



DEMOCRATIZING KNOWLEDGE: THE EXPERIENCE OF UNIVERSITY- COMMUNITY RESEARCH PARTNERSHIPS

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INTRODUCTION

In the course of various research missions to countries of both North and South in recent years (in particular, France and Argentina), I have found that the research team model based on university-community partnerships, with which we have been experimenting in Québec and throughout Canada since the 1990s, has aroused great interest among researchers, practitioners and policymakers, who see it as a very innovative approach. The novelty of this approach is not that university researchers are forging alliances with social activists and decision-makers of civil society to produce and disseminate knowledge—this has been going on here and elsewhere for several decades. What is new is that these practices have be-

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come institutionalized to the point that universities no longer see them as an experimental sideline.

Such institutionalization occurred when granting councils opened themselves to the possibility of supporting research partnerships and funding the maintenance of their infrastructures.

This has been the case in Québec since 1992, when the then Conseil québécois de la recherche sociale (CQRS) encouraged research teams, working in the health and welfare fields, to work jointly; some 20 research partnerships have been forged since. This approach is still favoured and has crossed over to other areas of study in 2003, since the Fonds québécois de recherche sur la société et la culture (FQRSC) began operations following the merger of CQRS and FCAR.

Since 1999, the partnership research model used in Québec has spread throughout Canada, leading the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC) to launch a three-year experiment with its new Community-University Research Alliance (CURA) programme. Although the SSHRC considered abandoning the experiment in 2002-2003, it decided to make the programme permanent in 2003-2004. Thus, by June 2005 there were 52 CURAs underway in Canada, accounting for 4.1% of the SSHRC budget (Renaud, 2005).

It must be recognized, however, that the university-community partnership model for research supported by the Québec and Canadian granting councils did not appear out of thin air. A number of universities were already experimenting with it, and the Université du Québec à Montréal (UQAM) had a good deal to do with breaking in the model.

In this paper, I look at some of these experiments in democratizing knowledge through establishing partnerships between academic and community resources. By confining my objective in this way I am not trying to suggest that democratizing the production and transfer of knowledge is something that happens only in universities. I do want to show, however, that universities are playing a key role in innovations for democratizing knowledge.

The paper is structured in two parts. The first section examines three concrete experiments with partnership research in which I participated. The second part presents critical thought, based on the experiments, about the issues inherent in partnership research. The methodology I have followed is akin to that of a “reflexive practitioner” (Schön, 1983), drawing lessons from an academic research career that has led me to work with social and economic community organizations over a span of some three decades.

THREE EXPERIMENTS IN UNIVERSITY-COMMUNITY RESEARCH PARTNERSHIP

The experiments examined here are those of UQAM's community service programme (SAC), the Laboratoire de recherche sur les pratiques et les politiques sociales (LAREPPS) and the CURA on the Social Economy (CURA-SE).

THE COMMUNITY SERVICES PROGRAMME (SAC) AT UQAM (1979/2005)

UQAM was created in 1969 as part of the network established by the Université du Québec, a public university. Since that time it has come to be seen as a "people's" university that stresses accessibility and democratization of knowledge. Since 1972, UQAM has adopted an approach of having academics work in partnership with labour, women's groups, community organizations and NGOs when carrying out research and training projects (Lizée, 1998).²

In 1979, UQAM adopted its corporate policy of providing "community services" (SAC). Under the terms of this policy, community services officially became a third component of academic duties, along with teaching and research, and were included as such in the collective agreement with the faculty union (SPUQ-UQAM).

Article 3 of the corporate policy statement defined "community services" as follows:

All university activities that promote greater democratization in access to and use of its human, technical and scientific resources by developing new ways of appropriating educational and scientific resources and disseminating knowledge more widely.

Article 4 of the policy statement identified the "prime partners":

The prime partners in achieving this goal will be grassroots and community organizations and independent, non-profit voluntary associations, unions, citizens' committees, and other nongovernmental organizations pursuing the objectives of economic, social, cultural and community development.

Following is a non-exhaustive list of the principal mechanisms that this policy draws upon.

