

Est.  
1841

YORK  
ST JOHN  
UNIVERSITY

Meredith, Margaret ORCID:

<https://orcid.org/0000-0003-4541-3821> (2020) Creating spaces of dialogical action towards epistemic justice in higher education. Doctoral thesis, York St John University.

Downloaded from: <http://ray.yorks.j.ac.uk/id/eprint/4622/>

Research at York St John (RaY) is an institutional repository. It supports the principles of open access by making the research outputs of the University available in digital form. Copyright of the items stored in RaY reside with the authors and/or other copyright owners. Users may access full text items free of charge, and may download a copy for private study or non-commercial research. For further reuse terms, see licence terms governing individual outputs. [Institutional Repository Policy Statement](#)

# RaY

Research at the University of York St John

For more information please contact RaY at [ray@yorks.j.ac.uk](mailto:ray@yorks.j.ac.uk)

Creating spaces of dialogical action towards epistemic  
justice in higher education

Margaret Ellen Meredith

Submitted in accordance with the requirements for the degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy

York St John University

School of Education, Language and Psychology

January 2020

The candidate confirms that the work submitted is her own and that appropriate credit has been given where reference has been made to the work of others.

This copy has been supplied on the understanding that it is copyright material. Any reuse must comply with the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988 and any licence under which this copy is released.

© 2020 York St John University and Margaret Ellen Meredith

The right of Margaret Ellen Meredith to be identified as Author of this work has been asserted by her in accordance with the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988.

Dedicated to the memory of my parents, with love and gratitude.

## **Acknowledgements**

I owe a huge debt of gratitude to my two supervisors, Professor Jean McNiff and Professor Julian Stern who have been extremely generous with their time and with their insights. I could not have been better supported. Throughout my PhD research they have challenged and prompted me to explore new avenues of thinking. They have pointed me towards a world of riches in the literatures and have inspired me to keep questioning and keep investigating. They have also communicated a belief in my ability to complete a doctorate, even during the times when I felt this belief was not well founded. This has been a powerful motivator for me. Through the example of their own research, I have gained a deeper understanding of the ethical side of knowing: the responsibility to know well and in ways which speak with the world both outside and inside of academia.

I would like to thank the many participants in the social economy project. Through their practical actions of solidarity with others, and from our dialogues, I have learnt so much. In particular, I am deeply grateful to the named research collaborators who have generously contributed the insights which are expressed in this thesis and have given the time to clarify and affirm them.

Thank you to Charles Hanks and to Donna White for proof-reading sections of this thesis. Any mistakes in the text are mine alone.

The social economy project described in the thesis was partially funded by the Erasmus Mundus programme of the European Union.

The methodology used to facilitate some of the interactions in the project is based on the 'Technology of Participation' facilitation methods developed by the Institute of Cultural Affairs: <http://www.ica-international.org/top-facilitation/icas-technology-of-participation-top/>

Finally, thank you to Catalina Quiroz-Niño with whom I have lived the experience of designing and co-ordinating the collaborative international project on which this thesis is based. Your creativity and ability to see great potential in everybody have been an inspiration to me, and your tenacity made it possible to get through the difficult times. Thank you for more than I can say.

## **Abstract**

Universities tend to take an exclusive view of knowledge and who can generate such knowledge. This knowledge tends to be based upon concepts within Western frameworks which assume the desirability of objectivity between the individual knower and what is known, the fragmentation of knowledge into disciplines and a marked distinction between theory and practice. As such, legitimate knowledge creation is seen to be the prerogative of academics based in Western contexts. Other forms of knowledge and other knowers are viewed as less legitimate. I challenge this view in practical and theoretical ways, arguing that it is exclusional, unjust and counterproductive. The practices described in the thesis are premised on the belief that all people should be seen as having knowledge creating capacity and the ability to use such capacity. It explores how relational, participative practices of knowledge creation between people of difference were enacted.

Using a self-study action research approach, I investigate my practices as an academic in co-ordinating an international collaborative project between those inside and outside of academia in global North and South. I describe and theorise how participative, relational and dialogic spaces were created for knowledge creation. The thesis explores how all participants were recognised as having a unique role which contributed to addressing a common concern, how such a role may be developed in collaboration with others and how this inclusive approach can motivate participation. I explain how such practices can embody epistemic justice.

I draw conclusions which contribute to a conceptualisation of the role and responsibility of the academic towards creating spaces for participation in collaborative and dialogical political action. I also draw out the practices embedded within my research and view them as a microcosm of what universities could be: spaces of participation in dialogical learning and in political action, towards social hope.

## Table of contents

Introduction .....	1
Research questions.....	4
The responsibility of the academic in the higher education sector .....	5
My claim to knowledge .....	7
Fields of knowledge to which I hope to have contributed .....	8
Professional and personal values informing my research .....	8
Timeline of my research .....	17
Guide to the thesis .....	18
Outline of the chapters .....	18
Terms used in this thesis.....	23
The social and solidarity economy – a brief explanation .....	25
Conclusion.....	26
Chapter 1 - What are the purposes of universities? What is the role of the academic within this?.....	27
1.1 Role of the academic .....	27
1.1.1 The academic as public intellectual.....	28
1.1.2 The academic as creator of spaces of participation: a public sphere .....	28
1.2 Knowledge and higher education.....	30
1.2.1 Legitimate knowledge.....	30
1.2.2 Plural knowledges .....	31
1.2.3 Epistemic justice.....	34
1.2.4 Conventional forms of academia .....	35
1.3 Knowledge and power .....	45
1.3.1 The significance of the right to theorise.....	48

1.3.2	Market values and knowledge power .....	51
1.4	Conclusion .....	58
1.4.1	Aims of my research.....	58
Chapter 2 -	Theoretical frameworks .....	60
2.1	Emergence of the frameworks .....	61
2.2	Explanation of the frameworks and development of my understandings.....	63
2.2.1	Arendt's theory of action.....	63
2.2.2	Justice and political action.....	69
2.2.3	Centre and periphery (in knowledge) .....	75
2.2.4	Theories of dialogue.....	79
2.3	Conclusion .....	90
Chapter 3 -	What action did I take?.....	91
3.1	Background.....	91
3.2	An international collaborative project about the social and solidarity economy.....	92
3.2.1	What were the aims of the social economy project? .....	95
3.2.2	The theme of the project .....	96
3.2.3	Partners and other participants .....	99
3.2.4	Outputs of the project.....	101
3.3	Conclusion .....	111
Chapter 4 -	Research methodology .....	112
4.1	The epistemic and philosophical basis of my action research approach .....	112
4.1.1	Locating action research within social science research traditions .....	113
4.1.2	Positioning my research within action research traditions .....	114
4.1.3	Re-enactment and the action-reflection cycle in my research. ....	118
4.2	Research setting and context .....	119



4.2.1	Timeline of my research .....	120
4.3	Research methods.....	120
4.3.1	Adaptation of critical incidents as research method .....	120
4.3.2	Reading and reflective writing as research method.....	124
4.3.3	Participants in developing the analysis of my research .....	127
4.3.4	Research ethics.....	130
4.3.5	Researcher positionality .....	132
4.4	Generating evidence to test the validity of my knowledge claim ...	136
4.4.1	Data sources and data gathering .....	136
4.4.2	Analysing my data and generating evidence.....	138
4.4.3	My knowledge claim .....	141
4.5	Conclusion.....	147
Chapter 5 - Turning inwards: the strategic planning meetings and beginning to write the handbook.....		149
5.1	A space of participation in political action for different knowers and knowledges .....	149
5.1.1	Designing the framework of the project handbook .....	151
5.2	Insights and discussion.....	168
5.2.1	Political action and epistemic justice .....	168
5.2.2	Raising questions and framing the issues .....	170
5.2.3	Promoting inclusive spaces – avoiding binaries .....	171
5.2.4	Achieving consensus vs. acknowledging difference in collaborative work .....	173
5.2.5	Political action and realising our natality – the importance of a meaningful role for each participant.....	174
5.2.6	Enlarging the centre .....	176
5.2.7	The ‘dialogical’ in political action .....	177
5.2.8	Conclusion to section .....	184
5.3	Turning inwards – challenging assumptions .....	184

5.4	Conclusion to chapter .....	188
Chapter 6 - Turning outwards: political action and the online medium.....		189
6.1	Section 1 - Online conferencing .....	190
6.1.1	Group meetings.....	192
6.1.2	A blended approach with issues of balance .....	194
6.1.3	Asynchronous communication and political action .....	194
6.2	Section 2 - Moving towards polycentricity: Turning outwards .....	195
6.2.1	Implications from previous learning .....	196
6.2.2	Blogs and the online environment .....	197
6.2.3	Critical episode 2: Background.....	198
6.2.4	Melba's students in Colombia .....	203
6.2.5	What influence did the practices have on participation?.....	208
6.3	Insights and discussion: creating spaces of participation in political action.....	209
6.3.1	Participation in political action and epistemic justice .....	210
6.3.2	Revisiting centre and periphery – towards polycentricity .....	212
6.3.3	Political action and complexity theory.....	217
6.3.4	Dialogism and the balance of process and product in political action .....	220
6.3.5	Political action as dialogical political action .....	222
6.3.6	A common concern – the axiological level .....	223
6.3.7	The foundational importance of relationships.....	224
6.3.8	Polycentricity and relationships .....	225
6.4	Conclusion .....	227
Chapter 7 - Turning towards the world: the end-of-project conference .....		229
7.1	What opportunities might a conference offer? .....	230
7.2	The end-of-project conference.....	234
7.2.1	Conference theme.....	235

7.2.2	Enlarging the public sphere of dialogical political action.....	236
7.2.3	Dialogical conference activities .....	237
7.3	Insights and discussion: Creating spaces of participation in dialogical political action.....	249
7.3.1	Centre and periphery: from polycentricity towards moving centres for epistemic justice .....	249
7.3.2	Dialogical political action .....	252
7.3.3	Internal dialogues.....	254
7.3.4	Dialogical political action and social hope .....	255
7.4	Conclusion.....	257
Chapter 8 - Reconceptualising academic practice as dialogical political action .....		258
8.1	The significance of my research .....	259
8.2	My knowledge claim: Reconceptualising academic practice as dialogical political action.....	261
8.2.1	Epistemic justice and the commitment to the uniqueness and agency of individuals .....	263
8.2.2	Polycentricity and moving/shifting centres.....	265
8.2.3	The importance of dialogic processes of interaction between people and the transformative potential of these .....	268
8.3	Reflections on the research process.....	271
8.3.1	Practice as a context for theorising .....	271
8.3.2	Writing as a research method .....	273
8.4	Implications of academic practice as dialogical political action .....	275
8.4.1	Turning inwards: personal – the academic.....	275
8.4.2	Turning outwards: the institutional – higher education as public sphere .....	279
8.4.3	Turning towards the world: the theoretical.....	283

8.5 What would I do differently? Where do I go now, theoretically and practically? .....	284
References.....	287
Appendix 1: Research timeline and data collection.....	305
Appendix 2: Screenshot of slides for presentation at SRHE conference ...	315
Appendix 3: Excerpt from Conference programme .....	316
Appendix 4: Participants' pre-conference expectations .....	317
Appendix 5: Conference participants' evaluations .....	318

## List of figures

Figure 4:1 The philosophical roots of my action research approach .....	114
Figure 4:2 Turning towards the other in the critical episodes of my research (building on the work of Buber 2002). .....	124
Figure 4:3 Excerpt from spreadsheet for coding data (Data archive, Data and evidence spreadsheets – 19.3.17). .....	138
Figure 4:4 Methodology for data analysis (adapted from McNiff 2017, pp.167-202). .....	140
Figure 4:5 Validity criteria for my research. ....	143
Figure 5:1 Photograph showing the sticky wall and arrangement of criteria. ....	161
Figure 5:2 Example page from the project handbook. ....	163
Figure 6:1 Agenda and notes from partners' Skype meeting (date 3.5.2013) (See Data archive). ....	193
Figure 6:2 Excerpt of partners' Skype meeting agenda (date: 1.2.2013), with notes added according to actions agreed. ....	198
Figure 6:3 Screenshot of A Patio of Hope blog post. ....	200
Figure 6:4 Number of visitors to English blog, May-June 2014 (dates in U.S. format). ....	202
Figure 6:5 Co-ordinating the blog using the centre and periphery model... ..	213
Figure 6:6 Screenshot of a blog post by Mary Kiguru, February 2015 .....	215
Figure 6:7 Co-ordinating the blog using a polycentric model. ....	216
Figure 7:1 Screenshot from participants' presentation. ....	246
Figure 7:2 Conference working wall or 'Hub'. ....	248
Figure 8:1 The cycle of turning inwards, outwards and towards the world (based on Buber 2002, p.25). ....	275

## List of tables

Table 3:1 Partner institutions in the social economy project. ....	100
Table 4:1 Participants whose contributions provide data in my research...	128
Table 5:1 Criteria for describing perceptions of the social economy by geographic area. ....	156
Table 5:2 Consolidation and consensus of criteria by partners for the handbook and social economy (SE) project. ....	160

## Introduction

This thesis is about the need to create a new vision for higher education and for my practice within academia. It is an account of my work in challenging the tendency of universities to take a narrow view of knowledge to the exclusion of those in, for example, the global South and in contexts of practice outside academia. The thesis records how I developed practices, along with others, which promote participation of people currently often marginalised in contexts of 'legitimate' knowledge creation. These practices focus on dialogical and relational forms of knowledge creation, and on the theorisation of such practices.

As an academic working in a university in the UK and involved in work in the global South, I set out here the practical development of a vision for academic practices in which people take collective action to enact a broad sense of purpose and of the realisation of personal and professional values. In the thesis, an innovative sense of agency is expressed in the idea of taking collaborative action around an issue of common concern. I call this dialogical political action.

The view of knowledge creation taken in this thesis reflects a core concern of mine which is that, in my view, universities could be better than they currently are, especially in how they might focus to a greater extent on serving democratic interests in the public sphere. I argue that participation in the way in which knowledge is created and legitimised is a key contribution higher education can make to democracy in the form of greater participation in knowledge domains. I argue that this is a matter of justice. As academics we can enact values of democratic participation in our practices which embody what Rorty (1999) calls 'social hope'.

The thesis reflects my current thinking, learning and practices, how these evolved over the period of my research and how I developed a theory of my practice as an academic. I refer to this theory of practice as dialogical political action. A significant aspect of this theory is that it is inclusional in recognising the knowledge creating capacity of all people, regardless of setting or

background. This theory is summarised in the section entitled My claim to knowledge, in this Introduction.

To exemplify my arguments, I give an account of my practices in co-ordinating an international research project entitled 'Enhancing the studies and practices of the social economy in higher education', which I refer to variously in this thesis as the 'social and solidarity economy project'; the 'social economy project'; or simply 'the project'. Later in this Introduction, I will explain what I mean by the 'social and solidarity economy'. The project was based on two overarching propositions: first, that all over the world people have developed practices and ways of ascribing value to their lives which prioritise community and well-being over currently dominant perspectives of profit-at-all-costs; and second, that these practices and the knowledge and values that underpin them should be more visible and present in academia itself and in theorisations of issues of great importance to the public, such as the economy.

As an academic I believe I can be active in influencing the broader social and political questions about what kind of society is worth working towards by making suggestions and modelling practices that can signal ways in which the university can 'be active in shaping the interests' (Barnett 2013, p.137) and understandings of the world it serves. The importance of the participation of many people as legitimate knowers in matters in which they have a stake and an interest is a key part of this, in my view.

The social and solidarity economy project involved collaboration between academics and practitioners in the so-called global 'North' and 'South'. In this context I challenge unequal power relationships between academia and practitioners outside the university and between academics working in different hemispheres. These power relationships are premised on the presumed overarching legitimacy of some dominant, techno-rationalist frameworks of knowledge, described and critiqued by, for example, Toulmin (1990), who identifies a belief underpinning Western knowledge that human nature and society can be fitted into exact rational categories; and Berlin (2003b), who argues that Western knowledge frameworks are based on the idea that certainty in knowing is possible. Such views go against my own preferred



commitments to open futures and flexible frameworks which accept the incompleteness of our knowledge.

One of the main conceptual frameworks of this thesis is the idea of epistemic injustice (Fricker 2007): the form of relationship in which some people do not respect others in their capacity as knowers. I highlight the potential dangers of international partnerships formed between academics that can reinforce the kind of neo-colonial practices that happen within unquestioned, dominant, Western-based knowledge frameworks. This thesis explores and develops alternatives to this, where practices are dialogic, and where participation is based on the assumption that participants are equals in their capacity to create knowledge. This is termed epistemic justice.

I also investigate the potential for collaborative action between practitioners and academics and challenge the hierarchy which places universities as owners and producers of knowledge, and communities as empty vessels to be filled. Along with Gaventa and Bivens (2014, p.73) my assumption is the *a priori* existence of knowledge in communities and individuals outside of academia: in other words that people outside of academia have knowledge developed within contexts of practice about what needs to be done and can contribute knowledgeably to discussions about achieving better futures. I explain how, through the project, spaces were created for collaboration between international participants that valued local knowledge paradigms whilst generating new understandings together, as academics from global North and South and as people working in contexts outside the university.

Central themes of this thesis are participation and knowledge creation. I argue that universities tend to take a narrow view of what, and whose, knowledge counts or 'is of most worth' (Apple 2012, p.viii). An underlying assumption in my research is that knowledges are specific to a particular place and time and cannot claim universal relevance or application in all circumstances. This is a view supported by references to philosophers such as Isaiah Berlin, Lorraine Code and Richard Rorty. Berlin recognises that there is value-pluralism in the world, that there is 'no one hierarchy of goods or excellences'; that rather there is an 'irreducible diversity of worthwhile forms of life whose goodness is not commensurable by any universal standard' (Gray 2013, p.177). Practical

reasoning, which needs some understanding of an ideal end point, cannot therefore be objective. As Code points out (2006, pp.4-5), 'Theories of knowledge shape and are shaped by dominant social-political imaginaries'. Similarly, Rorty (1999, xvii) argues that many of the truths 'discovered' and called 'objective' or common sense are actually invented and constructed.

As my research progressed, I increasingly came to see participation in knowledge creation as a form of justice: justice towards people in their capacity as knowers and justice in ways and processes of legitimising knowledge, as outlined by Fricker (2007). At the beginning of my research, this included the capacity of all to know and to create knowledge that may be used in the service of human development. As my research proceeded, I came to appreciate that practical recognition of this is a form of justice.

However, this form is contrary to the dominant form espoused by academia. This raises questions for academics about which types of knowledge are considered legitimate, how they are produced, by whom, and the knowledge interests served in process and outcomes. I address these questions, and this thesis reflects my deepening understandings and ability to articulate them in practice and in theory.

Underpinning my research has been a personally held belief in democratic participation in which people are recognised as equals in their difference. It is a belief in plurality. In the context of epistemology I have gained a deeper understanding of the implications of this: that all people, in our diversity, have the right to be seen as knowers. However, in its focus on techno-rationalist ways of knowing, and the positioning of research as a specialised activity which can only be carried out by academics (Appadurai 2000), the modern research university tends not to feature plurality and participation in knowledge creation. I argue that this stance represents a form of epistemic injustice towards people in their capacity as knowers and a denial of plurality.

## **Research questions**

My research questions explore how I can challenge and change this situation. In this thesis I investigate how ideas about what counts as legitimate knowledge and the participation of knowers in academia can be broadened, in

which values of participation and plurality can be enacted rather than denied. I ask,

- How can I develop practices which are epistemologically pluralistic within higher education? and
- How can I create spaces of participation in dialogical action in my role as an academic towards this aim?

As I have explored these questions, I have come to understand my responsibility as an academic in creating spaces for dialogical action towards epistemic justice for hopeful, shared futures. The aims of my research are articulated in the conclusion to Chapter 1, Section 1.4, following more detailed articulation of my concerns about higher education.

## **The responsibility of the academic in the higher education sector**

As Rowland (2006) points out, academics often work within a conflict of values systems: those espoused by the individual and those enacted by the sector. I take the view that as academics, we do have choices and a level of autonomy in our professional roles, and that the sum of our practices is what makes up the totality of higher education.

As an academic, I do not want simply to reproduce an existing paradigm which I believe is unjust and potentially damaging to the collective well-being of the societies served by universities. Countering such prevailing forces that promote inequality and exclusion requires a broad, alternative vision and direction of travel. Critique of existing ideology and practices is a necessary start in deconstructing the assumptions and purposes of current policies. However, if there are no feasible alternative visions, such academic activity remains at the level of theoretical contestation. Leathwood and Read (2013, p.1164) argue that such contestation is apparent amongst some academics, but much of this is 'ideological critique rather than active resistance'. There is a danger that we just 'live on the balcony' as observers of conflicts and struggles going on below, according to Apple (2012, p.xi).

I believe that it is possible for an academic to go further and take a proactive stance of practical critique towards the manifestation of ideologies and practices which conflict with personal and professional values. This means going beyond an attitude of resistance and moving towards practices which enact a renewal of vision and purpose. Barnett (2015b, p.5) identifies two camps of critical writers expressing concern about higher education: those who turn to philosophy, but at the cost of connection with real practices and institutions; and those who offer a sociological analysis framed by discourses of neoliberalism and managerialism, leading to accounts which he argues are 'unremittingly bleak' and which I believe risk becoming increasingly abstract theorisations of hopelessness. Barnett himself aims to break with these traditions and to offer a 'philosophy with practical intent' which searches for 'spaces for renewal' (pp.7-8). Taking Barnett's lead in a break with abstraction on the one hand and pessimism on the other, I present this thesis as an emerging theory of my practice in which I aim to imagine, create and practise within spaces of renewal.

The participative paradigm I have enacted in my work with others values outward-looking, dialogical research. My vision involves the responsibility of academics to create spaces of participation in a public sphere of knowledge creation in which there are many diverse ways of knowing, based on many expressions of values. It is about how universities can provide an important impetus and create models for knowledge creation in plural contexts in which difference is a resource for learning and greater understanding. I show how academics can facilitate relational learning rather than learning to reproduce patterns of domination and exclusion, albeit unintentionally. For this, I draw on Hannah Arendt's (1958) theory of action – the capacity we all have to start something new and to take collective action in the public sphere on an issue of importance to us. Enacting this theory of action is a core commitment which informs and runs through this thesis.

The practical question of how people, in our diversity, can take collaborative action with social intent on an issue of concern is a theme throughout the thesis. It is reflected in my growing understanding of the need for spaces of interaction between people in learning relationships which enable the

expression of different ways of knowing the world, and in which people are enabled to develop and articulate their own knowledge-creating capacity. I come to see this as a key responsibility of an academic. In this thesis, I increasingly came to position myself in the role of a creator and facilitator of spaces which foster collaborative, dialogical action in the public sphere, with a commitment to the creation of relational knowledge. I believe that academics are well placed for this role, given their international reach and networks, the physical resources available to universities and the role the university has in creating and disseminating knowledge.

## **My claim to knowledge**

In my research I have demonstrated that as an academic it is possible to address an unjust situation in accordance with one's values. In theorising my practice, I claim to have created spaces within higher education in which I and others have exercised our agency to take action around an issue of common concern, that is to say, for dialogical political action. This represents my original contribution to the field of academic practices. This has been done in participative ways which I theorise as forms for recognising the uniqueness and agency of individuals, as part of striving towards the goal of epistemic justice for all. My theory of practice recognises the importance of dialogic processes of interaction between people and the transformative potential of these. I draw conclusions which contribute to conceptualisation of the role and responsibility of the academic towards creating spaces for participation for those inside and outside of academia in collaborative political action. I also draw out the practices embedded within my research and view them as a microcosm of what higher education could be: spaces of participation in dialogical learning and in political action, towards social hope.

My research focuses on academics, practitioners and people from other walks of life, learning together, from each other and with each other and creating knowledge together. This will be expanded upon in the final chapter.

## **Fields of knowledge to which I hope to have contributed**

My principal concern throughout this research has been the roles and practices of academics in higher education. As an academic myself, my contribution is mainly expressed in terms of my own practice. In theorising this, I believe I can contribute insights of relevance to other academics.

The international nature of my research enables me to make a contribution to knowledge about practices of internationalisation in higher education. More broadly, the concept of epistemic justice as enacted in my research has relevance to any institutional or professional partnership in which there are relationships of power – and in which questions about whose knowledge has authority and normative status – become salient. This would need to be investigated in the specific context, but I believe my research has contributed practical and conceptual ways of identifying and approaching this issue. In the final chapter to this thesis, I develop these issues further and offer ideas about their potential relevance for future practice and research for the fields in question.

## **Professional and personal values informing my research**

What I have written above is an explicit acknowledgement that my research does not claim to be values-neutral, so first, to locate the values informing my work, I will outline aspects of my background and professional contexts.

In what follows, I write on the basis that values exist and take form in response to specific real-world contexts and are not abstract things-in-themselves. For this reason, I resist outlining my values in a categorical way. Instead I present a quite diverse range of snapshots from my life in which I aim to give a flavour of where my values-based priorities and interests lie, in narrative form and through examples. These are roughly chronological, although it would be impossible to identify at what point my thinking evolved around the issues I raise, so the narrative thread is partly in relation to my growing understandings in changing contexts and over time.

## **Snapshot 1**

My first snapshot is in a small town in West Wales where I worked as a trainee architect. The town seemed to cater for tourists and students, but had high levels of unemployment.

The town had few social outlets for the significant numbers of young people without work and little organised and purposeful activity for the school-age children who hung around in groups on the streets and outside the local burger bar. In this context, I became concerned about the opportunities people have of living lives which they consider meaningful and being the best that they could be rather than drifting into destructive behaviours and depression, which seemed to be the case. The outdoor pursuits centre and drop-in centre I initiated with the intention of addressing this issue, and worked with others to bring to fruition, was what would now be called a social enterprise although that term was not used by anyone involved at the time.

Later I would call my concern a sense of social justice and a matter of social injustice, although this was not a term I had heard then either and is one which I now believe needs further clarification. I was motivated by a sense of the unfairness and damage done to themselves and the loss to others when people are by-passed and marginalised by wider society.

## **Snapshot 2**

The concern about creating opportunities for people to be the best they could be led me later to become a primary teacher. I believed, and still do believe, in the power of education to promote the ability to think for oneself, to express one's unique self and to learn to live well with others. Soon after qualifying to become a teacher, I became enthusiastic about the potential of digital technologies – information and communication technologies, or ICT as it was then called – to promote learning. I could see its possibilities for promoting the skills of thinking and analysis, and of offering creative and inclusive ways to present ideas. I set out to learn all I could and to learn and investigate ways of using this powerful learning tool in my classroom.

Over a period of time, I noticed that the majority of people putting themselves forward, or being put forward, to take responsibility for this area of growing

importance in schools belonged to a particular demographic and represented interest in some areas of the curriculum more than others. Heavily represented were young men, who also generally had responsibility for physical education, maths, or science. Significantly underrepresented were women and people who held responsibility for English and the humanities.

The emphasis placed on ICT in education at that time meant that those with this knowledge gained status and power. There was a discourse of technological determinism in education, suggesting that 'technology is the future, therefore we need to do xyz, so we are part of it, to best prepare our children for the future'. Those who had some knowledge and interest in the subject were able to influence decisions about the types of pedagogy the ICT infrastructure might embed. This cohort was also strongly represented in those gaining promotions, so they were afforded greater decision-making power within schools and local authorities. They were able to further embed beliefs about pedagogy and education in decisions about ICT.

My point is not to discredit the group of people that took the initiative and responsibility in learning about ICT. Rather, it is to say that through these experiences, I began to understand that there was a relationship between knowledge and power. Later, and from my reading of Foucault, this issue became clearer. I understood that it is not just those who have a particular type of knowledge that have greater decision-making power. That is a fairly transparent, albeit potentially unfair, apportioning of power. I could now see that it was something deeper and more opaque than this: that particular types of knowledge give power to set the agenda and the parameters of the sorts of issues that might be considered important and the ways in which these can be discussed. I became aware that certain ideas, values and practices can become dominant and normative when those with power locate these beliefs and assumptions within discourses of, for example, inevitability, rightness and progress, as was the case with ICT in education. Within this, subtle ways can be found to delegitimise and make difficult any questioning of the underpinning assumptions and values driving the practices.

Through the research carried out in this thesis, I have had the opportunity to investigate something I was intuitively aware of in relation to these matters of



epistemology and what now emerges as epistemological or epistemic justice: how the dominance of particular types of knowledge can set invisible boundaries around the types of questions that it might be relevant to ask, and the types of answers that are likely or possible. These boundaries will have assumptions and values embedded in them, even when these are not articulated. This then gave power to some and excluded others on the basis of very limited, but increasingly incontestable, criteria around the value of digital technologies *per se*. In my opinion, this was unjust and, crucially, was in danger of leading to an impoverishing of education.

I felt I had a responsibility to work with teachers who felt undervalued and delegitimised in this respect. I believed it was important to them, and that their potential sense of voice in the decisions around ICT use would be beneficial in widening pedagogical perspectives, so I worked first in my school in lunch times and then, several years later, in a wider and more official remit with teachers to foster their capacity to use digital technologies. I aimed to do this in ways that promoted discussion about technological tools in relation to teaching and learning that were consistent with their beliefs about what counts as good teaching. My intention was that they could become active agents in their classes and schools, rather than passive receivers of the decisions of others, loaded as these decisions were with unspoken assumptions about teaching and learning which were not necessarily universally shared.

Later, when I had spent some years working in initial teacher education in higher education, with a focus on the use of digital technologies in the primary classroom, I spent some time with Catalina Quiroz-Niño, my research partner who is introduced later in this Introduction, working on a voluntary basis in a university in Peru, leading an ICT course for teacher educators there. The same issues were playing out in that part of the world. Decisions were not being made on pedagogical grounds that people felt comfortable with, and academic members of staff were being positioned as in some way deficient as teachers in relation to new technologies. We facilitated discussions about what these academics wanted in relation to ICT, what they saw as relevant and how they might take their next steps, whilst teaching and demonstrating the possibilities offered by readily available resources.

These ideas about knowledge, power, empowerment, the positioning of people as capable or incapable in epistemological matters and the consequences of this have been a lens through which I have increasingly viewed many political, social and economic situations. Foucault's work has helped me to understand and articulate the implications of this more precisely. His concept of power/knowledge (1980) has huge implications for justice in the world and for ways of thinking which legitimise or discredit certain types of knowledge and certain types of people as knowers. People can be marginalised because they do not have the 'right' knowledge and, in the process of excluding multiple perspectives and knowledges, the collective thinking available to society about important issues can become more limited and impoverished.

The department of initial teacher education where I currently work has had a high stakes inspection approximately every two-and-a-half years on average since 2006, each time achieving a grade of 'good'. Over that time, inspection preparedness has always to a greater or lesser extent driven the agenda and is an effective form of 'governmentality' or self-policing (Foucault 2000), of ensuring that things are done in particular ways, reflecting particular values and assumptions. At the time I started the project which provides the context of this research, the subject of inspection was spoken about in staff meetings far more than teaching and learning, or the purposes of the activities of the department. It seemed to dominate everything we did. At that time, in 2012, I was convinced that misplaced market- and business-driven knowledge and practices were infecting education: that the power/knowledge nexus reflected the overriding belief in the practices of the business world. In carrying out the research presented in this thesis, I came to see it as a much deeper matter – that of epistemology and epistemic justice. During this research, I have been able to deepen my understanding of power in relation to knowledge. I have come to realise that the issue is more about our ways of knowing and reasoning and the parameters of Western knowledge and hegemonic structures than about business practices of accounting and technical efficiency, which are only manifestations of such ways of knowing. I have gained a deeper understanding of how a rigid and singular epistemology, which means that some ways of knowing will count more than others in

education and in mainstream dominant discourses, can exclude people as well as include them.

### **Snapshot 3**

My next snapshot is from Latin America. Due to personal connections I have visited this region many times since the mid-1990s. I first came across the word 'cosmovision' when reading about the indigenous peoples of Central and South America. My time in the highlands of Guatemala and later the Andes of Peru confirmed that this was a live concept embedded in the minds of people there.

A diary I bought to try to understand the Mayan calendar defines 'cosmovision' as 'the way of seeing, understanding and interpreting the exterior and interior world of every culture' (Rodríguez 1998, no page number). The diary outlines the Mayan cosmovision, which I summarise here: it seeks 'balance in relations with Mother Earth and all that exists in her: plants, animals and things without life; and with our fellow beings ... it doesn't consider that people are exclusively endowed with divine breath' (my translation from Spanish). From reading newspapers and talking to local people in the highlands, I understood that the Mayan cosmovision was dismissed as folklore or outdated traditional knowledge by the Guatemalan government, whose preferred form of knowledge, as an official agency, would be technical rationality. Nevertheless, it was clear to me that it was part of a dynamic world view informing how people come to know and to demonstrate the validity of ways of thinking, of knowledge and of ways of being in the world.

The word 'cosmovision' identifies a concept. It is a way of articulating that we interpret reality in a particular way. It struck me as significant that there did not seem to be a mainstream word that conveyed this holistic idea in English and that many people in Europe might struggle to articulate an overarching cosmovision. I first asked myself what a Western cosmovision might be. Much later, in the course of the research presented in this thesis, I asked myself why I had never heard this discussed and what the consequences of this might be for the ways in which we live our lives.

Not having a readily understandable word to convey an idea about our relationship with the world reminds me of Foucault's concept of discourse (2000): that discourses put parameters around the ways in which we make sense of reality. In becoming invisible and normative, in other words becoming acceptable to those who are legitimised knowers, such discourses can be exclusional. In Chapter 5, I show how discourses were influenced in the project.

This thesis deals with, among other matters, epistemology: the ways in which we know. In a similar way to the observations I have made above, when the ways we know are considered common sense and normative, the assumptions we use to make sense of reality can become difficult to identify and challenge. They can marginalise those who do not, intuitively or consciously, share such 'common' sense.

I have lived for most of my life in the UK. I write from the perspective of an academic based in a UK university. My 'here' is this country and this time in history, with its epistemic and cultural traditions and norms, whilst realising that these in themselves should not be understood as a monoculture. My context has allowed me the opportunity to freely live in and visit different places, in the UK and abroad and in personal and professional contexts. My research has enabled me to comprehend to a much greater extent that my 'here' is privileged, not only materially but, importantly for this thesis, in terms of being a cultural and epistemic norm, around which other people's 'heres' are often positioned as lacking and their knowledge as not counting for much. This knowledge hierarchy is relevant to my position as an academic, as well as to my citizenship of a Western, English-speaking country. I am not romanticising any particular way of viewing the world. On the contrary, I am arguing in this thesis for the importance of the legitimacy of many world views, for plurality in practice, from the point of view of justice and for the greatest opportunity we have to create hopeful human futures.

#### **Snapshot 4**

When the financial crash happened in 2007-8 in much of the Western world and elsewhere, I saw it as an epic example of the pattern of this same

relationship: certain, limited and specialist knowledge had conferred extreme power to a narrow group of people, excluding many others who, I believed, had a right to contribute to debates about the assumptions and values embedded in practices which affected us all; and to participate in understandings of the purposes and interests the economy should serve.

This event and my reflections on it and how I was able (or not) to respond to it in my professional life became very influential in my thinking. The crisis seemed to be of the magnitude of a watershed event: things could not possibly stay the same. I fully expected there to be a sea change in the following years around conceptualisations and practices of the economy, led by academics and politicians.

However, I could not find any active response from academics. In fact, by 2013, students were taking the lead in demanding change. Student-led organisations such as the Post-Crash Economics Society and Rethinking Economics were challenging academics in economics departments who were uncritically teaching the same old free market orthodoxy – the reliance on mathematical models and the ‘narrow training of economists’ (Hodgson 2009), the quest for ‘simple ways of thinking about highly complex phenomena that cannot really be taken apart and studied in a systematic way’ (Shiller 2010, p.407), the myopic focus which prioritised making money at all costs, the lack of critique around purposes, consequences and the meaning of value – that all these factors had caused the crisis (Yunus 2007; Max-Neef and Smith 2014), the lack of judgement and the ability to ‘engage in radical self-criticism’ (MacIntyre 2009, p.362). Academia seemed to be silent, perhaps finding itself void of an academic and scholarly language to express deep concern based on values. In fact, according to some researchers, academics were actively complicit (Ferguson 2012) in using research, publication and status to promote morally indefensible practices in pursuit of personal gain and prestige at any cost to others.

I was one of those academics who seemed unable to respond. I felt my own work, mainly teaching ICT to student teachers, was part of a bigger silence on critical issues and was therefore arguably complicit in a status quo that I believed was unjust. I felt constrained and unable to make any kind of

meaningful difference through my work. The issues exposed by the financial crisis seemed to be symptomatic of the impoverishment of many areas of public life.

This thesis is a practical and theoretical response to the issues highlighted in these snapshots, and aims to answer the question, 'As an academic, what could I do?'

### **Starting my PhD**

When I started my PhD in 2011, I envisaged it, from previous experiences, as focusing on ICT in education, participation and social justice. ICT would be used as an exemplification of the way in which issues around participation and social justice played out in education and in my practices. However, in 2012 the university I had worked at in Peru gained access to funding for research and invited me and Catalina (the colleague mentioned above) to work on a proposal with them. Using the Peruvian funds as match funding for European Union funding streams, and in conversations with Catalina and other people, we developed a proposal for a project which, at that time, felt like my life's work in reflecting so many of the concerns I had. The social and solidarity economy project gave me the opportunity to investigate issues I had held in my mind on some level for a long time. I initially thought the project would be just an expression of such concerns, but it also became a way of deepening my understanding of them and finding a conceptual form of language to name them and take them forward in my practice.

This thesis, therefore, is a record of the compulsion I felt to take action and the realisation of that compulsion, to practise in ways that were consistent with my values – and to work towards deeper understandings of these actions – and not to be passive in a situation I felt was both unjust and limiting the possibility of hopeful human futures. Engaging in my research has given me the opportunity to study this issue in depth, to find my way of 'nam[ing] the world in order to transform it' (Freire 1972, p.135) and to work with others who did the same. It represents the transformation of values, thinking and intentions into purposeful action. It explains my theorisation of academic practice as dialogical political action.

## Timeline of my research

The research presented in this thesis involved investigating issues which have concerned me for much of my adult life. I have given examples of these and the reflections and actions I have engaged in over time in the Snapshots above. In hindsight, I see these as part of a 'life as inquiry' (Marshall 2016, p.xv) which is taken to a deeper level of processes of action and reflection in the phase of my life bounded by my PhD research. The project was a self-contained and time-bounded context and gave an international perspective in which to explore academic practice in relation to wider social and political issues which were of concern to me. It was a living practical example and realisation of broader issues I discuss above and in the following chapter. My doctoral research has given me the opportunity to combine practices of social activism together with academic research in what I call 'academic activism'. When I refer to my research in this thesis, I am specifically referring to my PhD activities, whilst acknowledging that this thesis represents another snapshot in a dynamic and ongoing process in lifelong enquiry. In the final chapter I will explain how my PhD research is informing my next steps.

The research presented in this thesis may be organised as four main phases:

**Phase 1:** Registration for PhD studies (2011) and start of formal research. Extensive reading and writing related to the subject of social justice and participation.

**Phase 2:** Data gathering (2012-2015) from an international project about the social and solidarity economy. Reflections and making sense of this experience.

**Phase 3:** Analysing and making sense of the data (2016-2018).

**Phase 4:** Writing summative accounts of my developing practice (2018-2019).

A more detailed timeline of my research is found in Appendix 1. In Chapter 3, I will describe and explain the project which was the specific context of my research into my practices as an academic.

## **Guide to the thesis**

This thesis is written broadly on three levels. At a first level, it contains the descriptive story of academics and practitioners in the field collaborating in a research project on an issue of common concern: the social and solidarity economy (a term explained below), as practised in different parts of the world and as an expression of concern at the way dominant models of the economy place over-riding emphasis on financial value. Interwoven with this is a second, reflective, level. This highlights the development of what participants in the project, as people from very different backgrounds, learnt through the process of our collaboration. A third, self-reflective level threaded throughout the thesis comprises my reflections on my developing understandings of my values in practice and in theory, as a way of researching self-in-company-with-others. The levels referred to above are interwoven. This reflects the interdependent nature of my thoughts and actions and the recursive pattern of coming to – and revisiting – understandings of actions in a non-linear way.

I use the first person singular 'I' as author of this text. The thesis reflects my own process of making sense of my practice. I do this mindful of the people I collaborated with and from whom I have learnt so much. At many points it represents an 'I-in-relation-with-others', whilst taking personal responsibility for my own actions, interpretations and theorisations.

In the thesis I use the pronoun 'they' rather than 'he or she'. I am aware that this use of the gender-neutral and non-binary pronoun may make the construction of a small number of sentences feel grammatically awkward in current English usage, but I believe this inclusive use of language is consistent with the theme of the thesis.

## **Outline of the chapters**

### **Chapter 1 – What are the purposes of universities? What is the role of the academic within this?**

In the first chapter, I examine the specific concerns about academia which motivated and informed my research. These focus on the types of knowledge favoured by traditionalist academia, the purposes of knowledge creation and



dissemination in a marketised higher education system, and the role of the academic within a system in which they may experience a conflict between personal and professional values, and those enacted within the sector.

I argue that the current paradigm of knowledge creation tends to be exclusional and is not adequate for knowledge creation in the social sphere. I explain why I believe that an important role of the university, and the academic within it, is to engage with a diversity of knowledges and values in a pluralist society and to focus on knowledge for human development.

## **Chapter 2 – Theoretical frameworks**

In Chapter 2 I set out the theoretical frameworks which emerged as I aimed to make sense of and develop my practice in accordance with my belief in the need to recognise plurality and the right of people to participate in meaningful ways in matters of concern to them.

I present the overarching explanatory framework for my practice with reference to Arendt's (1958) theory of action: the capacity we all have to start something new and to take collective action in the public sphere on an issue of importance to us. I outline the ideas and theories which emerged from my investigation into my practice towards creating spaces of such action. These are: a theory of justice in ways of knowing, referred to as 'epistemic justice' by Fricker (2007); the idea of a 'centre' and a 'periphery' in norms and culture, taken from post-colonial literature (for example, Mignolo 2002). I consider this specifically in the domain of knowledge and use it to explain how my thinking and practice moved to a different organisational structure – one of many centres, called polycentricity by Polanyi (1997, cited in Mitchell 2006, p.22); finally, dialogism as a way in which participants can collaborate to create new understandings and new knowledge.

## **Chapter 3 – What action did I take?**

In Chapter 3 I give an overview of the project that was the specific focus for my research and from which I gathered data: the social and solidarity economy project.

The project was called 'Enhancing the studies and practice of the social economy in higher education', and it was based on three premises:

- A people-centred approach to economic life and value should be present in universities' curricula.
- Universities should provide education and training which serves the community.
- Universities should offer broad and in-depth knowledge and understanding of ways of organising economic life.

