCO, what are some of the globally regional differences you’ve observed in how community engagement is expressed and enacted? You did touch on that. We’ve talked about the respect that we need to have for different communities and some of their traditional methods versus what is currently the approach. But what do you see working with UNESCO?**

BH: It’s very exciting, this work is very exciting when you do it on an international level. It’s exciting when you do it on any level. But you do see a lot of variations and the way in which—If you think about this it’s a question of knowledge and democracy. That’s the way I think about it. What is the relationship of knowledge to participation, to people having a chance to shape the world that they live in? There are various kinds of approaches.

Let me go back to Indonesia just to start with, because that’s one that’s more recent to me. Indonesia—I don’t know if it’s the world’s largest or the world’s second largest Islamic country. It is also a country that is well known for having moderate Islamic perspectives. It’s not a country that we lay awake at night worrying about in the sense of the Muslim extremists. Indonesia wants to be a place that really shows how Islam—their perspective, their take, their approach to moderate Islam—is a really important contributor to building healthy and egalitarian societies. So the community-based research and the community-university engagement that you see in the universities there, working in the community, has a close relationship to the teachings of Islam as the traditions in that particular part of the world are. That’s very interesting and it’s quite different from approaches in other places.

Now take a country like New Zealand. New Zealand, which has a very large Maori population—The community-based research, that is, where you would find the largest amount of community-based research, is in Maori-led Indigenous approaches. They have a concept called kaupapa, which is a Maori way of knowing, and over the last number of years there’s been just tremendous work done on Maori approaches to research. So that’s a very different approach to community-based research than you’d find in Indonesia.

If you look at Brazil, the group we worked with down there is called coepe. What’s coepe? Coepe is a social movement. It’s a big, big organization. It grew out of a social movement that was started some 20, 25 years ago, kind of an anti-poverty movement that was called the Campaign Against Hunger and For Life. I still love the name of that. It’s a social movement which has over time drawn in particularly state enterprises, businesses that are owned by the state, universities, and NGOs. They take on different issues according to where they are in Brazil. Their approach is very much a social movement. It’s got a social justice flavor which is different than the Maori and different than the Indonesians.

The one last example of differences, and there are many many more—Actually the book, the two last books that we’ve got which are open access books, they document some of this; I’ll give you the references—I mentioned the science shops. If we go back to the science shops, the science shops started in the late 70s, early 80s. They’re called science shops because they came mostly out of chemistry, environmental studies, physics, and all of that. There are a lot of graduate students and young professors who were wanting to make a contribution to the community, something other than just a more traditional academic career. So in some cases they set up actual storefront offices in their communities, and what happens there is that community groups approach them with issues. And because most of the students are coming out of the more science-oriented faculties and disciplines, these science shops tend to take on more environmental types of issues. So, for example, there may be concerns about water quality in a lake in the community. So they would say we’re worried about this, we don’t think the government’s doing enough, can you do a study, and a student will be given that. A graduate student will be under the supervision of a faculty member, will work with that community group and do a study for them. Another one I remember is wind turbine noise and what the effect was, and lighting issues in the community. Whole kinds of environmental issues.

**CH: So these are actually storefronts where they have hours where people can walk in and say I’m concerned about this?**

BH: Yah.

**CH: Fascinating. I haven’t followed up on this story, but I think it was at North Carolina State here in the US, a group of students got together, science students, and they have worked on inventing a nail polish that young women can wear and if they dip it in their drink at a party and it changes color it indicates that the date rape drug has gone into their drink.**

BH: Isn’t that amazing!

**CH: Yeah! That’s the kind of thing where they’ve identified a social issue—**

BH: Really innovative.

**CH: Yeah. To me it was just really cool but this is even—It makes knowledge accessible, when you talk about democratizing knowledge.**

BH: The European Commission is very interested. The European Research Commission, which has lots and lots of money, they have a whole kind of perspective. What they talk about is, they have a funding program called Science With and For the People. What they want is more public engagement in the big science issues of the day. They don’t think that that should just be left to professors and people to sort out. The big issues of the day that have a scientific implication, they think there needs to be public discussion. That’s European-wide. So they’ve been funding science shops and other structures like this for some time now. There's a network, it’s called the Living Knowledge Network, if you look it up online you’ll see all of this stuff about it. We’ve got it in our books that we talked about just now.

**CH: You refer to the books—Are they *Strengthening Community-University Research Partnerships: Global Perspectives* and *Training the Next Generation of Community-Based Researchers*?**

BH: Yes. The second book is actually called *Knowledge and Engagement*, colon, *Training the Next Generation of Community-Based Researchers*. I’ve got a flyer. There’s actually four of them. What we’ve done is, we’ve got each one of them as a full book and then we’ve done executive summary kinds of things for administrators or people that don’t have an interest or time to get into it all in detail. They’re all available on our website. They’re downloadable for free.

**CH: OK. Thank you. I think that just another question or two, but we asked Dr. Tandon this question too. It is: What responsibility does an institution like MSU have in preparing the next generation of community-engaged scholars? I think that everything you’ve said up to this point probably alludes to that, but is there anything you see at MSU that is potentially an asset to preparing the next generation of community-engaged scholars?**

BH: MSU is one of the leaders historically, as we know one of the land-grant institutions, and it’s a big one. I think over the years, at least in this century, in the 2000s, it has continued to build through its outreach and community engagement structures, and I’m amazed at all the different pieces. It’s hard even to make a map of it all because there’s just so much of it on the go here. So you’ve created a culture of engagement here at Michigan State University that is quite exceptional.

One of the challenges, and I would love to see Michigan State University finding a way to get involved in this a bit more, when we talk about training the next generation, there’s two types of people that Rajesh and I have in mind.

One is obviously students who are in programs and who are interested in doing research that they feel will make a difference in the lives of people in their communities.

The second is the challenge of building research capacity in the community organizations themselves. And why is that important? It’s important because as universities become more open to the idea of the co-construction of knowledge with people outside of the university, then the quality of that partnership becomes important.

If the community organization is so strapped for time, personnel running off their feet trying to get everything done because the budgets are tight and all of that, it’s going to be hard for them to be an ideal partner. Because at the universities we’re actually paid to be researchers and we don’t have a category—very few, and some very big organizations, will have a research and evaluation specialist. But at most of our community groups they don’t and unless we can find a way to identify and fund resources for these groups to be able to have their own autonomous research capacity, our ability to move this exciting challenge, this co-construction of knowledge challenge, forward in any substantial ways will be limited.

**CH: OK. I think that does it and I really appreciate that you were easy to talk to. I’m looking forward to hearing you this afternoon.**