- Within UQAM, SAC became an administrative unit with a staff of five to ten individuals, depending on the year. Staff includes a director as well as four to six professionals who serve as intermediaries between the research or training

² In this section I have drawn upon the work of Michel Lizée, a professional who has been involved in the community services initiative since its beginnings (Lizée, 1998).

needs expressed by community groups and the teaching and other resources available in the University.

- As an answer to its partners' needs, UQAM agreed to set up, on an annual basis, a series of twenty 45-hour courses devoted to training work with target groups under the policy (the training can be allocated in 15-hour units) as well as a modest research budget of around \$45,000 a year to support partnership research projects (Lizée, 1998).
- To evaluate the relevance of training and research projects negotiated by the University's partners, the SAC unit set up the Comité des services aux collectivités (Committee on Community Services), with eight members representing the professors and eight representing the community partners. This committee's mandate is to promote the achievement of institutional priorities.
- When it comes to partnership research projects, the SAC has turned to *comités d'encadrement* (coordinating committees) consisting of representatives of the groups concerned, the teaching staff involved, and the SAC coordinator, to promote the linking of community and university resources. These coordinating committees play a key role in the preparatory stage of research projects, as well as during implementation and dissemination of results.

In terms of research, UQAM's SAC model has made it possible over the last 25 years to carry out more than 100 partnership research projects on a great variety of topics. Lizée reports that:

The UQAM model has been cited as one that is unique in Canada, one that can foster collaboration between social groups and academic researchers. But it is not easy to introduce it or to keep it running. Building a solid partnership is a difficult task, because it implies the confrontation of two organizational cultures, that of the outside groups and that of the academics, which have different concepts of knowledge, of action, and also of time. This presupposes an atmosphere of trust, a shared vision of the objectives to be pursued and of the path for pursuing them. It involves continuous negotiation, with due respect for the skills and abilities of everyone. Indeed, one of the roles of the SAC is to help maintain a good working climate and to keep the project running smoothly from beginning to end.” (Lizée, 1998)

The reference to “the confrontation of two organizational cultures” may seem strange, yet it makes sense for anyone who has worked in this kind of partnership research. I shall return to this point in section II.

THE LABORATOIRE DE RECHERCHE SUR LES PRATIQUES ET LES POLITIQUES SOCIALES (LAREPPS)

Over the years, the philosophy of UQAM's community services programme has not been confined to the SAC unit's activities themselves. On the contrary, and

we may say fortunately, the SAC philosophy and model have spread to other departments of UQAM and even to other universities. Over time, the partnership model for pooling academic and community resources in support of social movements working with underprivileged or at-risk groups has found creative expression in training and education programmes of many kinds. The idea of the university-community alliance is the guiding theme of a dozen institutes, centres and partnership research teams, including LAREPPS and CURA-SE. In this section, I shall focus on LAREPPS, while the final section will look at CURA-SE.

LAREPPS is a research unit that focuses on social practices and policies. It was started within the School of Social Work at UQAM in the early 1990s. It quickly became known for the way it formulated the problems of transforming social policies and practices in the post-welfare state era. It did so by looking not only at the interfaces between government and the market but also at those emerging with the third sector (i.e., the social and solidarity-based economy) and the resources of the family or household economy. Thus, since its origins, LAREPPS has been interested in the social innovations that could spring from new alliances between the public sector and the third sector (Vaillancourt et al. 1993, 2004). Another important feature of LAREPPS is its interest in research conducted through university-community partnerships. It has adopted the partnership model of the SAC programme. In its major research undertakings of the last 15 years it has championed the use of coordinating committees consisting of practitioners as well as university representatives.

The university-community partnership approach has been firmly established since 1997, when LAREPPS was recognized as the anchor for a new partnership research team supported by CQRS on the topic of social economy, health and welfare (ESSBE) (Vaillancourt and Labesse, 1997). This research team, which was interested in the theoretical and strategic contributions that the social economy could make to social policy reforms, has won continued recognition and support from the granting councils since 1997. Its funding is assured until 2008.