I show how the concerns about higher education raised in Chapter 1 informed the design of the project and thinking around the practices within it. A participative and dialogic approach was adopted between academics and people in practice in the social economy, from global North and global South. The main outputs of the project are identified as a handbook, a blog and a conference.

#### **Chapter 4 – Research methodology**

In this chapter I explain and give a rationale for my action research approach, in which as a researcher I am also an agent within the research. Social change is placed at the heart of knowledge creation. I explain how my research is based upon my and others' practical experiences and the theorisations of such experiences in order to develop my practice towards a deeper practical expression of my values. As such, I gather data which can be drawn on as evidence of changes in my thinking and practices, and those of others, towards the enactment of participation in dialogical political action and epistemic justice. I explain how I generated evidence from this data to make a claim to knowledge.

The use of 'critical incident methodology' (Tripp 2012) is explained. Chapter 4 explicates how I use this methodology to draw upon three episodes from the project in Chapters 5-7, which take the form of an analytical narrative. I explain how these were selected to illustrate episodes of practice which highlight a point in my learning and explicate my evolving understandings and practices in relation to the main theme of the thesis: participation in action in the public sphere and epistemic justice.

## **Chapter 5 – Turning inwards: the strategic planning meetings and beginning to write the handbook**

Chapter 5 presents the first critical episode: a series of meetings in which project partners – academics from ‘global North’ and ‘global South’ – met at the beginning of the project to plan it on a strategic level.

I explain how, as different partners and collaborators in the project, we had differing understandings of the concept of the social economy. This meant that taking political action together, in which all could participate as equals, was potentially problematic. I explain how my understanding of the relevance of different ways of knowing and the legitimacy inferred upon types of knowledge and ‘knowers’ by these was deepened and sharpened and I explicate my growing understanding of the fundamental importance of epistemic justice if spaces of participation are to be achieved. In this context, I explain my understanding of the importance of all participants having conceptual input at the early stages of political action, and the need for people to raise questions they consider relevant to the matter of concern under investigation.

## **Chapter 6 – Turning outwards: political action and the online medium**

This chapter is divided into two sections. The first provides continuity with Chapter 5 in considering how project partners interacted online and the implications of this for dialogic relationships.

The online theme is developed further in the second section, which focuses on the second critical episode. This explores the development of the project blogs as an international platform and space for participation in political action around a common concern. Through the emergence of new ideas led by new people and new centres of practice, my thinking developed and I gained new perspectives on my own role in terms of the concept of centre and periphery. I increasingly see my role as an academic as creating spaces in which many centres can emerge.

I also revisit my understanding of dialogic approaches in relation to the processes involved in creation of the blog posts. I consider the balance between processes and products, or means and ends. I consider the importance of the relationships and connections themselves between people,

which are based upon trust and which cannot be reduced to formulas. This leads me to envisage political action as dialogical political action.

### **Chapter 7 – Turning towards the world: the end-of-project conference**

In the third episode, the end-of-project conference is the space for dialogic political action. The chapter starts with a short literature review about the potential opportunities and limitations of conferences.

Putting into practice some of the insights from previous phases of the project, a variety of sub-spaces were purposefully created within the conference which aimed to promote dialogic encounters and political action between people from different geographical, occupational and epistemic backgrounds. Participants themselves had input into the conference theme and design, reflecting the need for people to set their own agendas if participation in action is to be achieved. To conceptualise the participative spaces for political action created, the theme of centres and polycentricity is explored further. Drawing on complexity theory, the notion of ‘moving’ or ‘shifting’ centres is articulated to capture the changes of language within this bilingual conference, and the ‘centring’ of people with different languages and roles and the creation of different relational spaces at different times. I explain their relationship to political action and epistemic justice.

### **Chapter 8 – Reconceptualising academic practice as dialogical political action**

In this chapter, I summarise my learning from the research and articulate my theory of practice as dialogical political action.

I reflect on my research practices, such as the significance of practice as a context for practical forms of theorising and writing as an integral part of my research.

I consider the implications of my research, what I may have done differently and the influence of my research on my future interests and direction.

## Terms used in this thesis

In this thesis, I use the words 'higher education', which can take place in a range of institutions and contexts, and one place where higher education is carried out – 'universities' – interchangeably. I also use the term 'academia' as a general term as the sphere in which academics carry out their professional roles.

I consider myself to be a practitioner in academia, more usually called an 'academic'. When I use this term in the thesis, I refer to people working in teaching and research in higher education, such as myself. I refer to people practising in other contexts as 'practitioners in the field'. I use these terms to differentiate between roles and workplaces. My research is premised on the idea that all have a capacity and a right to carry out research into matters that interest and affect them (Appadurai 2006).

In using terms for the institution or sector, and the person working within such a setting, I am mindful of the need to not conflate these two aspects as one 'thing'. I have already argued that many academics work in a situation of personal conflict between their own priorities and values and those of the institution, and my research is in part motivated by this conflict. For clarification MacIntyre's (1985, p.194) distinction between institutions and practices is useful:

Practices must not be confused with institutions. Chess, physics and medicine are practices; chess clubs, laboratories, universities and hospitals are institutions. Institutions are characteristically and necessarily concerned with what I have called external goods. They are involved in acquiring money and other material goods; they are structured in terms of power and status, and they distribute money, power and status as rewards.

... no practices can survive for any length of time unsustained by institutions. ... [But they are] vulnerable to the acquisitiveness of the institution, in which the cooperative care for common goods of the practice is always vulnerable to the competitiveness of the institution. ... Without [virtues], without justice, courage and truthfulness, practices could not resist the corrupting power of institutions.

The terms 'global North/South' are used to denote the location of hegemonic power in relation to knowledge and theorisation, rather than specific geographical location. This form reflects how it used discursively in literatures. In addition, I use the term 'Western' presented in the literature as standing in opposition to the 'local' in terms of cultural and educational experience (Djerasimovic 2014, p.204). This is a recurring theme in my thesis, and is explained more fully in Chapter 2.

In the thesis, I draw upon Arendt's (1958) idea of action. As explained in Chapter 2, Arendt saw herself as a political theorist and her conceptualisation of action is politically-oriented. For this reason, I use the terms 'action' and 'political action' interchangeably.

The social and solidarity economy project was a complex and dynamic undertaking, which generated an increasing number of spheres of activity in different countries in Africa, Europe and North and South America. It involved, at different times as well as at the same time, academics, students, practitioners, policy makers and people who would probably not identify themselves in any of the above categories, but who were interested in the theme and the project. One of the challenges in writing this thesis has been to portray this evolving and growing undertaking and the three years of its duration in ways that identify particular key aspects of it to exemplify my developing understandings, and in a way which enables me to articulate to the reader some of the insights and learning I gained from it. An overview of the project is given in Chapter 3.

In this thesis, I use the term 'partners', meaning the people representing specific universities who participated on a formal and legal level according to the project contract with the European Union. I also use the term 'collaborators': these were academics or social economy practitioners or interested parties who took part on a voluntary basis and were not subject to legal agreements in relation to their participation. I sometimes use the word 'participants' as a general term to refer to anyone who participated in any capacity, including myself.

The chapters which comprise the data and its analysis and interpretation (Chapters 5-7) focus on different scenarios and foreground different participants. The one constant throughout this is my work with Catalina Quiroz-Niño, an academic, social psychologist and social entrepreneur. Together we worked on the ideas, wrote the bid and co-ordinated the project. We also, throughout, discussed issues relating to our practices and how we should proceed in difficult situations, celebrated our own and other people's achievements and encouraged each other at some low points. When I am describing activities within the project, I often say that 'Catalina and I decided to ...' or that we took some course of action. It was sometimes impossible to differentiate who initiated or built on an idea, and for this reason she is directly quoted very rarely. It was a form of dialogic leadership. In the writing of this thesis I have engaged in thinking, reading and writing in a more solitary way, but often asking for her feedback to ensure the accuracy and fairness in the way in which I describe and articulate our practices.

## **The social and solidarity economy – a brief explanation**

Pearce (2003, p.25) locates economic organisations in three types of systems: the private, the public and the social. According to Pearce, the characteristics of each system are directly related to the values and principles recognised and practised by the people and organisations involved, according to the purpose they are pursuing (pp.24-30). In this way, the first system highlights the private sector whose purpose is to generate profit in a competitive market. Organisations in the second system are identified with public service, based on the central planning of the distribution of resources.

Pearce identifies the third system by the values of reciprocity and solidarity. This 'social economy' is characterised by its aim to balance three factors—the economic, the social and the environmental (Amin 2009). Organisations within the social economy have diverse identities, which are reflected in the UK and Europe in terms such as 'social enterprise', the 'third sector', the 'not-for-profit sector' (Defourney, Hulgård and Prestoff 2014; Ridley-Duff and Bull 2015), and the 'economy for the common good' (Felber 2012). Cooperatives are also often

placed within this third system (Pearce 2003). These different terms reflect differing traditions and understandings of what the social economy is. For example, some see it as the sector which compensates for failures of the private and public sectors and mitigates the worst effects of a capitalist economy, while others view it as a radical challenge to capitalism itself (Ridley-Duff and Bull 2015).

The descriptor 'solidarity' is widely used in Latin America and theorised by economists such as Coraggio, Gaiger, and Razeto (Quiroz-Niño and Murga-Menoyo 2017, p.3). It emphasises systems and processes of democratisation and the idea of equality in relation to the recognition of people as more than merely economic subjects. As the project which forms the field of my research included significant contributions from both Europe and Latin America, I increasingly used the descriptors 'social' and 'solidarity' which acknowledged both traditions and reflected the dialogical processes in the project.

The main characteristics of the social and solidarity economy are teamwork, cooperation, self-management, inclusion, democracy, the connection of production to a specific geographical area, the creation of conditions for improving the quality of life, and the sustainable local development of people and communities (Quiroz-Niño and Murga-Menoyo 2017, p.4, drawing on Aguilar and Eduardo).

## **Conclusion**

In this introductory chapter I have outlined the main themes of the thesis. They are the importance I place upon plurality and participation in knowledge creation, the responsibility of the academic in fostering such approaches and the importance of considering assumptions about the types of knowledge which are considered legitimate in higher education. I argue that there is a need to go beyond academic critique and I introduce the context of the project in which these themes are investigated in my practices. In the following chapter I explore the current state of higher education: its purposes and practices, and the role of the academic within this.



# **Chapter 1 - What are the purposes of universities? What is the role of the academic within this?**

In this thesis I express concern about issues of knowledge creation in higher education. These issues provide the contextualising theme for the research and my reasons for undertaking it. I argue that these are matters to do with justice and injustice. They are also important because I believe that while the current priority of universities appears to be generating money from their products and institutional prestige, the role they could be focusing on – promoting the development of knowledges and practices to address some of the most serious challenges faced by communities – is not prioritised. Some of these challenges are, for example, environmental degradation, social and economic inequality (Wilkinson and Pickett 2009), and marginalisation from opportunities to live a life one considers meaningful (Sen 1999). In this chapter I examine the specific concerns which motivated and informed my research.

The chapter is structured in the following way:

1. I consider the role of the academic within higher education.
2. I consider the question of knowledge in relation to higher education, and why this matters.
3. I discuss knowledge and power, and how power affects the way in which universities value knowledge.
4. In concluding the chapter, and following the issues raised within it, I present the aims of my research.

## **1.1 Role of the academic**

This thesis is based upon the premise that academics working within universities have an opportunity and a great responsibility to enact processes of ethical and intellectual leadership in the way that they generate, articulate and use knowledge. In my view, academics have a vital broad social role which is to direct their knowledge work towards human development. This, I believe, should take place within wider social contexts in which the academic is engaged in the world outside the university. There are two closely interrelated

aspects to this role that I wish to highlight. The first is the role of the academic as public intellectual, in which they engage with matters of public concern; the second is the academic as creator of spaces of participation, or public spheres, in which the knowledge creating capacity of many people is acknowledged and fostered.

### **1.1.1 The academic as public intellectual**

In this type of engagement the academic has a recognisable commitment to society and is committed to being what Boyer describes as a 'vigorous partner in the search for answers to our most pressing social, civic, economic, and moral problems' (1996, p.11). The role of the academic as public intellectual therefore means being engaged in broader concerns in the public sphere. It is a form of public service which includes being prepared to challenge the established order: the need to 'speak the truth and expose lies', according to Chomsky (1967). In this view of practice, the academic interrogates the ethics and wider purposes behind activities and questions who benefits from them.

Said argues that the intellectual

considers that to be a thinking and concerned member of a society one is entitled to raise moral issues at the heart of even the most technical and professionalized activity (1994, p.82).

Academic practice viewed in this way aims to serve the larger purpose of human development and engage with matters of concern in the public domain. This is a form of practice in which academics go beyond communicating with peers in their own subject disciplines. Instead they position themselves as socially accountable and project themselves towards the wider public in ways that resonate with the public about matters of interest and significance to people outside academia.

### **1.1.2 The academic as creator of spaces of participation: a public sphere**

The academic-as-public-intellectual role explained above may give the impression that knowledge and understanding tend to flow in one direction: from the academic to the public. However, I share Barnett's view that university

research groups can 'reach out to the wider public, not just to share their ideas and results, but to engage dialogically with members of the public' (2018, p.95). This means breaking down distinctions between 'academics' who are widely acknowledged as having the capacity to generate knowledge and tend to be viewed as 'experts' (Easterly 2013) and those who are called 'practitioners', who may be expected to apply theory generated by experts, and are not expected to think and theorise for themselves.

The second aspect of the role of the academic I wish to highlight is that of creating spaces in which many people can, in Chomsky's terms, speak their own truths and engage with others to promote mutual understanding and renewal. Academics have the opportunity to create public spheres which can model forms of engagement in ways that promote the critically informed participation of people from differing backgrounds and with diverse perspectives. This can provide important 'references and frames for social, political and economic debate' (Weber 2002, cited in Maughan Brown 2016, p.18).

Creating public spheres therefore involves thoughtful engagement with the wider world and with 'multi-publics' according to Barnett (2015a, p.19), who points out that such publics include a global dimension. He argues that such dialogue needs the rigour of a critical dimension and is geared towards understanding and respect for the reasoned positions of others (pp.19-20). This means that such spaces need to be purposefully structured and use processes which value the meaningful participation of those outside of academia.

However, neither of these conceptualisations of the academic – that of public intellectual and of creator of public spheres – is currently expected or valued in the UK and elsewhere. Academics are incentivised to pursue particular goals in the form of specific types of work and demonstrate their success in particular forms of outputs, regardless of any sense of the value of such outputs within wider public life.

Hordern identifies the existence of 'rules of entry' within academia that exclude new, disruptive claims to knowledge, sometimes for reasons that are less to

do with the value and quality of such knowledge and more to do with preserving the status of existing members of the subject discipline (2016, p.369, drawing on the work of Bernstein 2000). This can prioritise academic privilege over knowledge creation for human development.

Similarly, particular aspects of academic practice and specific outputs bring what Bourdieu terms 'symbolic capital', from which status is accrued. According to Bourdieu, what is at stake is a 'competitive struggle' for the 'monopoly of ... authority' (1975, cited in Salö 2017, p.30). By this reading, those invested in the status quo in academia will seek to reproduce it. Neither of the views of academic practice explained above accrues symbolic capital. However, academics can have room for manoeuvre. This will be returned to in the final chapter.

## **1.2 Knowledge and higher education**

In this section I discuss how assumptions about knowledge can inform who is legitimised in their capacity as a knower and who might be marginalised. I discuss some of the consequences of taking a narrow view of knowledge and the role of higher education in this. I also argue that narrow understandings of how we can come to know are behind reductionist ways of assessing the quality of higher education.

### **1.2.1 Legitimate knowledge**

Knowledge is the most public of all public goods in strong democratic societies, according to Nixon (2017, p.2). As producers, validators and disseminators of knowledge, and of processes of knowledge creation, universities are therefore highly important institutions to society.

Universities have legitimating power to determine which knowledge is important and valid. How our knowledge is constructed, and the assumptions behind what counts as legitimate questions for enquiry, underpin how we make sense of the world. Knowledge legitimated by universities has a particular power to frame issues and perceptions of reality: to 'name the world' (Freire 1972, p.135) according to a particular form of discourse. Knowledge, and therefore 'knowers', approved by universities have a special kind of legitimacy

in the wider social imagination. Forms of knowledge considered 'legitimate' by universities are privileged at the expense of the legitimacy of 'other' knowledges. In my view, this gives academics, as occupants of the university, a specific responsibility towards society.

Examining the forms of knowledge which is created and disseminated in universities becomes critical to understanding who might be legitimised as a knower and positioned as a generator of relevant or important knowledge. Conversely, it is useful to understand who will be delegitimised or positioned as having or generating less important knowledge, and who might be positioned as merely 'data' in the knowledge creation of others. This can make possible the question 'which knowledges and whose perspectives are currently missing?' in deliberations about actions in the world. In this way, the investigation of the epistemology advocated and valued by academics, and our understanding that there are many epistemologies – some of which are currently delegitimised – are fundamental in creating a more just world.

### **1.2.2 Plural knowledges**

This leads me to argue that an important role of the university, and the academic within it, is to engage with a diversity of knowledges and values in a pluralist society. I believe that plurality in the backgrounds and world experiences of participants in learning and in knowledge creation processes is a potentially significant and transformative gain in the social sphere to be promoted by higher education.

This means that as well as being places of learning within subject disciplines and learning to think for oneself, higher education institutions can also be seen as deliberative spaces which are about

helping ourselves to live together in a world of incommensurable difference and uncompromising contingency [because] the world is not going to stop being like this. On the contrary, it will become increasingly super-complex in its inter-connectivity and will make ever increasing demands on our human capacity to understand (Nixon 2015, p.174).

For clarity, I wish to explain that the approach to plurality I take in my research might differ from other approaches. Gilborn (1995, p.9) draws attention to the

tendency to 'affirm difference simply as an end in itself' (citing Giroux 1991). Some of the more challenging differences, such as in ways of knowing and reasoning, can remain deliberately unacknowledged. This might be in the interests of getting on well together or to serve an agenda of ignoring 'relations of domination and exploitation of the larger society' (Apple 2000, p.xv). In addition, the possibility of representing and celebrating culture as performance or entertainment by 'the Other' for the 'mainstream' is highlighted by Apple (2000, p.xv), where unequal power relations remain unacknowledged and unchallenged.

The acknowledgement of such plurality in practice means that a variety of perspectives can enhance our understandings to address issues of critical importance facing humanity. The knowledge required to address the issues of our age needs to be 'adaptable and epistemologically pluralistic' and draw on the fullness of experiences and diversity of the world, according to Gaventa and Bivens (2014, p.72). I align myself with Said (2003, p.xiv) when he talks of 'the will to understand for purposes of co-existence and humanistic enlargement of horizons.'

As part of this, inter-relationality and the nurturing of relationships through dialogic and purposeful, negotiated action around common concerns are vital to avoid fragmentation into separate interest groups. Nixon (2008, p.8) encapsulates the issue:

how, having raised the stakes in terms of participation and engagement [can the democratic world] sustain civic spaces that are able to accommodate our incommensurable and often incomprehensible differences: how are we to live and learn together in difference?

This is at a time when the generation of knowledges and understandings to address critical issues facing humanity should be a priority; and I believe that there is a pressing need for people to find ways of envisaging and enacting a vision of how we can 'make the present into a richer future' (Rorty 1999, p.30). Enacting this vision within academia is an overarching aim of my research and provides a strong framework for the theoretical issues discussed throughout.

By doing so, it may be possible to ‘create new pathways for human development and wellbeing’ at what Leask and de Wit identify as a critical time in the history of the world (2016, no page). In this way, I believe that universities and the academics within them can make a contribution to the possibility of hopeful, shared human futures. I believe, therefore, that diversity in knowledges and participation in legitimate knowledge creation can lead to a more democratic society and to ‘social hope’ (Rorty 1999). I agree with Thompson (1997), who argues that

Democracy will realize itself – if it does – in our *whole* society and our *whole* culture: and, for this to happen, the universities need the abrasion of different worlds of experience, in which ideas are brought to the test of life (cited in Sperlinger, McLellan and Pettigrew 2018, p.vi, emphasis in original).

A premise of my research is that people beyond academia – that is, Western academia – should be positioned as agents who have the capacity to generate legitimate knowledge. My research offers practical ways to show how this might happen. I agree with Gaventa and Bivens (2014, p.72) that, despite differences in disciplines and training, academics tend to have a similar world view in common and a ‘monoculture of knowledge’; and Schön (1995) argues that academic world views can be detached from the complexity of everyday challenges people face.

For me, this raises questions about how spaces of connection, or a ‘public sphere’ (Arendt 1958), could be created within universities in which participants from a variety of backgrounds could participate as peers in the co-creation of knowledge around an issue of concern; and how the ‘new pathways for human development’ advocated by Leask and de Wit (2016) and referred to previously, which draw on plural sources of knowledge, might be created. In later chapters, I explore in practice how we can connect and collaborate in our differences in order to take action to address issues of common concern, and how all participants in such collaborations can have the opportunity to express their uniqueness and not have differences underplayed or ignored. In Leask and de Wit’s terms above, the question has pressing practical urgency. I argue that a wider good in the form of the creation of public spheres of action is an

important role for universities at a critical time for humanity in which inclusive spaces for constructive engagement with the 'other' appear to be under severe pressure.

Arendt's theory of action provides a conceptual framework for the need to negotiate knowledge for action in collaboration in which the space is held open for the expression of plurality and of difference. It is consistent with ideas of dialogism, as explained in Chapter 2. I agree with Arendt in viewing such negotiation as a necessary feature of democracy (2006). Arendt's theory of action gives a theoretical framework for just and participative processes in the collective generation of knowledge and understandings on the basis of equality between people in our differences. As my research progressed, I also came to see inclusion in public spheres as a matter of establishing justice in itself, and I will now explain this.

### **1.2.3 Epistemic justice**

Epistemology is a branch of philosophy that studies how knowledge is created and legitimised as 'true'; and the ways in which the individual acts in order to develop mental structures to understand the world. It is about ways of knowing. In this thesis, I use it in a broad sense as extending to the justifications humans find for their beliefs (Harding 1987, cited in Noffke and Somekh 2013, p. 7), and with logic, methods of argument and intellectual procedures which justify claims to knowledge (Toulmin 2003, p.196).

The conception of justice I have come to articulate as a focus for my practice in academia is epistemic justice. This is the justice of being recognised in our capacity as knowers: that the way we come to know and make sense of our world and our experiences is recognised by others, and makes it possible for interaction as equals. Conversely, epistemic injustice means 'a wrong is done to someone in their capacity as a knower' (Fricker 2007, p.1): in other words, they are delegitimised and disempowered because of the way in which they know and make sense of the world. This theory of justice is expressed in practice between people and our positioning of each other as knowers and it is intimately related to power. I return to this in Chapter 2, where I consider the theories in the literatures which informed my own theory of practice.



My concern, in a higher education context, focuses on creating spaces in which we can come to know, together. These spaces include the importance of justice in participation in knowledge creation; acknowledging our differences and working to address the incompleteness of our knowledge and understanding of ourselves, others and our world – in other words, addressing what Santos calls our ‘reciprocal incompleteness’ (2016, p.212); believing that all have a worthwhile contribution and a right to participate in matters which affect us; and seeing participation or exclusion in knowledge creation as a matter of justice or injustice.

This matter is far from trivial. As Appadurai (2000, p.2) explains,

In the public spheres of many societies there is concern that policy debates occurring around world trade, copyright, environment, science, and technology set the stage for life-and-death decisions for ordinary farmers, vendors, slum-dwellers, merchants, and urban populations. And running through these debates is the sense that social exclusion is ever more tied to epistemological exclusion and concern that the discourses of expertise that are setting the rules for global transaction, even in the most progressive parts of the international system, have left ordinary people outside and behind.

#### **1.2.4 Conventional forms of academia**

However, the focus of higher education as a sector in the UK and elsewhere is on other priorities, such as commercial advantage and relative positioning against others in the sector for institutional prestige. These priorities will be discussed later in this chapter. The sector, I argue, is not fulfilling a role that it is well placed to fulfil, towards, for example, making spaces for plural ways of knowing and for epistemic justice as envisaged above.

The prevailing situation in higher education is that legitimate knowledge creation is seen as the prerogative of traditionalist academics, and those using theoretical frameworks normally developed in the Western world and applied as if they offered a universally relevant way of explaining reality. This can lead to the injustice of the exclusion of others, such as practitioners or those working in academia in the ‘global South’. In my view, particular kinds of knowledge are

not afforded legitimacy in academia, and particular knowers – traditionalist academics – can be complicit in this situation. This can amount to epistemic injustice. In the Introduction, I have expressed concern at the ways in which academia, and by extension myself as an academic, are complicit in this injustice.

#### **1.2.4.1 *Academia and knowledge***

Achieving plurality in knowledge creation and dissemination requires the rethinking of traditionalist approaches taken by many universities. These institutions are mainly focused on techno-rationalist epistemologies to understand what questions might be worth asking and would be possible to answer, and to provide a method for answering them (Berlin 2003b).

According to Simons and Masschelein (2009, p.207), academics make their claim to authority by leading society into a form of right thinking: they deal with ‘matters of fact’ and frame their unique contribution in terms of their detachment. They argue that the effect of this ‘academic machinery’ is to ‘frame the past continuously as a time when people were mixing up facts and values’. Their public is those who do not (yet) know or are not yet enlightened, which ‘reaffirms the university and its research machinery to be the engine of progress’, where progress is believed to be the separation of facts from values. In Freire’s (1972) terms, this is a ‘banking’ relationship between knowers in universities and the general public who need to receive deposits of knowledge. In post-colonial terms, explained further in Chapter 2, it places academic knowledge at the ‘centre’ and other types of knowledge as ‘peripheral’ in their importance.

This is not to say that there is anything wrong with detached matters of fact. They are clearly important in education. Latour (2004) highlights the danger of, for example, the tools of critique and deconstruction or opinion being used against clearly established scientific facts or those involving world events for which there is ample objective evidence. He differentiates ‘matters of fact’ from ‘matters of concern’. Latour argues that matters of concern are constructive: they add to facts rather than subtract from them. They allow the idea of constructing the collective value associated with objects and facts. In the social

and solidarity economy, a matter of concern adds human interests about why value might be apportioned to something beyond a factual number or detached observation.

The logic of this 'matter of fact' epistemology, however, is that 'knowing' is always best left to experts who are able to develop an ever-narrower, technical focus in their field. In this way matters of fact on their own do not create a public sphere: on the contrary, they make it less likely that the public will be encouraged to engage with the issue. According to MacIntyre (2009, p.353 drawing on Cardinal Newman), this makes 'too many of us victims of the expertise of those trained to see things only in the narrow focus of their own discipline': it excludes people from contributing to knowledges in fields in which they practise, place particular value on objects or ways of being, have relevant knowledge and have a stake. I share MacIntyre's concern and believe it is a question about whether participation is valued, and is ultimately one of the justice or injustice of the exclusion of people on the basis of their capacity as knowers.

Knowledge in this paradigm is considered to be nothing more than external reality and, as such, to be relevant for application in any context. It is therefore 'not altered by differences between persons in their worldview commitments' (Gauch 2012, p.26). Such disembodied knowledge is used in the generation of theoretical tools by academics to be applied to solve discrete problems in the world outside the university. This, however, may contain unacknowledged assumptions about the purposes of such knowledge use and the values behind the identification of the problem. In a Latin American context, Velásquez identifies a problem in this approach. The application of university-generated knowledge

is guided by the telos of development with its concomitant sense of economic growth that ultimately assimilates people and projects into the world economy (Velásquez 2016, p.xi).

In this paradigm, what Barnett (2018, p.165) terms 'ecosystems of learning' are disregarded and knowledge is separate from the practice and the people who are affected by its application. However, it has a significant effect upon the way in which issues are understood and considered to be important, and

on the purposes of the practices. The people affected by this may be outside the university community and have little input into the framing of the problem, the knowledge applied and the purpose of the activity. Such problems, identified by others, may wrongly assume an understanding of the needs and aspirations of local communities. Chambers talks of the importance of 'ground-truthing' (2017, p.156): of being in touch with people's realities through 'direct, face-to-face interaction, listening and learning with people'. I believe that Velazquez identifies an issue that goes beyond Latin America and speaks to issues about epistemology and its relationship with personal and community values and with power.

Practitioners in the community, or other people outside the context of Western academia, will struggle to gain legitimacy for their knowledge within epistemologies more suited to pure scientific research or theory disembodied from practices. This is partly because their work is necessarily based on context and subjective or communally-held views about the values underpinning the knowledge and purposes of the practices. Such a paradigm, therefore, does not acknowledge or allow space for people to be agents in their own lives. The issue about who participates in the creation of knowledge is an epistemological question; and it is surely an ethical one as well.

With Code (2006, pp.8-9), I would argue that this

dominant model of knowledge and epistemology in Anglo-American philosophy produces an epistemological monoculture both in the academy and in everyday life, whose consequences are to suppress and choke out ways of knowing that depart from the stringent dictates of an exaggerated ideal of scientific knowledge making.

Such epistemology prioritises the theoretical or abstract over practical and personal knowledge, according to McNiff (2017, p.49, drawing on Polanyi 1958), and therefore claims to be universal, objective and values-free. Within the hierarchy that places techno-rationalist ways of knowing as most legitimate, other ways of knowing the world with other forms of rationality and purpose are delegitimised, as, for example, practice-based knowledge, indigenous knowledge, feminist knowledge, and so on – always with the qualifier to distinguish them from supposedly proper, neutral knowledge. Such

'proper' knowledge is erroneously disassociated from notions of power which give rise to it, according to Apple (2000). He calls it 'official knowledge' to make explicit its unarticulated connection with power.

Techno-rationalist ways of knowing are 'reductionist' according to Code (2006, p.8). In this world view an object or phenomenon can be best understood if removed from its context and broken down into the smallest elements. An assumption of this scientific method, embedded in some traditionalist academic research, is that understanding is best achieved by fragmenting parts from the complex interaction of the whole: that the behaviour of the whole is approached and understood in terms of the properties of its parts. In this epistemology, the patterns that connect the whole are disregarded, with a potential loss of understanding of the complex whole (Morin 2008; Bateson 2002).

It is assumed that understanding these disconnected entities will, in sum, give an understanding of the whole. This 'object-centred' thinking contributes to the belief that 'society, the economy, the climate, and humans themselves [can] be precisely controlled', according to Allan (2018, p.208), in a kind of cause and effect or input-output model. Research is carried out to establish causal relationships and predictable, measurable outcomes. It seeks the measurable and the certain in legitimising knowledge claims (see for example Montuori 2008, p.xxxi; and Nietzsche 2014, p.10, who draws on the ideas in Lyotard's work 'The postmodern condition') and the 'replicability' of this form of research is given greater importance than the idea of moral voice, according to Appadurai (2000, p.11). The goal of universality and universal application in any circumstance is in opposition to the possibility of localised and situated contexts and values. Currently the former is seen as important, the latter as an inconvenience or an irrelevance.

Within this overarching approach, complex social and environmental issues become merely technical problems with only technical solutions. Rorty (1989, p.167) highlights a tradition in Western knowledge which attempts to make meaning from existence by 'turning away from solidarity to[wards] objectivity'. For example, the notion of 'community' as relational processes in which people interact with each other and their environment is under-theorised according to

Walkerdine and Studdert (2016). This, they argue, leads to a tendency for issues in social research to be framed in individualistic, reductionist ways in which community is proposed only as a means of self-realisation; or on the other hand, community is theorised as an effect of the state. In either case, ‘the configuration of communal meanings [is] irrelevant, not worthy of investigation’ (pp.16).

Another example of the application of techno-rationalist knowledge to a complex and values-laden aspect of everyday life was referred to previously: Hodgson (2009) cites the ‘narrow training of economists’ and the over-reliance on mathematical models as a factor in the financial crash of 2007-8. Embedded in this epistemology is an assumption that certainty is possible (Berlin 2003b) if only enough factors can be isolated and understood. This logic assumes that the outputs – the results or ‘impact’ – are predictable and controllable if only the inputs – the interventions – can be understood and manipulated correctly.

I believe that while such knowledge generation is useful in technical and scientific research, the requirement for objectivity means that techno-rationalist ways of knowing are an inadequate way of understanding the social sphere, where people interact with each other and their environment in complex and interdependent ways. In the social realm, values and purposes ‘saturate practice’ according to Nixon (2008, p.42) and such practices cannot be values-neutral. Techno-rationalist knowledge in social contexts often brings with it unarticulated culturally-loaded values and assumptions about relevant questions for investigation and about legitimate purposes for the application of such knowledge.

#### ***1.2.4.2 Managerialism and performativity***

In higher education, these techno-rationalist approaches to knowledge can be obscured behind words and phrases devoid of meaning, or ‘empty signifiers’ (Laclau 2005), such as ‘excellence’, ‘best practice’ or ‘progress’ in a form of management by objectives, also called managerialism or performativity. This idea of management is no more than an ideology, in the sense that it ‘underwrites, manifests, and reinforces the dominant power relations in our societies’ (Santos 2015, p. xiii).

In the Introduction to this thesis, I drew on philosophers such as Toulmin (1990) and Berlin (2003b), who identify a belief underpinning Western knowledge that human nature and society can be fitted into exact rational categories; and that Western knowledge frameworks are based on the idea that certainty in knowing is possible. Within this epistemology, all that is needed is sophisticated enough tools to be able to obtain objective knowledge.

Such 'objective' knowledge is supposedly depoliticised in that it removes discussion and contestation of the purposes and values of higher education and replaces it with

a complex, often incoherent, unstable and even contradictory set of practices that are organized around a certain imagination of the 'market' as a basis for the universalization of market-based social relations (Ball 2012, p.18, citing Shamir 2008).

In this way it lacks a democratic dimension. However, this ideology has influenced policy and practice internationally (for example, in an Australian context Cannizzo 2018 and Clarke 2012; in the UK, Readings 1996; in a South African context, Gray 2017). In this world of managerialism and performativity, ideas of quality and accountability for knowledge and practices are reduced to an idea of objective calculability in the form of simplistic numbers for comparisons of output (Barnett 2003, Biesta 2009 and Ball 2012, each writing in the context of the UK).

Others write of using competition as a management tool (e.g. writing in a Latin American context Vessuri, Guédon and Cetto 2014) which gives the possibly comforting impression of certainty in judging relative quality while imposing performative demands and criteria on academics and institutions. Such an approach is used in higher education to strategically direct the sector towards specific objectives and goals to 'steer the field by numbers' (Gambardella and Lumino 2016, pp.424-426, writing from a European perspective).

Within this epistemology, only what is measurable and measured is valued, so the purposes, policies and practices of higher education become a technical exercise in improving performance according to narrow criteria. Cannizzo explains (2018, p.88)

The possibility of valuing academic conduct for its contribution to some ... value, be that an idea of justice, truth, freedom and so on, becomes a secondary concern to the pragmatic functioning of the mechanism of evaluation.

The measurements are used to infer an apparently objective understanding of quality and to rank one institution against another. Measuring and competing with others on what is measured become ends in themselves and begin to define the purpose of the university. It then follows that the issue for institutions is to become the 'best' – beating others in the same sector – without examining the question 'best at what?' and 'in whose interests?' The sector becomes inward looking and self-serving and an instrument in the reproduction of the status quo. As it is trivial learning behaviours that are easiest to measure (James 2012, p.66), higher education is in danger of becoming trivialised in order to be easily measurable. In relation to the recently introduced Teaching Excellence Framework in the UK, Charles argues that the choice of metrics and incentives 'seem unrelated or even in contradiction with quality practice' and instead serve a main purpose of 'permit[ting] a system of accounting' (2018, p.17).

Once the aspects to be quantified and fragmented have been identified, separated from the complex whole and calculated, there is a danger that these numbers seem to represent something more real and self-evidently existing in themselves. Clegg (2010 cited in Allan 2018, p.261) explains,

Quantification plays a central role in the concretization of intersubjective understandings... In a process that is both subtle and drawn out over a long period of time, a transformation occurs whereby concepts evolve from an initially highly contested malleable form, to being regarded as representing a self-evident and pre-existing object, contested only at the margins. Through a process of abstraction, homogenization, and sedimentation, complex social phenomena are reduced to a small number of measurable features.

Practices of performativity and managerialism have particular discourses associated with them, the introduction of which is slow and incremental and barely noticed, according to Chambers (2017, pp.154-155). For example, mid



1990s 'progressive development speak' used words such as 'vision, achieve, commitment, inspire, responsibility, assess and participation'. On the other hand, in 'linear and market speak' these become 'target, deliver, compliance, incentivize, accountability, measure and feedback'.

These have created a powerful construct of the role of the university which is very far from other possible imaginaries of higher education: for example, where the university might 'cultivat[e] humanity' (Nussbaum 1997) and contribute to 'extending human understanding' (Collini 2012, p.xi); or enact the development of pluralistic engagement in the public sphere. In this way, democratic debate about how higher education should contribute to society and the values which should underpin it can be closed down. These wider public goods, I believe, are important roles for universities at a critical time for humanity. The possibility of academic practice contributing to universal values, such as justice and freedom, and to ideas of public good beyond narrow economic interests, is rendered somewhat irrelevant and rather naive by the hijacking of discourses towards prestige and economic utility. Complex values-laden practices are reduced to notions of measurable quantity.

I believe that quantitative ways of 'measuring' qualitative and value-driven practices are highly unlikely to bring about developments to the sector which are meaningful or beneficial to students or the wider public, nor are they likely to encourage critical interrogation of the status quo. They are unlikely to encourage the emergence of renewal based on fairness and social hope. On the contrary, Dill (2009) argues that the main consequence of such practices of evaluation and competition are an 'academic arms race' (p.101): a sector which costs more and more either to individuals or to the public purse but effectively functions as a social filter, ensuring the most privileged students go to the most elite institutions.

In addition to this, and on a practical level, the statistical methodology on which such measuring and ranking is based is deeply flawed, according to Soh (2017), an issue which should return us to the question, 'whose interests are being served by the current state of affairs?' This focus on measurement should be a significant issue of concern and of wider public interest. It neutralises or works against the likelihood for the university being an

instrument of change for human development and well-being. Within this paradigm, issues such as epistemic justice or creating knowledge and understandings to address issues facing humanity become a secondary concern to the functioning of the mechanisms of evaluation.

### ***1.2.4.3 Epistemologies in the social sphere***

As stated above, such an epistemology of the belief in the possibility of objectivity and certainty can bring significant benefits in scientific and technical fields. However, an exaggerated faith in the value of techno-rationalist epistemology is contrary to a belief in all people's capacity to participate in knowledge creation and ability to bring something new into the world, as envisaged in Arendt's theory of action, referred to in the Introduction to this thesis. The misappropriation of techno-rationalist knowledge to the social sphere and to understanding complex, relational activity between humans and our environments excludes many people and their knowledges.

A reductionist and objective view of knowledge contrasts with 'systems' or 'ecological' thinking, which views objects and phenomena in terms of their context, connectedness and relationships between people, and between people and their context. These are considered to be more significant than the sum of the parts (Capra 1997) in this holistic form of epistemology. It involves

viewing many things as one whole, of referring them severally to their place in the universal system, of understanding their respective values, and determining their mutual dependence (Macintyre 2009, p.353, drawing on Cardinal Newman).

It is therefore contingent upon the parts and the dynamic relationship between them rather than certain and once-and-for-all knowledge.

In taking this approach, I agree with the need for what Code calls 'epistemic responsibility' (1987) and Barnett describes as 'care towards knowledge' (2018, p.88), in which the knower takes responsibility for the knowledge generated. Such knowledge makes no separation between the pursuit of truth and the pursuit of that which is good for human well-being (Toulmin 2007, p.xv) and for social hope (Rorty 1999). Part of this responsibility, I argue, is not to assume our knowledge is neutral and universally relevant, but we should still

hold on to what Barnett calls some 'universals – such as global wellbeing, criticality, fairness, understanding, openness, generosity and ... truthfulness' (2018, p.163).

In the social sphere, knowledge creation is dependent upon perspectives driven by world views and existing understandings underpinning the investigation or intervention. Assumptions and values are reflected through research choices in, for example, the purposes of the research and the interests being served. They are also reflected in how people are positioned: as having knowledge creating capacity and values and purposes of their own, or as data for the knowledge creation of others. For this reason, creation of 'legitimate' knowledge in the social realm should, I believe, include the participation of those affected by, and with an interest in, such knowledge. In taking a collaborative approach between people with different roles and perspectives, understandings can be articulated and open to challenge in a public sphere and open to revision.

Toulmin (2007, p.xv) draws attention to the co-existence of many knowledges in the world but points to abstract hierarchies which constitute them. He argues that there is a relationship between such hierarchies and the unequal economic and political power relations which produce and reproduce increasingly more severe forms of social injustice. In this way, Toulmin speaks to the relationship between knowledge and power, and I will now consider this. To do so, I will draw on Foucault and on post- and de-colonial literature.

### **1.3 Knowledge and power**

According to Foucault, power and knowledge are complementary (1980): power and knowledge imply one another, as opposed to the idea that knowledge exists independently of power relations. The implication is that those who have power will be able to set the terms about what counts as legitimate knowledge: that is, there is a relationship between existing power and the epistemology of the powerful (also see Apple 2012). Foucault argues that the influence of power relationships is manifested in the bodies of knowledge and in the practices and discourses of everyday life, which generate a 'regime of truth' (1977); in other words, ideas and ways of looking

at the world become so normalised that they are not questioned and create their own lenses through which we view the world. Power/knowledge is also manifested in the power to set the theories which are used as knowledge frameworks and representations of reality in research by academics. An implication of Foucault's ideas is that such power does not necessarily reside in the supposed superiority of the theories or the knowledge itself but owes much to the power interests that sustain it.

The form of knowledge favoured by academia discussed above takes the form of an epistemology which emanates from so-called Western thought. It emerged in a place and a time: in this sense it is provincial. The place was Europe, and the time was during the Enlightenment, according to Toulmin (1990) which took firm root in the 18<sup>th</sup> century in that continent.

Yet, it is a form of knowledge often treated as containing universally applicable truths and it is favoured, generated, disseminated and applied by many higher education-based academics, according to writers such as Fals Borda (1987), Schön (1995), Santos (2016) and Connell (2017). This epistemology of the powerful is supported with power in hard forms – financial, military and institutional and is also imposed in its soft forms within culture, norms, values and epistemology (Mignolo 2002; Connell 2007).

