

## THE IDEA OF THE COMMUNIVERSITY

*Epistemic Freedom in Africa means rescuing the university from capture by neoliberal market forces and repositioning it as a public good; rethinking and redefining the university as a truly African institution serving African communities.*

Sabelo Ndlovu- Gatsheni                      Epistemic Freedom in Africa

*Today the laboratory and the research university still stand as the most evolved and overlapping intermeshed institutions of knowledge. But since the central dynamic in the history of knowledge has been for a single institution to supersede its predecessor, the time is ripe for reinvention.*

McNeely and Wolverton                      Reinventing Knowledge

### **Orientation: The Integral Need for the Reinvention of Knowledge**

Most universities, as well as research laboratories and management consultancies, are Eurocentric (including Euro-America) in nature and scope. As such *there is no overall global “integrity”, authenticity, or indeed “alternity” in the “scientific” education that a Zimbabwean, a Nigerian, an Arab or a Pakistani receives* - in their cases inevitably French or English in origin - or in the kind of research they undertake, which is more likely to be American in its empirical, or more likely pseudo-empirical, orientation. Secondly therefore, when it comes to the “development”, or better regeneration, of a particular country or community, what we call the recognition and release of its “GENE-ius”, again there is no obvious place to start. The West predominates over the rest.

The Euro-centric or U.S.-centric research agenda, or educational curriculum, is, then, alien from where “non-Europeans” (that is most of the world) individually and societally are. Consultants and research laboratories, secondly, deal with the development of products, services and organisations, inevitably constrained by “western” macro forces, notably those of the “Washington Consensus”, that are invariably beyond their control. Community developers, thirdly, seem to have faded into oblivion in the wake of today’s all pervasive individual leaders and entrepreneurs – now social as well as business ones - who have become the order of our day. Finally and altogether as a result, the social and economic regeneration, of whole societies seems to be, on the one hand, left locally and largely to chance, notwithstanding the sincere, or indeed insincere efforts of public policy makers to deal with such. On the other hand, and globally, most societies are at the mercy of the “Washington Consensus”. So where do we go from there, now drawing *integrally* on the “south”, “east” and “north” as well as the “west”?

### **Substantiation: The Role of the Integral Communiversality : From Community to Laboratory**

#### ***“Southern” Learning COMMUNITY: Experiential -Feeling Transcultural: Engaging with Local Nature and Community***

Our point of “southern” departure in our so called *Communiversality*, is not with the “universal” education of an individual, university student, globally so to speak, but, instead, involves *grounding* such origination in and though a particular, and *local*, learning COMMUNITY, or communities. Such a community, for Nigeria’s Father Anselm Adodo, then, is not just a place where human beings dwell. The African community, for example, comprises plants, animals, human beings, the spirit and the ancestors. As such :

- *What do we specifically know about the work and life of our human and more-than-human local community; what particular gifts and capacities do they individually and collectively bring to bear?*
- *What are the burning issues faced by the specific community, within and/or around your enterprise, with an through which you work and learn?*
- *How does such collective learning relate to the major issues your society is facing, and to the regenerative capacities and issues of yourself, your group and your organization?*

Local, communal knowledge, of nature and people, makes for us a good start, a necessary start, but such origination does not form an enduring foundation, whereby local and global need to meet.

***“Eastern” Regenerative PILGRIMIUM: Imaginal - Intuiting  
Transpersonal: Regenerating Culture and Spirituality Locally-Globally***

Analogous to the individual level, it is here where we seek to identify and regenerate a community’s or society’s ‘seat of creativity’, now *locally-global*, as now a cultural and spiritual foundation for what is technologically and economically to follow, building on prior communal, and local origination. Far from representing the universality of Western culture, such trans-local “travelling” for Palestinian American humanist Edward Said, or for us journeying or “eastern” pilgrimage, serves to open up new spaces of discourse in which travelling theory, hybridity, and shifting idioms of identity constitutes an *emergent* foundation, and as such a re-GENE-rative PILGRIMIUM :

- *How can your community and culture regenerate itself co-creatively with others?*
- *How does the interaction between cultural/spiritual forms create fields of co-evolution?*
- *How can your own creative potential, rooted in our own cultural identity, ultimately also contribute to the regeneration of the world at large?*

Such a natural and communal origination, cultural and spiritual foundation, sets the state for what is institutionally and knowledgeably to follow.

***“Northern” Research ACADEMY: Conceptual - Thinking  
Transdisciplinary: Navigating Knowledge – Science and Technology - Newly Global***

A knowledge and value creating institution, as a “northern” research academy navigating its way towards societal *emancipation*, combines, *newly globally*, “southern” relational and “eastern” renewal paths, with paths of “northern” reason and “western” realisation, each along a research trajectory from origination to transformation. As such, aligned with Japanese management guru Ikijiro Nonaka’s “knowledge spiral” :

- *How do we, individually, organizationally, and societally, learn and know?*
- *How do we undertake, individually, institutionally, inter-institutionally, socio-technical innovation leading integrally to newly global knowledge, out of communal origination and cultural foundation?*
- *What learning models, knowledge creation concepts, forms of research and education, and learning tools can inform us in that context?*

Such innovation driven, institutionalise knowledge, though, needs to be actualised in small, action learning oriented groups, within what Nonaka has termed a “project layer”.

***“Western” Action Learning LABORATORY: Practical - Doing  
Transformational: Economics and Enterprise Effect – Global-Local***

From an integral, Communiversality perspective the individually oriented “west”, as a practical “Laboratory” builds on, rather than leading, the “rest” – experiential “southern” Community, imaginal “Eastern” Pilgrimum, and conceptual “Northern ” Academy, as per English research philosopher John Heron’s model of *Personhood*. For American pragmatist John Dewey then, as for the UK’s inventor of action learning, Reg Revans, scientific research was not a process separate from democratic social action. Scientific knowing, like all other forms of knowledge, for individual and enterprise, was a product of continuous cycles of action and reflection, for us ultimately leading to *global-local transformative* economic/enterprise *effect*. As suc :

- *through an exchange of information – ideas, advice, contacts, hunches, concepts - you learn with and from each other, in small groups,*
- *by supportive attacks upon real and menacing problems, through interaction between individual group members, offering each other support/challenge*
- *behavioral change results more often from the re-interpretation of past experience than the acquisition of fresh knowledge.*

**Conclusion: Communal to Individual**

In conclusion, the conventional university logic, whereby you start with the individual and work up toward the society is reversed, whereby you ground learning in a community, emerge though society (pilgrimum), navigate through an organisation (academy) and end with the individual (laboratory).