The decision-making bodies of LAREPPS and of the ESSBE team are co-managed by community and university representatives. The community partners (about 15 social and economic organizations) are drawn from the public sector, the third sector (which includes community organizations and social economy enterprises) and the labour movement. There are 15 regular researchers from UQAM, UQO, Université de Sherbrooke, UQAC and Université de Montréal. There are now 25 research projects underway with links to the ESSBE team's programme. These projects employ about 25 research professionals and assis-

tants. Several of our publications summarize the results of this research (Vaillancourt and Tremblay, 2002, Vaillancourt et al., 2004).³

In the spring of 2005, I organized two focus groups, one with research professionals and the other with social practitioners, in order to highlight some of the salient features of LAREPPS's expertise in partnership research. I shall discuss the feedback from these focus groups in section II.

THE CURA ON THE SOCIAL ECONOMY (CURA-SE) (1999-2005)

The CURA on the Social Economy (CURA-SE) emerged, as did LAREPPS, in the wake of the SAC tradition at UQAM. It was made possible by funding from the CURA programme sponsored by SSHRC in 1999 (see Introduction).

CURA-SE is one of the first generation of CURAs that SSHRC has recognized since 1999. It was based on a project prepared by Benoît Lévesque and Nancy Neamtan with input from several dozen researchers and partners (Lévesque and Neamtan, 1999). At the outset, CURA-SE was given funding for three years, from January 2000 to December 2002. It was then extended for two more years, 2003 and 2004, at a time when it was not yet clear whether the CURA programme would be made permanent. In 2004, SSHRC decided to prolong the CURA programme, while tweaking some of the rules. A new application was therefore prepared in 2004, under the direction of Jean Marc Fontan⁴ and Nancy Neamtan (Fontan and Neamtan, 2004). Thanks to SSHRC's positive response, CURA-SE now has assured funding for five more years (2005-2009).

In contrast to the other 51 CURAs that SSHRC has recognized across Canada, CURA-SE has the distinction of being a consortium-type CURA: while it is administered at UQAM, it is in fact established as well in three other universities, UQO, UQAC and Concordia. Its community partners, some 40 in number, are divided functionally into five thematic partnership areas of work, called *Chantiers d'activité partenariale* (CAP). Seven of these institutions play the role of principal partners: these include the *Chantier de l'économie sociale* (Taskforce on the social economy), the CSN and the FTQ.

The five thematic partnership areas (CAPs) are: Individual Services, Leisure and Social Tourism, Habitat, Financing, and Local and Regional Development. Each CAP is led by a team of two persons, one representing the academic researchers and the other the community practitioners. Each CAP is supposed to develop and implement a work plan designed not only to produce knowledge but also to

³ For more information on LAREPPS output and activities visit the site: www.larepps.uqam.ca

⁴ Jean-Marc Fontan replaced Benoît Lévesque as scientific director of CURA-SE in the fall of 2003. In September 2004, Lévesque retired, while retaining his status as associate professor with UQAM and ENAP.

transfer and disseminate it. The CAPs' activities focus on their assigned sector of study.⁵

THE ISSUES INVOLVED IN PARTNERSHIP RESEARCH

The following section looks at four issues: the specific features of partnership research, the opportunities it offers, the difficulties encountered, and the conditions for success.

WHAT KIND OF PARTNERSHIP RESEARCH ARE WE TALKING ABOUT?

The approach to partnership research discussed here differs from the kind of partnership that may exist between a university and private (for-profit) enterprise. As discussed in the paper by Ives Gingras (2004), university-business partnerships have been around for more than a century, although they have come to the fore most prominently in the last two decades, particularly in the biomedical field. Their increasing popularity has sparked a good deal of debate, and concerns have been expressed in academic circles that university research is in danger of being hijacked and commercialized by private interests (Mulazzi, 1998; Rocher in Mulazzi, 1998; FQPPU, 2004; Fournier, 2004; Sabourin and Hébert, 2005).