The perceptions and realities of power differentials in the legitimacy of knowledge should not be associated only with situations of geo-political difference, however. These power relations are relevant to situations closer to home in which difference in perceived legitimacy of knowers and knowledge may be more socio-cultural in its nature. The secure anchoring of the university in the camp of propositional, techno-rationalist knowledge and its related embedded discourses also promotes a hierarchy of knowledge-power between the academy and communities just outside its walls. Here, other forms of knowledge will be present but potentially de-legitimised by the hegemony and central position of propositional and 'expert' technical knowledge. Know-how and tacit forms of knowledge (Polanyi 1958; McNiff 2017), which are context- and tradition-specific, may be branded as of peripheral importance against the privileged representations (Inglis 2003, p.123) of social science research based on the scientific method. This

hierarchy can apply to relationships of knowledge between academic and other knowledges. It is also relevant between academics in the global North and South.

Discourses and power relationships, which position the legitimacy or otherwise of different knowledges, have practical consequences for the acceptance and circulation of knowledge. For example, knowledge and understanding which is locally generated, or explicitly values-based or practical knowledge are less likely to be published in the scholarly publications regarded as having the highest legitimacy in academia. Given the power/knowledge nexus identified by Foucault (2000), those based in the geographical or metaphorical 'periphery', who have other ways of knowing, find themselves and their epistemologies delegitimised and discredited.

Academia is part of a system that reinforces this norm: universities are powerful institutions and the knowledge deemed to be legitimate forms an epistemic centre. They therefore run the risk of reinforcing unjust and exclusionary practices and norms on an epistemic level. Discourses are based on assumptions of the need by the global North to address 'deficits' in the global South. For example, 'capacity building' in universities (EACEA 2019) and 'empowerment' (Djerasimovic 2014, p.207) are conceptualised as being a one-way flow, such that lack of capacity and powerlessness are unquestioned in discourse and practice (Easterly 2013).

Santos (2016) describes Western knowledge as an 'epistemological monoculture': it claims superiority and universality rather than acknowledging the legitimacy of 'other' knowledges. This, he argues can lead to 'epistemicide': the obliteration of ways of knowing. Fals Borda (1987) also refers to 'intellectual colonialism', a process in which the dominated are discredited for their epistemologies.

This suppression of other ways of knowing in the world leads to little scope for hybridity in research and knowledge, according to Marginson. He argues that in this way

elite status and global power in higher education are secured. A tight binary logic of inclusion/exclusion assigns worldwide academic labour

to one of two categories: part of the global research circuit that uses the dominant language and publishes in the recognised outlets; or 'not global', outside the hegemonic circuit, the bearer of knowledge obsolete or meaningless and doomed to be invisible (2008 p.314).

Quantitative indicators of research output and citation show global North countries – much of North America and Europe – predominating across fields ranging from natural science, technology and professional knowledge, to social science and the humanities (Connell et al. 2018). The global North, more specifically the complex of its elite institutions, is the centre of a knowledge economy with global reach and can see those outside of this geo-political region as a means to an end. It is not simply that universities and research centres in these regions achieve greater recognised output. They have also provided paradigms for knowledge work in other regions, producing the theory that drives research questions and interprets the data from those regions. I will now consider the significance of this right to theorise.

### **1.3.1 The significance of the right to theorise**

According to Connell et al. (2018), academics in the global South are required to use theoretical frameworks and methodologies from the global North in order to gain access to national or international funding and be considered legitimate contributors for publication. In this paradigm, global South research is conventionally offered as 'merely' a case study (Collyer 2018, p.58)

This is a manifestation of Said's 'Orientalism': since the time of the Enlightenment, relationships of power have enabled the powerful West to speak for the less powerful 'other' (2003, see for example, p.6). In knowledge terms, and in the present, this hegemonic power can still speak for 'others', but crucially in the dominance of theory generated in the West, can speak through others who use such theory to explain their own realities.

McLaren highlights the significance of this to the way in which we view reality:

Theories ... undergird everything we do – they shape the contours of our social and institutional life. Theories are agents, they are constitutive of tradition and prevailing forms of common sense. They organize people to and in the world. They formulate our public and

private 'gaze' ... We need to take theories out of the monoculturalism of academic life, out of the monovalent center of the academic mainstream, in order to get democracy off the ground in the streets and in the classroom (in Borg, Mayo and Sultana 1998, pp.372-373).

This approach to theory use has been challenged by Fals Borda, for example, through his participatory action research work in Colombia. He argued that collaborative international research between academics is marked by an attitude of 'intellectual servitude' by researchers from Latin America and a 'spiritual flight/fleeing' from their context (1987, p.78 and p.81 respectively, my translations) as theoretical frameworks developed in Western contexts are favoured.

This use of theory is not a matter of pressing concern amongst natural scientists, policy makers, social scientists and humanists, according to Appadurai (2000, pp.12-13). He argues that there is a consensus of concern amongst such research professionals on issues relating to research method: data gathering, sampling bias, reliability, comparability and so on; but that the use of theories and models in the modern research ethic is not considered a serious problem. Along with Appadurai, I disagree that the use of theory is of little concern. Theories and models set the parameters around what types of issues merit investigation, the types of questions that can be asked, the type of knowledge that is possible and our actions in the world. Addressing the issue of theory is therefore of real significance in working towards participation and epistemic justice, which is an abiding focus for my own research.

This phenomenon was still a live issue right from the beginning of the project in 2012: the academic partners from Peru had first-hand experience in their university of European projects. Ana María Villafuerte, project partner and co-author of the handbook, explained the usual approach taken by the Western partners in her university in the Peruvian Andes:

What generally happens is that when projects come from Europe to my university, we are merely the collectors of data. The research questions, the theoretical framework and the analysis of the data - those happen in Europe (Email, Data archive, Ana Maria Villafuerte - Reflective dialogue 2, 14.2.18. Translated).

Echoing the power relationship outlined above, this meant that there was little conceptual or values-based input from those regions in which people may have entirely different traditions and understandings from European ones. A traditionalist Eurocentric approach does not represent a public sphere in which all can participate as epistemic equals. Further, this lack of the wider dissemination and acceptance of knowledges, values and practices could be seen as a loss to humanity, as alluded to by Leask and de Wit above. Ways of knowing which are directly linked to well-being and which value harmony and reciprocity between human beings and their natural environment (called *sumak kawsay* in Quechua – one of the languages of the Andes, translated as ‘collective well-being’ by Velásquez 2016, p.xii) form part of the epistemology of this region, according to UNESCO (2015, p.31), but this important conceptualisation of life was not afforded space in the previous European-initiated projects.

This is not to say that those in global South contexts are always aware or able to actively resist this injustice. Universities in Latin America ‘reproduce the Eurocentric model of knowledge developed in the West in the modern period’, argue De Carvalho and Flórez-Flórez (2014, p.123). Academics from global South regions have an ‘inferiority complex’ in relation to so-called northern knowledge (Meneses 2007, p.359) and set out to test existing theories from the global North with what Sun (2019) characterises as ‘little or no consideration for cultural or situational influences’ (no page). This, I believe, can be damaging to the role of universities in generating knowledges and understandings of local significance and benefit, as well as reinforcing notions of knowledge hegemony. As Freire argues (1972, p.68),

One cannot expect positive results from an educational or political action program which fails to respect the particular view of the world held by the people. Such a program constitutes cultural invasion, good intentions notwithstanding.

The role that higher education could fulfil in meaningful human development, relevant to local people, in which it aimed to generate new knowledges and understandings based on this ‘particular view of the world held by the people’, is therefore lost.



These issues play out in a context of the commercialisation and marketisation of higher education. I will now turn to this question and the influence it has on the priorities and practices of universities in the UK, and increasingly on a global level.

### **1.3.2 Market values and knowledge power**

In the UK and elsewhere, higher education is increasingly seen as a means to predetermined ends, and the 'ends' in question tend to be unimaginative and reductionist, frequently viewing education as merely the transfer of knowledge and skills needed for economic growth in an increasingly unequal economy and for individual material enrichment, and of critical thinking skills within these narrow parameters. Market value and market values can be a way of abdicating responsibility for moral decisions and democratic debate about the values and purposes of higher education and of academic practices. As Torres argues, the university is 'increasingly called on to produce commercial knowledge at the expense of other forms of knowledge' (2011, p.190).

This marketisation often takes place within a broader political context of performativity and managerialism, as discussed earlier with reference to writers such as Barnett (2003), Ball (2012) and Olssen (2016). Such practices reduce the idea of accountability for quality and contribution to the public sphere to practices of auditing and accounting (Readings 1996, p.32). This can have the veneer of objectivity but carries its own priorities and values system which relate quality to efficiency, utility and centralised control. Purposes within this accountability regime are thereby reduced to a short-term sense of usefulness and configured as being 'business-like to the point of being a business' (Fitzgerald 2012, p.10). Such a system values the promotion of standardisation and working towards certainty of outcomes, so plurality in values, priorities and ways of knowing is implicitly a problem to be managed or ignored.

Marketisation and market values inform discourses around purposes and practices within higher education. Ideas of higher education driving a 'knowledge economy' (BIS 2016) and the potential to further exploit higher education in fulfilling its role through wealth creation (European Commission

2011, p.2) inform and justify the positioning of universities as instruments of economic and individual benefits. As Barnett (2013, pp.124-125) explains, these discourses and structural alignments

have a profound impact on the micro-practices of universities as social institutions. What counts as 'teaching', 'research' and worldly 'engagement' are all transformed, but so too are interpersonal relationships and identities and the character of the language employed to speak of the university...

Narratives of 'innovation', 'change', development' and 'impact' [are] saturated by unexamined interests.

Knowledge becomes 'capital' (Olssen and Peters 2005, p.330) and in this neoliberal world view, higher education is seen only in terms of its economic utility and therefore subject to short term market forces. From the perspective of this logic, wider public benefits become merely an aggregate of the private goods afforded to individuals.

In a 'market' of student recruitment and funding for research, universities compete for symbolic profit in the form of their reputation, the recognition of which is offered by, for example, global ranking lists, according to Salö (2017, p.74, drawing on the ideas of Pierre Bourdieu). He argues that such symbolic profit, in turn, may be exchanged for material profit. In this way, rankings and other forms of performance measures may be used by universities to secure a larger share of their state's funding, which, in turn, is increasingly exposed to competition. The prestige inferred also increases the attractiveness of universities to potential students. The creation of hierarchies based on contestable and standardised criteria means that, self-evidently, there will be winners and losers.

Global, media-led rankings of universities and the obsession with the status afforded by such ranking are reshaping the sector on an international level, according to Hazelkorn (2015). They create powerful constructs which frame normative understandings of the idea of the university internationally. The norms used for assessment by such forms of measurement are based on criteria and templates created in globally dominant regions and are

subsequently mimicked by those in other regions (Shahjahan and Morgan 2015). Proulx (2009, p.38) argues that the criteria are based on an idea of the university modelled by the wealthiest and most prestigious institutions. For example, writing in the context of two leading international league tables – the *Jiao Tong* and the *Times Higher Education* – Marginson (2009, p.85) points out that

In the Jiao Tong universe, higher education is scientific research. It is not teaching or community building, or democracy or solutions to local or global problems. In the Times universe, higher education is primarily about reputation for its own sake, about the aristocratic prestige and power of the universities as an end in itself, and also about making money from foreign students. To accept these ranking systems is to acquiesce at these definitions of higher education and its purposes.

The acceptance of purposes set by others and the desire to compete for prestige on terms set by others undermine diversity and local tradition within the sector. Such an acceptance imposes static understandings of quality, serving to reinforce existing privilege and power. I believe that this silences debate about the contribution universities can make to the public sphere and damages efforts to foster domestically relevant higher education systems. As Zhao explains, ‘the avid quest for prestige triggers a phenomenon called “academic drift”- institutions forgo their unique mission’, often set in response to the geo-political and social context in which the university operates ‘and blindly mimic the structure, organization, and process’ of institutions which are most successful according to the criteria set out by international league tables (Zhao 2007, cited in Proulx 2009, p.36).

These issues matter, because while universities prioritise institutional prestige, as indicated by international or national league tables and audits, their focus will be on the criteria which confer such prestige rather than on the development of knowledges and understandings to address challenges in their communities.

The quest for such prestige influences research. It has also been instrumental in making the English language the ‘lingua franca’ of academia.

Understandings of international partnerships are also affected by the marketisation of higher education. I will now consider these three issues.

### **1.3.2.1 Research**

Current competition and market-based imperatives incentivise forms and focuses of research which can be completed and made public in short units of time, or 'one end of the research spectrum', according to Hazelkorn (2015, p.213). They prioritise issues for investigations based upon what is known to be do-able and publishable in a short timescale (Felt 2017, p.137; Noroozi 2016), especially if this is of immediate socioeconomic interest (Murphy and Sage 2014, p.605). Publication in particular journals deemed to have high status is prized. However, as Salö (2017) notes, it is not the content of the articles in itself that is highly valued. Rather it is the acknowledgement of such publication in assessment criteria used in ranking universities which confers value and prestige. The work of academics who spend their time writing books or material for broad audiences does not count because these do not count in the apportioning of criteria of institutional 'excellence' (pp.74-75).

Many platforms for publication of what academia values as the best research incur financial cost to the reader, if they are accessible at all. Prestigious academic journals are generally only available in university libraries or those of other large institutions. Many are not accessible to the people who could contribute to and benefit from research because access would require financial resources and knowledge of English. The result is that academics speak only to one another rather than to a wider public. In this way, knowledge can be elitist and inaccessible.

This reductionist view of research and publication is a form of extracting value from knowledge, an approach that prioritises exploitation of knowledge for institutional prestige. It promotes the tendency that Chomsky identifies (2003, p.192) in which the study of issues that can be addressed with existing knowledge is prioritised rather than research which requires new understandings. Academics are incentivised to publish rather than focus on genuine contribution to the public sphere. Contribution is reduced to accruing

symbolic capital, valued only by those in what Bourdieu calls the 'game' (1993) of higher education.

This culture of 'deliverables' (Fitzgerald 2012, p.5) does not foster an environment in which new approaches can be taken, wider perspectives sought, or participation enabled. Such approaches take time and are inherently uncertain in their outcomes and may not provide outputs which 'count' in the present system. The present culture makes the practical challenge of current arrangements in academia difficult and potentially personally costly for those who might do the challenging.

### **1.3.2.2 Academic knowledge and language**

According to Salö (2017), there is an 'Englishization' of universities taking place on a global scale (p.4) in which 'knowledge markets and linguistic markets have come to intersect'. Beck (2018, p.231) argues that academic English is considered to be a 'deterritorialised, culturally neutral language' in academia. I disagree that any language can be deterritorialised and culturally neutral: each one carries within it a view of the world and a way of articulating our place in it. As Polanyi argues, 'One particular language carries with it the acceptance of the particular theory of the universe postulated by that language' (Mitchell 2006, p.86). The overwhelming dominance of publication in the English language also deprives many speakers of other languages the opportunity to access and contribute to internationally disseminated research. Discourses and power relationships which position the legitimacy or otherwise of different knowledges mean that locally generated theoretical, values-based and practical knowledge is less likely to be published or be considered to generate worthwhile insights for an international academic audience, according to Connell (2007, p.219). Such an audience would normally read academic journals in English, written in a Westernised academic style and understand knowledge in accordance with theory generated in the West.

This focus on English 'undermin[es] the value and potency of academic research' in the national language, according to Moreira, Henriques and Aires (2015, p.208). It is also against the interests of participation in knowledge creation and reduces opportunities for many people to draw on the insights of

others. A theme in my research is that participation in and access to research based on locally generated theory and practices is important for a form of human development which respects people as agents in their lives and local traditions and assumptions. It is more likely to be meaningful and enlightening to local people. Lack of respect for locally generated theory and practices can become what Bourdieu refers to as 'symbolic violence' (1992, p.168).

Taking this further, drawing on ideas of the active acknowledgement of plurality above, research which crosses international and language borders can enrich understandings and practices and challenge previously unarticulated assumptions in productive and transformative ways. This depends upon people in different roles being considered equals in their capacity for research and knowledge creation, and on epistemologies being considered equally different. If different languages are on an equal footing, some of the issues of alienation of research from local concerns caused by the 'language of the elite' (Ngũgĩ Wa Thiong'o 1993, p.32) marginalising local languages can be addressed by promoting the engagement of a much wider group of people. This is what Catalina and I set out to do in the project.

### **1.3.2.3 Internationalisation**

In this context, the understanding of any benefits of international relationships between higher education institutions and student enrolment is driven by economic discourses and prestige (Djerasimovic 2014, p.206). I believe that international exchange should exist to serve wider purposes, such as the development of pluralistic and intercultural educational experiences and transformational learning for individuals and the communities they work within. However, Knight argues that in a marketised system there is

a gap between the values of collaboration and cooperation for mutual academic benefits and the realities of competition, commercialisation and self-interest status building (2013, p.85).

University branding uses discourses that reinforce perceived ideas of the superiority of knowledge and experience in the Western university which international others can buy into (Akdağ and Swanson 2018, pp.68-72). This

is reminiscent of Said's 'Orientalism' (2003) in which the non-Western 'other' acknowledges inferiority.

Such discourses and the strategies underpinning them are contrary to ideas of mutual benefit from interaction between people and their knowledges and ways of knowing. I believe that relationships between people from different national contexts can promote greater understandings and the co-creation of knowledge to address important local and international issues. However, where market forces and market values are a driving force in an activity or strategy, it is likely to shore up existing privilege. It is less likely to contribute to greater justice or the transformation of power relationships towards greater equality. If universities, and academics within them, hide behind the supposed neutrality of market forces, we will increase inequalities in society and serve only narrow interests. Education in this paradigm has a strong tendency to 'transform the truth value of knowledge into the "market truth" value of knowledge' (Santos 2016, p.5). Gaventa and Bivens (2014, pp.71-72) argue that knowledge production that is driven by motivations of efficiency or market value is unlikely to transform the current paradigm or contribute to democratic justice or the democratisation of knowledge – central to a democratic society in their view, and in mine.

Where knowledge power is not scrutinised in international partnerships, the result is likely to be a consolidation of Western epistemologies at the expense of other epistemologies, unwittingly reinforcing a kind of neo-colonialism. Unexamined expectations and norms from the powerful international partner can close down the exploration of issues from a more locally appropriate perspective. Speaking of an international online forum for academics, Hay (2008) argues that 'an open invitation to participate does not ensure inclusion'. I would extend this to say that formal inclusion does not ensure epistemic inclusion in knowledge creation across borders.

Positioning the current university as an arm of colonialism, Velásquez poses a problem which underpins de-colonial thinking from the global South, and which, I believe, speaks to a core purpose of academic practice: how might it be possible to create learning spaces in ways that are 'historically rooted in local histories', guided by local knowledges and understandings and

'conscious of global designs' (2016, p.xii)? How can local epistemologies be respected in a globalised world? An intrinsic part of the project was to increase participation between academics from global North and global South in co-creating knowledge, and between academics and practitioners in their regions. This process in itself and the interplay between individuals, processes, our contexts and the context of the project seemed to be more than a sum of the parts, as will be explained in later chapters.

International or local collaborations between academics and others offer possibilities for the generation of new understandings to respond to issues faced by our communities and by humanity. Conversely, such international partnerships also run the risk of reinforcing unjust practices and paradigms.

## **1.4 Conclusion**

In this chapter I have articulated my concerns about higher education. I have also explored the idea that as an academic I may be able to respond to these challenges to practice in ways which are more consistent with my personal and professional values. This is the purpose of my investigation. Emerging from these concerns, and to conclude this chapter, I will now turn to the aims of my research.

### **1.4.1 Aims of my research**

Given my concerns about the role of universities in the public sphere, my research aims to address the question, 'As an academic, what could I do?' This takes two forms:

- To investigate my practices as an academic working in higher education in relation to the values I hold and my beliefs about the role of the academic in society, and in doing so, to work towards a greater coherence between my values and practices.
- To investigate how I can address broad social and political questions about the kind of society it is worth working towards; and the way in which the university can shape the interests (Barnett 2013 p.137) and understandings of the world it serves.

My second aim follows these and focuses on 'How can I do this?' Specifically,



- To investigate how those inside and outside of academia, and from different hemispheres, can take collaborative action in our differences.
- To theorise my practices as an academic and, in doing so, to contribute to public discourses by beginning to develop a theory of what higher education could be.

As set out in this chapter, these matters relate to the contribution an academic can make to society. The specific domain of such a contribution the academic can offer is that of knowledge, with the aim of influencing public discourses and practices. This applies to the value, and values-base of the content of such knowledge in relation to contributing to positive human futures. More significant for my research is the contribution made through the processes of knowledge creation. This is a question about whose knowledge, or what type of knowledge 'is of most worth' (Apple 2012, p.viii) and therefore which people are considered to be legitimate knowledge creators. This issue concerns me because it relates to the justice or injustice of participation on the one hand and exclusion on the other. Knowledge creation is considered to be a specialised activity carried out solely by specialists, according to Appadurai (2006, p.167). I share his concern and argue that this can exclude and delegitimise many people as knowledgeable about matters which affect their lives and that of their communities. This is a denial of the democratic and dialogical values which I hold. In the following chapter I will discuss the theoretical frameworks which have arisen from and informed my research.

## Chapter 2 - Theoretical frameworks

In Chapter 1, I set out my concerns about higher education and, as an academic, about academic practices. I argued there that universities are not values-neutral. I also argued that such institutions could play a greater role in human development if they engaged in debates about values and purposes with a wider scope than economic gains and if they created new theories of value which went beyond reductionist faith in ranked, numerical data, mimicking a form of market value.

I stated that, in my view, academics should be engaged in addressing concerns in the public sphere, as public intellectuals. I highlighted the role of creating spaces in which many people could participate in generating knowledge about issues of importance.

Additionally, I believe that as academics and citizens we create our own living theories of value by what we prioritise. My research aims to investigate the dissonance I experienced between my values and practices. I explained how my values of the importance of participation and recognition of plurality, as expressions of justice, are denied by currently dominant forms of market-oriented higher education epistemologies. The social and solidarity economy project provided an opportunity for a focused effort on how to overcome this denial. This then gave me the opportunity to investigate my practice in relation to epistemic and social justice and, in this thesis, to produce an account of what I did, how I did it and why I did it.

In Chapter 1, I also argued that the techno-rationalist type of knowledge considered most legitimate by universities has the effect of excluding many ways of knowing, and knowers, in the world and closing the pathways for human development contained within them. This hierarchy of types of knowledge, in which the theoretical or abstract is afforded greater status than practical and personal forms of knowledge, also underpins the relationships forged between the higher education sector and the outside world, and between universities in the global North and global South. These factors, I argued, mean universities are not fulfilling a role they are well-positioned to fulfil towards wider and considered ideas regarding the nature and purposes

of a public good. In ways highlighted in Chapter 1, they focus on working for institutional prestige and benefit, where the main idea of a public good is focused on presumed benefits to 'the economy' and private financial gain. As an academic working within the sector, I am in danger of being complicit in this. This understanding prompted me to ask myself what I could do about these issues. Chapter 3 explains the action I took with others to address my concerns. The research that led to the production of this thesis is an investigation into that action.

In this chapter I set out the theoretical frameworks which became relevant as my research progressed and which were nurtured and developed through and within in it. In the chapter, I make reference to the practices through which these theorisations were developed. These are developed and explained in practical contexts in Chapters 5-7.

Chapter 2 is structured in the following way:

1. I give a description of how the theoretical frameworks emerged in my research and an overview of them.
2. I explain the frameworks and how my thinking evolved during the research process.

## **2.1 Emergence of the frameworks**

These frameworks emerged as I aimed to make sense of and develop my practice in accordance with my values, which were themselves interrogated in the process. I have adopted, temporarily discarded, readopted, evolved and developed the frameworks in non-linear ways throughout the process of conducting my research. In other words, I did not start with the theoretical frameworks explained in this chapter. The frameworks represent attempts to theorise my practice that are 'biodegradable' in the words of Morin (2008, p.29): the truths they carry are more alive and mortal than reified and relevant for all time in this analogy. They are 'open to uncertainty and to being surpassed ... knowing that the thing will never be totally enclosed in the concept, the world will never be imprisoned in the discourse' (2008, p.30).

However, they represent my best thinking so far in my research, and what Polanyi refers to as a period of 'dogmatism' (1958, p. 268) and consolidation.

My driving concern from the beginning has been participation: that people should be enabled to participate as agents in and take control of their own lives. In the context of my role as an academic in higher education, this participation involves participation of all as legitimate knowers in the knowledge that frames and affects our lives. I believe that narrow conceptions of legitimate knowledge have led to injustices on an epistemic level and an impoverished ecosystem of knowledge available to humanity. During my research, I gained insights and ways forward through the theorisation of my practice.

As my research progressed, and as I reflected on the significance of episodes within it, I came to see the following as frameworks which enabled me to explain my practice and to name it. These comprise one overarching framework, developed and informed by three constituent theoretical positions which encapsulate my work and form threads throughout the thesis. I list them here. I then explain how my understanding of them informed my practice and how such understandings evolved over time.

The overarching framework of my practice as an academic is Arendt's (1958) theory of action: the capacity we all have to start something new and to take collective action in the public sphere on an issue of importance to us. This theory, explained more fully in Section 2.2.1 below, acts as a sculptor's armature in my work around which to build my ideas (McNiff 2017, p.83). The following three theoretical frameworks have emerged from my investigation into my practice towards creating spaces of and for such action, and to theorise my practice as dialogical political action. This theorisation, emerging from my practice, has enabled me to understand and build upon Arendt's work.

As such, my practical theorisation of Arendt's idea of politically-oriented action comprises the following:

- 1. A theory of justice** which is a dynamic form of practice among people in their capacity as knowers: referred to as 'epistemic justice' (Fricker 2007). This

highlights the importance of spaces in which different epistemologies can contribute to the public sphere.

2. **The idea of a 'centre' and a 'periphery'** in legitimacy, taken from post-colonial literature, in which some ways of knowing are normalised and centred, while others are discredited and marginalised. I explain different theorisations emerging from my practice which challenged this idea of a centre and a periphery as an organisational structure.
3. **Dialogism** is explained as a way in which people can inter-relate, which creates space for, and sees value in, difference and which enables participants in the dialogue to create new imaginaries.

Sometimes the literature gave me the tools to name and theorise a practice which I had engaged in. At other times, previous knowledge of the literature gave me conceptual spaces in which to reconsider practice over time. Often, collaboratively discussing practice would create or shift its value and significance, opening new lines of enquiry or finding a place within my praxis much later. Therefore, I do not engage in a 'cause and effect' narrative. I do aim, however, to indicate general movement in my thinking about theoretical concepts.

## **2.2 Explanation of the frameworks and development of my understandings**

In this second section of the chapter, I will explain, with reference to the literatures, the theoretical frameworks which emerged from my practice, starting with the overarching concept of Hannah Arendt's theory of politically-motivated action. I will then explain how other theories emerged which built upon this.

### **2.2.1 Arendt's theory of action**

For Hannah Arendt (1958) 'action' is based on two conditions of humanity: that of natality, the capacity we all have to act as agents, capable of original thinking and of bringing something new into the world; and plurality, that as humans, we are equal and distinct (p.175). Her theory of action gives a theoretical framework for just and participative processes. Through our inter-relations with

others, we can exercise our ability to contribute newness – renewal – to the world

Arendt described herself as a ‘political theorist’ (Buckler 2012, p.1). The action she envisages is deliberate, based on a vision of the social intent of real-world engagement and change and is negotiated in contexts of plurality. It takes place in the public sphere, and its existence is secured whenever actors gather together for the purpose of investigating and deliberating about matters of public concern.

The action Catalina and I took with others in the social and solidarity economy project was political in that we aimed to gather together with people to investigate and act about a matter of common concern. The project became the transformation of thinking and of intentions into actions with social and political intent. To convey the nature of the interactions between participants in the project, I increasingly came to use the descriptor ‘dialogical’. In my view, dialogical action takes the idea of the need for ‘inter-relationality’ (Walkerdine and Studdert 2016, p.32, interpreting the work of Arendt 1958) in action and builds upon it by being explicit about the ethical stance towards the ‘other’ and the place of each in the negotiation of collaborative action.

Arendt highlights the necessary inclusion of the many in our differences within political processes and the importance of keeping open the spaces of deliberation and structures of plurality for political action. During my research, I increasingly came to see this theory of action in the public sphere as a way of explaining my intentions for my practices as an academic. Arendt’s action values equality and a belief in the capacity of all to bring something new into the world. It forms an overarching theory of my practice, in which the other theories listed above and explored in this chapter become necessary parts for its realisation.

As explained previously, my concern was about the need for participation in knowledge creation and dissemination, and this informed the initial conceptions of the social economy project. Arendt’s concept of action, I believe, takes this further as a theory of change through personal and collective agency. She argues that power is exercised by ‘cooperative effort

between people who differ from one another yet have the capacity to come together' (Frazer 2014, p.156) to bring something new into the world. Such 'capacity' involves processes and spaces, metaphorical and literal, in which there can be a coming together of individuals acting with a common purpose.

The action research explicated in this thesis is research as political action and into political action. In the chapters that follow, I increasingly conceptualise my practice as opening and facilitating spaces in which people – from different backgrounds and experiences, but connected by common concerns – come together to learn from one another, to reach common understandings, to create new knowledge and to take political action together. Within this, I use the term 'plurality' in a way that is very different from ideas of either identity politics, with its assumption of each asserting rights against the other, or multiculturalism, with its emphasis on passive tolerance of the other. My understanding of plurality, I believe, is more in line with Arendt's use of it.

For Arendt action is not just a means towards an end. Action in Arendt's terms is both a means and an end in itself, disclosing the identity of the agent and fostering humans' capacity for freedom. In Chapters 5-7 of this thesis, I describe and explicate the way in which through collaborative action with others, I increasingly see action as an end-in-itself: as embodying values such as justice in and of itself, rather than a just and effective means towards all-important ends. I come to realise that the process of taking dialogical action with others can carry within it the enactment of justice, recognising as it does each person as an agent in their own right with something unique to bring to the world. Arendt seems to argue that the affirmation of human natality and plurality is embedded within the process itself: in the actions and utterances of individuals who have come together to undertake some common endeavour. From my perspective, this theory was lived in practical ways in the social economy project as partners, and later other collaborators, came together to question prevalent social constructions of the economy and challenge it by showing that practices could be conceived of and lived in other ways. This is explained in Chapter 5; and the realisation of action as a means and an end in itself influenced the design of the project conference, the significance of which

is explained in Chapter 6. This process, I argue, involves and fosters personal transformation.

In placing natality alongside plurality and the inter-relationality of the human condition, the concept and processes of action can avoid the allure of individualism. The individual and their relationships with others and with their context are irreducible in the 'web of human relationships' (Arendt 1958, p.183). Arendt herself seems to believe that the capacity for newness or natality is an individual one, played out in public with others.

The central pillars of natality and plurality – the recognition of our unique contribution along with unique others – are problematic, however. From my practice with others and my reading of Foucault, I have come to understand in practical ways that dominant norms and discourses can marginalise or render invisible certain types of inequalities and therefore exclude people from realising their natality. In political action, processes need to be created which encompass spaces for differences which may have been 'subjugated' (Foucault 1980, pp.81-82) within current norms.

Within these norms and discourses, people will have different opportunities for taking action within a public sphere. A public sphere of questioning and of knowledge creation in a university can potentially frame how important issues are theorised, with potential consequences for policy and practice. Academics, as legitimated epistemological power-holders, have the potential to include or exclude types of knowledges and types of knowers. To understand this, exploration of the issue of justice provided a key theoretical idea to inform the practice of taking collaborative political action. I will address this in Section 2.2.2 below.

Fraser (1990) questions the idea that it is possible for people to take negotiated, collaborative action in the public sphere. Specifically, she is responding to Habermas' (1962) 'The structural transformation of the public sphere' rather than to Arendt, but I believe her arguments are relevant to the latter. She argues that informal obstacles to participation can persist even if everyone is formally permitted to participate. She believes that 'even the language people use as they reason together usually favors one way of seeing



things and discourages others' (pp.63-64). This is one of the central challenges addressed in this thesis. Practices which focus on practices of participation are explained in Chapters 5-7 and the theoretical ideas emerging from these practices are introduced in this current chapter.

### ***2.2.1.1 Complexity theory and political action***

From my reading of Hannah Arendt and in using her work to explain my practices in writing, I have come to the conclusion that she draws upon similar ideas to those expressed in complexity theory; and that an understanding of links between Arendt's work and of complexity theory becomes enriching to both. In what follows, therefore, I will discuss this with particular reference to Arendt's 'web of relationships'. I will then consider complexity theory and highlight the aspects of this that provided explanatory frameworks for my practice.

#### **The web of relationships, the in-between and complexity theory**

Arendt refers to the 'web of human relationships' which is the 'in-between' of the process of people acting and speaking to and with one another. She argues that although intangible, this notional in-between is no less real than the physical world. It can exist whenever people are together. Arendt explains that the disclosure of the uniqueness of the person through speech and the setting of new beginnings through action take place in an existing context or web, creating a new life story for the 'newcomer' and uniquely affecting the life stories of all those with whom they come into contact (1958, pp.182-184).

Within techno-rationalist epistemologies, the behaviour of the whole is approached and understood in terms of the properties of its parts, as explained in Chapter 1. Such thinking is inadequate for explaining action in the social realm as an interdependent series of variables, something which Arendt seems to identify in her emphasis of the 'in-between' and the mutually inter-relating nature of individuals in social relationships. Complexity theory or systems science has a different approach and one which seems more aligned with Arendt's insight. For example, Capra argues that properties of parts are not intrinsic to them, but rather can only be understood within the larger whole. This implies a shift from objects to relationships: the objects are themselves

networks of relationships, embedded in larger networks (1997, p.37). This seems to describe Arendt's 'in-between'.

As well as a focus on relationships, a key characteristic of complexity theory is the emergence of self-organised forms – the idea that new properties and behaviours can emerge with a momentum in a particular direction (Davis and Sumara 2005, p.456; Mason 2008, p.33). The principles of complexity in the social realm require an embracing of the agency, or purposeful participation, of individuals. Emergence may not just be spontaneous, and self-organisation may not just happen by chance. Byrne (1998, pp.41-42) highlights intentional and effective facilitative action in this process. It can be fostered by people who engage in leadership processes which 'enable rather than engineer', according to Plowman and Duchon (2007, p.119). This involves a decentralised control of outcomes (Davis and Sumara 2005, p.460) and a distribution of knowledge and effort, rather than a 'command and control system' (Morrison 2008, p.18).

These issues are explored further in Chapter 6, in which I explain a shift in my thinking and practice away from a centre and periphery model to one which is more polycentric.

Plowman and Duchon (2007, p.125) suggest that designing for emergence requires

confronting the unknown and dealing with what is new and different.  
Such an encounter can be unsettling, uncomfortable, and difficult.

Accepting disturbance is a way to sustain tension in the system and, paradoxically, tension is good because it forces the system and its agent to pay attention and learn.

In Chapter 5 I explain how a certain anxiety about needing to manage differences of opinion in practice gave way to an understanding of the potential for learning and mutual enrichment within difference.

According to Goldstein (2007, p.78), leadership in emergent systems can be understood in terms of 'expediting, linking people and projects, shaping, and other constructional ways of facilitating the emergence of novel structures'. This involves enabling the means for the expression of diversity in possible

responses around the issue in focus, which can provide conditions for emergence, according to Davis and Sumara. They also argue that there need to be mechanisms to prompt ideas to interact and be knitted into more sophisticated possibilities (2005, pp.459-460). It involves creating spaces of participation: opportunities for conversations, relationships and actions to emerge, and encouraging, resourcing and facilitating these towards new outcomes. In Chapter 7, I will explain how a conference was designed and constructed in order to, in Goldstein's words, expedite, link people and projects, shape, construct and facilitate the emergence of novel structures.

## **2.2.2 Justice and political action**

The concept and enactment of justice is a key focus of my research into my practice, and I view participation by people in matters that properly concern them as a matter of justice. In investigating concepts of justice in order to explain ethical social practices and to theorise my practice, I have found the articulation of 'social justice' to be rather vague in mainstream discourses and open to different interpretations. I have therefore investigated other expressions of relational forms of justice.

In this section, I will explain the conceptualisation of justice I use, first by giving a brief overview of distributive justice and its limitations. I then outline a theory of political justice, drawing on Young (2011). The concepts of distributive and political justice are briefly outlined in order to prepare the ground to explain the specific way in which I theorise my own practice towards justice. Drawing on Fricker (2007), I articulate the type of justice which refers to people in their capacity as knowers: epistemic justice. I will explain this in a practical context in Chapter 5.

### **2.2.2.1 *Distributive justice***

Distributive theories of justice focus on fairness in relation to access to and distribution of the benefits and duties in society. Rawls (1999), for example, advocates that social and economic inequalities should be addressed to provide the greatest benefit to the least advantaged members of society. However, such theories do not encompass questions about the norms or cultures which identify the items for redistribution and do not consider how

these legitimise or delegitimise ways of knowing and of being in the world. Distributive theories of justice do not question the complexity of human inter-relations, how the areas in which justice and injustice become visible are based on these inter-relations. As my research proceeded, I became increasingly aware of the significance of these issues and of the need for a different theory of justice and for a different type of theory, which can give theoretical frameworks for practical relations and interactions between people.

### **2.2.2.2 Political justice**

A theory of justice primarily concerned with redistribution precludes space for considering social and political ways in which people are legitimised or delegitimised in their ways of being. Young critiques the distributive paradigm in that it does not position people as 'doers and actors' (2011, p.37). A central belief in my research is that people are doers and actors and that they are thinkers, too, and need to be recognised as such.

In her theory of justice and difference, Young argues that

in the objectifying ideologies of racism, sexism, anti-Semitism, and homophobia, only the oppressed and excluded groups are defined as different. Whereas the privileged group are neutral and exhibit free and malleable subjectivity, the excluded groups are marked with an essence, imprisoned in a given set of possibilities (Young 2011, p.170).

In Arendt's public sphere of action, plurality is acknowledged as the human condition. Acknowledging this makes it imperative that spaces are created in which norms and assumptions can become visible and interrogated, and that participants are equally different.

Young identifies 'cultural imperialism' (2011, pp.58-61) as one of her five 'faces of oppression' (p.48). By this, she is referring to the universalisation of the experience of a dominant group and its positioning as the norm. Their experiences are unremarkable because they are widely established and recognised as normal. According to Young, groups which do not conform to this norm are positioned as having a 'lack' or a negation and are marked as Other in ways that are so pervasive that these interpretations are difficult to contest. Furthermore, such negative images are internalised by members of

dominated groups. This phenomenon is identified, and its implications considered in practice, in post-colonial literature by authors such as Ngũgĩ Wa Thiong'o (1993), Memmi (2003), Said (2003) and Fanon (2017).

In her theory of justice, Young argues for the assertion of a positive sense of group difference. She argues that members of such oppressed groups need separate organisations that exclude others in order to identify and reinforce the 'positivity of their specific experience' (Young 2011, p.167). Accordingly, these groups need the opportunity to represent themselves in political decision-making. I agree with her in this need for groups to be able to represent themselves at the political level. However, I believe that spaces of interaction between groups need to be broader than this. In an interdependent world, separateness – focusing on differences – can be problematic if it leads to othering.

The significant aspects of Young's theory which influenced my understandings are the ways in which the normalisation of particular assumptions, types of knowledge and practices can prevent or inhibit people from contributing to dialogues, theories and practices about issues which are important to them, and the significance of such contribution to concepts of justice. It is this that has been a way of pinpointing the injustice relevant to my research.

### ***2.2.2.3 Epistemic justice***

In what I have written above about distributive justice as a theory of who gets access to the tangible and less tangible resources within a society, and political justice, where ways in which people are legitimised or delegitimised in their ways of being are held up for consideration, I have laid the ground to consider what is distinct about another kind of justice: epistemic justice.

As my research has progressed through interactions with others and through further reading, I have become increasingly aware of what Foucault describes as the power/knowledge nexus: power and knowledge interact to create discourses, norms and legitimacies (1980). Injustice is also discernible specifically in relation to people in their capacity as knowers, or as epistemologists. It is manifest in the normalisation of particular ways of knowing and of the type of knowledge worthy of the title. This complements

Young's theory of political injustice, explained above, but is not specifically articulated in it. As stated in Chapter 1, epistemology is a branch of philosophy that studies how knowledge is created and legitimised as 'true' and the ways in which the individual acts in order to develop mental structures to understand the world. I have increasingly found that this form of justice, or injustice, needs a name in order to enter discourse and provide a sharper focus for my thinking and practice in this respect.

This form of justice is called 'epistemic justice'. Fricker (2007) identifies two forms of epistemic injustice: 'testimonial' – where the 'knower' is not considered believable; and 'hermeneutical' – where the conceptual and language tools are lacking to enable the injustice to be framed in ways that are understandable. Fricker argues that there is an ethical aspect in two of our most basic epistemic practices: conveying knowledge and making sense of our social experiences. She argues that

since the ethical features in question result from the operation of social power in epistemic interactions, to reveal them is also to expose a politics of epistemic practice (2007, pp.1-2).

Fricker's (2007) identification of this form of injustice therefore encompasses considerations of power through which knowledge is legitimised or delegitimised to maintain norms and hierarchies. The 'knower' is not perceived by others to have the authority to know or does not perceive themselves to have such authority. I adapt this theory specifically to my practice in the field of higher education. The use of the idea of epistemic (in)justice is significant in this sphere given that knowledge is the main feature which differentiates universities from other publicly-focused sectors, and that institutions can work in self-interested ways to maintain their sense of legitimacy, as argued in Chapter 1.

Identified and conceptualised as such, knowledge becomes central to the possibility of the university in working towards justice. There is a significant body of writing from, or inspired by, the global South which refers to the concept of cognitive justice and injustice and provides many practical examples (for example, Mignolo 2002; Santos 2007; Visvanathan 2009; Gaventa and Bivens 2014). My understanding about why it is referred to as

'cognitive' rather than 'epistemic' is that the former seems to refer to cognition as processes of thinking, whereas the latter is about ways of knowing and legitimising knowledge and therefore seems more relevant to my practices.

In ways which draw upon Foucault's nexus between power and knowledge, Hayward (2000) conceives of power as a set of boundaries created by mechanisms such as laws, rules, norms, customs, social identities and standards which define the field of action and constrain or enable action. Adding epistemology to Hayward's list of the mechanisms of power offers the possibility of identifying such boundaries and shaping them in creating spaces for the expression of a variety of epistemologies. The capacity, or lack of it, to do this is an aspect of justice that has become increasingly embedded in my thinking.

So, the conception of justice I have come to articulate as a focus for my praxis of creating spaces of participation in political action is epistemic justice. It is the justice of having the way in which we come to know and make sense of our world and our experiences recognised as legitimate by ourselves and others. These ways of knowing will be considered relevant for serious engagement between people with different understandings and traditions in open, inclusive, and critical argument about the good, in which knowers are taken seriously and expected to articulate the assumptions and moral visions which inform their actions and to ask and answer questions in a way that makes it possible for interaction as equals. Conversely, epistemic injustice means being marginalised in one's capacity as a knower.