My own view is that a research partnership between universities and private business can be justified and can produce positive results, provided it avoids the pitfalls mentioned above. However, I don't want to confuse it with the kind of arrangements discussed in this paper. University-community partnership is an innovation that goes back some 15 years, and it exhibits at least three specific features:

- University-community partnerships are not just sideline activities pursued *sub rosa* by a few “activist” academics who manage to get around their institutions' rules to pursue research for and with disadvantaged groups. On the contrary, this kind of research is thoroughly institutionalized: it enjoys official recognition and support from the university (in this case, UQAM) and from the public granting councils (in this case, CQRS since 1992, FQRSC since 2003, and SSHRC since 1999; Renaud, 2005).
- What is involved is a research partnership, not between a university and a profit-seeking private business, but between a university and not-for-profit community groups generally rooted in the third sector (or the social and soli-

⁵ For more information on the output and activities of CURA-SE, visit the site: www.aruc-es.uqam.ca.

darity-based economy) and the public sector.⁶ In the first case examined here (SAC), the target community organizations are grassroots, community and volunteer organizations, labour unions, women's groups, environmental groups, etc. They have less access to university resources than do the private sector and government organizations. In the second and third cases examined (LAREPPS and CURA-SE), the prime community partners are socio-economic agents that are active in the third sector, the public sector and the labour movement, and that are also interested in the contribution the social economy can make to economic and social development.

- Community stakeholders and academics alike are jointly involved in the planning of the research, in the various stages of conducting it, and in the dissemination of its results. Thus, university-community partnership research is conducted not just *for* but also *with* community stakeholders. It draws upon a process of co-construction of knowledge. It implies expanding, and indeed democratizing, the circle of producers and disseminators of academic knowledge.

That said, university-community partnership research certainly offers opportunities, but it is no less demanding and no less exposed to pitfalls than is university-business partnership, as the following paragraphs will make clear.

THE OPPORTUNITIES PROVIDED BY UNIVERSITY-COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

On the basis of the experiences described in section 1 and the testimony provided by some of the people who were involved as academics (Jolin, 2004; Proulx, 2005c), partners (Blondin, 2004; Proulx, 2005b) or research professionals (Proulx, 2005a), the potential opportunities relate to the following elements:

- Thanks to the sense of mutual trust that it develops, this kind of partnership research gives the researcher access to data that would otherwise be unavailable. It can open doors when it comes to gathering field data.
- It covers fields of research that would otherwise be closed to the researcher. For example, experimental projects with at-risk groups such as the homeless, alcoholics or people with mental problems can be studied and evaluated with

⁶ Like Evers and Laville (2004), I draw a distinction between two international traditions in research on the third sector. The first, which we might call the "US legacy," is based on American experience and stresses the non-profit aspect. The second, which we might call the "European legacy," is based on European experience and places the stress on cooperatives and the social economy. I also agree with Evers and Laville that the international literature on the third sector could be enhanced by some dialogue between these two traditions. In the Canadian setting, I suggest that Québec shows the influence of the European tradition of social economy, while the rest of Canada has been more influenced by the US tradition (Kearney et al., 2004, Vaillancourt et al., 2004; Vaillancourt, 2005).

the collaboration of partners who are involved in those experiments and who want to see them evaluated.

- Partnership research requires the researcher to take account of the partner's concerns to ensure that the project is thoroughly “connected” with the reality in the field. The partner's field expertise, which the researcher will often lack, enriches the research process.
- Feedback from partners on results at different stages of the research can help the researcher adjust and recast the way the results are formulated, to reflect aspects that he may have missed, and this will enhance the validity of the results. As Louis Jolin has noted (2004), “the researcher recognizes the invaluable contribution of social stakeholders not only in terms of meanings (databases, concrete cases, financial and human resources) but also in terms of practical know-how or even theoretical knowledge, as well as the formulation of research hypotheses.”
- Partnership research often helps partners to think reflexively about their work. For them it has a “mirror effect.” Michel Blondin, from the FTQ Solidarity Fund, had this to say after working for three years with CURA-SE: “Despite the difficulties, cooperation between researchers and union people has allowed them over time to move forward in their thinking and to be ready to accept new messages and take a broader view. [...]. The thinking we have had to do, given the reality of the social economy, has made us more appreciative of the demands and the characteristics of alternative approaches, and the need to pool efforts with other players in the social economy” (Blondin, 2004:5).
- Partnership research expands the opportunities for disseminating results. “In conventional research, dissemination is often limited to the scientific community and very little gets out to the practitioners. In partnership research, practitioners themselves are involved in dissemination activities, and so they reach much further” (Proulx, 2005b).
- Our initial research allows practitioners to arouse researchers' interest in issues of concern to them and in the real problems they encounter in the field. As one partner said, “previously, we just played host to the researchers. They came and took their data, ran their experiments, and then they went home, produced a short report, and thanked us for collaborating with them. There wasn't much for us in all that—it wasn't very useful.” (Proulx, 2005b).
- For practitioners (field workers and managers), the fact that they are actively involved in research projects stimulates interest in the research within their own organizations. This is especially true when people within the organization have been directly involved in the data gathering: “Since they have been interviewed as part of the research and have made a contribution, they are inter-

ested in reading the report. Indeed, they eagerly await the report.” (Proulx, 2005b).

- The fact of helping to prepare the research project allows partners to ensure that there will be some concrete benefits from it to their organization. “It’s a question of give-and-take: I participate, I contribute, but I also have to get something out of it” (Proulx, 2005b).
- Partnership research allows for the sharing of expertise. It is an opportunity for “stimulation and interchange” in which each partner contributes his expertise along with his knowledge, thus enriching the process of reflection. (Proulx, 2005b).
- Partnership research allows us to stand back and look hard at our activities. It helps us to adjust our practices in the field, or to “validate” them. In the case of the research project on the Fédération des OSBL d’habitation de Montréal (FOHM), carried out by LAREPPS in the 1990s, “it led to real forward movement with community-supported housing. Ten years later, people are still quoting that research” (Proulx, 2005b).

PROBLEMS WITH PARTNERSHIP RESEARCH

The problems with university-community partnerships for research relate, in one way or another, to the challenge of arranging for two cultures to meet on an even playing field, as Michel Lizée mentioned earlier. That ground can be tilted in two ways: either because the researchers “use” the partners or because the partners “use” the researchers.

The following are some of the problems that partners in the field have identified (Proulx, 2005b):

- For the partner, partnership research demands a real personal investment. “It is clear that we have to commit a lot more of our time than when we just played host to the researchers. That means we have to find resources and people, and that adds to our normal workload.”
- When the partner is at the same time the subject of evaluation, tensions may arise. Sometimes “you have to take issue with the results [...]. As partners, you may not always agree with the results, and they may not be what you wanted to hear. That can cause clashes, and it can undermine your political objectives.”
- It is not always easy to reconcile the interests of researchers with those of practitioners. “The practitioner is generally pursuing two kinds of objectives: to improve practices, or to achieve a political or strategic goal. [...] As to the researcher, he will have his own interests: he has to conduct the research, find funding for it, publish it, and win recognition. For the researcher, it’s his sci-

entific reputation that matters [...]. That means negotiation, and sometimes the negotiations will hit a snag.”

- Practitioners and researchers live in completely different worlds, and it is not always easy for a practitioner to adapt to the way academics express themselves. “I remember leaving a meeting and having understood absolutely nothing.”
- Practitioners often find that dissemination tools are “heavy and complex” and not very usable. In practitioners’ eyes, moreover, academics often have trouble moving beyond the dissemination stage to the actual transfer of knowledge. Michel Blondin put it nicely when he said, “Disseminating results and transferring knowledge are two separate realities. For an academic, dissemination means peer recognition and getting a report or an article published in a scientific journal, where it will be read primarily by his own students (!) [...]. For the practitioner, transferring knowledge means enriching practices, which leads us to ask ourselves some questions.” (Blondin, 2004:2).

It is interesting to compare this list of problems with the one drawn up by the academic researchers. Let's start with a list prepared by LAREPPS members (Proulx, 2005a):

- Researchers may have trouble preserving their “scientific independence,” especially with projects that involve evaluating the partners' own practices and organization. Partners will be both judge and defendant in this case. They may not be happy with some of the results and may pressure researchers not to pursue these aspects in their research reports. Researchers may be all too ready to accept the partners' insistence on adding some element or another during the course of the research, and this can mean a considerable increase in workload and costs. The challenge for researchers, as Jolin mentioned (2004), is not to lose their independence and to maintain a certain distance, a healthy margin of manoeuvre with respect to the methodological approach used and the analysis of the results.
- There can be a problem in reconciling partners' interests with those of the researchers, which may be different: “political” objectives for the partners and “knowledge” objectives for the researchers. This difficulty is sharpened when there are several partners, for they may have several different objectives. In fact, the problem here is not necessarily that the partners want to influence the choice of topics and the conclusions reached by the researchers; rather, it has to do with the researchers’ fear of upsetting some of the partners, which may

make them reluctant to deliver potentially embarrassing results on a touchy topic.⁷