For example, in positioning knowers and knowledge from particular parts of the world or from outside of academia as less legitimate, both of Fricker's types of injustice can be present. This is an experience common to dominant forms of higher education practices. In higher education, as in the wider world, there is an asymmetry in power relations and the potential for injustice, as discourses are framed in relation to a dominant epistemology. As Restrepo explains (2014, p.142), 'epistemic justice means to guarantee the conditions that allow human cultures to create their own life projects from their everyday knowledge'. It is a fundamental part of the right to think for ourselves and encompasses 'the right to name the world for ourselves' (Ngūgĩ Wa Thiong'o

1993, p.3) rather than have theorisations imposed by ways of thinking which are not appropriate or useful for well-being and social hope (Rorty 1999). Escobar (2007, p.275) argues that although there has been a shift in the humanities towards the production of critical intersubjective knowledge, it has 'floundered in the persistent Achilles' heel of their engagement with extra-curricular worlds'. I believe such practical engagement is critical to achieving a more sustainable world which is more equal and more democratic in epistemic terms.

For example, in many so-called 'indigenous' epistemologies of the Andes, understanding is relational rather than object-centred: one thing cannot be separated from another in our understandings. The religious beliefs of the indigenous peoples of the Andes place supreme importance on subject-subject, reciprocal relations with other humans, non-human animals and with *pachamama*, Mother Earth. There is no word for 'nature' in Quechua because it is not an entity separate from human life (Mignolo 2018, p.159). Ways of knowing are directly linked to well-being, valuing harmony and reciprocity between human beings and their natural environment. This belief is based on a view of knowledge that is inseparable from its context and from those who claim such knowledge. In this sense, this epistemology is inherently relational rather than reductionist.

Imposition, rather than acceptance of co-existence, leads to 'epistemicide', according to Santos (2016). He argues that Western techno-rationalist knowledge is unaccepting of the legitimacy of other knowledge forms and that 'cognitive justice' allows for the possibility of the co-existence of knowledge forms. Such knowledges may be incommensurable or 'agonistic' (Gray 2013), something which is addressed in Chapter 5 of this thesis.

The concept of epistemic justice was something I felt but was unable to articulate until writing about my experiences and drawing upon literature to try to pinpoint what the issue I needed to communicate was. I believe it has potential to identify the nature of a specific injustice in a wide variety of relationships. In the context of my research these are relationships between 'academic' knowledge and 'practice-based' knowledge, as well as global North-South relationships and the legitimacy of knowledge often disregarded



as 'indigenous', 'ancient' or 'traditional'. It is also vital for political action, based on Arendt's (1958) natality and plurality.

Central to the concepts of political and epistemic justice as explained in this section is that there is a 'norm', and beside this there is 'difference' or deficit in relation to that norm. I will now explore this in a way which is also informed by global South-led, post-colonial theory. Although very connected to the concept of (in)justice, I have made it a separate theme here because it led to significant developments in the way in which I theorised my practice.

### **2.2.3 Centre and periphery (in knowledge)**

A central premise underpinning my research is that knowledges are specific to a place and a time and cannot claim universality. They do not have universal application, and it cannot be assumed that knowledge is relevant in any time and any place. This point is also made by, for example, Toulmin (1990) and Berlin (1969). My investigation of this in post- and de-colonial literatures enabled me to articulate the injustice of exclusion wrought by the power of dominant ideology and culture: the concept of centre and periphery. This gave me a linguistic and conceptual tool to think about my practice and to use in an explanatory way as my thinking evolved. I will now draw on the literature to explain the concepts which will be referred to in the following chapters in relation to the practices they enabled me to name, and as my practice developed, to re-name. I argue that in creating spaces of political action there needs to be a critical awareness of power relationships.

Post- and de-colonial authors (for example, Fals Borda 1987; Mignolo 2002; Bhabha 2004; Connell 2007; Andriotti 2011) argue that ways of knowing and theorising the world from the hegemonic 'centre' are distributed to other regions – identified as a 'periphery' by such writers – through a global network of organisational forms and powerful institutions which include universities, scientific organisations and publishers of research journals, as well as institutions dedicated to practices of a certain type of economic development theorised in the West, such as the World Bank.

As argued in Chapter 1, techno-rationalist epistemology is considered universal, and universally relevant, and so constitutes a norm: it is considered

*the* centre in relation to other knowledges, which are found to be in deficit, rather than a centre which makes space for co-existence and mutual enrichment. As such, those with other ways of knowing find themselves delegitimised and discredited. Their knowledge may be dismissed as ‘indigenous’ or ‘practical’ knowledge to differentiate it from the technological and empirical ‘norm’. In Chapter 1, I drew upon literatures to argue that academia is complicit in this injustice in terms of types of knowledge favoured, the cloistered understanding of who could engage in research and theorisation, access to publication and the use of English as the lingua franca.

In grappling with ideas of knowledge, power and justice in writing about my experiences as part of my research, the concept of a centre and a periphery unlocked and transformed ways I can explain my practice. Andriotti suggests that post-colonial theory creates the conditions for ‘the possibility of theorizing a non-coercive relationship or dialogue with the excluded ‘Other’ of Western humanism’ (2011, p.1, citing Gandhi 1998). In my research it has helped me to theorise the relationship between those with knowledge supported by power, and those with knowledges which are delegitimised and excluded by academia and other powerful institutions. In other words, notions of ‘centre’ and ‘periphery’ are also relevant in more local contexts within the global North and South. I have used this theory to consider the idea of power and knowledge in local contexts as well as in the international and colonial power relationships which it critiques. In epistemic terms, this theory indicates that those on the ‘periphery’ are unable to contribute to knowledges about issues of importance to them, because they are delegitimised. This issue is dealt with in practice in Chapter 5.

### **2.2.3.1 Polycentricity**

As my practice and theoretical understandings rejected the injustice of the centre and periphery model, I also came to understand that my practice was self-centred, or ego-centric. There is a need to ‘shift the centre of vision’ rather than ‘use the vision from any one centre and generalise it as the universal reality’ (Ngũgĩ Wa Thiong’o 1993, p.4). This understanding developed when I found that participants had their own ideas about taking the project forward in their own contexts. While this was the intention within the project, when it

actually happened and people were ready to set up their own 'centres' in their own way, it caused me to reflect on the way that I had conceived of my own work in ways similar to a centre and a periphery. In trying to work towards justice, I came to understand that my work could be more just if I left spaces open for others to exercise their agency and take their political action in their contexts, rather than filling spaces with my own work. This is explained further in practice in Chapter 6 and is articulated in the idea of polycentricity, which I will now turn to.

Polycentricity is a term used by Polanyi to describe a system that 'operates according to the mutually adjusting actions of independent participants' (1997, cited in Mitchell 2006, p.22) rather than one which is commanded from one powerful centre. It suggests a network system of nodes and connectors (as in Capra's 1997 *Web of Life*), rather than a wheel-like central hub and spokes model. It suggests that there can be many mini centres rather than all powerful ones from which others have norms, values and practices imposed upon them, be it consciously or subconsciously.

This idea of polycentricity became a tool which helped me to conceptualise my practice: that as fragmented individuals and communities we can become a community because we are held together by overarching values or ideals. This can happen even though – or because – in practice there are many autonomous centres of activity which develop and explore these values in ways which are relevant to people in their own contexts and in relation to their own values. Reminiscent of Arendt's 'web of relations' (1958, pp.182-184), it is a conceptual bulwark against the tendency for power to consolidate itself centrally, and the injustice of this rendering others peripheral. The development and expression of values in practice becomes the unifying principle and a criterion of rationality.

### **2.2.3.2 Moving centres**

In a polycentric networked community in which the intention is that there is mutual enrichment through shared learning experiences, the question arises about how inter-relationality between the many centres might be achieved. In a potentially crowded and geographically dispersed network of individuals and

communities, who gets to share with the wider group and what are the processes by which this might happen? How can spaces be created in which many and diverse knowledges are shared in meaningful ways? It could be argued that polycentricity ignores the reality of power structures. In an organisation or collaborative project, these might be related to funding and accountability and the need to demonstrate outputs rather than processes. The risk of defaulting back to a conventional centre is real.

Although groups of people may be linked together with overarching values, a question remained for me about how they can learn from one another while forming their own centres, and how fragmentation between us could be avoided. Paradoxically, I later returned to a type of centre and periphery model, but one in which the centre was temporarily taken up by different groups who had different experiences, allegiances and backgrounds. I explain this in practice in Chapter 7. Using ideas from complexity theory led me to conceptualise these centres as emergent, dynamic and temporary and shifting. This meant that there could not be a settled 'centre' of assumptions and norms, because it would be deliberately decentred and made unfamiliar, allowing other centres to emerge and dissipate in an ongoing way.

Building on the 'many centres' idea of polycentricity, I have called this 'moving' or 'dynamic' centres where the focus is on processes and 'the centrality of the means to enable the expression of diversity around the issue' (Davis and Sumara 2005, p.459). As explained in Chapter 7, moving, or shifting, or dynamic centres is a way of theorising spaces and processes in which different people and groups can emerge as a centre at different times.

Although throughout my research I have stated a belief in the importance of participation and the importance of people having agency, what I have been able to learn has transformed my understanding of the implications of this in practice. The theory of moving centres in my practice is my best thinking so far about the issue of structural organisation and the position of myself in relation to others. Articulating this represents a phase of what Polanyi calls 'dogmatism': a period of consolidation in which I am 'deliberately holding unproven beliefs' (1958, p.268) with which I can explain and inform my

practice, and from which I may move or change my understandings in the future.

In the previous section I have discussed the concepts of centre and periphery and of moving towards poly- and moving- centres. These are ways of creating macro organisational spaces. They are potentially coherent with working towards epistemic justice and consistent with Arendt's principles of natality and plurality, in which all have something unique to offer and all are equal. I also discussed Arendt's web of relationships. In political action, much of this 'in-between-ness' will be in the form of speech and dialogue. In the next section I will continue to weave the threads developed earlier, at a micro level of face-to-face, people-to-people interactions expressed through dialogue.

#### **2.2.4 Theories of dialogue**

In this chapter I have stated that my overarching theory for my practice is informed by Hannah Arendt's (1958) theory of action. In planning to take action with others in the public sphere, one needs to have a critical awareness of power relationships which might exclude some from realising their natality, and in the context of knowledge this means taking steps to work towards epistemic justice. The final component at this stage of my research is to consider the way in which people can relate to each other in person and how dialogue and action might be conducted.

From the beginning of the social economy project, and as expressed in the bid for funding for it, dialogism was a concept and an approach to social relations and knowledge creation which Catalina and I believed was appropriate to foster the knowledge creation with others in a peer-to-peer way.

In experiencing this in practice and writing to explain the experiences of dialogism in the project to a reader of my research, my understanding has deepened and enabled me to articulate and theorise practices which, I believe, can foster participation in action between people of difference and move towards epistemic justice. I will now explain how my thinking evolved in relation to dialogical relations with others. I will use the literature to theorise this evolution of thought and show how it developed from and in practice in Chapters 5–7. In the social economy project, partners and collaborators came

from very different contexts and backgrounds. In order to take political action together we needed to engage in dialogue to develop common understandings.

In what follows, I will start by making the case for the need for dialogue to avoid separation between groups of difference. After all, as Nixon argues, 'any serious debate about higher education must also be a debate about how we are to live together' (2011, p.117). In order to avoid confusion of terms, I will then differentiate between dialectics and dialogism because they are 'diametrically oppositional' according to White (2014, p.220), but this may not be immediately apparent from the way they are used when referring to approaches which involve dialogue, for example in education. I will then discuss the literature which has helped me to theorise my practice and which will be returned to in the following chapters. As a device to chart the changes in my thinking, I have organised what follows into the categories of instrumental dialogism and relational dialogism. I then consider some of the practical strategies offered in the literature to use as a basis for discussing my own practices in later chapters.

#### ***2.2.4.1 Separation or dialogue***

An issue in my research has been to work with people in contexts of plurality whilst maintaining a coherent whole and avoiding fragmentation of people into unrelated sub-groups working in parallel but with little relationship to each other. Separate spaces for like-minded groups, as advocated by Young (2011), need to be balanced with practices which enable subject-subject, 'I-Thou' (Buber 2004) relationships between people of difference, in which we can develop understanding of our common humanity. Dialogism offers this possibility in that it neither 'destroys difference by reducing it to a simple unity, [nor] obscures unity by only seeing differences' (Montuori 2008, p. 8). Montuori is speaking about complexity thinking rather than dialogism, but I believe the point holds for dialogic approaches. In creating spaces of participation in dialogical action, I have investigated practical and theoretical ways to work this out, to move forward from this 'neither/nor'.

#### **2.2.4.2 *Dialectics – seeking a right answer***

A dialectical perspective takes a thesis – antithesis – synthesis approach. It seeks to overcome difference and work towards one truth or ‘one-ness’ according to White (2014, p.222). Socratic dialogues would come into this category as they are the

investigation of truth through revealing contradictions in people’s thinking ... based on the preset curricular endpoints reflecting the eternal, universal ideas

according to Matusov (2018, p.283). So, too, would Vygotsky’s social constructivist approach (Wegerif 2008, p.349), in which a more knowledgeable other guides the learner to the correct knowledge through dialogue. Vygotsky’s approach is therefore essentially mono-logic, according to Gradovski (2017, drawing on Matusov 2011). In the project, this was not an approach Catalina and I wished to pursue. The point was that we did not know what approaches and practices of creating and apportioning value existed in different parts of the world, and we wished to open spaces and dialogues in which a diversity of understandings could be articulated.

#### **2.2.4.3 *Dialogism***

A dialogic approach, on the other hand, views plural truth – truths – rather than the singular truth pursued in dialectics. It is an ongoing process of communication rather than a once-and-for-all conclusion. The dialogical approach does not seek to overcome difference and suppress it in order to reach an answer and a consensus; rather, it finds meaning within the difference or the ‘dialogic gap between voices in dialogue’ (Wegerif et al. 2019, p.81). In dialogism ‘differences remain yet the dialogue continues’ according to Stern (2016, p.19).

The focus on dialogic process sometimes felt in conflict with the need to achieve specific outputs in a certain time scale within the project. The outputs needed to be open ended enough to reflect the dialogic processes. This conflict will be discussed further in Chapters 5 and 6.

However, in the literature about dialogism there is a subtle difference in intent and approach. I will now discuss how this difference has helped me to articulate the ways in which my own understanding has evolved. Although I categorise these approaches as 'instrumental' and 'relational', the reality of the differences in the literature is quite nuanced. This may not be reflected in the following categorisation in which I aim to make the difference starker in order to explain the point. The difference may be more of a spectrum, but it is one on which my own position has shifted.

### **Instrumental dialogism: a means to an end – many answers are possible**

In the literature, dialogic approaches are sometimes viewed as an instrumental means to a desired end in view. Many perspectives might be possible, and learning will occur in this exchange of views. The process is primarily viewed as a means to get to an end, whatever that may be.

In the case of Paulo Freire's work (1972) with oppressed rural people in Brazil, the dialogue promoted by him was for the purpose of political and psychological emancipation of these people from a powerful minority. Dialogue helped them gain an understanding of the political reality causing their suppressed status. Freire's work was foundational towards conceptualising education as a political project and one which should be an act of collective emancipation. However, my argument here is a narrow one to make a specific point: that some of Freire's work could be interpreted as suggesting that there was one just way of seeing such emancipation and (political) reality, and dialogue was an instrumental means to that end. His dialogic work in Guinea-Bissau, for example, accepted the vision of the revolutionary leaders of that country, and engaged in dialogue and action with the people to implement this specific interpretation of social justice (Freire 1983). Dialogue and action with people at the grassroots did not include the possibility of other socio-political arrangements emerging. The 'end point' was pre-decided. It was a source of concern that civilians saw 'literacy as the solution to their individual problems' (p.151), rather than for the political emancipation envisaged within the revolutionary schema.



In much education and in research, the desired end point is known, be it to find a settled answer to a question or fulfil content-oriented curriculum requirements. Burbules takes this means to an end approach by framing the issue as 'using' dialogism as a technique in teaching (1993 in Sidorkin 1999, p.14). In this sense Burbules is using dialogic teaching as a vehicle towards a known destination of curriculum requirements. Lefstein and Snell (2014, p.21) capture the instrumental approach when they state

we see dialogue as an important means of educating pupils for democratic participation, and as an effective way of learning content matter and developing pupils' thinking.

They do develop this statement to also state they see it as 'an end in itself – a good way to live'. I note this to avoid misrepresentation of their overall stance.

In my research, I initially viewed dialogue as open-ended and creative of newness and as a gift of the cultural diversity of partners in the project. In my thinking, a key attraction was that we would not know where it would take us, but that new knowledge and understandings would be forged in these dialogic interactions between peers, in which as peers we represented wider perspectives than Western academia. As such, I can now see it was a means to an end. I believe this is a significant but undervalued approach for higher education, in which there can be seriousness in the processes of drawing people into dialogue and gaining multiple perspectives on an issue of public concern; and in forging new understandings and inclusive ways forward together which acknowledge many interests and many ways of knowing.

In his vision of a 'third space' Bhabha (2004) uses the analogy of the staircase between downstairs and upstairs, a liminal space in which the separate areas fuse and are neither one nor the other. This third space conceptually allows the possibility of maintaining difference – in the separated spaces – and of the dialogical potential in the in-between areas. It speaks to the possibility of a participative space in which dominant ideologies and practices, or those believed to be 'neutral' and self-evident, can be re-examined and in which new perspectives can be generated. This is exemplified in practice in Chapter 5.

In its acknowledgement of difference, its emphasis on the irreducibility of means and ends, and the absence of emphasis on a pre-determined end point, Arendt's theory of action resonates with a dialogic, rather than a dialectic or instrumental approach. Through further engagement in reading and the process of reflecting with others on our experiences, I became more receptive to insights contained in Arendt's notions of plurality and natality as the foundations of political action. Without this bedrock of the acknowledgement of our human condition – our differences and our equality – political action would risk lacking significance and humanity.

### **Dialogism as relational process and end in itself**

As my understanding of the importance of relational process developed, and in aiming to work out my thinking by writing and re-writing about the issue, I realised that my thinking about dialogue had subtly but profoundly tilted away from viewing dialogic approaches in instrumental terms towards a view of them as an inclusive, effective and just means to the end of creating knowledge. I had moved towards the idea that the processes in themselves can be a mutually enriching affirmation of our humanity which – in themselves – contained virtues such as justice towards each in their capacity as a knower, or epistemic justice. In Chapter 6, I explain how my thinking evolved from a more instrumental understanding of dialogism towards conceptualising dialogism as a process of intentional inter-relatedness fostered in spaces of plurality: of being with, and creating meanings with, others. I came to see this relational understanding as both the foundation and the purpose of political action, and to think of such action as dialogical action.

In further engagement with the literature, I also found greater resonance with insights from key writers about dialogic interactions, such as Buber and Bakhtin. Buber's approach to dialogue places ethical relationships and the humanity of the 'other' at the centre. He highlights the act of 'turning towards' (2002, p.25) the other in 'genuine dialogue'. This has within it an ontological belief about what it is to be human and in relation with another being, where

each of the participants really has in mind the other ... in their present and particular being and turns to them with the intention of establishing a living mutual relation between himself [sic] and them (p.22).

In a similar way to the relational emphasis of complexity theory and of Arendt's 'web of relationships', Buber is concerned with the 'sphere of the between' (2002, p.241), in which attention does not focus on individual objects and their causal connections but upon the relations between things (Friedman 2002, p.66).

I now see dialogism in this way: as a process which embodies its own purpose. Buber contrasts this with 'technical' dialogue, which is prompted solely by the need of exchange of objective understanding (2002, pp.22-23). The knowledge and information are the important part, in contrast to 'genuine' dialogue which places importance on the humanity of the actual people in the relationship.

A process of engagement with the 'other' which creates a mutual responsiveness is also theorised by Bakhtin. He argues that in a 'dialogic' approach, new understandings and new insights are found within the difference between people when they respond attentively to each other. This insight has enabled me to explain my practices. For example, in Chapter 7, I explain how Catalina and I created spaces in which conference participants – in our differences – could interact in different ways around the topic in focus. The process of engagement with the other enables the creation of new thinking and new understandings because

what is realized .... is the process of coming to know one's own language as it is perceived in someone else's language, coming to know one's own belief system in someone else's system (Bakhtin 1981, p.365).

In other words, a dialogic approach as conceived by Bakhtin can foster an environment in which previously unnoticed assumptions and ways of knowing are placed in the spotlight. He further states that

... a dialogic encounter of two cultures does not result in merging or mixing. Each retains its own unity and open totality, but they are mutually enriched (Bakhtin, Holquist and Emerson 1986, p.7).

Bakhtin's idea of coming to know oneself through another, quoted above, has resonance with transformative learning theory, a process by which previously

uncritically assumed frames of reference – for example, mindsets and meanings – are changed to become more inclusive, discriminating and reflective (Mezirow 2018, p.116). In Chapter 7 I argue that participant responses to the project conference, which was a space created to promote dialogue by highlighting different assumptions and practices, showed signs of such changes to frames of reference and of transformative learning.

Within transformative learning theory is the notion of a shift: one that includes

our understanding with other humans ... our understanding of power relations in interlocking structures ... and our sense of possibilities for social justice (Cranton 2016, p.38, citing Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, 2004).

In Chapter 5, I explain how my own assumptions were challenged in this process of encountering others from backgrounds different from my own. Towards the end of that chapter I give a specific example about how I had changed the way I positioned others, but this whole thesis is a record of a journey of transformative learning for me. I agree with Freire in seeing this personal change as a necessary aspect of dialogue. He asks, ‘how can I enter into dialogue if I always project ignorance onto others and never perceive my own?’ (1972, p.63).

I have experienced this transformative learning through a kind of dialogic interaction between the reflection on my experiences with others in the project and through writing about these. The process of writing has on many occasions caused a shift from knowing about my experiences and knowing the relevant literatures to a deeper learning experience of sense-making. This sense-making has meant that the way I view my experiences has changed. It is an experience of ‘the writing begin[ning] to write me’ (McNiff 2014, p.129). It points to my increasing belief in the value of a ‘process’ view rather than an ‘outcomes’ view of learning (James 2012, p.64, drawing on the work of Lawrence Stenhouse).

Some examples of transformative learning through sense-making are the way in which I have theorised my changing practices towards polycentricity and moving/shifting centres, as explained above and in Chapters 5, 6 and 7; and

my understanding of the power of articulating theory as a driving force for, and as emerging from, practice.

When seeking to learn from and with others and to take dialogical action, the possibility of incommensurate differences, or agonism (Gray 2013, discussing Isaiah Berlin's work), is something which initially troubled me. I did not hold a fully resolved position about some of the issues of contention amongst partners: capitalism, the free market, and so on. Initially I was concerned that I was rather ambivalent in this respect and that this was problematic as a project co-ordinator. I later came to see that one of the things I felt most deeply about was in fact a fundamental value: the value of respect for difference, encapsulated by Arendt's focus on collective action stemming from our natality and our plurality. I came to see that engagement between people of difference had transformative potential and that my role was to learn to create and hold spaces where this could happen, and where others could do the same, differently. Having identified this as a clear stance, I was able to theorise and develop it in my practice rather than see it as a deficiency.

With reference to complexity theory, ecological thinking (Code 2006) and to Santos' (2016) ecologies of knowledges, I increasingly viewed my practice in creating spaces of dialogical political action as creating spaces, or processes, in which there was an 'ecology of dialogues' between people from different geographical contexts, different lived experiences and different roles and interests in the social economy. I explain the practical manifestations of this in Chapter 6 and develop it in a different context of the end-of-project conference in Chapter 7.

### **How can spaces be created for dialogism?**

Spaces of dialogue are critical and intrinsic to the possibility of political action and this need forms a central theme in the chapters that follow. Such dialogue must be structured in ways that enable all to actively contribute, and to promote critical self-reflection. Insights can be gained from the literature about how to engage in processes of dialogic interactions. In this section I will consider what the literature says about how these can be created in practice.

As explained above, Bhabha (2004) points to spaces apart and new, unfamiliar places together in which taken-for-granted assumptions are exposed. Given the differences in which the partners and collaborators were working in their local contexts, it was important to enable the 'spaces apart' to be an important and legitimate part of the project. As mentioned earlier, if we were to avoid fragmentation, we also needed spaces together with common understandings. Implicit within the need for spaces apart is an insistence that people must be able to speak for themselves to avoid the risk of misrepresentation and marginalisation (Freire 1972; Said 2003).

In the context of schooling, Wegerif (2013) draws on the Bakhtinian approach to suggest that it is possible to 'open' dialogic space through interrupting an activity with a reflective question, 'widening' the space through bringing in new voices, or 'deepening' it through reflection on assumptions. Along with Bakhtin and Buber, he too argues that dialogue should not only be treated 'as a means to an end but also treated as an end in itself' (p.33). Also in a schools context, Stern (2013) draws attention to the importance of structure which can provide space for the surprising or unexpected. In this reading, the process cannot be a free-for-all, but should steer sharply away from controlling and overly-structured approaches which deny the possibility of spontaneity and meaningful expression by the participants of self and of deep connection with others. The approaches suggested by both Wegerif and Stern above contrast with those in which 'speech is crafted to minimize the possibility that it will be transformed in uptake', something characteristic of a 'monologic' approach, according to Tomlinson (2017, p.6).

In a context in which people from different and potentially incommensurate cultures engage in dialogue to take collaborative action, as was the case with the social economy project, Santos identifies the importance of processes of 'intercultural translation', which is 'an imperative dictated by the need to broaden political articulation beyond the confines of a given locale or culture' (2016, p.214). Viewing reciprocal empowerment and cognitive justice as goals, he argues that important questions are how to create non-hierarchical communication and how to achieve shared meanings. It is a relational process that will change participants and address our 'reciprocal incompleteness'

(2016, p.212). He argues that the fact that such change is possible undermines the idea of 'original' or 'pure' cultures.

The theorists above assume a structure designed with dialogic approaches in mind. In Chapter 5, I will describe and explicate a dialogic encounter which was purposefully facilitated. However, as the project developed, I became more aware of the importance of free spaces within a dialogic approach which embrace the dialogic nature of ordinary, everyday encounters between people. In these, people can 'move in and out of the interaction, remain silent, change and modify the themes, and engage simultaneously in several activities and agendas' according to Matusov (2018, p.295), who calls it a 'free range' or 'ecological' approach to dialogue.

This approach is exemplified by Sidorkin, who identifies three phases of dialogic encounters: first, the input – the initial event, experience, project or sharing of a common text for example. This will be monothematic. Second comes the challenge, agreement or disagreement. This is a polythematic and chaotic phase where people talk freely about the initial input or about anything else. Finally, there is the reconciliation (1999, pp.74-76). Sidorkin argues that all three dynamics of dialogue are necessary and that prioritising one at the expense of another puts stress on the psychological well-being of participants. This theorisation helped me to understand some difficult aspects of online communication which had puzzled me. This is explained in Chapters 6.

The idea of 'free range' dialogue as part of a dialogic approach gave me an explanation for some successful spaces of dialogue in the end-of-project conference (see Chapter 7) which had been purposefully designed because they seemed very positive on an intuitive level. It gave me theory to explain why such encounters had been rather successful and to ensure such spaces are part of events, rather than viewing them as unimportant non-spaces, or non-thought-through spaces incidental to the more structured activities and interactions.

In all of these understandings of dialogism, the assumption is that it does not exist in a vacuum that has no content. Buber highlights the need for a common centre or core. For him, this was the God of his faith, the 'eternal Thou' (2004,

p.99). Moroco identifies this common core as a collectively accepted mission (2008, p.15), which allows for dialogue between persons to occur. In Chapter 5 I will discuss this idea in relation to the 'common centre' of the people involved in the project, and the practices which gave rise to the use of Buber's work as an explanatory framework.

## **2.3 Conclusion**

In this chapter I have set out the theoretical frameworks which emerged from my practice with others towards spaces for participation in knowledge creation in higher education. I have explained that the overarching theoretical framework for my practice is based upon Arendt's (1958) concept of action. I have given an overview of the development of my thinking in the areas of epistemic justice, of the recognition of many and moving centres, and of dialogism. In the next chapter I describe the practical context in which these issues, and those raised in Chapter 1, arose and developed.



## **Chapter 3 - What action did I take?**

In the previous chapters I have expressed concern about issues of knowledge creation in higher education, the legitimacy conferred on particular types of knowers, and the injustice of the exclusion of many knowers and knowledges. I have expressed concern at the ways in which academia, and by implication myself as an academic, are thereby complicit in an injustice.

I have explained in the Introduction to this thesis that the social and solidarity economy project (2012-2015) gave me an opportunity to focus my wider enquiries on issues of participation and social justice in an international context. The project became the field for my specific focus and for data gathering in the research story recounted in this thesis. In this chapter, I will describe the project and explain how it aimed to respond to the concerns raised in Chapter 1 in relation to my practices as an academic. In Chapters 5-7, I will explain in more detail the interactions and practices within the project and how these influenced my evolving thinking and practices. A timeline of significant events within the project, along with the more expansive timeline of my research, can be found in Appendix 1.

The chapter is structured in the following way:

1. I explain the background to the project and the circumstances from which it emerged.
2. I give specific information about the project: its aims, the central theme, the partners who participated and its outputs. I also relate this information to the concerns raised in Chapter 1 about higher education.

### **3.1 Background**

In the Introduction to this thesis, I explained how Catalina Quiroz-Niño, my research partner, and I had collaborated with colleagues in a university in Peru in 2010 on the theme of developing their practices in the use of ICT in teaching sessions. In February 2012, the General Secretary of that university contacted us to say that the institution had access to funds for research, and asked whether we could work up a proposal for a collaborative project between themselves and our university. We agreed that this would form part of a larger

project by bidding for European Union funding streams with the bid for funds in Peru as part of this. Catalina and I led an application for the proposed bid under the Erasmus Mundus Action 3 funding stream, whose purpose was to 'promote European higher education' to people from outside of the EU who were potential students. In this way, the funding stream was quite straightforwardly instrumental in its aim. In a parallel process, academics from the University in Peru created a bid for their research-focused funding stream based upon the agreed theme, reflecting and complementing what Catalina and I were writing in the bid to the European Union, written specifically according to the criteria set for their bid and adapting it to the context of their position in the Andes. The Peruvian bid was submitted to the funding authority at the university in Peru at the same time as Catalina and I submitted the European Union bid.

The project could be traced back to long-standing conversations between Catalina Quiroz-Niño and me about the deep concern we both felt about the dominance of an ideological model steering the global economy. We were alarmed by the exclusive and specific interests which were being served at a high cost to many people. Equally concerning was the apparent lack of an active response from academia or practical challenge to the values and assumptions of profit-at-all-costs mentality which had caused the global financial crash of 2007-8. The same ideological model steering the global economy seemed to be highly influential in academia, too. When the opportunity for creating a funded project arose, we therefore found other people working in other institutions with whom we could work.

### **3.2 An international collaborative project about the social and solidarity economy**

The project was called 'Enhancing the studies and practice of the social economy in higher education', and it was based on three premises (see Conference report, p.1 in Data archive, Conference):

- A people-centred approach to economic life and value should be present in universities' curricula.

- Universities should provide education and training which serves the community.
- Universities should offer broad and in-depth knowledge and understanding of ways of organising economic life.

In the bid for funding, and in consultation with partners, Catalina and I wrote

Erasmus Action 3 is aimed at promoting European higher education through measures which enhance its attractiveness, profile, image and visibility. In this project, the partnership views 'attractiveness' as the capacity of European higher education institutions to promote and enhance a systemic and systematic understanding and transformation of current issues from a human-centred perspective.

The economic downturn following the banking crisis of 2008 raises serious questions about how European higher education addresses and perpetuates the limitations of a specific economic model and values which have proved to be highly vulnerable and unstable. Higher education institutions need to further question any instrumentalist and reductionist approach which limits the students' and teachers' capacity to learn, study and research for transforming their own lives and their communities for common good. If higher education in Europe is to remain relevant it needs to review its ethos, purpose and curricula which should consider other economic models and their philosophies from a human-centred approach. This considers human well-being as well as wealth creation.

That is why this project aims to gain an in-depth knowledge of the nature, origins and practice of a people-centred economic approach, with its own values framework, thinking and behavioural model. This is the social economy system with social capital as its backbone (Data archive, Bid for funding and feedback – ema3\_application\_2012, p.22).

In collaboration with our partners in the project in Peru, we continued

It is evident that the world in the 21st century is facing profound changes and transformations and these should not be alien to the everyday activity in the university. In this sense there is an urgency of finding new answers for old problems and it is possible that those

answers have to do with the everyday life, with the local, with the revaluation of ancient knowledge from an intercultural perspective. It is essential that universities in Europe look at themselves and adjust their curricula to the new dynamics and challenges facing the continent and the wider world. The curricula offered by higher education institutions have to be relevant to the development and current challenges facing global society.

... the field under study involves making visible an often invisible area of life, understanding the values that drive this and examining mainstream views which often go unchallenged.

For San Antonio Abad del Cusco (UNSAAC) the project offers great internationalization in which the University plays a central role in knowledge creation and management alongside the YSJ Consortium, in a peer-to-peer role. The YSJ Consortium is challenging the often unquestioned model of western universities 'taking' knowledge to the 'global south'. In this project the relationship will be one of a dialogical co-study of complex realities of human life and economic activity in these regions. UNSAAC believes that the project will be an asset to its current course accreditation process as well as further improving the educational quality of its courses. UNSAAC aims to develop relevant core curricula that promote the regeneration of local economic life with a global perspective, and believe this project will support this process (Data archive, Bid for funding and feedback – ema3\_application\_2012, pp.26-27).

One of the overall aims we specified was to 'promote intercultural dialogue and mutual understanding between higher education teachers from the geographical scope of the project' (ibid, p.28).

The bid document highlights a belief underpinning the project in relation to the purposes of higher education: that practices by academics in universities can 'promote ... an understanding and transformation of current issues from a human-centred perspective' (ibid, p.22) and question approaches which limit people's capacity to learn in ways that can transform their own lives and their communities. The bid also referred to the values of the lead university to illustrate that as an institution it embraced values which were congruent with

those of the project. We cited its mission statement: to provide 'open and progressive higher education that embraces difference, challenges prejudice and promotes justice' (ibid, pp.26-27).

The bid for funding was one of six (out of 70 proposals) approved by the EU in July 2012. The feedback from the adjudicators drew attention to the contribution of each of the partners in the consortium, stating that 'the partners have well defined complementary roles and profiles and contribute to the project with their individual strengths' (Data archive, Bid for funding and feedback - EMA3-372558 feedback, p.4). The proposal for funding written by our colleagues in Peru was also approved after the commencement of the project, in 2013.

In my broader research investigations, I have further considered many of the issues raised in the bid, and the research has given me a wide range of literatures and a more conceptual language to explain my concerns and how the project addressed them. In what follows, I develop these explanations, making brief reference to literatures used in Chapters 1 and 2 and to other literature, as appropriate. In some instances, I briefly explain how the project unfolded and use examples to show the intentions in practice. In places I explain that some of the practices changed over time. I develop the explanation of the practices more fully within the chapters about the specific episodes and practices within the project and my learning from these (see Chapters 5-7).

### **3.2.1 What were the aims of the social economy project?**

The project was a challenge for academics, Catalina and me included, and the institutions we work in, to reconsider our ethos, practices and roles in society related to the way in which knowledge is created around issues of concern in society, and to include a wider range of people and their epistemologies in knowledge creation. Not doing so could signal tacit agreement with injustice towards the knowledge held by communities of people – called 'epistemicide' by Santos (2016), explained in Chapter 1 as the obliteration of ways of knowing, or at least it could mean academics and their forms of knowledge faced increasing irrelevance to society.

The aim of the project was to make visible the many ways of expressing value and values in our economic activities, encapsulated by the notion of the 'social and solidarity economy' (a term previously explained in the Introduction to this thesis). The intention was to take a broad and internationally-oriented view that would enable an understanding of knowledges and practices at a local level, and how these reflected the values and aspirations of people working in their local contexts. The project went beyond a critique of existing knowledge and practices. As participants, we worked collaboratively and dialogically across disciplines and across sectors to share knowledge and to create new understandings of practices. We aimed to gain an in-depth knowledge of the nature and practices of a people-centred economic approach. It was designed to encourage academics and universities worldwide to critically consider their practices and ethical responsibilities, and to broaden knowledge and embed the values of people-centred economic systems within their curricula (Meredith and Quiroz-Niño 2020).

### **3.2.2 The theme of the project**

Academics and practitioners in the so-called global 'North' and 'South' worked to make more visible the multiple expressions of values and knowledges within the social economy which tend to be marginalised in academia and mainstream discourses. The project was premised on the idea that scientific and techno-rationalist ways of knowing and of legitimising knowledge represent an 'exaggerated ideal' (Code 2006, p.9), which had failed to address pressing social and environmental concerns. It involved academics seeking other ways of knowing and of applying knowledge to practice, learning from those practising in the social and solidarity economy. In this way, the project was a challenge to the conventional notions of legitimate knowledge favoured by much of academia. It aimed to challenge current ideas about who is considered legitimate in participating in the generation, articulation and legitimation of knowledge.

The focus of the project was an issue of common concern around which there could be myriad responses, drawing upon a variety of experiences, knowledges, values and professional practices in response to different local and political contexts. It did not start with theorisation from the global North, a

practice critiqued by, for example, Connell et al. (2018) and explained in Chapter 1. It started with the premise that current mainstream conceptualisations of the economy and applications of theory to practice were diminishing ethical standards and impoverishing community life, and that there is a need to learn together from alternatives on a global level. It was therefore reconstructive and a form of appreciative inquiry (Zandee and Cooperrider 2008), whose aim was to make a contribution to different – human centred – practices of the economy within a public sphere.

The project challenged the ethic of the modern research university, which, according to Appadurai (2000), requires the ‘subtraction of the idea of moral voice or vision’ (p.11). Instead, Catalina and I aimed to make a values-based proposition as a focus for collaborative and investigative action by academics and practitioners. Rather than demonstrating an appearance of objectivity and the obscuring of values and assumptions which is characteristic of modern research, the project would be underpinned by dialogic action between academics, university students and practitioners. This dialogue would include investigation of the personal and organisational values that informed practices in the social economy organisations, how these were expressed in the practitioner’s and organisation’s work and what difference they believed their participation in such organisations made to them and their communities. By its very nature, the knowledge was context-based and values-laden. Practices based on values were in a fluid relationship with changing contexts. The knowledge we sought to create collaboratively would be dialogical and relational, between academics from different geographical and disciplinary spheres, and people in practice in the field.

The project aimed to challenge the usual ‘banking’ relationship of knowledge (Freire 1972) between academia and practitioners in the field, in which academics know and theorise and lead others into what is considered a ‘right form of thinking’ (Simons and Masschelein 2009, p.207), as referred to in Chapter 1. The project was an acknowledgement of the need for academics to learn from practitioners and to reflect a wider panorama of knowledges and practices which exist in the world.

The conceptual and practical perspectives of those from the global South were highly important to the project. Urban and rural communities in Latin America, for example, have felt the impact of policy designed by experts from the global North, where macro growth in GDP is deemed important but is gained at the expense of the increased poverty of many people (Max-Neef and Smith 2011, p.85; Easterly 2013) and at the cost of their local epistemologies being discredited and rendered invisible. However, in the face of weak government, many communities have self-organised to meet pressing social needs. Further, in the global North, the social economy tends to provide a practical and theoretical way of challenging the causes and impact of policies of, for example, the dismantling of the welfare state or 'austerity' (Mendoza 2015), of endemic marginalisation and personal loss of agency and of the impoverishment of communities.

Consequently, by taking a broad view of what is considered legitimate knowledge and whose knowledge counts, many people in the regions of activity of the project were included in the generation and dissemination of knowledges and understandings on an issue of common concern, promoting engagement with 'multi-publics' (Barnett 2015a, p.19). It is 'learning with' others, and 'learning for' change, in which more people could realise their agency as creators of knowledge.

Therefore, from its inception and design, the project featured an inbuilt assumption that each participant would have original and valuable contributions to make from their own values and ways of knowing and understanding the world within their own contexts. It always aimed towards what I later came to understand and identify as epistemic justice. Our international collaboration could make this add up to a much bigger picture of practices which encompassed the importance of the social and the environmental, as well as meeting economic needs, in our work. The project was designed to connect local concerns within a global network. It aimed to connect the big ideas or the 'universals' referred to in Chapter 1 (with reference to Barnett 2018, p.163), such as wellbeing, fairness and generosity, with local understandings and local practices.



It also aimed to enact ways in which higher education could identify the ‘new pathways for human development and wellbeing’ called for by Leask and de Wit (2016, no page).

### **3.2.3 Partners and other participants**

European Union bids require specific levels of participation by representatives of EU member countries. In the case of the bid for funding under Erasmus Mundus Action 3, universities in three EU countries needed to become partners in the project, alongside at least one institution from a ‘third country’ outside the EU. Representing our UK university, Catalina and I brought a consortium together involving academics from higher education institutions in Portugal and Spain, to complement the university in Peru. A higher education institution in Bolivia joined later, once the project was in progress and, from the perspective of the sustainability of the project, to mitigate emerging risks of only having one university representing a third country. The partner institutions can be seen in Table 3:1.

In the project, the knowledge-creating capacity of partners in both global North and global South was acknowledged and identified as an important aspect of the work. In the bid we stated, ‘The YSJ Consortium is challenging the often-unquestioned model of western universities “taking” knowledge to the “global south”. In this project the relationship will be one of a dialogical co-study of complex realities of human life and economic activity in these regions’ (Data archive, Bid for funding and feedback – ema3\_application\_2012, p.27).

**Table 3:1 Partner institutions in the social economy project.**

<b>Name of institution</b>	<b>Why selected</b>	<b>Partners</b>
York St John University, UK	Lead organisation. It was the project co-ordinators' home university	2 academics (teacher education, social psychology)
Universidad San Antonio Abad del Cusco (UNSAAC), Peru	<p>Catalina and I had carried out previous work had been carried out at UNSAAC in 2010 (Using ICT in Education: professional development for staff, as referred to in the introductory chapter). All parties expressed a desire to work together in the future. In 2012 UNSAAC had access to research funding through 'CANON' (Mining royalties for regional development) and contacted us.</p> <p>This initiated the process of applying for Erasmus Mundus funding to broaden the scope of what we could do. UNSAAC was part of some Latin American university networks and had links to social and solidarity economy organisations in the Cusco region of the Andes.</p>	4 academics (anthropology, economics, social communication) 2 administrators
Centre for African Studies, Oporto, Portugal	One of the partners had previously worked with Catalina. They provided familiarity with African contexts and links with organisations on that continent.	2 academics (history)
Mondragon University, Spain	<p>The university is itself a cooperative and situated in the Basque Country of Spain which has a high number of cooperatives. Cooperativism is considered part of the social economy (as stated in the Introduction to this thesis).</p> <p>The institution had networks in the field. We made initial contact with a phone call to gauge their interest.</p>	2 academics (business studies)
CESU, Bolivia (became partners in January 2014)	<p>This post-graduate university centre was an 'associate partner' of the project (that is, they were mentioned in the bid but not as formal partners).</p> <p>They became formal partners in 2014.</p>	2 academics (economics, rural development) 1 senior manager

Each partner had a specified and unique contribution to the whole. The Spanish university was situated in the Basque country, which has a significant number of cooperatives. The University is itself a cooperative. The institution in Portugal was a centre for African studies and had significant links with grassroots organisations in that continent. The institutions in the Peruvian and Bolivian Andes were situated in the heart of Andean and indigenous culture, which would mean such perspectives could be included. The project, from the outset, involved the practice of plurality. It aimed to respect, in theory and in practice the 'particular view of the world held by the people' (Freire 1972, p.68).

A premise of the social economy project was that academics practising in universities need to learn with practitioners in other fields, rather than merely offer disembodied theory for others to apply to practice. A large number of organisations and individuals eventually participated in the project, reflected in the list of acknowledgements (see [https://www.yorks.ac.uk/media/content-assets/social-economy/documents/Acknowledgements\\_v1.2.pdf](https://www.yorks.ac.uk/media/content-assets/social-economy/documents/Acknowledgements_v1.2.pdf)). The purpose of enabling practitioners in the field, and other individuals, to participate was to ensure that participation went beyond academia and that practitioners and others were able to contribute their values, practices and explanations of such practices to the project handbook.

### **3.2.4 Outputs of the project**

There were three main outputs:

- a 240-page handbook written in English, Spanish and Portuguese, with contributions from academics and practitioners in the social and solidarity economy in 17 countries;
- a blog in each of the three languages of the project, as above (not envisaged in the bid for funding); and
- an end-of-project conference for academics, practitioners in the social economy, policy makers and other interested parties.

The three outputs can be found on the York St John University website [www.yorks.ac.uk/socialeconomy](http://www.yorks.ac.uk/socialeconomy).

The handbook was designed to reflect the thinking and practices of the three geographical regions represented in the project (Europe, Africa and Latin

America) and is based on collaboration by academics and practitioners working separately and collaboratively in the field. It has been published online and is freely available on the lead university's website (Meredith and Quiroz-Niño (Coords.) et al. 2015) and was made available for publication on partners' institutional websites. Online publication gives the handbook the prestige conferred upon universities in the eyes of many while maintaining the open access spirit of the project. It therefore provides a university-based platform for ways of being in the world which go beyond the techno-rationalist approach and highlight values and epistemologies which are practice- and place-based. The handbook contributes and shares knowledges, rather than extracting knowledge, counting it as 'capital' (Olssen and Peters 2005) and effectively privatising its access.

The handbook comprises eight chapters, each of which addresses a different aspect of the social and solidarity economy, as follows:

**Chapter 1 Ways of knowing (epistemology) and values:** This chapter argues that the dominant way of viewing the world in modern times is through a rationalist lens, that this single world view is destructive for humanity and that it is blocking consideration of other perspectives. It calls for a re-examination and a reformulation of ways of thinking and understanding in our complex and pluralistic world.

**Chapter 2 Identity, territory and profile:** This chapter explores the different meanings and organisational forms of the social and solidarity economy. It includes the diversity of conceptual and operational approaches of a variety of international organisations, with links to the geographical areas of this project: Europe, Africa and Latin America.

**Chapter 3 Ways of working of organisations within the social and solidarity economy:** If the social and solidarity economy is premised upon values which emphasise social and environmental considerations, these should be evident in their modus operandi. This chapter considers values and approaches in relation to operational aspects such as participatory governance and management, and marketing by social economy organisations and explores how these differ from mainstream approaches.

**Chapter 4 Competences:** The professional profile of teachers within the social and solidarity economy is considered in this chapter. It highlights the importance of valuing and developing practical, critical and reflexive wisdom, or *phronesis*, which emphasises ethical and socially responsible practice.

**Chapter 5 ICT: effective practices:** This chapter considers the use of communications technology to support the aims, and promote visibility, of organisations in the social and solidarity economy. It focuses on two aspects of such technology: social media and community radio.

**Chapter 6 Social capital:** In the first chapter of the handbook, it is argued that the epistemology of the social economy is inherently relational rather than individualistic. In this chapter, the implications of such epistemology are considered in terms of relational structures underpinning, and making possible, specific organisational forms in the social economy (such as ‘timebanking’, referred to below).

**Chapter 7 Social responsibility and transformation:** Organisations in the social and solidarity economy claim to exist for social and/or environmental purposes. In this chapter this idea is examined in relation to the difference such organisations actually make in their communities and the wider world.

**Chapter 8 University ecosystems:** Through a series of practical cases, this chapter examines the practice of universities, or individuals within universities, in nurturing the social and solidarity economy ethos and principles and in developing the eco-system in which such ethos and principles can thrive and contribute to just and sustainable practices.

Catalina and I envisaged a structure which was sufficiently open-ended to accommodate the diversity of partners, but which would also reflect commonality of purpose and concern. In the handbook, most of the chapters include

- literature reviews from the three regions represented (Europe, Africa and Latin America);
- practical cases written in collaboration between academics and practitioners in the field (excerpts are given below);

- sections in which the partners representing universities worked together to articulate their new understandings from working together and from collaborating with practitioners in the field. (An example is given below from the chapter entitled 'Social responsibility and transformation').

### **Literature reviews**

In contrast to conventional handbooks which can tend to be focused on methods and techniques, the project handbook aimed to provide some axiological and cognitive frameworks for the focus of the chapter for each of the regions of the project.

Each chapter contains a literature review, and five of the chapters specifically include separate reviews of the literature from the three regions of the project: Africa, Europe and Latin America. The intent behind this practice was to challenge the dominance of Western literature and theoretical frameworks, noted in Chapter 1 and confirmed by project partners. In presenting the explanatory frameworks being developed in these regions, the handbook also provided a bibliography of regional publications for use by others.

### **Practical cases**

The handbook contains examples of practitioners explaining their practices. These show aspects of the reality of social and solidarity economy organisations and give rise to theoretical points and issues raised within the chapter. Some examples in the form of short summaries are given below. Further examples are in the handbook written by project partners: Saioa Arando, LaSalette Coelho, Miguel Silva and Ana María Villafuerte, along with Catalina and me (see Meredith and Quiroz-Niño (Coords.) et al. 2015).

**Example 1**

In Cape Verde, Mami Estrela from Atelier Mar, an artisan cooperative and training centre, explains her values and practices 'We always see people as complete beings, with various dimensions and various dynamics in their lives. We don't say we are only going to work on matters of health, or only artisan production. People do not live in isolated compartments.

We never accept the discourse some people use saying there is nothing, there are no resources, we don't have anything. This process contributes to boosting self-esteem in the target groups, valuing culture, using existing resources and increasing profitability of the results. When we arrive at the community meetings, we sometimes say, "Tell us about your place, what it has and does not have." A handout mentality prevails, and this has become a well-worn discourse: "We don't have anything." So we agreed that it was forbidden to say that we have nothing, to say that we want help .... Usually nobody says anything for a few minutes because this is precisely the established discourse – and the one institutions want to hear, in order to say, "Now we are going to help."

(Meredith and Quiroz-Niño (Coords.) et al. 2015, p.1.17). (Translated from Portuguese by project participants).

**Example 2**

In the Apurimac region of the Andes of Peru, Armando Rodas, President of the Beekeepers' Association explains the mission and the beliefs and values of the organisation:

"To provide the urban and rural population with an ecological product that is 100% organic, healthy and high in nutritional value; To offer members the possibility of a better life, practising mutual assistance, honesty, truthfulness and active participation."

Beliefs and values

- We work together, like bees: all for one and one for all.
- Our products are food for life.

We must care for and protect the forests. The forest is life and we depend on nature.

• I earn, you earn, we all earn. “For every sol we earn as beekeepers, other farmers and growers earn between 10 and 50 times more thanks to the crosspollination carried out by the bees. People’s health and nutrition improve because bees’ honey and its by-products are a source of carbohydrates, vitamins, salts, minerals and amino acids.

(Meredith and Quiroz-Niño (Coords.) et al. 2015, pp.1.19-21). (Translated from Spanish by project participants).

### **Example 3**

Timebanking is a means of exchange where time is the principal currency and members make ‘deposits’ and ‘withdrawals’ of time by giving and receiving services to other members of the group – and the practices that sustain it. In the UK, Viv Chamberlin-Kidd, member of York Timebank, explains the philosophy and practices of the timebank:

When people express an interest in joining the Timebank, they are visited by a ‘timebroker’ or another member of the group to have an initial chat and welcome them. A discussion is carried out about what they might be able to offer the group and what services they might need in exchange. The process of identifying potential contributions to the group starts immediately. The timebroker goes round and sees to people and they say “... well I can’t do anything.” And she says, “Well let’s go through a list of things that people have asked for. Can you walk somebody’s dog?” “Oh yeah, I could do that.” “Can you go and help somebody do their shopping? Can you drive a car and pick somebody up, can you water someone’s plants? Can you phone someone once a week and have a chat with them?” “Oh yeah, I can, I can do that.” She draws a distinction between traditional volunteering which has a hierarchical thing where I’ve got skills and I’m going to help you, which is great because you need people to do that. But the Timebank works on the basis that everybody’s involved and everybody can do something important. People are valued equally. This can have a significant impact on members of the group who don’t think they are worth very much or valued as part of society and who may be treated as passive recipients of social security.

(2015, pp.6.24-6.26). (Translated into Spanish and Portuguese in the corresponding handbooks by project participants).



## Dialogical section

The handbook also contains knowledge created dialogically between the partners from what we had learnt in the study. For example, in the chapter on social responsibility and transformation, we created together a model that goes beyond the ‘triple bottom line’ of social, environmental and economic considerations:



Diagram from handbook: The four compass points of social responsibility and transformation (2015, p.7.21)

### Individual transformation

This deals with becoming aware of, and responsible for, our relationship with our immediate surroundings. Our view in presenting this model is based on the conviction that it is not enough to have personal knowledge or understanding, but rather the responsibility lies in the decisions made by each person in relation to their knowledge and understanding. The belief underpinning this is that it is not possible to speak of social responsibility and transformation that does not start with full consciousness and commitment of individual responsibility to others within their environment and space of interaction.

From the perspective of human transformation, this is conceived of within a holistic paradigm; where overall well-being is highly valued by those who work in this sector. This is a well-being that promotes their personal fulfilment, the meaning and direction that individuals attribute to their lives, and the respect that they deserve from other people. It is a well-being that must be defined by certain standards of quality, fair work conditions, and implies a greater understanding of the well-being of all.

Individual transformation means that each person feels that his/her work is valued, is personally significant and meaningful to others; and that they are aware that their well-being and empowerment depends on the well-being and empowerment of others. Therefore, there is an interdependent relationship between people.

The co-independence factor arises in relation to liberation from relationships that detract from the ability and freedom to make decisions and to take actions without external coercion. It is a co-independence that allows the person, together with others, to regulate their time, context, and working conditions, and to be aware of the impact that is derived from their active participation in making personal and collective decisions.

The psycho-affective processes that occur within this individual transformation are key to confronting the realities of injustice and those that align or marginalise the person from his/her rights and needs (ibid 2015, pp.7.21-7.23).

I believe that these examples illustrate the belief in the knowledge creating capacity of participants from a variety of backgrounds and the co-creation of knowledge between participants. I would argue that they discredit discourses about capacity-building and empowerment as the gift of some to give to others.

The blog and the end-of-project conference are explained in detail in relation to my practices and emerging theorisations of practice in Chapters 6 and 7.

#### **3.2.4.1 Language**

In Chapter 1, I argued that the English language is dominating academia and drew upon Salö (2017, p.4) to refer to the 'Englishization' of universities

throughout the world and the exclusionary effect it had on people's access and potential contribution to research. I also challenged the idea that academic English, or any language, could be culturally neutral. The project aimed to address issues of language and to challenge the normative status of the English language in international collaborations and in academia. By doing this, it aimed to be more inclusive and promote the participation and contribution of many who would otherwise be excluded on the grounds of language. The handbook was created in each of the three main languages of the project: English, Spanish and Portuguese. In the bid document it can also be seen that Catalina and I considered Basque and Quechua within the project (Data archive, Bid for funding and feedback – ema3\_application\_2012, p.33), languages used in the Basque country of Spain and the Andes respectively if representatives of those regions chose to include them. Dialogues between academics, students and social economy practitioners were conducted in Basque and Quechua.

#### **3.2.4.2 Processes – values-laden and pluralist**

A participative and dialogic approach between people in different roles and from different backgrounds was fundamental to the purpose of the project. Some of these approaches will be described and explained in Chapters 5-7, and I will show how my thinking and practices evolved during the course of the project.

The project was set up with the expectation that the partners from different regions would take the lead in their region in creating their own collaborations between other academics and practitioners in the field. In this way, it aimed to foster engagement between universities and other organisations in their locality.

The aim of Erasmus Mundus Action 3 funding, as already stated, was to 'promote European higher education' to potential students from countries outside the EU. We argued in the bid that higher education institutions in Europe needed to change their curricula to acknowledge and include a wide variety of perspectives to attract such students. The bid was borne of a sense that higher education was not fulfilling a role it was well placed to fulfil. Having

completed the project and investigated my own practices with others within it, I have noticed that little of the text is dedicated to the work with practitioners but that this is what much of the time was spent doing. The bid talks of an e-survey to understand the fields of the social economy within the regions encompassed by the project. The intention was to then convene focus groups of practitioners and others to support the interpretation of the data.

In practice, in many regions the electronic format of the survey was unattractive or inaccessible to many practitioners, and face-to-face contact was made instead. This contact between academics and practitioners often took the form of semi-structured interviews and dialogical focus groups (for example, in Colombia, Cuba and Mexico). During these, people in social economy organisations explained, for example, the values that drove their practices. They also explained the differences between their organisation and others working in similar fields and highlighted the way in which their practices had evolved. Many drew attention to the effect the work had on them and their communities. These interviews led to the contribution by many practitioners to the project handbook. In terms of the visibility of the organisations, the questionnaire led to the first time such organisations had been mapped in the Cusco region of Peru in a systematic way (Data archive, Meeting with EU assessor – Transcript from audio 3.9.15, with translations).

#### ***3.2.4.3 Practising plurality***

There were spaces for participation in the project for a wide range of people, from a wide range of backgrounds and with a wide range of experiences. This commitment to plurality in knowledge creation had several aspects. I have already explained the inclusion of people from the global North and global South and of people inside and outside of academia. Within academia itself, the project was cross-disciplinary: the academic participants were from fields such as sociology, history, teacher education, anthropology and social communication, as well as business studies and economics. Students in their respective institutions also worked with these academics and worked across disciplines. For some students, it was the first time in their university career that they had collaborated with those from other subject disciplines. In this sense a ‘transdisciplinary’ approach was adopted in the project (Max-Neef

2004), in which disciplinary boundaries were disrupted and the focus was on knowledge that is 'not always inscribed in the modern academic canons' (De Carvalho and Flórez-Flórez 2014, p.122). This is in contrast to the basis for the organisation and compartmentalisation of knowledge in universities and elsewhere, which 'bear too little relation to practice, past or present' (Bender 2005, p.54) and in which there is little or no effort to connect the knowledge gathered in the different departments of universities (Montuori 2008, p.xxviii).

The dialogical approach taken in the project, in which knowledge and understandings were created collaboratively between academics and practitioners with different assumptions and experiences, required a great investment of time. In accordance with the idea of dialogical learning, it was also inherently uncertain in its outcomes. It did not lend itself to a quick turnaround of 'countable' outputs.

### **3.3 Conclusion**

In this chapter I have described and explained the project which forms the focus of the research story within this thesis. The overarching structure of the project was explained, naming the partners and stating its proposed outputs, including indicative chapters of the handbook. I have also highlighted the dialogic way in which relationships were conducted and the importance of dialogic processes to achieve the aims of the project. Such an approach would be incompatible with tightly defined outcomes which would deny the opportunity for the newness and surprises (Stern 2013) that might arise when people come together to take action. So, room was deliberately left in the project design for the emergence of new ideas: of 'new forms, new interventions, new interminglings ... new arrangements for interdisciplinary inquiry' (Barnett 2018, p.164). Such emergence will be considered in later chapters.

## **Chapter 4 - Research methodology**

So far in this thesis, I have identified the issue that I am concerned about and am investigating: how I can create spaces for participation in dialogical action in higher education, and how I can engage in practices which are epistemologically pluralistic within higher education, with the aim of working towards epistemic justice. In the previous chapter, I gave an overview of the purposes and activities of the social and solidarity economy project, which gave me an opportunity to focus my wider enquiries on issues of participation and social justice in an international context. I have also explained the theoretical frameworks which emerged from studying my practice and further reflections upon it.

In this chapter I consider how I can explore my research questions, as stated in the Introduction to this thesis:

- How can I develop practices which are epistemologically pluralistic within higher education? and
- How can I create spaces of participation in dialogical action in my role as an academic towards this aim?

The chapter is structured in the following way:

1. I consider the epistemic and philosophical basis of my action research approach.
2. I explain the research setting and context.
3. I present the research methods used in my investigation.
4. I explain the processes of generating evidence to test the validity of my knowledge claim.

### **4.1 The epistemic and philosophical basis of my action research approach**

In this section I briefly draw out the contrast between traditionalist social science research and action research, and the implications of this for the types of knowledge created and the purposes it might serve. I then consider the influence of different action research traditions on my approach. For this, I draw

upon and consider the relevance of (i) critical-emancipatory traditions, (ii) the interpretive approach informed by hermeneutics, and (iii) the tradition of pragmatism in action research. This section concludes with a section on the action-reflection cycle widely accepted as characteristic of action research, and the contribution of the concept of historical re-enactment to this cycle.

As explained in Chapter 1 my view is that, as an academic, I have a responsibility to consider my practice in relation to how knowledge is created and used. This responsibility involves investigating how I can work towards realising 'universal principles' (Said 2004, p.39), such as justice and freedom, in a local context and in practice. My thesis therefore is an account of my enquiry into my practice as an academic in a university. It is based on the belief that knowing well is a matter of considerable ethical significance (Code 1987) and that knowledge generated through research can be understood as a contribution to the meaning we give to our lives, those of others, and our world. This belief makes it necessary to enquire into, and be accountable for, this knowledge and the practices it underpins.

#### **4.1.1 Locating action research within social science research traditions**

Action research differs from traditionalist forms of social science research. The following are some key aspects of this difference:

**Purpose.** The purpose of traditionalist social science research is to generate 'know that', propositional types of knowledge which are intended to be generalisable to many contexts. Action research is a form of enquiry which aims to bring about change and improvement of practices. According to Reason and Bradbury, it nearly always starts with a question of the kind, 'how can we improve this situation?' (2008, p.11). As such, action researchers produce knowledge which is context dependent.

**Positionality.** Traditionalist social science researchers do not intervene in the object of their study. They take an 'outsider' stance to a situation to study others (Herr and Anderson 2015). Action researchers, on the other hand, are embedded within the research (Bradbury 2015, p.2). They make interventions,

and ‘change and improvement at the local level’ is a key focus (Cohen, Manion and Morrison 2011, p.344).

**Relationship between researched and researcher.** Traditionalist social science is conducted *on* people (McNiff 2017, p.10; Eikeland 2006b). It makes a distinction between those generating theory – usually academics – and those applying such theory – often practitioners, who are therefore positioned as not having the capacity to generate explanatory frameworks for their practices. However, action research is *with* people. It breaks down the theory/practice dualism and assumes that all people can generate theory within practice (McNiff 2013).

#### 4.1.2 Positioning my research within action research traditions

Action research is itself usually seen as a ‘family’ of approaches (Reason and Bradbury 2008, p.1), each drawing on its own traditions and philosophical roots. My investigation draws on three such traditions, as shown in Figure 4:1.



**Figure 4:1 The philosophical roots of my action research approach**

In what follows, the basis of each of these three roots – critical-emancipatory theory, philosophical hermeneutics and pragmatism – will be considered from the literatures.



#### **4.1.2.1 Critical-emancipatory tradition**

Rather than presenting the illusion of ‘value-free’ research of the positivist traditions, praxis-oriented inquirers seek emancipatory knowledge, according to Lather (1991, p.52). In the critical-emancipatory tradition, action research addresses power inequalities and generates knowledge in practice to challenge them. Kemmis, McTaggart and Nixon (2015, p.453) argue that such research aims to find out how particular perspectives, arrangements and practices can create unjust or unsustainable consequences and how to change such perspectives, arrangements and practices to become more just or more sustainable. The political realities which ‘shape, limit and determine action’ (Carr and Kemmis 1986) are the focus of action research in this tradition.

Drawing on Habermas’s 1972 work, McNiff, Edvardsen and Steinholt highlight the purposes of different types of knowledge, serving different interests. They explain,

A technical interest tends to produce instrumental forms of knowledge, a practical interest produces practical understanding and actions, and an emancipatory interest encourages thoughtful reflection on those practices within an understanding of their wider social, cultural, historical and economic contexts (2018, p.5).

As Bradbury argues (2015, p.5), without an emancipatory concern, action research is ‘devitalized to a set of uncritical techniques’: the political dimension of power will remain unacknowledged and unchallenged.

In my research, in which a main commitment is the participation and inclusion of all, I challenge practices which exclude academics from the global South in contexts of creating legitimate knowledge, and orthodoxies which separate theory and practice to the exclusion of practitioners.

#### **4.1.2.2 Philosophical hermeneutics and the irreducibility of knower and known**

The philosophical hermeneutic tradition claims that understanding of the world is created and continually re-created through dialogue – with each other in the

present, with ourselves and our world, and with unseen others through a tradition of knowledge handed down and expressed through artefacts such as literature, themselves created in dialogue. My research aimed to understand and to generate new insights through such dialogic relations with others, with the literatures and through the internal dialogue of reflection. Gadamer speaks of a 'fusion of horizons' (2013, p.600) which 'does not allow the interpreter to speak of an original meaning ... without acknowledging that, in understanding it, the interpreter's own meaning enters as well'. This fusion means acknowledging that new insights and interpretations are open to revision and the accommodation of those of others.

This interpretative turn is not an abstract exercise in which the goal is to produce 'objective' knowledge. It is one in which understanding is created when meaning is of personal value and significance. The knowledge is embodied in the knower's interpretation and therefore applied in their life and praxis. Its application to address present questions means it cannot become static and 'for all time' and it embraces practical wisdom. It is *phronesis* in Aristotle's terms (Eikeland 2006a). As Zimmerman (2015, p.53) states, this approach views knowledge not as

distance but involvement, not impersonal observation but personal interaction, not thinking against prejudice or tradition but accessing knowledge through them ... the game comes alive through the players ... true objectivity requires the engagement of the knower.

As a 'player' in this research and a 'knower' in the sense that we are all knowers, I keep my personal and educational values in the forefront of my research rather than making any claim to objectivity and I aim to exemplify how they might inform my educational praxis in the university. In this practice I follow in the action research tradition explicated by researchers such as Elliott (2009), who views action research as a form of practical philosophy that unifies the process of developing theory and practice, and McNiff (2011, p.284) who emphasises the importance of interrogating and expressing personal values through action and through research into that action. Action and reflection form irreducible parts of the same whole in these approaches and in my approach. In this tradition, meaningful and authentic change can only spring from deep

personal engagement on the part of the researcher and from concern for human flourishing at an ontological level in the chosen field of the action research.

In line with the hermeneutical tradition, the emphasis on dialogue and, crucially, dialogically informed political action is a key theme throughout my research and informs the methodology for creating knowledge within it. Within the research, situations or spaces are created with a view to the generation of knowledge through interaction with others and through a fusion of perspectives. It also draws upon Bakhtin's dialogical approach (Bakhtin 1981; Bakhtin, Holquist and Emerson 1986) in that his work focuses on the new understandings and new insights which are possible when there is mutually responsive engagement between people.

#### ***4.1.2.3 Pragmatism – acting and researching as the same expression of being***

Greenwood and Levin (2005, p.53) base action research within the pragmatic tradition on foundations laid by John Dewey. Connecting theory and praxis, the core reflection process is linked to outcomes expressed through actions that involve intervention in a given context and rooted in the enquirer's norms, values and interests. Action research is 'knowledge creation in service to meaningful social change' according to Reason and Bradbury (2008, p.21). My commitment to this approach is summed up by Fals Borda (2015) when he poses the question 'How can we investigate reality in order to transform it?'

My specific commitment in this study is borne of deep concerns about the responsibility of the academic and, by extension, of the university. So, the project that forms the field of research of this study was in broad terms an enquiry into the nature and purposes of higher education. It explores new possibilities and in this sense adopts a generative approach (Gergen and Gergen 2008). I asked, how could things be different: more just and enabling the participation of more people in addressing issues of concern? Increasingly I asked the similar but radically different question: how could I think differently about things?

#### **4.1.2.4 Summing up**

My approach is informed and driven by a personal commitment to challenge power structures which unjustly marginalise people. In this sense it draws upon the critical-emancipatory tradition; an ontological belief that knowledge and understanding include the person claiming to know – drawing on philosophical hermeneutics; and the pragmatic motivation to understand and to transform reality as part of the same expression of being.

#### **4.1.3 Re-enactment and the action-reflection cycle in my research**

The cyclical nature of the action-reflection cycle is represented in the literature as a defining feature of this methodology (see, for example, Cohen, Manion and Morrison 2011, pp.352-355). This cycle is made into a spiral by, for example, McNiff (1988), and Kemmis, McTaggart and Nixon (2014), adding a third spatial dimension and a greater sense that the process is continuous and ever evolving over time. My experience is that this third dimension – time – is a highly significant part of developing new understandings. In coming to these understandings, I have been consciously engaged in a process of reviewing data, re-visiting episodes and experiences within the project and of understanding them in evolving ways. This has been either in light of future events or of changes to my thinking prompted by reading, reflective conversations with participants and with others who prompted deeper reflection with their insights. Also significant in this respect was the deep engagement brought about by the process of writing – a research method that will be discussed later in this chapter.

Reflection as a way of crystallising meaning and a form of best-understanding-so-far took place across the fourth dimension of time and was highly recursive as I moved between recalling actions and experiences and seeking deeper understandings. It has been a process of historical re-enactment (Collingwood 2002, p.114) in which I re-played and re-created the past in the present, finding different answers suggested themselves as my understandings evolved and I raised different questions (2002, pp.31-32). This re-enactment was a kind of 'distancing [myself] from [my] practice' to 'become epistemologically curious in

order to then understand [my] practice in its reason for being' (Freire 2005, p.140). From further conversations with collaborators, deeper insights from reading and further reflection, I posed different questions about my experiences and found different conceptual spaces and different language to articulate theorisations of my practice. This process is necessarily ongoing, where crystallised and articulated thoughts are milestones rather than settled destinations.

It could be argued that this reflection on, or after, action distorts experiences through incomplete memory or a desire to make them something they were not. Aware of this danger, I have at regular intervals discussed my thinking with the people I am calling my 'meta-informants', as explained later in this chapter. These discussions have helped me to understand the significance of aspects of our work and prompted new lines of enquiry.

## **4.2 Research setting and context**

In Chapter 3, I described and explained the social and solidarity economy project. This is the field for my specific focus and for data gathering in the research articulated in this thesis in which I investigate my practices as an academic.

This thesis draws on original documents and artefacts produced as part of the project, such as the bid to the European Union for funding (Data archive, Bid for funding and feedback), the report of the strategic planning meeting (Data archive, Strategic planning meetings) and notes from partners' meetings (Data archive, Agenda-minutes of partner meetings), the project handbook (Meredith and Quiroz-Niño (Coords.) et al. 2015), the project blog in English (<https://blog.yorks.ac.uk/socialeconomy/>), the end-of-project conference report (Conference report 2015) and video (Conference video 2015); and feedback from the EU assessors (Data archive, Meeting with EU assessor; Bid for funding and feedback). Where applicable, and where the data can be put into the public domain (respecting ethical considerations including confidentiality of data), it is placed in the appendices.

The chronology of my research, including relevant events within the project, is found in the supporting Appendix 1. It is briefly summarised in the next section.

### 4.2.1 Timeline of my research

As stated in the Introduction to this thesis, my research process is divided into four main phases:

**Phase 1 (2011):** Registration for PhD studies and start of formal research. Extensive reading and writing related to the subject of social justice and participation.

**Phase 2 (2012-2015):** Data gathering from the social and solidarity economy project: reflection and making sense of the experience.

**Phase 3 (2016-2018):** Analysing and making sense of the data. Development of writing as a research method (explained in Chapter 4, Section 4.3.2).

**Phase 4 (2018-2019):** Writing summative accounts of my developing understandings and practice.

## 4.3 Research methods

In what follows I will explain two strategies which enabled me to interrogate my thinking and to gather, organise and analyse my data. These are the adaptation of critical incidents methodology, and reading and reflective writing. I will then explain who participated in providing data and in engaging in dialogue about my emerging analysis and interpretations. The section concludes with a discussion of ethical considerations.

### 4.3.1 Adaptation of critical incidents as research method

In Chapters 5-7, I draw upon critical incidents methodology as a device for presenting and analysing my data. Tripp (2012) explains what makes an incident 'critical'. He suggests that it is not the event itself that is critical, but rather that its critical nature is generated by the way we look at a situation: it lies in the interpretation of the significance of the event (p.8). The essence of critical incidents as a research method lies in the prompting of critical reflection on the part of the researcher. This could be a one-off incident or an unfolding of a course of action over time. In this thesis, I describe some events, or episodes, which have prompted my deeper thinking into my assumptions and

my practice. This critical reflection serves the purpose of highlighting the connection between my theorising-in-process, the assumptions affecting and driving practice, and my practical actions. The critical episodes also aim to highlight the transformation of values into practices, which is a central feature of action research.

In this thesis I use the idea of an 'incident' loosely, either as a specific and significant event within the project described above – as in the case of the five-day strategic planning meetings in which all project partners met for the first time to plan the project – or as a development within the project which exemplified a new direction in my thinking and practices, as in the critical episode centred on the project blogs. In each case, they were not 'light bulb moments'. Rather they were a series of activities and interactions that I could see as marking transition phases in which I can demonstrate how I sought answers to one set of issues and could subsequently see an evolution to a focus on different issues. The critical episodes serve as a launching point for deeper interrogation and articulation of my evolving practices and serve as an organisational strategy to exemplify and problematise my state of thinking and of practice at that time. They are attempts to map out and put milestones on a learning journey whilst acknowledging that learning can be 'tacit' and intuitive, according to Polanyi (2009).

#### ***4.3.1.1 Selection and focus of the critical episodes***

In the data analysis phase of my research (2016-2018), I organised the data into three significant critical episodes, as explained in the previous section. These loosely coincided with the beginning, the middle and the end of the project to act as a narrative focus to exemplify and analyse my developing practice. The critical episodes also encompass three outputs of the project: the handbook, the blogs and the conference. Following McNiff (2017), the critical episodes have also been chosen to illustrate episodes of practice which highlight a point in my learning, how my learning influences new actions and my practice, how my actions influence other people's learning, and how other people's learning influences my actions, in relation to the research focus. As such, I limit my descriptions and analyses to aspects relevant to the theme of

my thesis and draw out my developing practice and theorisations in relation to a specific theme.

Although the episodes are written as three separate pieces, they are inter-related and express my emerging understandings of the creation of spaces of political action in my practice which developed over time. The three critical episodes are as follows:

1. The 5-day strategic planning meetings between project partners, which took place in York St John University in October/November 2012. In this the project partners met as a group for the first time, and for most individuals it was the first time they met the partners from other universities.
2. The use of blogs to extend participation to a greater number of people.
3. The end-of-project conference which brought together academics, practitioners in the social economy field and policy makers, from five continents.

These episodes emerged from ongoing reflection and many iterations of organising and re-organising my data. For example, potential critical episodes which I did not develop for this thesis were focused on meeting the team in Peru to work on the bid-writing process together in April 2012, and visiting a university in Colombia in 2014. These two episodes were linked by my reflections on how I felt positioned as a European academic visiting a Latin American university. These reflections and my learning were eventually transformed and synthesised in Chapter 5, Section 5.3, where instead I turn the lens towards myself in order to articulate my reflections on the way I had positioned others. Such changes in the direction of the lens in themselves represent a transformational shift in my thinking.

Another potential critical episode, ultimately rejected for the purposes of this thesis, was the presentation of the project and meetings with my colleagues in Initial Teacher Education at my university, as a narrative hook for the efforts made to gain traction within the University with the ideas and aims of the project. This, and other possible opportunities within the project, involved many, many hours of meeting people, enthusiastic responses, plans truncated by changes in personnel, many prolonged false dawns, a deeper and very personal understanding of the issues raised in Chapter 1, and a profound



sense of disappointment. There were also incidents in which formal agreements were not honoured within the project involving extended periods of time spent in the build-up and aftermath of such situations. I have not chosen these as critical episodes, a decision I will explain more fully in the next section in which I discuss reflective writing as a research method.

Some of the directions Catalina and I had wished to take in the project find expression in the end-of-project conference, which was a space in which we had a remarkable amount of freedom to take political action.

It would have been possible to consider my learning and practice in terms of themes of activities, such as the use of social media within the project. My examination of the data around this theme eventually led me to consider the 'real', known people involved and the processes taking place around social media use as what gave it significance within the project. From this, critical episode 2 was developed.

The critical episodes draw on Buber's theory of dialogism as a form of 'turning towards' the other (2002, p.25). In the first iteration, I adapt this idea to theorise my practice as 'turning inwards' to develop understandings between and within a small group of academics; in the second, I explain the process of deliberately 'turning outwards' from the group to include other collaborators, including academics, students and people working in the social and solidarity economy; and the third is characterised as an action of 'turning towards the world' as people from five continents and many spheres of life came together. This process is illustrated in Figure 4:2 below.



**Figure 4:2 Turning towards the other in the critical episodes of my research (building on the work of Buber 2002).**

Each of the critical episodes focuses the development of my thinking and practice towards creating spaces of collaborative and negotiated action in which participants exercise their agency, as conceptualised by Arendt's (1958) theory of action. As explained in Chapter 2, important theoretical elements of this are

- Epistemic justice and political action;
- The centre and the periphery in power relations, and reconceptualisations of this idea;
- Dialogism and political action.

Some or all of these aspects are explored in each of the critical episodes.

#### **4.3.2 Reading and reflective writing as research method**

Throughout the period of the research I have written reflective pieces in which I have aimed to make sense of my experiences. This writing has been nourished by reading from fields such as education, philosophy, political theory, sociology and business studies. I will now explain the importance of engaging with the literatures and writing for my learning within the research.

As part of my research I have kept an archive of all the writing I did, with dated versions. My early writing describes activities carried out within the project on the one hand, and on the other, a style in which I draw on an increasingly wide body of academic literature to interrogate, and gain an understanding of the legitimacy of my aspirations. In periods of analysing the data, thinking, writing and rewriting, I can see a journey starting with other people's theories mixed with my own aspirations and aims, and a tendency to default to values and purposes in the abstract. While I was learning from practice and my practices were evolving in the project, I acted on an intuitive level and did not give myself the time or reflective space to come to understand the significance of what was happening. In addition, some of my practices seemed 'obvious' and did not call attention to themselves in relation to my aspirations for justice and social change. The messiness and minutiae of the activities meant it was easy to underplay their significance.

Towards the end of the lifetime of the project and for some time afterwards, I experienced feelings of exhaustion and of failure. I did not believe that what I had done was of much worth. Writing has enabled me to work through these feelings. Initially I tried to write, and find ideas in the literature, to explain some of the disappointing experiences of the project. I believe that this practice gave me an important time of reflection to process some of those episodes. However, I did not want to get stuck in theorising hopelessness when this could not provide contexts for learning and moving forward into renewed understandings and practices. Eventually, I started looking at my data and felt able to reflect on the experiences and episodes which had been transformative for me, and it seemed, for others. Social hope seemed to be manifest in the data, with many examples of the emergence and consolidation of trusting relationships, collaborative action and of learning. In the critical episodes, I aim to communicate this hopefulness and learning in, and for, practice.

I have worked out my ideas through writing, but more than this I have been able to acknowledge what was achieved in practice, rather than what was not. As I have engaged in this process, I have increasingly found that the aspirations and the practices gradually became inseparable. Through writing, I have moved towards understanding a deeper connection which has enabled

me to see my practices as significant and to be able to engage in the practice of theorising them in ways that have given me deeper insights. Theory in practice and the practice of theory-making have become part of the same expression of values. This was something I espoused from the beginning, but understanding the ontological implications of this has been a journey for which writing has been the vehicle.

hooks (1991) identifies theorisation as 'liberatory practice'. The power of these words resonates with my own experience of literature giving me conceptual tools to adapt and give form to previous tacitly held understandings and to create new spaces for thinking about things differently. An example of the former is my 'discovery' of complexity theory in the literature, having written about the experiences described in Chapter 6.

Far from being a 'knowledge-telling process' in which ready formed understandings are codified in text (Carnell, MacDonald, McCallum and Scott 2008, p.50), some of my journey of working through issues, and changing and deepening my understandings, took place during the writing process itself. It was a knowledge transforming process in which the retrieval of ideas is mediated by active problem solving or 'reflection' (Galbraith 1998, pp.137-138, drawing on Bereiter and Scardamalia 1987).

My thoughts were developed through the act of writing and re-writing. In this process, the need to explain the significance of a sequence of events or activities to an unknown reader becomes apparent. To do this some synthesis of relevant information to communicate an explanatory message was necessary, and this process seemed to slow down and deepen thinking as it externalised and made demands for clarity of internal dialogues. I have come across richer ways of understanding my thinking and practices through writing and re-writing. This process is reminiscent of Freire (1972) who theorises emancipatory approaches as learning how to read and write the world.

Sometimes, it was during intense periods of reading and reflection which led to interpretation of the words of the writer into my own schema, itself a form of dialogism according to Bakhtin (1981). At times interpretation of this reading resonated with my experiences, and its application helped me to articulate

what I had previously tacitly understood. In this sense my thinking could be 'nomadic' in quality and illustrated more as a rhizome than an action research cycle. Deleuze and Guattari describe a 'smooth space', which 'is nomadic in quality, unlike the striated space ... [that] is coded, defined, bounded and limited' (1987, cited in Amorim and Ryan 2005, p.588). The possible fusion of perspectives from academic literature with my own thinking meant that Bakhtin's (1981) concept of dialogism was in play in this aspect of my research too, and raised the level of what was possible from the limitations of my own experiences and those within my 'orbit' to encompass the concepts developed in other times and other places. In the hermeneutic tradition, of course, my possible interpretations and applications were not infinite and were potentially limited by my own schemas.

#### **4.3.3 Participants in developing the analysis of my research**

The social and solidarity economy project was collaborative throughout. In explicating my practices within it, I draw upon people from the wider group of partners and collaborators presented earlier. In doing this, I aim to understand the meanings they made of their participation in the project, and changes to their thinking and practices in the process of their participation. Many of these are people who at different times helped me to develop my own thinking and influenced my practice. They also articulated views and reflections which, with their authorisation, I bring forward as evidence for my developing practice as generative of spaces for political action.

To explain this participation more systematically I have compiled the following categorised table (Table 4:1 below), although a truer representation might be a spectrum. It is inspired by Platt (1981, p. 85), who draws a distinction between 'respondents', who provide data which will be 'interpreted by someone else' and is anonymous, and 'informants' who provide their own interpretations. In addition, I have added two further categories: 'contributors', who offered information and opinions in the (semi) public domain; and 'meta-informants', who provided feedback, including on my use and development of their interpretations, and were invited to judge the legitimacy of the emerging theorisation. These categorisations reflect the differing levels of involvement in the construction of this thesis.

**Table 4:1 Participants whose contributions provide data in my research**

<b>Type of contribution to my theorisations</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>People named and cited in thesis</b>
Contributors	People who volunteered information or opinions in the (semi) public domain and whom I have named and cited as evidence in my thesis.	<p>Katy Corderoy and Ashley Dujlovic, (Participants in Students for Social Impact programme of the British Council Canada; participants in the end-of-project conference);</p> <p>Elizabeth McCallion and Ceecee Quinne (Co-ordinators, British Council Canada Students for Social Impact; participants in the end-of-project conference);</p> <p>David Maughan Brown (Emeritus Professor, York St John University; legal representative for project 2012-2013);</p> <p>Rory Ridley-Duff (Academic, Sheffield Hallam University, UK; author of book which was influenced by project).</p>
Respondents (Platt 1981)	People who responded to questions set for the purposes of gaining feedback.	<p>Respondees to evaluations of events: the strategic planning meeting and the end-of-project conference (anonymous).</p> <p><i>(Table continued on next page)</i></p>

<b>Type of contribution to my theorisations</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>People named and cited in thesis</b>
Informants (Platt 1981)	People who give information which they have already interpreted for themselves (Stern 2015).	<p>Miwon Choe (Academic at Western Kentucky University, USA. Participant in end-of-project conference);</p> <p>Mary Kiguru (Founder and mentor of the Sujali Self-Help Group, Nairobi, Kenya; contributor to the project blog);</p> <p>Laura Kreiling (Erasmus Masters student and collaborator in project; contributor to project blog; led team for conference communication in end-of-project conference, including the conference report and conceptual input into the theme of the conference);</p> <p>Chris Mortimer (Director of Master's course, Business School, York St John University, UK).</p>
Meta-informants	People who provided feedback, including on my use and development of their interpretations. Invited to judge the legitimacy (Platt 1981, p.80) of the theorisations.	<p>Melba Quijano (Academic in social communication at Universidad Pontificia Bolivariana, sede (campus) Bucaramanga, Colombia; collaborator in the project, contributor to the project blog and handbook);</p> <p>Catalina Quiroz-Niño (Co-designer and joint co-ordinator of the project);</p> <p>Ana María Villafuerte (Academic in economics at Universidad San Antonio Abad del Cusco, Peru; project partner and co-author of the project handbook).</p>

Platt (1981) positions 'respondents' in interviews as serving an instrumental purpose and points out that in traditional research their individuality is irrelevant. In my research, none of the reflective dialogues held were of this nature (see Section 4.6.1.1 below). All are with specifically named people.