- There is a danger that researchers will be used by partners to provide an academic gloss for their political objectives, and, conversely, the danger that partners will be used by researchers simply as a means for gaining access to the field, for example.⁸
- Researchers and field practitioners do not relate to time in the same way. They operate “on different clocks,” and this can produce frustration in the partnership (Blondin, 2004).

An example of a problem partnership

It was 1992/1993. We were two academic researchers at LAREPPS working on a project dealing with the privatization of public health services, in partnership with two sections of the CSN. The project was being conducted within the SAC framework of UQAM, and it was being monitored by a coordinating committee.

In early 1993, we started discussing the research results within the coordinating committee. Consistent with the accepted research proposal, the conclusions did not confine themselves to complaining about creeping privatization of health and social services. They included a more constructive section where the academics put forward a scenario under which public-sector unions seeking to fend off the privatization of social and health service delivery, in particular housing and home services for the elderly and the handicapped, should not just complain about the dangers of privatization but should be open to some alternative approaches whereby the third sector could contribute through community initiatives (Vaillancourt et al., 1993). Not all the labour representatives on the coordinating committee liked these conclusions, but it was decided to present them anyway at a union symposium on privatization, planned for February 1993.

The symposium attracted some 400 people, primarily from the labour movement, but it also drew some community activists. When the research conclusions and recommendations were presented, there came a real moment of truth. The most innovative aspect of the report, the one dealing with the third sector, aroused great interest and sparked numerous debates among participants, in the workshops and in the corridors. Yet, the union leaders of the Fédération de la santé et des services sociaux (Federation of health and social services) gave them a cold reception. During the plenary session, several speakers condemned the recommendations and those relating to the third sector were set aside. In the closing debate, the Federation president merely repeated the conventional leftist mantra about the dangers of privatization and made no reference to the report's recommendations on the third sector's role.

⁷ Among these "touchy topics" that researchers are sometimes reluctant to air publicly, and on which our partnership research teams have tended to censor themselves both in LAREPPS and in CURA-SE, are issues such as the definition of the social economy and critical analysis of the policies of the Charest Government in Québec and the Martin Government in Ottawa as they relate to the social economy.

⁸ On this danger of exploitation of researchers in partnership teams, see Jean-Philippe Pleau (2004).

THE CONDITIONS FOR SUCCESS

The conditions must be right if the difficulties described above are to be avoided. As Michel Blondin put it, “it’s only when we can get the two cultures to join forces and work out their differences that the results will be productive” (2004:1). For this to happen, the two groups of players must interact and develop a relationship of trust. The problems mentioned earlier do not always arise because one of the two cultures imposes itself on the other. They can also arise when one of the two players is so influenced by the other that he downplays his own viewpoint for fear of upsetting the partner. What follows are some ingredients for a successful combination.

- Partnership research implies a real sharing of powers and resources between academics and practitioners. This sharing must be a basic feature of any partnership research project. It requires co-management of the coordinating committees, such as is done in the SAC programme at UQAM, at LAREPPS and in CURA-SE. It must also be reflected in the bodies that oversee the partnership research teams and their programming, as is the case at LAREPPS and CURA-SE. In these coordination and steering bodies, it is important to co-manage the entire process and all the different dimensions of the project, including the budgetary dimension. In the coordinating committees, for example, co-management should be applied in defining the project, its main successive stages, and the dissemination activities. In this context, the partners we interviewed stress the importance of reinforcing support for research: “The people involved in partnership research have to be supported by the entire organization [...]. People in the field have to see the value of the research” (Proulx, 2005b).
- In developing a partnership relation, the academic and community players have to agree on their objectives. As Louis Jolin says, these objectives will not necessarily be the same, but they must be compatible and complementary. “Partnership also involves complementarity in terms of the resources and means needed to carry out the research” (Jolin, 2004). The goal of building a symmetrical relationship between the two groups of players must not lead to a confusion of roles. The community players will have a handle on the project and its contents at every stage of the research. But “the researcher must have the last word, since it is he who is responsible for the research and accountable for the results. The partner’s contribution must be sought and assessed in light of the purposes of the research and at the various validation stages (co-construction) but it should not be left to the partner to say what goes into the research report” (Proulx, 2005a). On the other hand, if co-construction is to be meaningful, the academics will have to submit their writings to critical review by the community players at certain key points.