One of these is the joint co-ordinator of the project, Catalina Quiroz-Niño, originally from Peru and now living in the UK, with whom I have discussed developing practices in the project and theorisations of these throughout my research. In addition, in critical episode 1 (Chapter 5), I draw upon the insights of Ana María Villafuerte and refer to reflections with her following completion of the project. In critical episode 2 (Chapter 6), Melba Quijano, who co-ordinated student contributions to the blog and contributed to the handbook, comments on my developing theorisations following completion of the project; in that same chapter, Mary Kiguru, founder and mentor of a grass-roots micro-finance initiative called the Sujali Self-Help Group, also gives insights into the influence of the social economy project blog on the work of the group. In critical episode 3 (Chapter 7), my informants are Chris Mortimer, an academic in a UK university; and USA-based professor of arts education, Miwon Choe, whose reflections influenced my thinking about dialogism. My contributors are staff from the British Council Canada (Elizabeth McCallion and Ceecee Quinne), who played a significant part in the end-of-project conference;

#### **4.3.4 Research ethics**

Herr and Anderson (2015, p.157) describe the ethics of action research as 'moving beyond doing no harm'. Rather than an add-on, my research is based on what I argue is an ethical imperative of greater participation in practices of knowledge creation and of human inter-relationality. As McNiff (2013) argues, being ethical 'involves an attitude towards other people and the world ... a dialogical attitude' (p.113). My research is, in itself, an ethical stance in which I am open about my intentions and am accountable for my practices with others. It is the focus of the research and the lens through which I invite it, and myself, to be judged.

As explained in Section 4.1.3.4 below, the thesis is a study of self-with-others. It describes and theorises my practices in collaboration with others. The main



ethical issue I identify from this is the permission to use the words and ideas of collaborators, and importantly, to ensure these words are not misrepresented or misinterpreted. Where people are specifically identified their words are used with their authorisation. My 'meta-informants' participated in dialogues with the understanding they were contributing to my developing understandings and interpretations. In this sense, informed consent was not just a once-and-for-all event (Herr and Anderson 2015, p.146). Rather, where applicable, it was a process of overall consent, then dialogue and finally, requesting authorisation to use the individual's contributions in the near-final version of the thesis. Such written authorisation was sought from participants in an email to which the following was attached:

- the near-final draft versions of relevant parts of the thesis in which they were referred to;
- a thesis summary; and
- the transcripts of dialogues with the individual and translations from Spanish to English, if applicable.

Responses indicating authorisation can be seen in the Data archive, Authorisations from participants folder.

Where I have drawn on project participants' contributions to the handbook, blog or conference, that is, in ways that were intended for the public domain, I have included their names with their work. Where possible they have been contacted as a courtesy to inform them of their inclusion.

The reflective dialogues referred to below took place after the project had finished. This timing was an ethically driven decision. There would be no confusion of roles, or a sense of confused agendas: I was no longer co-ordinating a project in which we were all participating. In that sense, I would argue, participants were potentially more at liberty to be honest. As Platt (1981) states, 'shared community membership is enormously helpful in some ways, but it implies personal relations which carry social obligations that can make the normal impersonal and instrumental use of the interview difficult' (p.78).

The use of data from the social and solidarity economy project for the purposes of this thesis was approved by the York St John University ethics process. All digital data was stored securely in password protected locations.

### **4.3.5 Researcher positionality**

As stated in Section 4.1.1 above, the articulation of researcher positionality is an important aspect of action research, because it differs from what is often seen as the 'norm' of objectivity in traditionalist social science research. I will now turn to this issue of positionality.

As stated earlier, propositional forms of research position the researcher as an 'outsider'. A key aspect of action research is an acknowledgement of researcher positionality in relation to other research participants (Herr and Anderson 2015, pp. 37-59). The researcher is often conceptualised as an 'insider' – as practitioner, researcher and researched (Eikeland 2006b). Researcher positionality is an issue about power: who speaks on behalf of whom, and of responsibility: who is responsible for the knowledge created.

The possibility and ethics of objectivism in research are rejected by Polanyi. Objectivism, he argues, 'seeks to relieve us from all responsibility for the holding of our beliefs .... the responsibility of the human person is eliminated from the life and society of man' (1958, p.323). In my research I am present, and the 'personal' level of action research (Noffke and Somekh 2013) is fully acknowledged. I explicate the ways I have come to know and the 'creative synthesis' (Code 1987, p.9) between myself as knower and the knowledge claims I make. I will explore this presence of myself as researcher further in what follows.

#### **4.3.5.1 Positionality as continuum**

The binary of being an 'insider' or an 'outsider' researcher is deconstructed by Herr and Anderson (2015) into a much more nuanced continuum of positionalities the researcher might adopt or identify with, ranging from an 'insider researching their own practice' through 'insider in collaboration with outsiders' to 'outsiders studying insiders' (pp.37-49). However, their continuum

sees positionality as something, once thought through and identified, as relatively fixed.

#### **4.3.5.2 Positionality as shifting and multiple**

My own experience was of continual shifting of multiple positionalities (Thomson and Gunter 2011, p.17) within this continuum. As joint co-ordinator of the social and solidarity economy project, I position myself as an 'insider-researcher' and an 'insider in collaboration with other insiders' according to Herr and Anderson's continuum (2015, p. 51). Catalina and I were co-researchers in the theme of the project with the project collaborators, but as co-ordinators we were also responsible for the outcomes of the project, and crucially, held the purse strings. This meant that we held a position of power which enabled us to accept or reject the ideas of others on a financial level whilst also aiming to work as peers. As I dealt with and reflected on the data in writing this thesis, I sometimes felt like an outsider researcher to the project as I reflected on it from a position of distance from the immediate dialogue and actions, and was aware I had power to craft this into what I wanted it to be. However, as stated in Section 4.3.3 above, I went back 'in' again to discuss my interpretations with those with whom I held reflective conversations following the project. In addition, as an academic in higher education, I am an insider here too and I am 'generat[ing] knowledge of practice from the inside out' (Herr and Anderson 2015 p.38): I am the ultimate insider in my own praxis.

This thesis is based on action from within a university. I am an insider to my own practice in this sphere, a fact that enabled me to take the political action of initiating the project. However, I sometimes felt like an outsider in understanding and negotiating the internal politics which 'are structured in terms of power and status' (MacIntyre 1985, pp.194-5).

As an insider in higher education I have some autonomy in teaching and research, but I have little input into the wider policies and practices of the university or of available funding streams; and neither can I claim to speak for all, or any other, academics. De Certeau (1988) argues that institutions employ 'strategies' to maintain the institution and its objectives. On the other hand, academics can use what De Certeau calls 'tactics', day to day practices, which

can work opportunistically within overarching strategies and interpret them in ways which are personally meaningful and towards personal values and 'reorganis[e] the functioning of power' (Buchanan 2000, p.99). For example, the rationale behind the Erasmus Mundus funding stream was to 'promote European higher education' to those from outside the EU and encourage applications to courses and research opportunities. Catalina and I had concerns about the appropriateness of this goal and the value non-EU citizens would find in Eurocentric courses. We argued in the bid that in order to remain relevant and attractive to non-EU citizens, European education needed to embed into its understandings and curricula a greater understanding of non-European regions of the world (Data archive, Bid for funding and feedback – ema3\_application\_2012, p.22). As 'outsiders' to the policy, we sought to use tactics to manoeuvre within the parameters of the strategy to achieve our aims.

#### ***4.3.5.3 First-, second- and third-person action research as a way of understanding positioning***

Reason and Bradbury identify three main categorisations within the family of action research approaches (2008, p.6, drawing on Torbert 1998), which they call first-, second-, and third-person action research. These will be explained in the following section. To avoid a misconception, it is important to point out that these do not relate to the commonly understood grammatical structure of first, second and third person.

In Reason and Bradbury's categorisation, first-person action research and methods address the ability of the researcher to foster an enquiring approach to his or her own life and to assess effects of these in the outside world while acting; second-person action research addresses our ability to inquire with and in the presence of others into issues of mutual concern. Second-person inquiry starts with interpersonal dialogue and includes the development of communities of enquiry while third-person research aims to extend these relatively small-scale projects to create a wider impact. Third-person strategies aim to create a wider community of inquiry involving persons who, because they cannot be known to each other face-to-face, have an impersonal quality. Writing and other reporting of the process and outcomes of inquiries can also be an important form of third-person enquiry.

The most compelling and enduring kind of action research will engage all three strategies, according to Reason and Bradbury (2008, p.6): support and challenge is provided in first-person research by engaging colleagues whilst attempts at third-person research without rigorous examination of one's purposes and practices is open to distortion through unacknowledged and unchecked bias. Taking a complexity theory approach, where each level is affected by the other, I would argue that the levels are interwoven in my research.

Within this categorisation, the social and solidarity economy project handbook embraced mainly second-person and third-person expressions of my research. It was centred on collaboration between a group of academics who reached out into their communities, making the loosely formed group wider and more inclusive. The collaborative processes involved in the execution of the project are the well of data this thesis draws on.

As a subsequent written output, this thesis takes a more overtly reflective stance and focuses on my learning and developing practice throughout the project. Some of the participants take on the role of informants to prompt my thinking or to provide perspectives on the impact the project had upon them, and to comment on my perspectives. In this sense, my thesis is the *yin* to the project's *yang*, using this idea from Chinese philosophy to symbolise the balance, interconnection and complementarity of the two pieces of work. The former contributes to theorisations of practice-based knowledge in academia, while the latter makes a contribution to the theorisation of the social and solidarity economy.

The work embodied in written documents such as the project handbook and this thesis is the result of an iteration between first-, second- and third- person action research. Although I see both pieces of work as the product of collaboration, the main categorical banner over this thesis is that of first-person action research. It is a study of self-with-others. As explained in Section 4.3.2 on reading and reflective writing as research method, as I have reflected on my experiences, analysed the data and tried to make sense of it, I have become increasingly identified with not just the activities and the intent driving them, but as an action researcher researching myself-with-others.

#### ***4.3.5.4 Ontological commitment/knowledge interests as positioning***

The commitment I express in this thesis to more participatory and emancipatory styles of working in higher education is also a declared positionality. It is my knowledge interest (McNiff 2018, drawing on Habermas 1972). All research takes a values-based position, in the sense that choices over which areas to study, the framing of the research question and the assigning of categories will in themselves be values-laden and prior knowledge-dependent in the way they ascribe meaning to people, actions and objects. In my research political, moral and ideological issues are not rendered invisible. Rather, they are acknowledged and provide a vital source of motivation for the research (Gergen and Gergen 2008, p.165). In articulating my knowledge interests in Chapter 1, I am acknowledging the impossibility of objectivism. In declaring my ontological commitments, I also take responsibility for them and do not claim to be objective.

### **4.4 Generating evidence to test the validity of my knowledge claim**

In this section, I explain the data gathering processes used in my research, and how this data was used to generate evidence in support of my knowledge claim.

#### **4.4.1 Data sources and data gathering**

In the development of my research, I gathered a variety of types of data from a number of different sources. Appendix 1 sets out the sources of data gathered, in the form of a research timeline. In the following section I will explain the types of data generated.

##### ***4.4.1.1 Reflective dialogues with research informants/meta-informants***

Reflective dialogues were held in person with informants and meta-informants, by email or via Skype depending on the opportunity presented. They were semi-structured in the sense that we had an agenda of discussing our interpretations of the conduct of the project, but they were largely free-flowing conversations in which my dialogue partner was able to change the focus or

question my interpretations. In the sense explained in Chapter 2, the dialogues were far from dialectical: they did not seek once and for all conclusions but were rather ongoing over a period of time. They were recorded and transcribed from audio form, as applicable.

Stern (2016, p.4) finds he seems to hear the “real” voices of the conversationalists in his ‘Conversations on ethical practice’ in contrast to more ‘tidied up’ forms research published by his conversation partners. In his conversations, Stern says he ‘recognises the people he knows’. Where I have used their words, I too hope the person is visible behind them.

#### ***4.4.1.2 Project reports and documents as data***

As project co-ordinators, Catalina and I routinely produced documents such as meeting agendas or minutes and progress reports to Erasmus Mundus as funders. In addition, we wrote some reports following significant activities within the project. One of these was the report following the strategic planning meetings at the beginning of the project and explained in Chapter 5. This report can be seen in the Data archive – Strategic planning meetings folder.

#### ***4.4.1.3 Evaluations as data***

These include evaluations mentioned above following specific events. They are itemised below, with a reference to their location in the Data archive:

- the evaluation from the Erasmus Mundus project assessor (Data archive, Bid for funding and feedback);
- an audio recording of the final meeting between the Erasmus Mundus assessor in which seven project partners were present and answered questions about the project and their participation in it (Data archive, Meeting with EU assessor);
- emails from informants (Data archive with the informant’s name);
- video recordings of conference participants speaking about the conference and about the project (Conference video 2015).

#### ***4.4.1.4 Project outputs as data***

The project handbook was one of the main outputs and is referred to in the critical episode in Chapter 5. Additional artefacts are the conference videos

and final report (Conference video 2015; Conference report 2015) and the project blogs.

#### 4.4.2 Analysing my data and generating evidence

In the previous section, I explained the way in which I gathered my data, or pieces of information about the activities within the project, and how this was organised into the critical episodes of the following chapters. I will now address how I turned some of these pieces of data into evidence to support my knowledge claims and test their validity. I used an iterative process of making a provisional knowledge claim and selecting particular pieces of data to stand as evidence to test the validity of this claim to knowledge. This process was carried out initially as a coding activity.

##### 4.4.2.1 Coding and re-coding

Figure 4:3 shows a screen shot of a spreadsheet in which I illustrate how I began to organise my data as part of analysing it. This sorting of my data sources involved a provisional knowledge claim – that I had created spaces for participation – and selecting data to generate evidence for this claim. The spreadsheet shows the tentative sub-categories, such as the emergence of different centres of activity and the relational aspect of participation (stated as ‘trust’ in this example).

	A	B	C	D
1				
2	<b>Data source</b>	<b>Data - detail</b>	<b>Evidence for?</b>	<b>Evidence useful for key context</b>
3	Letter from [name], EU agency	participative approach of project is apparent. Project was challenging for 3 reasons: ethical standards, remote regions, 3 languages	Participation, ethical standards, many centres	Cusco
4	Meeting between partners and [name] after conference	[Name] states this has been most collaborative project he's worked in. [Name] - social enterprises around Cusco have not previously been mapped	Participative approach, many centres	
5	Conference: video of [name], Key note speaker, [name] Uni	explaining his perception of benefits of having participation of students and lecturers together	Participative approach, nurturing student engagement	Conference
6	Conference: [name] closing address	Enthusiasm of participation, held us up as 'living our values'	Ethical standards, participation, challenging status quo	Conference, handbook, YSI
7	[Name] email		Trust + (check)...	Handbook
8	Conference planning docs, agendas for steering committee		Platforms for participation	Conference
9	Conference programme		Platforms for participation	Conference
10	Conference report		Platforms for participation	Conference

**Figure 4:3 Excerpt from spreadsheet for coding data (Data archive, Data and evidence spreadsheets – 19.3.17).**

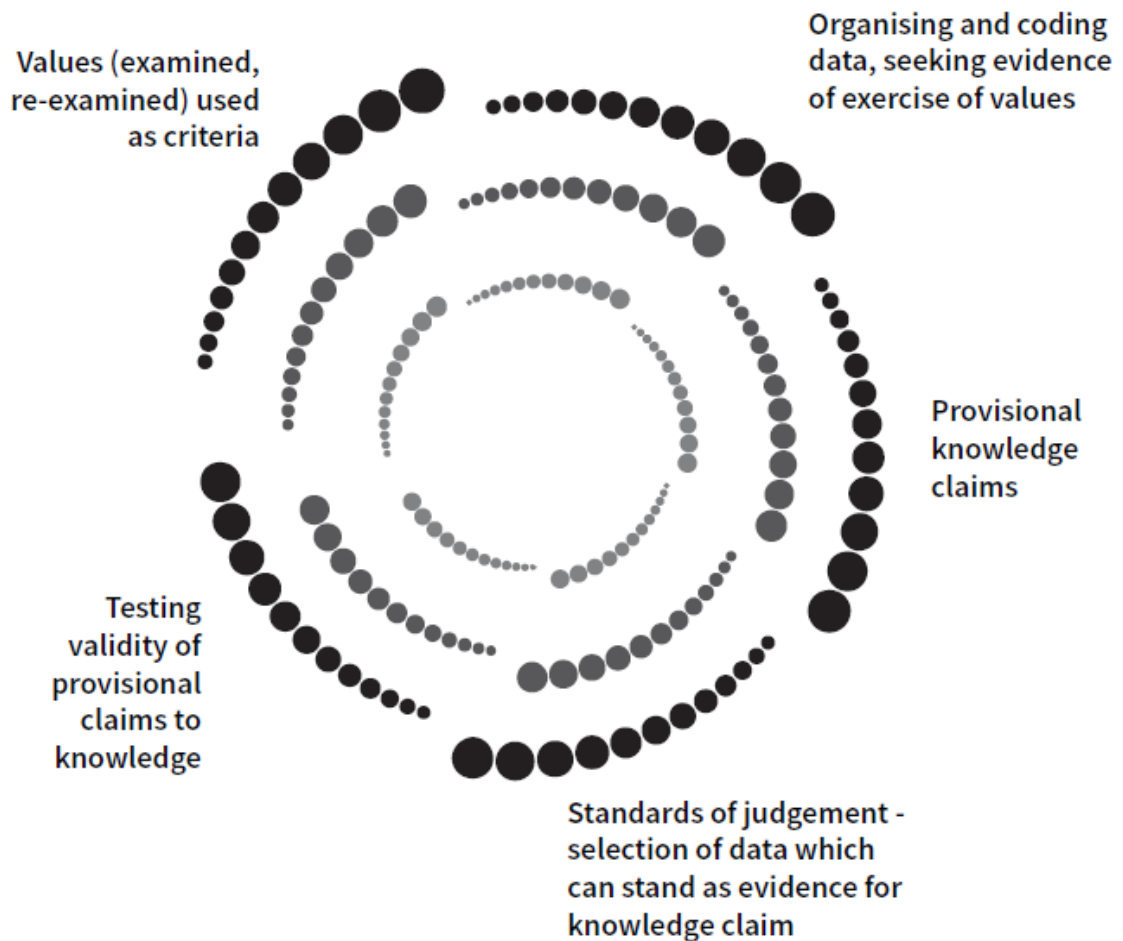
The screen shot in Figure 4:3 shows my developing understanding of my data and the way in which I was conceiving of it as evidence to test the validity of my provisional knowledge claim. I had started my research with a deep interest



in the participation of people in decisions which affected their lives, and specifically in what was being taught in universities. Reviewing my data showed that people were not necessarily talking about 'participation' as such. For example, participants from the global South acknowledged the opportunity to articulate their types of knowledge and be counted as equal partners. In other evidence, people spoke about the affective level of experiences in collaborating with others which were transformative. They identified opportunities to do things that were personally meaningful to them in their own ways within the bigger whole. As my research progressed to encompass and develop understanding of explanatory frameworks such as post-colonial literature (as explained in Chapters 2 and 5), and from collaboration and dialogue with collaborators, I began to grow into a role which was different from my role as participant and co-ordinator of the project: that of generating explanations, with reference to academic literature, to explain the practices we had engaged in, to name them and to articulate their place in fields of knowledge around justice, dialogism and the meaning of political action in a higher education context.

As my understanding from reading and interactions with others developed, my understanding of participation began to take on very specific meanings which coalesced around themes, such as participation and knowledge, and participation in knowledge creation and forms of organisation (such as polycentricity and then moving or shifting centres). It also seemed that there was a deeper issue of justice, in its epistemic form, driving participation. Discussing my interpretations with others and asking for their reflections following the completion of the project also led me to consider the importance of the deeper and affective-level learning some expressed through the processes of collaboration and participation in dialogical actions.

The following diagram (Figure 4:4) uses McNiff's (2017) methodology to analyse data and generate evidence to test the validity of a knowledge claim. It aims to illustrate the iterative and spiralling process followed in working towards a claim to knowledge. Here I have represented it in a visual form.



**Figure 4:4 Methodology for data analysis (adapted from McNiff 2017, pp.167-202).**

The diagram in Figure 4:4 represents a cyclical movement and indicates spiralling motion into a new cycle and which never reaches an end point.

#### ***4.4.2.2 Generating evidence from my data to make a knowledge claim***

In order to claim that my research has generated new knowledge about my practice, it is necessary to set out my criteria – the principles by which it may be judged or the framework in which I can state that my claim is demonstrated as valid. In positivism, prediction and control are the criteria of scientific utility (Gergen and Gergen 2008, p.169). In contrast, my research has centred on values and the development of my practice in accordance with those values.

## **Values-as-criteria**

My criterion is therefore the development of my practice in ways which realise my values in practice. Using values-as-criteria (McNiff 2017), I have analysed and re-analysed my data for evidence of the exercise of my values in my practice. As alluded to above, there was an iterative and fluid process of interaction between consideration of my values and consideration of the data. It was a process of moving through spiralling cycles. As I sought data to generate evidence of my values in action, I found that my data was pointing in specific directions which made the idea of participation *per se* an overly blunt instrument to explain what was being achieved. This then led me to further reading, reconsideration of the meaning of the value I espoused, and further review of the data. This is a process which has not reached a settled conclusion in this thesis. Rather this thesis represents a point in time of the development of my thinking, in which participation has come to mean participation in political action, where this is understood as people exercising their agency about issues which concern them, in ways which are consistent with plurality and dialogical relational processes between people. The critical episodes document and explain my developing practice and the language I have adopted to theorise such practice.

## **Standards of judgement**

Whereas criteria establish and inform the principles or framework by which I make my knowledge claim, standards of judgement show how well I have done this in terms of these criteria. Through my research process I claim to have created spaces in which I and others have exercised our agency to take action around an issue of common concern. In Chapters 5, 6 and 7, I use my data to provide evidence to support this claim. I also use the data provided in and by the project handbook, to which people from 17 countries contributed, to test the validity of this claim.

### **4.4.3 My knowledge claim**

In theorising my practice as an academic, I claim to have created spaces in which I and others have exercised our agency to take action around an issue of common concern. I call this dialogical political action. This action has been

taken in participative ways which I theorise as recognising the uniqueness and agency of individuals, as part of striving towards the goal of epistemic justice. My theory of practice recognises the importance of processes of interaction between people and the transformative potential of these. It also recognises the importance of inspiring and encouraging others to take political action in their own contexts.

I draw conclusions which contribute to conceptualisation of the role and responsibility of the academic towards creating spaces for participation in political action. I also draw out the practices embedded within my research and view them as a microcosm of what higher education could be: spaces of participation in dialogical learning and in political action, towards the realisation of social hope.

#### ***4.4.3.1 Establishing the validity of my research***

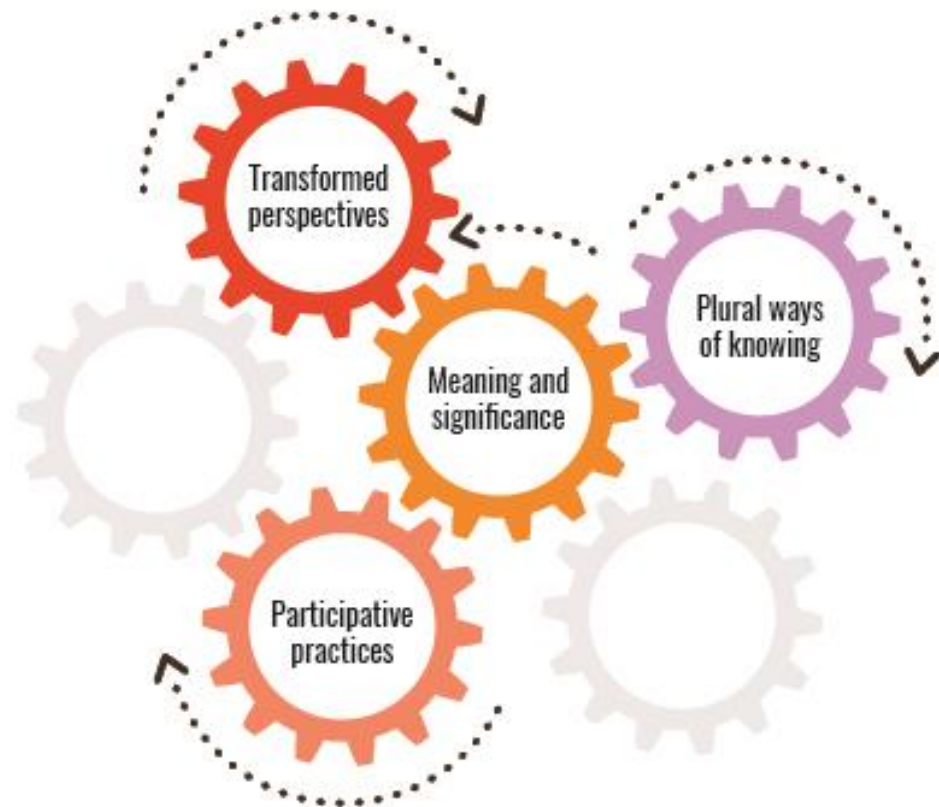
Many authors have developed approaches for establishing the ‘goodness’ (Heikkinen, Huttunen, Syrjälä and Pesonen 2012, p.6), or the validity of action research. Some of these are: Dadds (2008), Herr and Anderson (2015), Lather (1991), Reason and Bradbury (2001), Habermas (1979) and Winter (1989; 1996). Examination of these sources reveals diverse approaches and various articulations of criteria for establishing validity. It also reveals some commonalities. As Reason and Bradbury (2001, p.454) argue,

no action research project can address all issues equally ... choices must be made about what is important in the emergent and messy work of each action research project.

For this reason, I have selected and adapted the validity criteria offered by the above writers and have developed them into my own set of criteria in which the specific emphases and purposes of my own investigation are reflected.

In Figure 4:5 below, I consider the validity of my research in terms of four criteria.

## Validity criteria



**Figure 4:5 Validity criteria for my research.**

The cog wheels represent the inter-related nature of the criteria. Some cog wheels remain empty to signify the necessarily incomplete and provisional conclusions when working in a qualitative, emergent process involving many participants in diverse contexts. These criteria are provisional and would be subject to change in a different research project. Underpinning them, however, would be values based on Habermas' (1979, p.58) criteria for judging validity claims, and these would be foundational: truth – is the researcher telling the truth based on evidence; and truthfulness – is the researcher's relationship with other stakeholders based on ethical intent rather than manipulation.

I will now explain each of the four criteria in more detail, drawing on the literature and giving examples from my investigation.

**(i) Plural ways of knowing**

This criterion is taken from Reason and Bradbury (2001, pp.9 and 12), referring to Aristotle's diverse forms of knowing (Eikeland 2008) and Polanyi's (2009) idea of tacit knowledge.

In Chapter 2, I addressed the importance of working towards epistemic justice in processes of participation. This is also a theme in what follows in my thesis. For example, it is discussed in practice in Chapter 5 with reference to plural ways of knowing between representatives of the global South and global North. This plurality in ways of knowing therefore becomes a criterion for testing the validity of my research.

This criterion is also offered with reference to Winter's 'creating plural structures', which highlights the importance of developing various accounts and critiques and not accepting just one authoritative interpretation. Another of Winter's six principles is drawn upon here: the principle that 'theory and practice are internalised' means seeing theory and practice as interdependent and complementary phases of practical professionalism and of social enquiry (1989, pp.62-65; and 1996, p.14). In Chapters 5, 6, and 7, I present examples of practice, and the theorisation of my practice, as interdependent.

**(ii) Participative practices**

Reason and Bradbury refer to 'questions of relational practice' and the 'relational ecological' world view (2001, pp.9-10). They argue that a goal of action research is 'the creation of shifts in the balance of power' towards those previously marginalised (2001, p. 9, citing Selener 1997). Developing participative practice is a central concern of my thesis and a driving purpose of my research and should therefore be a criterion by which its validity is considered.

This criterion draws on Herr and Anderson's idea of 'dialogic validity', which centres on the generation of new knowledge in critical and reflective dialogue with others (2015, pp.69-70) and on Winter's principle of 'collaboration' or 'collaborative resource', in which everyone's view is taken as a contribution to understanding the situation (1989, pp.55-59; and 1996, p.14). Heikkinen, Huttunen, Syrjälä and Pesonen's five principles for validity includes the

'principle of dialectics' (2012, p.8): they ask, 'How has the researcher's insight developed in dialogue with others?' and 'How does the report present different voices and interpretations?'

This theme is developed in Chapter 5, in which the theorisations and approaches to the research are developed collaboratively by participants formulating questions which they consider relevant to the issue in focus. These are all used and collaboratively categorised into themes which informed the direction of the project.

In Chapter 6, I explain how an academic in Colombia became a participant in our research, leading to 'spin offs' of multiple centres of enquiry. This emergence of participation in different places would be a form of Lather's rhizomatic validity, which is 'the interconnected nature of human enquiry and the power of a study to have influence in multiple directions' (1991, cited in McNiff 2017, p.208).

This criterion also relates to the exercise of agency and the expression of natality. As such, it draws on Heikkinen, Huttunen, Syrjälä and Pesonen's (2012, p.8) principle of workability and ethics which poses a question in relation to empowerment: 'does the research make people believe their own capabilities and possibilities to act?'

In Chapters 5 and 6, I report some participants' values-driven statements which explain their motivation for participating in the project and its meaning to them. In Chapters 6 and 7, I explain how participants were able to take the activities of the project forward in ways of their choosing.

### **(iii) Transformed perspectives generative of new actions**

Earlier in this chapter, I cited Fals Borda (2015) who asked, 'How can we investigate reality in order to transform it?' An important aspect of this idea of transformation of reality is the personal transformation of perspectives through the study of the action researcher's context and relational practices. This criterion draws on Heikkinen, Huttunen, Syrjälä and Pesonen's (2012, p.8) 'principle of workability and ethics', which asks 'what kind of discussion does the research provoke?' It also makes reference to two of Winter's criteria: 'risking disturbance', by which he means 'demonstrating an understanding of

our own taken-for-granted processes and willingness to submit them to critique' (1996, p.14), and his 'reflexive critique: The process of becoming aware of our own perceptual biases'. An example of this criterion can be found in Chapter 7, where I use evaluations from the end of project conference as evidence of transformed perspectives by participants of that event.

Lather's concept of 'catalytic validity' (1991, p.68), in which 'the research process re-orientates, focuses and energizes participants toward knowing reality in order to transform it', is relevant to this criterion. In Chapter 5, I quote a participant who expresses a transformation in her belief about the relative importance of knowledge emanating from the global South and the global North. A transformation in my own view of my role in creating spaces of participation is articulated in Chapter 6, when I realise that participation is deeper when I do not fill the participative space with content or inflexible structures.

Dadds' (2008) notion of empathetic validity could also be drawn on here. It is 'the potential of practitioner research in its processes and outcomes to transform the emotional dispositions of people towards each other, such that greater empathy and regard are created' (p.279). In Chapter 5, I explain how my own way of positioning others was challenged by a participant and led to a reframing in my own mind.

(iv) **Significance and meaning of the research**

This criterion is adapted from Reason and Bradbury's 'On purpose and meaning: spirit and beauty'. They argue that action research should encourage questioning on the meaning and purpose of our endeavours: 'was the research worthwhile? What values have been actualized in the inquiry?' (2001, pp.10-12). Ultimately, I believe, these questions must be answered if research is to be deemed as of quality.

In the three chapters of this thesis which contain data, and its analysis and interpretation, I have used the words of participants which communicate a sense of the meaningfulness to them of what they have participated in and achieved. I argue that in the processes and in the theorisations, values such



as justice and participation have been achieved. In the final chapter, I write about how the research has changed my aspirations and plans for the future.

#### **4.4.3.2 Reliability of my research**

Action research, by its nature, is research in a specific time and specific place. It takes place in contexts of human interaction, which are, therefore, complex contexts. Bassey (1999) uses the term 'fuzzy generalizations' (pp. 51-54) to convey the element of uncertainty in knowledge created by such research. He states that

it reports that something has happened in one place and that it may also happen elsewhere. There is a possibility but no surety. There is an invitation to 'try it and see if the same happens to you' (p. 52).

It is the kind of prediction arising from empirical enquiry, that has reliability in the form of its 'reliability': it suggests that insights generated may be relevant in other contexts, an assertion that something *may* happen but without any measure of its probability (p.46).

In my research, I have looked at my data to find evidence of participation in political action, of people having spaces to exercise their agency with an underpinning concern about epistemic justice. My findings are therefore values-laden. I have not sought to make a proposition that *if we do x then y will follow*. My claim is to have generated knowledge which has changed my understandings and my practice and *may* generate insights for others in their praxis.

## **4.5 Conclusion**

The purpose of this chapter has been to explain my working understanding of the foundations of action research, which inform my own approach, and to explain how I gathered my data, tested its validity and indicated how the quality of my research may be judged.

My approach can be summed up by Code (2006, pp.6-7), who argues that

an epistemological position whose starting point is in the ecological situations and interconnections of knowers and knowings ... departs

radically from inquiry directed toward analysing discrete, disparate being, events, and items in the world, only subsequently to propose connections among them or to insert them into “contexts” conceived as separately given.

In the following chapters, I focus on the events and practices which have given rise to the data itself and on its interpretation and analysis.

## **Chapter 5 - Turning inwards: the strategic planning meetings and beginning to write the handbook**

In this and the following two chapters I present my data along with its analysis and interpretation, as ways of working towards the production of evidence in support of my claim to have created spaces of dialogical action towards epistemic justice in higher education. As explained in Chapter 4, each of Chapters 5-7 is focused on a 'critical episode': an event or series of events on a specific theme. In Chapter 4, I outlined how each of the chapters based on the critical episodes would focus on the specific aspects which emerged from my practice towards participation in action, as envisaged by Hannah Arendt (1958). These aspects are epistemic justice; challenging the notion of the centre and the periphery in power relations; and dialogism. These are woven throughout Chapters 5-7 as relevant to the practices described and the development of my thinking.

This chapter is structured in the following way:

1. I present the first of the three critical episodes of practice: the strategic planning meetings, when all project partners gathered in York to plan the project and work collaboratively on the structure and content for one of its main outputs, the project handbook.
2. I discuss the insights I gained in relation to my developing understandings of epistemic justice, the idea of a centre and a periphery, and dialogism.
3. I explain how some of my own assumptions were challenged during the processes of interaction with project partners.

### **5.1 A space of participation in political action for different knowers and knowledges**

In the first episode, recounted in this chapter, the space created for political action takes the form of a series of meetings when project partners from 'global North' and 'global South' met at the beginning of the project to plan it on a

strategic level. Data was gathered from these meetings and from subsequent events and communications which I scrutinised to show evidence of spaces of participation which promoted the possibility of epistemic justice and dialogic relationships.

In what follows I explain how partners in the project had differing understandings of the concept of the social economy. These differences meant that taking political action together, in which all could express their natality, was potentially problematic in terms of whose conceptualisations would prevail and whose might be marginalised. I explain how my understanding of the relevance of different ways of knowing and the legitimacy conferred upon types of knowledge and 'knowers' by these was deepened and sharpened. The post-colonial theory of 'centre and periphery', introduced in Chapter 2, is used as a conceptual tool to understand some challenges in fostering relationships between people who come from backgrounds of 'universal' (read 'dominant') epistemology and people who inhabit 'other' places, and experience their own ways of knowing as of lesser legitimacy by traditional academia in the context of the current epistemic hegemony. Working towards creating a space of participation as equals in this respect at the outset of the project, when understandings and concepts would be established, is the particular challenge addressed in this chapter and in which the concept of epistemic justice is developed.

In what follows in the current chapter, I explore how Catalina and I took a dialogic approach to the strategic planning of the project; and explain how, with project partners, we moved beyond a response which would take us on separate and parallel paths, instead working towards collaborative action. I explain how, as project co-ordinators, we adopted a dialogic approach which aimed to challenge knowledge hierarchies and was premised on the idea that dialogism was effective for generating new knowledge and viable ways forward together. I consider how such an approach meant that, as project partners, we all had the opportunity to take political action together.

In the following section I will explicate how Catalina and I, as project co-ordinators, explicitly sought to expand spaces of participation in which differing ways of knowing could be expressed, and in which a plurality of knowledges

could lead to new understandings. It meant addressing the issues of perceptions of power and collaboration within difference. I will explain how we aimed to create spaces in which each collaborator could have a voice and influence outcomes if they wished.

### **5.1.1 Designing the framework of the project handbook**

#### ***5.1.1.1 The 5-day strategic planning meeting***

At the start of the project, all partners came to York for a week with the intention of collaboratively planning the strategic direction for its three-year duration. The encounter would be an important space for intercultural exchange: we were ten partners in total, representing four different universities, in the UK, Peru, Spain and from a centre for African studies in Portugal.

By the end of the five days we needed to have agreed a coherent action plan with which to proceed. On a conceptual level, the intention was to gain a deeper understanding of the bases which informed the understandings of the social economy of each group, given the diversity of our backgrounds, and to find a way to move forward as a group. We also needed to foster a sense of ownership around the structure and content of the main output of the project, the handbook, in order to promote full participation in which different forms of knowledge were recognised. Having done this, the plan was to work on how each partner would develop our respective roles in the project. The less tangible aim was that we would develop trusting collaborative relationships based on open communication, which would be necessary to ensure progress.

During the writing of the bid, Catalina and I had visited Cusco and realised that there were significant differences between the way in which we had conceptualised the social economy and the understandings put forward by the Peruvian team. They also told us about the experiences of their university colleagues of European projects. In Chapter 1, I quoted Ana María Villafuerte (introduced above) who explained the usual approach taken by the Western partners in her university in the Peruvian Andes: European projects, she explained, would position the Peruvian academics as data collectors. The conceptual framing of the issue and the analysis of the data would be

undertaken by the European academics (Email dialogue, Data archive, Ana Maria Villafuerte - Reflective dialogue 2, 14.2.18. Translated).

From what she and other team members told us, their experience was of the academics from Cusco being positioned virtually as research assistants with no input on framing the issue for research, analysing the data or developing theory. It seemed to be a complete denial of the possibility of epistemic justice in that some participants were positioned as worthwhile implementers of knowledge but not as knowledge creators. In our first meetings with the team, this disquiet had been expressed very clearly and in a variety of ways. Similarly, we were told that even within the same country, academics from private universities, such as in Peru, often assume a hierarchical divide between themselves and their counterparts in the state system; and that in any public/private university collaboration, academics from a state university would be positioned as junior partners by their private sector counterparts, and more so because Cusco is situated in a rural area far from the capital city. They were positioned by others as 'peripheral' geographically and, it seemed, epistemologically.

A Eurocentric thrust to the project would put the participation of others at the end of a set of givens: given definitions, given questions and a closed vision of the content of the handbook. In this sense the opportunity to realise our natality (Arendt 1958) and the opportunity to take participative political action, would have rested only with Catalina and with me, rather than with all partners, contrary to our educational values. The challenge therefore was to create spaces in which others could participate in ways that were more meaningful for them than choosing from a given set of options: to enact what Isaiah Berlin (Gray 2013, p.41) refers to as 'negative freedom' which goes beyond pre-set choices. The options we could provide would be derived only from our own socio-cultural experiences, and therefore, would be deeply partial. Therefore, we needed to use processes which went beyond our partial understandings and which could open the space for partners to contribute understandings from their own experiences. In so doing, we could broaden the field of possible understandings and interpretations of the social economy.

### **5.1.1.2 Setting the agenda**

Given the participative approach we saw as fundamental to the project it was important to Catalina and to me to give time in the agenda for the week to explore our different personal and cultural conceptualisations of the social economy. There had been little time in the bid-writing process to explore these differing conceptualisations fully, but being able to identify oneself in the conceptual understandings within the project itself would be a fundamental aspect of taking political action together as peers.

It may have been straightforward to have held the planning meetings as a *who, what, when* type of logistics exercise: design the specific tasks towards the pre-engineered objectives and make sure they were assigned to different people, ensure that we agreed on how to go about them and check that we all understood what was expected of us. This could have been participative in having discussions about how the tasks should be set up, by getting people to put their name against the tasks or areas they felt best able to work on and give flexibility in the work plan itself according to personal working preferences. We could then have invited others to participate in the work of carrying out the vision and conceptual framework Catalina and I had established. Such practices would involve participation and dialogue around the edges, perhaps a form of 'technical dialogue', or 'monologue disguised as dialogue' (Buber 2002, pp.22-23), but it would have missed an opportunity for a deeper and more just form of participation. It could have been superficially participatory, but actually asymmetrical, disempowering and hierarchical. It would have denied justice on an epistemic level, in which people are recognised in their capacity as knowers and knowledge creators. Such practices would have reinforced unjust notions of a centre and a periphery. So, we realised we needed to dedicate considerable time to the articulation of concepts by each team – where 'teams' were established by their institution, and therefore, the country in which they worked – and invite discussion around the input of each team.

We would then have the challenge of weaving the different conceptual understandings into something we could all proceed with. The alternative would be to work as parallel but separate (and potentially unequal) entities,

thus possibly reinforcing difference and fragmentation – a kind of postmodern monologism, where each asserts the truth of their individual understanding: an approach that would be along the lines of ‘Here’s a perspective from the UK’ and ‘Here’s one from Spain, Peru, etc.’ in a kind of parallel monologue. This disjointed information would barely add up to a bigger picture or anything original. Our aim was to create something bigger – something that would contribute to *discourses*, which according to Foucault (2000) take a part in shaping reality. The challenge was to do this in ways which would highlight each partner’s contribution and ensure it was reflected in a bigger picture.

The space of the meetings needed to be open to partners’ differences if it were to be dialogic, but such space would need to be carefully structured if all were enabled to make a fair contribution and the meetings were to amount to something we could all proceed with. We needed to create spaces in which ‘differences remain yet the dialogue continues’ in the words of Stern (2016, p.19).

#### **5.1.1.3 Articulating concepts**

On the first day of the meeting, the team from each country gave a presentation about the social economy in their region, answered questions and led whole group discussion about this. Preparation for this presentation had enabled partners to work individually, or as a team representing their university, on the main conceptual points of importance and the expression of these in practice. As such, it formed an important starting point in which each could state a position.

In what follows, I will explain how the collaborative work varied between different formations of small groups and the larger group comprising all participants. In each case the method of work was suggested rather than imposed. During the small and the whole group work participants were free to contribute or not, and able to observe the work of other groups if they wished to do that. The aim was to ensure an environment in which participation was fostered and encouraged but not coerced. There was a lot of expression of different viewpoints in the activities, but there was no apparent resistance to the activities themselves.



#### ***5.1.1.4 Developing criteria for social and solidarity economy organisations that project partners would seek to work with***

Following the articulation of concepts around the social and solidarity economy, we divided ourselves into two geographical region-based groups (representatives from Africa and Latin America in one group and from Europe in the other making the numbers of people equal in each). We wrote on flip charts what we considered to be the defining characteristics of organisations in the social economy. These were the criteria the partners felt they could use to identify organisations they would approach to work with within the project. This activity involved some negotiation of ideas and concepts rather than the presentation and clarification of them and required us to think pragmatically about the types of organisations we might approach to work with and towards the preparation of the handbook. Overall, there were identifiable areas of commonality which could be synthesised, though with some differences (see Table 5:1).

**Table 5:1 Criteria for describing perceptions of the social economy by geographic area.**

Latin America: UNSAAC and Africa: CEAUP	Europe: YSJ; UK and Mondragon; Basque Country, Spain
Independent groups structured around collective enterprises and focused on meeting common objectives	Prioritising work over capital (as a means not an end)
Collective property of the active members of the enterprise	Democratic governance (participation in: management, outcomes, capital)
Approach based on human capital and generating self-employment	Sense of belonging and solidarity among members
Respects private property	Sharing of limited profits
Based on democratic and participatory principles	Creation and protection of employment
Equitable distribution of the enterprise's output	Managerial autonomy
Groups regulated by common law and fact, based on the establishment of rules, values, solidarity, reciprocity and respect for traditional knowledges, and human and ecological diversity	Social transformation
	Intelligent, sustainable growth

One UK-based perspective of the social economy from the literature positions it as the part of the ‘third’ sector which trades, such as enterprises which have a social and/or environmental mission (Pearce 2003). In the discussions with partners, this conceptualisation became problematic. The Portuguese colleagues had extensive experience in parts of Africa and expertise in the NGO sector of that continent. They had a clear view of the role of the State and of aid agencies as a driving force behind the empowerment of people to establish small, perhaps eventually self-sufficient, enterprises which would benefit the wider community. In Peru, our colleagues explained, farmers group together in associations to ensure they had sufficient power in the market to be able to sell their products at a level that enabled their families and communities to rise above subsistence level. So there was discussion about differing understandings of the responsibility of the state and the expediency of ‘the market’. There was also a difference in the desired *telos* of the social economy: some saw it as a way of overthrowing capitalism, while for others, the ‘market’ was a useful way of people moving beyond struggling at subsistence level and could therefore potentially act as a force for good. There was extensive debate and not insignificant disagreement, particularly on a political level which owed much to personal outlook and could not necessarily be aligned to a perspective based on nationality or wider culture.

Given the differences in the conceptualisations of the social economy, both in the literature and in the experiences of partners, it would have been highly problematic to attempt to create a definition of it to inform which organisations we would approach to work with as part of the project. Organisations would potentially meet different criteria to a different extent, and so partners would have the flexibility to approach organisations with social and environmental aims which may not have strictly met the inflexible criteria of a set definition. The approach would offer a spectrum of different dimensions rather than a hard and fast ‘included’ or ‘excluded’ definition.

#### **5.1.1.5 *Creating the framework for the handbook***

As explained in Chapter 3, one of the practical outcomes of the project was to create a handbook about the social and solidarity economy and practices linking universities to the sector, to be written in English, Spanish and Portuguese - the three languages of the project. A second purpose of the five-day series of meetings

between partners was to develop a sense of ownership by the partners of the structure of the handbook which would be the main output of the project. The structure would need to be open enough for all to have significant input into the theoretical underpinnings of the way in which the social economy was envisaged and would promote an approach in which new knowledge and understandings could emerge from our different perspectives.

As part of the bid, it was important to draft titles for the chapters we envisaged for the handbook. These chapter titles were based on previous engagement with the literature and reflection on experience carried out by Catalina. We gave a draft title for each chapter, and these were presented to partners and open for comment by them before the bid was submitted.

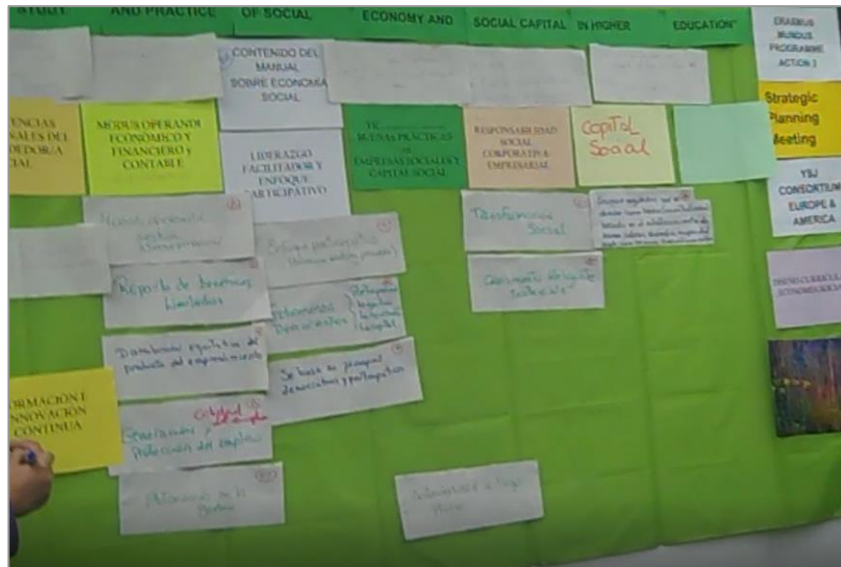
Following the generation of the criteria, as explained above and presented in Table 5:1 by project partners working in two groups, we came together as a larger group to use these criteria as starting points for the content of the handbook.

So, during the meetings the following day we placed the draft chapter titles onto a 'sticky wall' (ripstop nylon with spray glue on which papers will stick and can be placed, peeled off and replaced. On this sticky wall, papers can be organised and reorganised). As a group we discussed the criteria generated the previous day and negotiated placing each one under the provisional chapter headings which best encapsulated the idea contained in the criterion. There was extensive debate about each one and where it best fitted. Papers were rearranged and reordered into different chapters as a better thematic fit was agreed upon. At the initiative of the group and with much discussion, some chapters were combined because they were considered by the partners to be dealing with a similar, bigger theme, and some chapters were renamed to better reflect the themes emerging from the criteria generated by the partners. Reflection and debate around chapter themes led to ten chapters becoming eight. There was a high level of engagement in the process and a sense of elation in the group as the final paper was discussed and placed. We were now beginning to flesh out the concepts in a series of chapters which visibly included everyone's contribution. This process took most of the day (see final report from the meetings in the Data archive, Strategic planning meetings – Summary final report in English). Each partner could claim, and have the corresponding responsibility for, some ownership and input into the whole and see

their contribution to setting the conceptual framework. We now had chapter titles which reflected the conceptualisations of partners. We now had outline areas of focus for the handbook chapter based on the criteria generated by partners, shown in Table 5:2. In Figure 5:1. a photograph of the sticky wall with the arrangement of the criteria during the process explained above can be seen.

**Table 5:2 Consolidation and consensus of criteria by partners for the handbook and social economy (SE) project.**

I. SOCIAL ECONOMY EPISTEMOLOGY	II. IDENTITY AND PROFILE OF SE BUSINESSES / COMMUNITIES	III. WAYS OF WORKING Facilitative leadership and participatory approach	IV. PROFESSIONAL COMPETENCES Continuous innovation and training	V. ICT AND EFFECTIVE PRACTICE	VI. SOCIAL CAPITAL	VII. TRANSFORMATION AND SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY	VIII. PEDAGOGY AND CURRICULUM DESIGN
See work on social economy done by partners on Moodle	Independent groups structured around collective enterprises and focused on meeting common objectives  Voluntary membership	Equitable distribution of the enterprise's output	Personal and work-related competences		Groups regulated by common and statutory law	Responds to needs of the community: employment, education, training, social cohesion, environment, economic inclusion, gender equality, housing.	Current curriculum on social economy, social capital in Europe, America, Africa and Asia.
	Sense of belonging and solidarity among members	Sharing of limited profits	Questions for professionals		Voluntary membership	Intelligent and sustainable growth	Teaching methodology and process
	Collective property of the active members of the enterprise	Creation, quality and protection of employment	Questions for directors/coordinators			Long-term sustainability	Content informed by results of multidisciplinary study
	Respects private property and the freedom of the individual	Administrative/accounting management					
	Groups regulated by common and statutory law, based on rules, values, solidarity, reciprocity and respect for traditional knowledges, and human and ecological diversity	Based on democratic and participatory principles				Social transformation	
	Prioritises work over capital (as a means and NOT AN END). Approach based on human capital and the creation of self-employment.	Managerial autonomy					



**Figure 5:1 Photograph showing the sticky wall and arrangement of criteria.**

#### **5.1.1.6 Raising questions for enquiry**

Next, in small and self-selecting groups in which both global North and global South were represented, partners worked on formulating questions or areas of enquiry for specific chapters based on the criteria previously generated. This small group structure was a space in which partners could share priorities, articulate concerns and have assumptions questioned. Catalina and I considered asking people to write statements about what should be included but such statements may, perhaps, have led to a more dogmatic vision of the content of the handbook. Questions or proposed areas of investigation, on the other hand, can leave space for a variety of responses.

An overarching proposed area of investigation which emerged from partners from three represented continents was to

Know what is being taught within the area of the social economy, and how to promote its practice from within higher education institutions (Data archive, Strategic planning meetings - 29.10-2.11.2012 - Final report in Spanish, p.22).

Examples of other questions emerging from those meetings were:

- How are decisions taken [in the organisation]? Mechanisms of participation and governance; transparency in accounts.

- What strategies are there for the distribution of benefits generated?
- Trust: how is it initiated, maintained and restored?
- What values support the development of social capital?
- Social transformation and responsibility: how do we measure (judge) it. How does the community measure (judge) it?

During the strategic planning meetings, it was agreed that partners would take the lead on the chapter(s) for which they had developed questions. Due to changes in personnel and other factors, however, there were subsequently some changes in the people taking the lead on each chapter because of changes in personnel involved in the project after the first year.

Three years later the questions had evolved through the many interactions between ourselves and the many collaborators in the project, but the genesis of some of those generated are reflected in the project handbook. For example:

#### Chapter 1

- What values are identified by those involved in the social and solidarity economy?

#### Chapter 3

- How do social organisations' ways of acting differ from other sectors in terms of: funding, internationalisation and marketing?
- How do the ways of working of these organisations connect to the values and epistemologies of the social and solidarity economy and what are the challenges?

#### Chapter 6

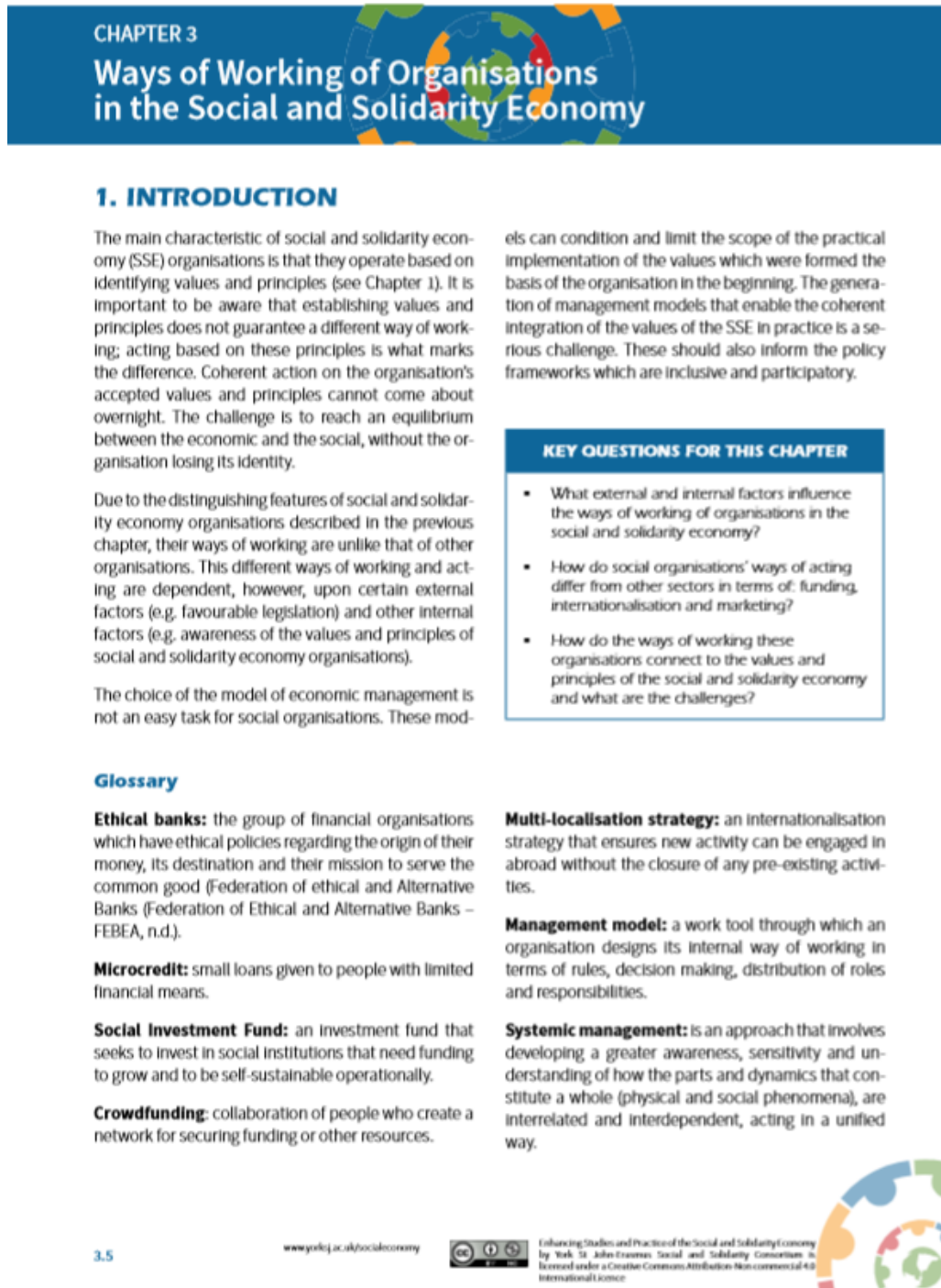
- How do social sector organisations generate social capital?

#### Chapter 8

- What is understood by social responsibility? And by social transformation?

Figure 5:2 shows an example page from the handbook in which the questions are raised.





**Figure 5:2 Example page from the project handbook.**

(Created by Saioa Arando, LaSalette Coelho, Margaret Meredith, Catalina Quiroz-Niño, Miguel Silva and Ana María Villafuerte (Meredith and Quiroz-Niño (Coords.) et al. 2015).

Within the strategic planning meetings, the partners had presented their conceptualisations of the social economy and collaborated on the generation of criteria for the types of organisations that would be approached. They had

also raised the questions for investigation. So, next, as a group, we could proceed to considering how we could carry out our work together on a practical level to realise the newly developed collaborative vision for the investigation and the handbook.

#### **5.1.1.7 Partners' evaluations**

An important aspect of the strategic planning meetings was to develop a sense of shared ownership and responsibility for the development of the project handbook. In what follows, I present some partner evaluations of the experience of the week, elicited at the end of the week. These, I believe, show a good level of engagement and satisfaction with the activities and outcomes of the meetings. In a later section I will draw upon evidence of the longer-term impact of the approach taken in these opening days. All eight partners contributed evaluations.

- One partner stated in their evaluation of the strategic planning meetings that they were 'very happy for having known and participated in the process and contributed to the outcomes'.
- A second drew attention to the 'engaged participation from the participants'.
- Four out of the eight partners drew attention to the 'very good methodology of work: participative and dynamic'.
- Another stated 'It was very ambitious and therefore it was not possible to achieve everything. However, the main objectives were achieved with in depth debates which were necessary'.
- One partner stated that 'It's a matter of building from diversity, which is not easy, but foundation stones were laid'. All eight partners' evaluations can be seen in the Data archive, Strategic planning meetings – Summary final report in English, pp.2-4.

The invited and structured participation of partners, and the processes which aimed to promote the articulation of knowledge and assumptions meant that each individual had the opportunity to place themselves within the project – to find their own space and to identify with the creation of the handbook. In carrying out the processes explained above, partners 'shaped' the handbook from soon after its inception.

#### ***5.1.1.8 Using the framework of the handbook throughout the project***

In this way the decisions made and recorded in the strategic planning week, including the agreed draft framework for the structure of the handbook, served as a reference throughout the whole three years of the project for those who remained. In times of disagreement, misunderstanding or forgetfulness, it served as a mutually agreed commitment willingly entered into by all partners and respected for as long as they participated. It served as something akin to a promise, which, according to Arendt, partially dispels the unpredictability of the outcomes of action (1958, p.244).

Seven of the eight chapters agreed during the strategic planning meetings stayed in the form developed during the strategic planning meetings from that point until the end of the project and are reproduced in the final handbook. We elicited feedback from many dialogical focus groups held in several countries and including the participation of university- and field-based practitioners. These focus groups comprised academics and practitioners from non-academic settings. Participants were asked to consider what content they would include within the chapters, and whether any further or different chapters were needed. Records of these dialogical focus groups which were held in 2014 in Colombia, Cuba and Mexico can be located in the Research timeline in Appendix 1 and seen in the Data archive folder called Focus groups Colombia, Cuba, Mexico, UK. Similarly, they were presented for feedback at conferences aimed primarily at academics. These included the Society for Research into Higher Education conference, 'Higher Education as if the world mattered', in April 2013 (see a screenshot of the PowerPoint presentation slide in Appendix 2), and those aimed primarily at social economy practitioners, such as the Social Enterprise Yorkshire and the Humber conference at York St John University on 2<sup>nd</sup> February, 2014, 'Sustaining enterprise and innovation'. In both of these cases, curriculum design and pedagogy were considered in a separate chapter. Both presentations can be seen in the Data archive, Presentations and conferences folder. Following discussion and feedback at these conferences, the eighth, 'pedagogical activities' was integrated into each of the other chapters. It also became clear from collaboration with new individuals and groups from 2014 onwards in Brazil,

Argentina and the UK that a chapter was needed to showcase the work of higher education institutions in combining theory and practice in effective ways. So the eighth chapter became 'University eco-systems' to reflect the work in universities to promote social entrepreneurship and collaboration between universities and their communities and policy makers for collective benefit.

The handbook that was developed by me and Catalina Quiroz-Niño in partnership with Saioa Arando, LaSalette Coelho, Miguel Silva and Ana María Villafuerte (Meredith and Quiroz-Niño (Coords.) et al. 2015), along with many people who are credited within the handbook, contains literature reviews from the three geographical regions of the project: Africa, Europe and Latin America. These act as examples from people from 17 countries and in many contexts in each region in which practice was explicated by those working in the social and solidarity economy, and by academics from universities; and dialogical sections in which we articulated the new understandings we had gained together from our work in our local contexts. Working in this way gave collaborators the opportunity to articulate knowledges and practices unique to their context. Within the same handbook the dialogical spaces articulated the newness of what we had learnt together. Published in three languages, the handbook was therefore the result of the collaborative efforts of many people committed to epistemologies and practices that prioritised social and environmental considerations as well as economic ones, from various countries and continents. These epistemologies and practices are reflected in approaches to the theme from communities in Europe, Latin America and Africa. The broad themes of the handbook chapters are presented in Chapter 3 of this thesis.

In Chapter 6, I will focus on relationships with collaborators beyond the group of project partners. As a concluding note to this section, however, I wish to show that the dialogical relationships developed between global North and South, theorised in Chapter 2 and explicated in this chapter, had influence beyond the scope of the project itself. At its best, this dialogical approach led to interconnected dialogues and had an influence in both hemispheres. I will now briefly turn to this.

### **5.1.1.9 Influencing discourses**

Later in the lifetime of the project, Catalina and I met Dr Rory Ridley-Duff, a leading researcher in the field of social enterprise. By this time, we had further developed our understandings of conceptual approaches through dialogues with academics and practitioners in the field in Latin America and had added the descriptor ‘solidarity’ to the term ‘social economy’. This addition is significant because it captured a wider systemic conceptualisation important to project partners. As explained in the Introduction to this thesis, the social and solidarity economy signifies a system-wide approach which includes features such as cooperation, self-management, democracy and the sustainable local development of people and communities.

The concept of the ‘solidarity economy’ was influential in the 2nd edition of a key textbook on social enterprise, called ‘Understanding Social Enterprise: Theory and Practice’, published in 2015 by UK academic Rory Ridley-Duff. He explains,

Margaret and Catalina last year, in coming to the Summer School at Sheffield Hallam [University in the UK], and sharing with that School this project and the connection between what we were doing on the FairShares model and the solidarity economy they actually quite dramatically influenced the writing of the 2<sup>nd</sup> edition of the writing of Understanding Social Enterprise Theory and Practice (Ridley-Duff, 3<sup>rd</sup> Sept 2015). (See video from which this transcript is taken in the Data archive, Rory Ridley-Duff – explains influence of project ... ).

Ana María has used the project handbook, particularly the chapter on social capital, in her subsequent practice, which has been influenced by notions of participation in fostering individual transformation. She states,

I have included a chapter within my [rural] development courses at pre- and post-grad level about social economy and social capital, using the handbook as reference text. Participating in the project has given me more elements and it has helped me to consolidate the idea that for all that development means, it must assume a process of individual transformation of each agent (Email dialogue, Data archive, Ana María Villafuerte – Reflective dialogue 1, 2.10.16. Translated, p.3).

She was the lead author for the Latin American literature reviews. In the same dialogue, she further commented that it was significant to her personally to have been able to review the sections on Latin America in co-writing the manual.

Other examples of the use of the handbook in teaching in universities, in for example, Spain, Portugal and the UK can be seen in the Data archive, Use of handbook in universities folder, in which letters from course leaders who verify its use, can be found.

## **5.2 Insights and discussion**

In the previous section, I have focused on the strategic planning meetings and the way in which they laid the foundations for collaboratively writing the project handbook. Santos (2016, p.214) advocates 'intercultural translation' in which people with different knowledges are in dialogue. As pointed out in Chapter 2, his work is mainly theoretical and does not include explanations of the practicalities of how such intercultural translation can be realised in real-life contexts. In the previous section, I have shown in practice that it is possible to collaborate within differences so that all participants can take ownership of the outcomes.

In the following section I will use the critical episode of this chapter to draw out the way in which the collaboration with project partners led to developments in my thinking to evolve around key issues outlined in this thesis: spaces for participation in political action through epistemic justice, challenging the idea of a centre and a periphery, and dialogism. I will use the comments of others and use the handbook itself as evidence of my practice as I worked towards the realisation of these key themes. I also draw on some later dialogues and comments by project participants to illustrate points and in support of my claim to knowledge about creating spaces for dialogical action in a higher education context, towards epistemic justice.

### **5.2.1 Political action and epistemic justice**

The discussions and other activities in which we worked as participants towards shared understandings led me to reflect on the purpose and value of

what we were doing and the values intrinsic to such purpose and understanding of value.

In my early vision for the project, I was concerned that the countless ways of organising affairs which value people, their communities and the natural world were rendered invisible by an overwhelming profit-at-all-costs way of judging the worthwhile and the good. It reflected a belief in the need to find new ideas in an environment in which political discourses were merely focused on patching up an economic system which had clearly demonstrated its limitations and lack of moral and philosophical substance and which had adversely affected other areas of life such as education. As a citizen and as an academic, I felt that there had to be ways of showing that other values and other practices are being realised but are delegitimised by current cultural hegemony. At this point in my research, thinking about economics seemed to be at the heart of it because in discourses about the economy the hegemonic values of efficiency and material growth seemed to be expressed so unproblematically in official discourses and policies.

As the project proceeded and through many dialogues with people and with literature, I began to see it increasingly as issues of how knowledge itself is approached and how we know and judge knowledge to be valid and legitimate. It was an issue of epistemology. What I was learning about was a layer of justice (or injustice), which, with reference to Fricker (2007), I am calling 'epistemic justice'. The assumptions on which we come to know and come to see belief as justified underpinned discussions with collaborators. Many ways of knowing are discredited and I began to see delegitimation as the heart of the injustice, one which is directly relevant to the work and purposes of higher education. It seemed that this injustice was a layer beneath political and distributive injustices which had previously helped define the issue for me.

So, during the interactions of the strategic planning week and beyond, my thinking around participation in collaborative action evolved. I came to see more clearly that what is known and how it is known determines our actions and our being in the world, and that these could be markedly different. Reflecting on this later, I came to use the term 'epistemic justice' to theorise what Catalina and I had tried to achieve in the spaces of the strategic planning

meeting. Epistemic justice required fostering spaces in which such difference could be expressed. It meant taking time to work together around our issue of concern, and ensuring all could ask questions to frame and conceptualise the issues which required attention and action.

### **5.2.2 Raising questions and framing the issues**

I would characterise my previous understanding as an awareness of the potentially unlimited number of answers there might be to a question. This became a much deeper awareness of the importance of understanding the parameters around how issues are framed and who raises the questions. I came to see this framing and participation in raising questions for investigation as part of epistemic justice. Establishing lines of enquiry through the simple act of participants (and more widely, stakeholders) setting criteria around the issue and asking the questions they consider relevant is not featured in the existing literature about cognitive justice, or in Santos' framework for intercultural translation (2016). It is perhaps alluded to by Ngũgĩ Wa Thiong'o (1993, p.3), who demands 'the right to name the world for ourselves' and Freire (1972, p.61), who says that 'to exist, humanly, is to *name* the world' and could be considered one of the 'conditions that allow human cultures to create their own life projects from their everyday knowledge' (Restrepo 2014, p.142) as referred to in Chapter 2. Framing issues and setting questions for enquiry are considered a basis of enquiry-based learning (for example, in Kai Wah Chu et al. 2016), but its radical potential and implications for justice in ways of knowing tend not to be a feature of this literature. Enquiries usually start with a conceptual understanding on the part of the enquirer, be this articulated or not. Questions can follow from conceptual understanding. In this way, the question-asker has the power to set the foundations of knowledge construction and include one set of assumptions and parameters rather than another.

Earlier in the Chapter, I stated that a partner from Cusco in Peru, Ana María Villafuerte, had initially seen European projects as not positioning academics from her university as having a knowledge creating capacity. The point made in the quotation, included in Chapter 1, Section 1.3.1, was partial. She made the fuller point elsewhere:



It usually happens that there are projects which come from Europe to my university. All that happens is that we are collectors of information. *But here we have been partners, we have constructed together, and I want to make this very clear* (Transcript of audio recording. Data archive, Meeting with EU assessor - Transcript partners meeting EU assessor 3.9.15, with translations, p.7, my italics).

Ana María is unequivocally stating that, in contrast to other projects in which her university participated, within the social and solidarity economy project Catalina and I had actively sought her contribution and that of others on the basis of collaborating as peers.

A partner who worked in the African continent articulated the way in which the project had challenged the centre and periphery dynamic in terms of the unidirectional flow of learning and insights which might be considered significant and relevant in that continent:

Our experience is that in Africa we always study Europe and ... good examples from the North. And I think this [project] allowed us to do a little bit of the opposite. There are ... good examples from the South ... they are not heard in Europe (See transcript of audio recording in the Data archive, Meeting with EU assessor - Transcript partners meeting EU assessor 3.9.15, with translations, p.4).

### **5.2.3 Promoting inclusive spaces – avoiding binaries**

The decision to collaboratively establish flexible criteria for the types of organisations we would approach to work with within the project has been explained above. Given the differences of experiences of partners, it was a more inclusive approach than offering a set definition. The flexible criteria enabled the group of partners to move forward together. Definitions tend to be inflexible, binary and are set: you concur, or you do not. There is no room to redraw the parameters or accept a different framing of the issue and they therefore reduce the possibilities inherent in any social context. They are therefore not necessarily conducive to justice in its epistemic form.

Policy makers tend to need definitions without grey areas. As explained in the Introduction to this thesis, the literature from within the UK and Europe does

not always agree on definitions of the social economy; much less so in a wider international sphere where a single definition might be highly contentious and exclusionary. It could be argued that creating criteria was a way of hedging our bets, but it did mean that in the diversity of the group, each appeared to feel a sense of identification with the whole. In developing criteria for the organisations partners would approach, rather than a definition of the social economy, I believe we succeeded in creating a situation in which the partners could work with an element of fuzziness, keep the dialogue open and maintain space for a variety of responses. This open-endedness made it possible to go forward in the project as peers rather than partners from one tradition dominating and winning the argument. Such an approach is usually therefore more complex and less certain. Binaries, while sometimes necessary, are by nature exclusive and bring about the appearance of certainty because the choices have been clearly defined. For these reasons, I believe they should be used with careful reflection on their purpose and potential cost, not least to maintaining dialogue which might encompass other perspectives and other possibilities. The criteria we developed had the status of a spectrum of indicators of intent of the organisations we were envisaging for inclusion in our investigations.

As the work of the project developed, this flexibility meant we could also investigate organisations which had clear social and environmental aims, but which had legal structures not typically associated with the social economy. Some took the form of public liability companies (i.e. a shareholder-owned company), such as Divine Chocolate. The social and solidarity economy element, and the difference from other private sector companies, is that a major shareholder of Divine Chocolate is a cooperative of West African peasant farmers and so the farmers have significant input into decisions about the business. Profits are invested into community education and micro enterprises led by local women. If project partners had adopted a definition of the social economy, Divine Chocolate would probably have been excluded due to its legal structure as a shareholder-owned private company. Adopting flexible criteria for the organisations we would investigate meant that we could be open to those which clearly embodied the principles of social and environmental purpose in the enterprise.

### **5.2.4 Achieving consensus vs. acknowledging difference in collaborative work**

At the beginning of the project, I underestimated the differences in understandings of conceptualisation of the social economy held by project partners. However, as the project progressed, I became increasingly less uncomfortable with disagreement, increasingly aware of the possibility of multiple spaces for diverse expressions of these joined by a common purpose, and increasingly saw any difference as a 'disturbance' (Plowman and Duchon 2007, p.125) of settled opinions and perspectives, which could enrich and lead to new understandings rather than impoverishment. However, in the project, arriving at common understandings within difference took time and care over processes to ensure opportunities for inclusion, and it required all parties to be motivated towards developing such understanding. If a theme or focus is imposed by others and people feel excluded by unspoken assumptions or parameters, I believe the endeavour is less likely to be sustained.

I learnt that there was a difference between gaining consensus in all areas and finding ways forward together in spite of our differences. One of the challenges in our collaborative endeavour was around seeking consensus within the group on the one hand and acknowledging difference and having space for disagreement on the other. Both of these approaches can encompass notions of solidarity, according to Sennett (2013). He identifies two approaches to solidarity: a 'participative' one with its impetus in the 'grass-roots'; and an approach which is top-down and aims for unity and which, ultimately, can be deeply exclusionary in the overriding aim of presenting an appearance of consensus (p.39). In Sennett's terms, the approach Catalina and I took in the project aimed to be participative.

In terms of taking political action, it was vital to find ways of proceeding which we could all sign up to. Diversity needed to be given spaces of expression in political action rather than glossed over or trivialised in ways which leave existing norms unchallenged, as explained in Chapter 1 with reference to the work of Michael Apple (2000, p.xv).

Following completion of the project, Ana María commented

[You both] managed to integrate as peers a team of people who would never have met, with different languages ..., different professions, and including different political ideologies and opposing philosophical positions. We were all together for the same objective, the dream of contributing towards the construction of a world of more solidarity (Email dialogue, Data archive, Ana Maria Villafuerte - Reflective dialogue 1, 2.10.16. Translated, p.2).

### **5.2.5 Political action and realising our natality – the importance of a meaningful role for each participant**

In the project, diverse expressions of participants' values and of different understandings of the social and solidarity economy needed to be accommodated if it were to be an inclusive space of political action. This is the development of an important aspect of Arendt's idea of natality, explained in Chapter 2, as the capacity we all have to bring something new into the world. The design of the project meant that each national group or team had a specific role which they alone were able to develop and fulfil, based on their particular experience, expertise and geographical location. For example, as stated in Chapter 3, the team from Spain had expertise in cooperativism and would investigate this organisational manifestation of the social and solidarity economy; the team from the Centre for African Studies in Portugal had extensive contacts in Africa; and the team from Peru could take the lead in the investigations in Latin America. Within the teams, it was hoped that participants would work in complementary ways, although ensuring such ways of working was beyond the control of Catalina and me as co-ordinators.

Having a unique and specific role for each national team within the project also resonates with Young's notion of political justice. She argues that members of oppressed groups need spaces to identify and reinforce the 'positivity of their specific experience' (Young 2011, p.167). I argue that when placed in the domain of knowledge creation, the availability of such spaces becomes a feature of epistemic justice.

In the feedback of the bid for funding, the EU assessors indicated that at the proposal stage of the project, we had achieved this. They wrote:

The consortium composition can serve as a role model: the partners have well defined and complementary roles and profiles and contribute to the project with their individual strengths. [The non-European partner's involvement] helps to combat a potential European bias of the project (Letter from EACEA 2012, Data archive, Bid for funding and feedback).

Within the strategic planning meetings, partners allocated themselves to take the lead on particular chapters which were of interest to them. The only stipulation from Catalina and me was that each chapter needed a leading representative from both global North and global South, to ensure a diversity of approaches and understandings would be reflected in each chapter as far as possible, and to promote dialogue and the regular checking of assumptions. Taking a lead in creating a chapter represented an opportunity for each to influence and steer its content and to make a unique contribution in this way.

#### ***5.2.5.1 Challenges of all having unique roles***

While a unique role for each person can be motivating, this arrangement did present some serious difficulties. The roles were separately allocated so that each one had a specific contribution on which the whole depended, as explained above. In one sense this bound partners together: the success of one and the whole were tightly inter-related, and such inter-dependence, I believe, promoted the sense of shared responsibility. On the other hand, when some very stressful situations emerged in which some universities were unable to realise their commitments for reasons beyond the control of the group, the progress of others was affected. Therefore, there was a tension between each having a uniquely defined responsibility and contribution on the one hand and insuring against risk of one difficulty adversely affecting the conduct of the whole project on the other. Catalina and I did not find an ideal answer to this dilemma. According to Arendt, the unpredictability of political action means there will always be uncertainty about outcomes and consequences (1958, p.191).

In order to address some of the issues of particular universities and individuals not managing to realise their commitments, Catalina and I sought ways of ensuring that the specific aspects of work which were under threat of not being

completed were carried out in different ways and by different people. As the project progressed, more collaborators became involved and carried out the work in their own unique ways. This involvement resulted in the widening of the space of political action through the involvement of new participants. This will be explained and exemplified in the next chapter.

### **5.2.6 Enlarging the centre**

In practice the theory of centre and periphery, as explained in Chapter 2, can be enacted in context-driven and dynamic ways. People can be positioned in the centre or the periphery, or both, depending on the context they are in and who is doing the positioning. The partners in the project all represented universities. Given the relationship between power and knowledge as explained in Chapters 1 and 2, partners represented institutions at the 'centre' in the form of knowledge that tends to be considered to be of 'most worth' (Apple 2012, p.viii) by virtue of being universities. Within this hierarchy universities in the global South can tend to position Western, techno-rationalist, knowledge as 'central' in its legitimacy and indigenous knowledges as more peripheral. And within the specific countries represented, some partners were aware of the central or peripheral status of their own universities or departments and the legitimacy or otherwise inferred by such status.

Catalina and I represented a UK university and a European project. In this sense we had, and were deliberately using, the positional power to include those who tended to be excluded as having knowledge creating capacities under current power/knowledge hegemonies. As explained in Chapter 3, within the bid for funding we used the criterion to promote the attractiveness of European higher education in a way which was consistent with our values of working towards justice through inclusion and participation. In terms of the theory of a centre and a periphery, I later realised that I was conceptualising my practice as aiming to make the centre more inclusive and therefore not challenging the very idea of a periphery. This issue will be returned to in the next chapter.

### 5.2.7 The 'dialogical' in political action

In this chapter, and with reference to Buber (2002, p.25), I have shown in practice a form of 'turning towards' partners in the project. As explained in Chapter 4, I am calling this phase of turning towards the other 'turning inwards' in developing shared understandings in order to move forward together.

Catalina and I saw our role as creating the space, and as facilitating the process to hold it open, for a diversity of perspectives and to ensure these were reflected in the bigger picture of the project processes and outputs. As Berry states (1985, cited in Sidorkin 1999, pp.15-16), 'the choice is not between structure and spontaneity, but between regarding structure as closure and as enabling, as an opening'. The challenge for Catalina and for me was to create structures and processes which were enabling, rather than limiting.

The literature discussed in Chapter 2, such as that by Wegerif (2013) and Stern (2013), points to the idea that spaces can be created which make dialogism more likely, but that it cannot be planned as such. This is because it is a creative process which does not happen 'to order'. Santos (2016) advocates 'dialogues between knowledges'. In practice, and in a project with people from very different backgrounds over an extended period of time, the impetus for dialogic approaches can present significant challenges, and addressing them in practice is not explicitly addressed in the literature.

According to Bakhtin, within dialogism perspectives are not merged. Rather each participant has a greater understanding of herself and of the other (Bakhtin, Holquist, and Emerson, 1986, p.7). In the practices explained above in this chapter, I argue that a framework was created which enabled difference to be explored and articulated. We had entered a 'third space' (Bhabha 2004), in which something new, reflecting its creators but different from them, was generated.

In the sections above I have aimed to show how dialogism was enacted in practice in the strategic planning meetings. I will now explore this issue further in relation to Buber's identification of different types of dialogue. The context is the continuation of work towards writing the handbook, but it takes place in the

first year of the project following the strategic planning meetings (see Research timeline, Appendix 1), rather than in the meetings themselves.

#### ***5.2.7.1 Genuine dialogue, technical dialogue and monological interaction disguised as dialogue***

As stated in Chapter 2, Buber (2002, pp.22-23) makes a distinction between 'genuine' dialogue, in which meeting and relating with the 'other' is prioritised; and 'technical', or more transactionally focused, dialogue. He argues that there needs to be a balance or an 'interplay' (Morgan and Guilherme 2014, p.5) between these two forms. In the phase of the project described above, when conceptual frameworks were being set and relationships established between ourselves and between each partner and the project itself, creating spaces and opportunities for genuine dialogue was of critical importance.

Having explored differing conceptualisations and perspectives and collaboratively created a whole which would give space for these, it was then possible to work on achieving a more technical form of dialogue (Buber 2002, p.22): in other words, the 'who, what, how and when' of getting the job done. Types of dialogue will be explored further in the next chapter, in relation to the online medium. In what follows here I will explore some of the challenges in adopting a dialogic approach.

There can be a tension between monologic and dialogic practices. However, there are competing pushes and pulls between an approach which co-constructs and one which seeks to make decisions and move things forward in more monological ways. Some of these competing forces are related to the reality of differing levels of responsibility within a project. Although our approach was to share power with others as much as possible, Catalina and I maintained organisational power and aimed to use this power to maintain spaces which enabled personal and collective agency. This was a deliberate decision in order to ensure that our values of participation underpinned the whole project. There were times when, following discussion with people involved, we had to make unilateral decisions. I will exemplify one such situation in what follows.



In the project proposal stage and during the strategic planning meetings, a partner offered, and gained agreement from the relevant authorities, to lead a team to host an international event at their university in the second year of the project. It was envisaged as an event to present the work of that university in relation to the project, and to invite academics, practitioners in the social and solidarity economy and students as an interchange of knowledge and experiences and foster new collaborations.

During the first year of the project the event was discussed in partners' Skype meetings and in individual meetings between Catalina, me and the proposed event leader. However, when a specific plan was eventually submitted it arguably met the letter of the agreement, but not its spirit. The 'international' people in the event would have been just the project partners, rather than partners with other people from the international sphere, and it comprised presentations to audiences rather than deeper levels of mutual interaction. It seemed it would not expand the space of dialogic political action in the way originally envisaged.

I am presenting this story not to blame any individual. All partners had competing priorities to manage as all were participating as well as carrying out their 'everyday' work and holding other responsibilities. I am presenting it as a context with the aim of explaining that within a dialogic approach, Catalina and I, as co-ordinators ultimately responsible for the use of resources of the project, sometimes had to make 'unilateral' decisions together which may not have been the preferred decision of the group.

It would have been easier to agree to simply proceeding with the event. It was something all partners had eagerly anticipated, and for which time away from other university commitments had already be agreed with respective university authorities. As finally proposed, the event would have mainly comprised partners travelling to another country to present to each other. On an ethical basis, Catalina and I decided the work could not justify the use of significant resources of money or time. We explained to the partner leading the event, and then to all partners, why we could not partially fund it from project resources, as envisaged. However, we aimed to avoid engaging in 'monologue disguised as dialogue' (Buber 2002, pp.22-23), in, for example, not canvassing

opinions of others when we felt unable to proceed whatever their opinions were. The commitment of the project partner involved had been ebbing away, and the decision marked a watershed in terms of their involvement in the project at the beginning of its second year.

Being joint co-ordinators made such decisions more bearable, and offered the possibility of full and safe discussion – something not always available in leadership positions. I could not argue definitively that we were ‘right’, just that according to the priorities we believed in and espoused and in relation to the direction of travel of the proposed work, we found it problematic to justify.

Bakhtin refers to the idea of a ‘superaddressee’ (Bakhtin, Holquist and Emerson 1986, p. 126): an imagined third party listener whom he identifies as possibly being ‘God, ... the court of dispassionate human conscience, ...science, and so forth’, depending on personal beliefs. In addition to the people we are addressing in the dialogue in the here and now, this superaddressee is present in our internal dialogues, according to Bakhtin. It is the ‘incarnation of a particular value deemed desirable’ and a ‘voice available to [guide the] inner dialogue’ (Bryzzheva 2006, p.227). In the dialogue Catalina and I engaged in about the situation described above, we discussed the values and aims underpinning the project and invoked an imaginary person to whom we would explain our actions, based on those values and the competing value of maintaining solidarity with the group; we invoked a kind of superaddressee to guide the dialogue. It became clear from this guided dialogue that neither of us felt able to proceed with using project resources for the event.

In speaking about dialogism within the project, the dialogic relationship which underpinned many of the decisions made was that between Catalina and me. The example above was one of many in which we discussed ways forward amidst awareness of competing values and interests. We sometimes had very different perspectives, and being able to discuss these at length, did, I believe enable us to make decisions based on assumptions that had been tested and challenged in our dialogues.

### **5.2.7.2 *Having a common centre or concern***

Arendt's view of political action in the public sphere is about deliberation and negotiated action around an issue of common concern. As referred to in Chapter 2, it needs a 'common centre' according to Buber (1965, cited in Moroco 2008, p.15), what I will call a 'common concern', so that the participants do not fragment into separate interest groups. The notion of a common concern implies that it is inclusive in terms of expanding the space of dialogue rather than reducing it or making it premised on narrower and exclusive group self-interest. It needs to be an appealing proposition which motivates people to contribute.

There is an obvious tension between making this common concern inclusive and flexible and making it focused and rigorous. Throughout the project, Catalina and I were in frequent dialogue about meanings and purposes, often about how we should proceed and how we could balance the competing concerns and interests. In what follows I aim to show that there were differences in the motivations and understandings between project participants in the concerns we addressed and the personal meanings invested in the project. I will give three examples from project participants and one from the project handbook:

Firstly, Catalina explained what the concern had been from her perspective:

If something was linking us to other universities, ... the linking was not the answers to the questions, but the questions [themselves] we were raising in terms of our roles as academics.