- The initial stage of a partnership research project is important and should not be rushed. It should result in the adoption of a clear research proposal with which both sides are comfortable. In the focus groups with LAREPPS academics and partners, several members stressed the need to take all the time necessary at the outset to clarify the objectives, the purpose of the research, the stages of the project, and the *modus operandi*. These objectives should also be kept under review throughout the course of the project to ensure that the research is not straying from them. The contribution expected from each of the partners must be made clear at the outset. Hence, it is important to have monitoring and validation mechanisms in place with the partners at each stage of the work to keep the process from bogging down, and the partners from losing interest (Proulx, 2005a; 2005b).
- It is impossible to overemphasize the importance of trust and transparency in a research partnership between academics and practitioners. It is confidence of this kind that encourages each player to persevere and to hold up his end of the bargain. This demands, once again, that discussions about each member's academic, socioeconomic and political agendas should be engaged openly. On this point, Louis Favreau (Proulx, 2005c) has suggested that some partners should do more to make their policy agendas known when it comes to research on the social economy.
- Research partnerships also need some cajoling when it comes time to disseminate and transfer the results. The assessments of partnership research projects that we have done with CURA-SE and at LAREPPS are unanimous on one point: in our teams we still have to make a qualitative leap when it comes to the transfer aspect. All too often we find that, at the end of a project, transfer planning boils down to arranging for the researchers to hold forth at symposiums and seminars in which practitioners, users and community representatives are relegated to a secondary role. It should not be beyond our creativity to find different and innovative formulas for involving community players more actively alongside the researchers.
- Finally, if partnership research is to improve the quality of its practices, the teams will have to network and help each other in Québec, throughout Canada and internationally.

CONCLUSION

In this paper I have focused on the process of partnership research as we have experienced it over the last few years in the SAC unit of UQAM, at LAREPPS, and in CURA-SE. All three of these testing grounds have institutional links to

UQAM. In the case of LAREPPS and CURA-SE, other universities are also closely associated.

The analysis shows that these three experiments share one feature in common, which is that they all involve research from a university-community partnership perspective. At the same time, we have seen that this type of partnership research is quite distinct from the longer-standing formula of university-business partnerships. One of the differences between these two forms of partnership research is that, in the university-community case, the community organizations identified as partners are at a disadvantage, relative to businesses, in terms of their access to resources and to academic research tools. Looking more closely at the university-community partnership formula and identifying some of the challenges it faces, we can see that it has been a very demanding undertaking both for the academic researchers and for the community partners. The conditions for success include making sure that the researchers are not hostage to the community partners' political agenda, and that the community partners are not hostage to the researchers' academic agenda. Yet if these challenges can be overcome and a satisfactory compromise worked out between the two cultures, there can be immense advantages in terms of democratizing knowledge. This democratization means greatly broadening the circle of those who co-construct and disseminate knowledge. Such an achievement is far from insignificant in a society that is based increasingly on the knowledge economy. The democratization of knowledge, as discussed here, can enrich undertakings on both the academic and the community fronts.

In a recent address, Marc Renaud (2005), the departing director of SSHRC, presented a report on the work of his funding agency, noting that, with nearly 9% of its budget going to support various forms of partnership research, SSHRC was leading the way internationally in this field. In my own discussions with academic colleagues who are working with their communities in France and in Argentina, I have detected great interest in the university-community partnership model of research. In the preparatory work for the Third International Meeting on Globalization of the Solidarity Economy, held in Dakar, November 22-26, 2005, the university-community research partnership model was discussed both in plenary and in workshops. Participants from many countries in the North and South alike saw in it an innovative formula that should be encouraged worldwide in order to promote the democratization of knowledge (Salam Fall, Favreau and Larose, 2004).

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