[It wasn't so much about the knowledge] ... It was in the end, so what? ... if it was not for making this world more human ... (Transcript of video dialogue 15.10.2017. Data archive, Catalina Quiroz-Niño – Transcript, p.1).

She is arguing that it was the questions about what we are doing, as citizens and in our role as academics, were of concern to her.

For my second example, I will use the words of Ana María Villafuerte. In an email exchange with me about what we had learnt from the project, she stated:

I learnt that a better world is possible, that our differences are not irreconcilable, that it is only necessary to learn and to listen. I learnt that a dialogue of knowledges between different latitudes is possible, I learnt that no knowledge is better than another, they are simply different and therefore we have to seek how they complement each other. ...

I learnt that human beings from whichever part of the world are equal. We have the same problems, fears and defects. But with some good will, we are capable of transcending [the fragility of] our humanity and feeling like citizens of the world (Email, Data archive, Ana Maria Villafuerte – Reflective dialogue 1, 2.10.16. Translated, p.2).

Her response speaks of her concern about the possibility of equality and understanding between people and peoples.

My third example is the words of Emeritus Professor David Maughan Brown, whose positive response to the initial idea of the project enabled it to proceed to the bidding stage. Reflecting on the moment Catalina and I first spoke to him about submitting the potential bid, he commented that

it seemed to me ... a visionary proposal ideally suited to the particular historical moment, and entirely in line with this University's mission to embrace difference, challenge prejudice and promote justice (Conference report, 2015, p. 12).

Again, values-based themes and concerns are emphasised, beyond the content and specific focus of the project.

As a final example, within the project handbook different styles and approaches are apparent in the literature reviews, practical cases, teaching activities and documentary evidence that make up each chapter. In the introduction to the handbook partners from two continents wrote collaboratively:

And beyond the results, as a team we are left with the experience of having been a part of a collective where cultural barriers between 'north' and 'south' were erased and where, if we are able to sustain the essence of being human, dialogue between peers, as peers, is

possible (Meredith and Quiroz-Nino (Coords.) et al. 2015, Introduction, pp.7-8).

For Buber, the idea of a 'common centre' was important in dialogic relationships, as explained in Chapter 2. For him, this overarching reference and common centre was the God of his faith, the 'eternal Thou' (2004, p.99). What might be discerned as a common centre or common concern for project participants is that all of us seem to grapple with the values we find inherent within the project: equality, justice and what it means to realise our humanity in the world, and yet, as illustrated above, each one expresses this common concern in different ways.

The meaning I have personally drawn from the project is the foundation of this thesis and centres on the possibility of working towards greater participation and justice for all. I believe it is significant that none of the people quoted above expresses the purpose of the project in terms of its outputs, or of contributing to a changed economy. The project enabled participants to express common concern, not in terms of tasks or tangible outcomes. Rather, the significance they find in the work is expressed in terms of realising personally motivating values, which may go beyond differences of the expression and outworking of those values.

### ***5.2.7.3 Process versus product in dialogue***

The processes explained earlier in this chapter in which partners shared their understandings, generated criteria for identifying organisations in the social and solidarity economy and generated questions for collaborative investigation took longer than had originally been expected. The processes created some considerable knock-on pressures in the project. Under pressure of time, it could be easier to envisage an end point, such as a handbook with given conceptualisations and themes, and then work to get everyone there. However, I believe that this would have been against the principles of political action, which is collaborative and negotiated, and against the interests of epistemic justice. The process took longer partly because we needed to explore differing conceptualisations of the social economy and find ways of proceeding together. However, in spite of the time pressures, I would argue

that if epistemic justice is important to a collaborative endeavour in which there are different interested parties, this dialogic process should be seen as its core. Without such processes, I believe that shared understandings would not have developed to the same extent, and partners may not have seen themselves and their concerns and conceptualisations reflected in the project. As one of the partner evaluations stated, quoted above in Section 5.1.1.7, the in-depth debates were necessary.

In this early phase of the project, my understanding of dialogic approaches was more 'instrumental' – as a means-to-an-end – than it would later become. At this point in my research, I saw a participative and dialogic approach as a just and inclusive way of getting to an equitable outcome. A dialogic approach was a means to an end and the 'end' in view was to fulfil the terms of the bid, in, for example, creating the project handbook. Participants were working towards tangible outcomes which needed to be realised and my sights were firmly on these outcomes. I will revisit this theme in the following chapter and explain how my understanding of dialogism evolved.

### **5.2.8 Conclusion to section**

Within the project, the dialogical action taken by partners in our public sphere generated new understandings on three levels. The first was that in articulating our understandings we learnt about each other's contexts and realities and found commonalities and differences. The second, a slower and more profound process, involved deconstructing our own assumptions as part of the dialogue. So, on one level it involved learning about one another's contexts and worlds; on another level it created a situation in which we could partially step out of our own context and view it as an outsider in a way that enabled a greater meta-understanding of our own frameworks of knowing. In this way we learnt from one another. The third level was that in our dialogical space of new understandings of ourselves and others, new knowledge and frameworks for knowing emerged.

## **5.3 Turning inwards – challenging assumptions**

The political action, started in this phase of the project, initiated a process of reflection on my own assumptions. Bakhtin's words about coming to know

one's 'belief system as it is perceived in someone else's system' (1981, p.365) became very real to me, sometimes in ways that were not entirely comfortable. Gaventa and Cornwall (2008, p.182) argue that not only must production of alternative knowledge be complemented by action upon it, but the participants in the knowledge process must equally find spaces for self-critical investigation and analysis of their own reality, in order to gain more authentic knowledge as a basis for action or representation to others. In what follows I will explain one such assumption, which concerns my positioning of others. I learnt that benevolence can be contrary to the values of justice and the right of people to exercise their agency.

During dialogue with project partners about ways of knowing amongst indigenous people in the Andes, I realised that in some ways I had 'essentialised' the peoples of this region, perhaps seeing their way of life as one which should be 'preserved' against existential threats (environmental, social and political) from outside. On reflection, I could see that this was a position that was easy for me to adopt and that could be considered patronising. In Buber's terms (2004), it positioned the unknown 'Other' as 'It' rather than as 'Thou'. I will now give an example.

My understanding is that in the region of Cusco in the Andes, associations of coffee growers are being threatened because of a new policy of giving individual families the deeds to pieces of land: land was previously common to all. My instinctive reaction to this information was that the policy was wrong. The logic of the International Monetary Fund who have driven the policy is that with these deeds, families can borrow on the capital markets, invest and improve their situations. Some have sold up and done well. The rest are becoming increasingly stuck in isolated pockets which are becoming unviable for coffee production and therefore unviable for providing a livelihood to the land dwellers.

Project partners pointed out that, for many, the priority for many people in their region of the Andes was that their children should have a better life, which may be a different kind of life elsewhere. People's ways of life and epistemologies can be viewed by outsiders as intrinsically good, and it is possible to assume as an outsider that efforts should be made to maintain such a way of life. This

approach can tend to see culture as something unchanging and fossilised, which can be at the cost of freedom and lack of opportunities for natural cultural evolution and personal and community development.

As a westerner, I am not necessarily confronted on a day-to-day basis with laws and judgements and ways of doing things working significantly against my interests or those of my wider community. This is a privilege I need to problematise when in different contexts. Many dilemmas will not have a right or wrong answer, as the example above shows. When working with others and in unfamiliar contexts I need to aim to test my own assumptions, and always to acknowledge the capacity for others to exercise their agency. Making assumptions that the life of indigenous people in the Andes is 'good' does not leave space for others to exercise their agency. Following completion of the project, Ana María and I discussed this theme and my realisation of what I saw as 'benevolent racism' in an email. She commented

Yes, benevolent racism but, when it comes down to it, racism, and violation of the right to choose one's own life. ...

There is a strong tendency from academia and from politicians and those who harvest votes with hunger, from those who do not suffer hunger or cold and who have a comfortable bed and a roof over their heads and a secure salary to try to raise their voice for those whose voices are not heard because they are invisible to power; and imagine a happy world for them (from our own perspective). But they never ask what it is people want, what are their dreams. The help is conditioned on what 'I' think (Email communication 13.2.2018. Data archive, Ana Maria Villafuerte – Reflective dialogue 2, 14.2.2018. Translated, p.3).

Post-colonial writer Frantz Fanon (2017) describes a phenomenon of 'black skin, white masks' where colonised people seek to imitate their colonisers. Fanon's portrayal of subjugation in this way is a shocking and arguably violent metaphor to illustrate a process of psychological violence against a collective of people. Grootjans (2010) turns Fanon's idea around to examine benevolent racism and calls it 'white skin, black masks'. My understanding of his point is that people who are privileged materially and in other ways aim to uncritically 'help' those in other contexts, regardless of whether the help offered is wanted



by the recipients or serves their interests, perhaps in the way Ana María is alluding to above.

I realised that my unthinking position of indigenous people in the region and the assumption that all placed high value on their way of life was a contradiction in my belief in the right of people to be agents in decisions which affect them, or an assumption of what such agency might mean. I wouldn't seek to underestimate how complicated this issue is as there is sometimes a very practical and existential conflict between individual rights and community rights in situations where, in the example given, land is held in common and is then privatised. However, my point here is that as a European I could be blinded to realities that didn't fit with my 'benevolent' world view which positioned others as not being entitled to the same freedoms that I can enjoy, and as somehow benefitting from my 'help'. This 'others' people as different and exotic (Said 2003), and as people who are in need of knowledge, rather than people who have something important to contribute to wider domains of knowledge.

As the project proceeded and as I met and interacted with people from backgrounds different from mine in the global South, I became embarrassed about this assumption and increasingly felt a sense of solidarity as we strove in our own contexts to realise our common humanity and to be agents in our own lives.

For me, this realisation was perhaps a part of a process of *conscientisacion* (Freire 1972), of being critically aware of power structures and the oppression that affects life chances. Freire sees the oppressor solely as an 'other'. During the project I became increasingly aware that I can go along with oppression and be the author of it, sometimes in subtle ways which are disturbing to acknowledge by thinking of myself as a 'good white person' (Brookfield 2019, p.4 citing Sullivan, 2014): professing to be anti-racist and condemning racist actions, while being complicit in a system that sanctioned those actions.

In Chapter 2, I referred to the work of Cranton (2016), who highlights the notion of a shift in understandings which takes place as part of transformative learning. In the example above, my understanding shifted and was

transformed. It is difficult to shift the centre of vision (Ngũgĩ Wa Thiong'o 1993, p.4), which is why it is important to engage in dialogue with people from other centres. *Conscientisacion* is a process that is ongoing: it did not start with my increasing understanding described here, but I believe the example I have given above illustrates a change in perceptions, and in an awareness of personal responsibility, which took place during and within processes of dialogical interactions with others in the project. This example served to deepen my understanding of justice, as a reminder that justice is not only about the actions of others and of systems. It is also about challenging one's own assumptions which can then become exposed as unjust.

This ongoing process will probably never be complete. As an 'outsider' to many contexts encompassed by the project, I have asked myself on many occasions what distorting assumptions or biases I might be bringing to my assumptions which I used to frame approaches or conceptualisations. These potentially limited people's possibility for political action. I will return to this issue in the following chapter.

## **5.4 Conclusion to chapter**

In this chapter I have explained how the actions and processes taken with partners in the project aimed to be participative from the outset, and the importance of participation on the level of ways of knowing. At an early stage of the project, the aim was for partners to have meaningful input into the framing of the issues and the focus of the investigation.

I have explained how, in practice, dialogic spaces were created for such input, and how the process of weaving this into something the whole group could proceed with was facilitated.

At this point in the project, and charting my own intellectual progress, my understanding of my practice could be characterised as aiming to enlarge the 'centre' to make it more inclusive. This idea is also linked to my awareness of a 'benevolent' stance in my thinking. In the following chapter I return to the idea of centre and periphery and challenge the concept in practice.

## **Chapter 6 - Turning outwards: political action and the online medium**

This chapter is divided into two main sections. In the first, and following Chapter 5, I continue to discuss interactions between project partners. I explain that, following the strategic planning meetings described in that chapter, project partners held regular meetings using online conferencing: interaction which was in 'real time' or synchronous. In this first section, I will discuss some of the opportunities and challenges presented by the use of Skype for individual and group meetings within the project, with reference to literature. I will then draw on experiences in the project to argue that one of its main advantages – its potential for time-efficiency and narrow focus – can also be a challenge for sustaining dialogical relationships in group settings and therefore also to political action.

In the second section, I continue to consider the internet as an enabler within the project. Here, however, I consider its 'asynchronous' use where participants in the discourse do not communicate concurrently. Some social media such as blogs, Twitter and many features of Facebook come into this category. Such social media were the project's public-facing use of digital technology. This second section forms the main part of the chapter, taking the use of blogs within the project to consider the opportunities they provided for political action. This forms the narrative of the second critical episode in which I explicate my learning about participation in dialogical action.

The chapter is structured in the following way:

1. Section 1: I consider online conferencing and the possibilities it offers for developing and maintaining relationships in the context of political action.
2. Section 2: I discuss the use of blogs within the conference. I then give the background for, and introduce, critical episode 2 which focuses on the use of the project blogs by an academic in Colombia with her students.
3. I reflect upon my learning, and that of others, in and through the critical episode towards creating spaces of dialogical political action.

## 6.1 Section 1 - Online conferencing

Throughout the three years of the project, the principal medium of live – or synchronous – communication at a distance was Skype. This was the main medium through which contact was maintained between project partners for the duration of the project in the form of bi-monthly group meetings of about one hour, which at least one member of each national team was expected to attend; and more ad-hoc meetings between partners. One-to-one meetings with some project collaborators were undertaken exclusively using Skype.

Markham (2004, cited in Quartiroli, Knight, Etzel and Monaghan) highlights three essential aspects of real-time, Internet communication and the advantages of working together in this way. They are

- (a) geographical dispersion - being able to connect synchronously and remotely with all team members, regardless of real-time location, for every meeting,
- (b) temporal malleability – negating the time necessary for travel, as all members could meet from their preferred location and were able to start the meeting immediately, thus avoiding inconvenient ‘dead-periods’ where time is not used productively, and
- (c) multiple modality, such as the ability to share the computer screen, thus enabling all team members to view and respond to research data in real time, ‘facilitating the consensual analysis process’ (Quartiroli, Knight, Etzel and Monaghan 2017, pp.662-663).

Markham’s first two points will be discussed in what follows. The third point will not be explored. This is because it seems to me that his third point highlights the advantage of Skype and similar online conferencing facilities – where in-progress documents can be projected onto all participants’ screens, enabling comment and input by all during the meeting – which give an advantage over asynchronous means of communication, such as email. However, Skype does not provide advantages in this respect in relation to face-to-face meetings where participants are present in the same physical space and can easily have input into documents in progress.

When discussing the difficulties of the medium, some of the literature highlights the disadvantages of such technology at a very practical level: dropped calls,

time delays and inaudible segments. Within the online project meetings these issues were irritations, but not insuperable obstacles. The literature points to differing conclusions about whether the medium affects the quality of human interactions. For some (for example, Deakin and Wakefield 2014; Quartiroli, Knight, Etzel and Monaghan 2017), the quality of the interactions as such is not affected as compared to meetings where all are physically present. However, there is some identification in the literatures of a change in the affective level of interactions when using online conferencing. Seitz (2016), for example, found that the quality of research interviews was affected by the nature of the topic. Skype presented an emotional barrier when sensitive topics were addressed due to the 'loss of personal connection and intimacy' (p.232). She argues that here is an 'inability to read body language and nonverbal cues, and loss of intimacy compared to traditional in-person [encounters]' (p.230).

In the project, this personal connection was created through video conferencing on a number of occasions. Relationships were developed and maintained through Skype. For example, Master's student Laura Kreiling became involved with the project via the Erasmus Mundus Alumni Association. The initial meetings between her, Catalina and me took place using Skype. She commented,

we had known each other since autumn 2013 and initially communicated remotely, as I was writing my master thesis in Sweden. This gave us time to get to know each other. I remember the first time we physically met, it didn't feel like it was for the first time (Email communication 31.1.2017. Data archive, Laura Kreiling – Email with Laura, p.1).

She discusses the trusting relationship that developed, initially from Skype meetings about a blog post she would author:

It was indeed mutual: my trust to let you read and brush up our English in the master thesis and then your trust to relying on me in critical project periods (ibid 31.1.2017, p.1).

Using Skype, we were able to connect synchronously – in 'real time' – and collaborate with people from five continents. It enabled project partners to

'widen the space of dialogue' (Wegerif 2013, p.33) by including new collaborators who participated in the project. Significant contributions to the project were made from people from very different contexts, in the form of contributions to the handbook, the project blog and the end-of-project conference. The advantages highlighted above by Quartiroli, Knight, Etzel and Monaghan (2017, p.663) were manifest in our work: without online, synchronous meetings, it would have been impossible to expand the space of political action in the public sphere to this extent 'synchronously and remotely'. It is not just that our geographical dispersion could be overcome. Rather, a project of this type would be inconceivable without this kind of online affordance. We were able to maintain regular communication with partners and collaborators, sometimes in a quick and just-in-time manner when they wished to discuss their project work with Catalina and with me in between other commitments: a form of 'temporal malleability' highlighted by Quartiroli, Knight, Etzel and Monaghan (p.663).

### **6.1.1 Group meetings**

The nature of our online group meetings was different from the face-to-face strategic planning meetings described in the previous chapter. This difference was partly because the time given for a meeting in a busy day can be much more limited than in an event in which people are away from the pressures of their normal working environment. They were also held in a different phase of the project: whereas the strategic planning meetings had evolved into an extensive exploration of concepts, the Skype meetings were more geared towards the day-to-day execution of the project. As such, the form of the dialogues in this context on Skype were closer to what Buber calls 'technical dialogue' (2002, pp.22-23), which, as discussed in Chapter 2, is driven by the need for objective understanding and was more appropriate in the project when we needed to discuss our progress towards the already agreed goals and actions. In Figure 6:1 below I give an example of an agenda for a Skype meeting between partners, and the notes created during the meeting and distributed as a form of minutes to record decisions made. The 'Actions to take: what? who? for when?' sections were completed by negotiation between partners during the meetings and projected using the 'Shared screen' facility

of Skype. Such visual projection to each partner meant that understandings could be clarified at the time. The document was sent to all partners immediately following each meeting.

Categories	Themes to cover	Actions to take: what? who? and for when?				
YSJ – Consortium	Sharing the 2nd English newsletter for April: <a href="https://s5.newzapp.co.uk/gtp.aspx?ID=OSwzNTYxNjU2NTksMw==">https://s5.newzapp.co.uk/gtp.aspx?ID=OSwzNTYxNjU2NTksMw==</a> <b>Urgent</b> – news of case studies for the Spain/Peru/Portugal newsletter? Please fill in the table.  What have we done to bring in friends of the project? What strategies have worked? What are we going to do next?	Case studies and news about ES in higher education appropriate for the readership of their country – one per country x 4 times a year.				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Newsletter</li> </ul>		Who's responsible? Each country to name one person per newsletter	April-May, 2013	July-August, 2013	Sept/Oct 2013	Dec/2014
		Spain	[Name]: in process			
		Peru	[Name and name]			
		Portugal	[Name]: done and sent	[Name]: Concept of social economy from thesis		
		UK	Maggie: done	Maggie: Time bank, York? or [Name]Foundation, Cameroon?		
		[Name] Will send case study for the newsletter. Industrial cooperative from the Corporation, waiting for data to be verified. Cooperative recently created by 12 students from Leadership [Name] Case study about microcredits, waiting for authorisation from the organisation. Next newsletter: [name] Case study about Guinea Bissau. [Name] case study about social economy concepts for development and integration of cultures.				

**Figure 6:1 Agenda and notes from partners' Skype meeting (date 3.5.2013) (See Data archive).**

During the strategic planning meetings described in the previous chapter, methods and processes of facilitating interaction were varied. This variety also corresponded to the exploratory nature of these meetings. The face-to-face interactions meant we could easily alternate between small group discussions, writing on flip charts in our groups, physically reorganising our writing on the sticky wall, looking at what others were doing in their groups, and conducting whole group discussions. We also had 'in-between' times outside of the structured activities, such as meals and breaks, when spontaneous interactions occurred.

The online group meetings, on the other hand, lent themselves to Quartiroli, Knight, Etzel and Monaghan's idea of 'temporal malleability', referred to above. All the time spent was 'productive': there was no travel time and informal breaks and conversations did not seem necessary or appropriate in this medium. There was a different 'rhythm' to the encounters (Adams-Hutcheson and Longhurst 2017, p.148). Quartiroli, Knight, Etzel and Monaghan present this time-saving aspect as an advantage. Certainly, the online meetings did give the opportunity to keep the conversation going, with frequent and time efficient communication even in our geographically distant settings and it enabled us to be in regular contact at mutually convenient times. On the other

hand, the reduced possibilities of relationship building and bonding in group meetings were the corollary of time efficiency. The loss of times of informality together carries a cost. This point will be returned to in Chapter 7 in relation to the contrasting 'free range' (Matusov 2018, p.295) style of dialogism, which I understood the importance of later in the project.

### **6.1.2 A blended approach with issues of balance**

The project took a 'blended' approach (Bonk and Graham 2006, p.5), in which participants combined face-to-face encounters in physical space and online interactions in a virtual space. A reflection of some partners at the end of the project was that we would have benefitted from more face-to-face meetings 'in order to accommodate different cultural and working styles' (see EACEA 2016, p.23 where a testimony is given about the project in an EU publication).

When some partners began to be less 'present' in the project, online conferencing meant that this withdrawal from each other and from the project was easier than it would have been if we had worked together face-to-face. If the balance of face-to-face and online interactions within the project had been tilted more towards face-to-face meetings, I believe that some challenging issues may not have arisen. The main issue was lack of engagement and presence by some partners. Perhaps these could have been more readily understood and addressed in an environment in which people could be located in person for face-to-face conversations about the issues influencing their reduced engagement.

The face-to-face interactions in the offline world of the strategic planning meetings, described in the previous chapter, made spontaneous one-to-one conversations around issues other than the intense work focus more possible and provided the opportunity for personal connections based on other common interests.

### **6.1.3 Asynchronous communication and political action**

As the research proceeded it became apparent that participation in the political action could take on a more expansive dimension through using social media. Asynchronous online communication brought new opportunities for



participation on a broader stage. Given their flexibility and place-to-place or 'aspatial' communication possibilities based on 'connectivity rather than geographical proximity' (Miller 2011, pp.200-201), social media can provide a space for participation in political action with international scope, and many-people-to-many-people communication in ways not possible through print media, or in-person or traditional broadcast one-person-to-many people communication. It was this broadening of the scope of participation that offered potentially interesting opportunities which were explored in the project blogs.

## **6.2 Section 2 - Moving towards polycentricity: Turning outwards**

I will now turn to the second critical episode of my thesis. In the previous chapter, I explained how project partners worked together to begin the project handbook. I referred to Martin Buber (2002, p.25), who characterised dialogism as a form of 'turning towards' the other. Adapting this analogy, I called this current phase of the project 'turning inwards' – towards the group of partners. In the next section, I describe a 'turn' towards others who became voluntary collaborators in the project. I am calling this 'turning outwards' to indicate that the project work moved beyond the group of partners. This turning outwards happened in many forms. In what follows and building on the theme of the online medium, I will use the development of the project blogs to exemplify this and to draw out some of the theorisations which explain the direction the practices Catalina and I developed and engaged in as co-ordinators of the project.

In Chapter 4, I stated that each of the chapters containing accounts of the critical episodes would focus some or all of the following aspects which emerged from my practice towards participation in political action:

- Epistemic justice and political action.
- The centre and the periphery of power relations, and reconceptualisations of this idea.
- Dialogism and political action.

In this current chapter, I particularly focus on changes to my thinking about the concept of centre and periphery, a concept which was introduced in Chapter 2

and considered in practice in Chapter 5. I also revisit my focus on the development of the project handbook as explained in the previous chapter, and question how I previously envisaged dialogism within this process. I show how a change of thinking about dialogism also corresponded to a firmer articulation of the importance of relational processes in political action.

### **6.2.1 Implications from previous learning**

In Chapter 5, I explained my understanding of participation and its relationship to justice. I identified a different form of justice and injustice through collaborating with people from different backgrounds, specifically from a geographical region which has had epistemologies imposed upon it. I theorised the need for epistemic justice in spaces of participation. I argued that an important aspect of epistemic justice was to create spaces for dialogue at the early stages of action when the issue of concern is conceptualised and framed and I identified the importance of all having the opportunity to identify issues and raise questions for enquiry.

In that same chapter, I drew upon Buber (1965, cited by Moroco 2008, p.15) to discuss how the 'common centre' or common concern of the project which bound us together was expressed differently by different partners. I discussed the importance of creating spaces for people to exercise their agency on an axiological level and how this values-driven engagement formed a common concern. In the strategic planning meeting, partners needed to find ways of moving forward together. Differences were exposed, however, and needed spaces for expression if people were to remain committed to the collaborative action required by the project.

In what follows, I use the development of the social and solidarity economy project blogs to focus on how these, as a virtual medium, provided a means of enabling groups of people beyond the project partners – and the social economy practitioners with whom we were in contact – to collaborate. I will explain how the blogs became a means of promoting political action both in the online world and in the physical world. I also explain how my conception of the blog changed over time: how it changed from a focus on the blog posts themselves, to one which placed greater value on the relational processes of

creating the posts. I consider how the international platform provided by the blogs was a stimulus for relational types of learning and interaction in the real world. I explain how my thinking evolved at this

time. I exemplify this development of my thinking through the practices described in this section.

### **6.2.2 Blogs and the online environment**

In the previous section I have articulated some of the affordances and challenges of using synchronous, 'real time' online communication. In what follows I briefly focus on asynchronous online communication, in which participants are not interacting at the same time.

In relation to this asynchronous form of communication, Miller identifies two characteristics: 'aspatiality' – the ability to include all internet-connected spaces regardless of physical location; and 'open-endedness' (2011, pp.200-201) – for example, the lack of financial or logistical constraints created by the need to print and distribute material and the finality of print, which removes the possibility of adding more material on an ongoing basis. I would also add the immediacy of publishing texts online, which made it a useful tool for short term endeavours and meant that many texts could be produced which were not necessarily intended for inclusion in the handbook at the end of the project, but which enabled people to participate in the political action of the project. These affordances made the blogs highly relevant tools for the project. More people, from more geographically dispersed places could contribute to and access the blogs and could interact with each other. The open-endedness was an appropriate counterbalance to the handbook, which was based around a print style of production and therefore more limited in size, more difficult to manage, longer-term in preparation and time scale and structured in a particular way which, once established in print-style format, was not flexible. In contrast to print medium, the blogs are unlimited in the amount of possible content included.

### 6.2.3 Critical episode 2: Background

As stated above, the idea of starting project blogs emerged between partners in one of the regular Skype meetings held during the lifetime of the project. Partners had the opportunity to manage and edit a blog in their own language, and over time, a blog was created in each language of the project: English, Spanish and Portuguese. In line with the ethos of the project, partners took responsibility for the particular focus of the development of the blog in their own language, and this development was discussed during partners' meetings in order to share ideas. Figure 6:2 shows a screen shot of the project partners' meeting agenda from 1<sup>st</sup> February 2013, with notes added to serve as minutes for actions agreed (see Data archive, Agendas – notes of partner meetings).

	and responsibilities for workshops, abstracts, timeline	
YSJ – Consortium Sharing		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Web page</li> </ul>	Define new content for the page: resource library. Development of pages in Spanish and Portuguese. Partner institutions' logos to upload onto the page	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Library – Thank you to [name] for finding the bibliographic resources. (All are freely available online.) To be certain of author rights, [name] will send the original links. (before 15 February).</li> <li>CEAUP now has a project blog which they will start this month. YSJ will update the blog they started some time ago.</li> <li>To facilitate more interaction with the website using social media [name and name] and Margaret will form a sub-committee. (Initial meeting [name] &amp; MM 4/2/13)            Subsequent meetings:           <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>20/2/13 - 3.30 GMT</li> <li>6/3/13 - 4.30 GMT</li> </ul>           Others welcome to be part of the committee.</li> <li>Mondragon will send info from the university/MIK for the website (15 February)            Approx. 250 people have signed up to receive the newsletter.            Mondragon will send the link to the page to their contacts and encourage them to subscribe to the newsletter (by 14 February).</li> </ol>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Newsletter</li> </ul>	Sharing until date Content and timeline for the March newsletter	

**Figure 6:2 Excerpt of partners' Skype meeting agenda (date: 1.2.2013), with notes added according to actions agreed.**

The idea was raised and given impetus by a partner in Portugal. Three partners, including myself, volunteered to form a mini committee to support each other in the development of the blogs in three languages. Other partners were invited to join the committee if they desired. As can be seen, times were agreed for meetings which would focus on the blogs.

I worked on developing the blog in English. I hoped for interactions online through comments and responses. My early posts consisted of reviews of articles about, for example, higher education courses and social entrepreneurship, and responses and links to news articles, for example about students challenging tutors about continuing to teach free market orthodoxy (<https://blog.yorks.ac.uk/socialeconomy/2013/10/25/economics-students-rebel-against-free-market-syllabus/>).

In May 2013 I wrote in some personal reflections on the use of social media in the project. At that time my concern was that

at present ... my posts tend to report things that are happening in the field of social economy in higher education, or wider issues about the social economy, but they are really just drawing attention to things that are already 'out there' rather than having an original or reflective voice. I hope to develop this as time goes on (Excerpt from reflective writing, May 2013. Data archive, Reflective writing – Social media-blog, p.1).

At this time in May 2013, the blog was already including some 'guest posts' from other people, but from my writing above it is clear that I was seeing the actual writing posts for the blog as mainly my own responsibility.

Catalina took responsibility for the blog in Spanish in June 2013 (see <https://blog.yorks.ac.uk/econsocial>), having established that none of the other native speaking Spanish partners felt attracted to taking responsibility for this form of social media. Her emphasis was to offer the blog as a platform for other people rather than mainly focus on writing posts herself, something which she had advocated for the English blog. We discussed ways of promoting this online platform and a gradual shift can be seen in the balance of contributions to the English blog: away from my own posts and towards those of others.

Reflecting on this shift of emphasis in a conversation with Catalina in November 2019, in her role as 'meta-informant' to my research (as explained in Chapter 4), she commented on her understanding of our remit as co-ordinators of the project:

The whole point was that we were the ones creating the space for others, making them aware how their own action could be shown in one way or another using social media. They were the actors. We were just facilitating that. Our space was the project and the funding (Transcript of dialogue, 19.11.19. Data archive, Catalina Quiroz-Niño).

We invited the many contacts we were making through the project to contribute to the blog and some responded positively. Some examples of posts on the English blog are

1. A post by a journalist in Cuba about a community arts project (May 2014, see Figure 6:3 below),
2. A post by a UK-based social entrepreneur who worked towards creating products with a supply chain comprising only other social enterprises (July 2014, see below),
3. A post by a Kenya-based academic which reports on the support business school students have given to local group of women social entrepreneurs (July 2015) <https://blog.yorks.ac.uk/socialeconomy/2015/07/09/kenya-methodist-university-students-having-impact-in-their-community/> This will be referred to later, in Section 6.3.2.

### Example 1

Daima Cardoso Valdés, a journalist from Cuba contributed a post about a community enterprise which focused on providing opportunities for artistic expression by people in the local community:

**A patio open to hope**

*By Daima Cardoso Valdés*



Today Cuba is experiencing a massification of its culture to all regions of the country, without making distinctions about particular local cultural needs. This is prompting Cubans to reclaim their humanity and create the means to address their current problems.

Cuba, a poor country under a US blockade, strives to make visible its social projects which prioritize community and culture, because it is within community that we realise our spirituality.

In Pinar del Rio various projects exist, generally in the areas in which access is difficult. These projects give the possibility of recreation and contact with the cultural heritage of the region. Puerta de Golpe has around 6000 inhabitants within its immediate area. These people are in need of cultural and community projects.

With this in mind an artist from the community, Mario Pelegrín Pozo, opened up his home and gave his free time to support a project, Pelegrín's Patio, in order to meet the social and recreational interests of his neighbours.

**Figure 6:3 Screenshot of A Patio of Hope blog post.**

The post was published on the English blog 7th May 2014. It was originally published on the Spanish blog and then translated by a project collaborator.

Full post available at

<https://blog.yorks.ac.uk/socialeconomy/2014/05/07/patio-of-hope-cuba/>.

### Example 2

Natasha Almond, founder of Living Interiors, UK.

I believe meaningful work is a key contributor to health and well-being and so I set about designing something that could be made through other social enterprises, which could extend the social value. I set up Living Interiors, as an experiment, to develop high end products and an end to end solution through social enterprise. If I can make a success of this I can help meet the skills gap within some social enterprises in taking products to market. Those enterprises could then concentrate on what they do best to, recruit, train and provide supported work opportunities for disabled people.

Trading with other social enterprises will increase social and financial value within the sector, and in turn sustainability. With this in mind I set off designing a number of ethical products. I was inspired by the new green wall technology that was starting to spread across the globe – covering buildings with beautiful plants, renewing life in urban areas, reducing carbon emissions and attracting wildlife.

Available: <https://blog.yorks.ac.uk/socialeconomy/2014/07/22/i-believe-meaningful-work-is-a-key-contributor-to-well-being-so-i-set-about-designing-something-that-could-be-made-through-other-social-enterprises-which-could-extend-the-social-value/>. Blog post published 22nd July 2014

These guest posts continued until the end of the project in 2015. Using Twitter to promote posts, the English blog attracted more interest than I had expected – as did those in Spanish and Portuguese – and we had visits from several continents, building up to thousands of visits in total a year after the launch of the blog. Figure 6:4 below gives a snapshot of the geographic distribution of the visits to the English blog for a month between May-June 2014, with each red dot on the map indicating the location of a visitor.



**Figure 6:4 Number of visitors to English blog, May-June 2014 (dates in U.S. format).**

As academics co-ordinating a project from a Western university, Catalina and I had something to offer people that they considered worthwhile. The epistemic capital of a European-funded project attracted people to make contributions, knowing that the blog was an international platform and that their work would be read by many others. In this way, spaces were created for people to express ideas and practices that were important to them and could provide insights for others. Social economy practitioners and others were offered a platform with international reach to explain and contribute the thinking and practices which were of importance to them. Many had not previously been invited to contribute to this type of international platform. The project was able to offer its position from the perceived 'centre' to decentre itself by opening spaces of participation to people in a wide variety of contexts. In May 2013, an extended sequence of activities started which added an extra, unexpected, dimension to the blog as a stimulus for political action. In the next section I will describe these activities (see Research timeline, Appendix 1). I will then explicate the influence they had on my thinking and practices, and that of others.



### 6.2.4 Melba's students in Colombia

Whilst attending a conference in Spain, Catalina and I met Melba Quijano, an academic from Colombia who worked in the field of social communication. Melba had deeply held personal and professional commitments which coincided with those of the project. She expressed frustration at the way in which private universities in Colombia were educating students: not to understand and respond constructively to conditions in what she termed 'post-agreement' (making a distinction with 'post-conflict') Colombia, in its attempt to move beyond 50 years of armed conflict. Instead, she argued, the private universities were more interested in prioritising the personal benefits of their activities and relationships and the opportunities for gaining institutional prestige. She explained

... they're working on the cognitive capitalist rationale that means just that: what's the pay-off for me? What do I gain, what's the benefit? Not so much economically but a benefit that translates into a ranking within the Colombian body that regulates the production of knowledge .... [It's] not so much through conviction that the topic was interesting, positive, useful, a topic relevant to the condition of the country (Transcript of audio recording, 2.5.2016. Data archive, Melba Quijano – 2016, p.2).

The university, she explained, allowed her to connect one of her courses to the activities of the project because 'it's a UK university, it's a project funded by Erasmus Mundus' (Transcript of audio recording 2.5.2016 *ibid*).

The project linked to her strong interest in the Cooperative movement and the solidarity economy. Melba explained that her teaching at the university was normally focused on the theoretical aspect of her discipline, but in the following cycle she was going to be teaching practical classes focused on the production of texts. Melba takes up the story of our first encounter in Spain:

I have an image, a sort of symbolic reference in my head, in Santiago de Compostela, the two of you in that big foyer giving out flyers. I was impressed by that because for me, first [strong surprise in her voice] a university from England handing out flyers, looking for people [from Latin America], something's been flipped around a bit here. I liked that.

Normally as a Latin American it's [knocks on the table as if knocking on a door] – to see if the English university would listen to me. From there, symbolically, the project demonstrated a power relationship, not of power but with a parity of conditions. So that for me was really...[pause] .. it highlighted the human aspect there in the group. And so that was the first moment. The second moment when I had my hands on the flyer, I said 'SSE [social and solidarity economy] – that is a topic that I like, but I don't work in the business school or in economics, I work within communication' (Transcript of audio recording 19.1.2018. Data archive, Melba Quijano – 2018, p.3).

The practical approach we had adopted in the social and solidarity economy project – of visiting social enterprises and cooperatives and engaging in dialogue about their practices in semi-structured interviews – was one she felt she could adapt with her students. She saw a great opportunity for her students of social communication to research local social enterprises and cooperatives and use the project blog to publish their final pieces of journalistic writing, giving them an international platform for publication of the articles. She had ideas to adapt the principles and values of the project to her own situation. We offered to translate the posts into English, broadening the potential audience further. The collaboration with the project would enable her to combine her institutional commitments with her personal values and interests to a greater extent.

The activities she proposed for her course would introduce the students to an aspect of their local area they were unfamiliar with. Normally, the practical experiences within their courses would be in banks and marketing organisations. In this investigation, each would visit one social enterprise/cooperative, carry out interviews with people involved and write a journalistic article for publication on the project blog, giving the work an authentic international audience. In doing so, they would move beyond familiar social and epistemological contexts. The articles for the blog would focus on the values of the organisation and its influence within its social and geographical context – which was consistent with the focus agreed by project partners.

Catalina and I had Skype meetings with Melba to discuss her ideas about the content of the interviews, the relevance of questions we had worked on as partners for interviews and how she might adapt them and add to them. Melba took the lead in terms of how to adapt the project towards the requirements of her course, which organisations to approach and how to organise the work with her students, and we supported her decisions. Later we met her students on Skype to introduce ourselves: us as co-ordinators of the project; and the students as the people who were visiting the organisations and writing the articles. The blog collaboration subsequently involved several months of preparation in which Melba adapted the work of the project to provide a focus around the discipline of social communication. She also identified and contacted appropriate socially-focused organisations. Some of the organisations addressed food security issues, such as the *Asociación de Desarrollo Comunitario Merquemos Juntos* ('Market Together Community Development Association'), a community organisation that set up a market for local products when the civil war meant no food was arriving from outside the area; and Guan Permaculture Centre which focuses on education for ecology workshops and sells ecologically produced food.

Attracted by exposure of the organisation on an internet platform of an international project (see dialogue with Melba 19.1.18 in Data archive, Melba Quijano folder), the organisations stated they would be willing to participate in interviews with students. Melba worked with students in her class to prepare them for their visits to the organisations. In due course, the students went out to meet people in the organisations and later produced texts for publication on the blog. These appeared initially in Spanish. Later, having been translated into English by a project collaborator, they were posted on the English blog (<https://blog.yorks.ac.uk/socialeconomy/category/columbia/>).

Below is an excerpt from a blog post by Lina Fernanda Muñoz González.

Colombia, a magnificent country rich in natural resources, has suffered the violence of an armed conflict for a long time; this has not been, however, reason enough for Colombians to abandon hope. They are keen to move forward.

One proof of this began in 1992, in a very poor area of the northern city of Barrancabermeja called Versalles, designated a 'red zone', an area where there is constant conflict. Here was a community that was a victim of the war and its consequences. Its population lived in a state of uncertainty and extreme poverty, with not enough to eat: even the market did not make it to the area due to the constant gun-fights and shootings.

And more and more young people were taking part in the conflicts, giving rise to more violence and poor education. In response to these circumstances which the families of Versalles faced daily, a handful of women decided to meet to discuss their considerable fears about the situation and how it could not continue in the same way. These women decided to look for solutions to their economic and social problems.

Together, they found an extraordinary way of resolving the problem of the family 'food basket'; in a show of solidarity, 11 families each managed to contribute \$200 Columbian pesos (approx. 0.1 US dollar and 3.5% of the legal minimum wage at the time) towards setting up a market, ensuring that every household's food needs were met.

In time, they began to realise that this idea had gone a long way to improving their lives so decided to continue, but this time in a more organised fashion. Seeing that through working as a team – as they had been doing – they really were achieving great things, they decided to officially define themselves as a group working for the good of all, with the objective of developing their community.

Years later, they became established as the 'Asociación de Desarrollo Comunitario Merquemos Juntos' ('Market Together Community Development Association'). The women went out every day at 3am to set up the market in the Torcoroma market place, not letting anything get in their way, even the war that was taking place all around them. With the support of Antonio Gómez, the local priest at the time and part of Fundación Compartir (The Sharing Foundation), the project became a space for combating violence.

Needing to keep the family 'food basket' project going, they created a revolving fund offering low-interest loans to cover the community's needs. "When a problem is widespread and concerns everyone, we go looking for a solution and other

programmes are set up, such as the revolving fund, which today we call 'solidarity economy' but was to prevent women having to go to the pawnbroker with their iron or the electric fan or whatever little else they had, and losing it because they had no way of getting it back. This led to the bingo night that was organised, in which 36 families took part," says Lucía García, treasurer of Merquemos Juntos.

"That bingo was a success. We made \$186,000 pesos (approx. 100 US dollars), so more or less \$5,000 pesos (approx. 2.5 US dollars) per member that took part, but nobody took a single peso. It was all kept in a central account, and in a notebook we opened like an account for each member; with that money we started to give loans to these women to buy medicine for their children, to pay bills, or for whatever other difficulty they had," García explains.

Growing steadily, with 46 families linked to the project by now, they were beginning to need new ways of organising the group, and thanks to such perseverance they managed to build a solidarity economy fund, to help alleviate domestic hardship, in health, education, construction and improving their quality of life.

Eager to keep moving forward, they have decided to undertake another project. Employing the knowledge of certain members, the help of others and the desire to learn of yet others, they have opened a bakery, continuing their successful drive for food sustainability. They have also obtained a juice and dairy processor, furthering their work for the family 'food basket'.

Projects such as the community market, child benefits, support for further study, creation of jobs, micro-credit, the bakery and the food processor have contributed to the objectives of overcoming poverty, of removing young people from the war, of seeking peace, and of personal development.

"The association, for me, is a door, a window onto hope. And hope is what we have devoted our lives to," Lucía García affirms.

(Blog post, December 2013. Available from: <https://blog.yorks.ac.uk/socialeconomy/2013/12/12/solidarity-economy-in-columbia-pt-1-community-solidarity-and-enterprise-in-the-face-of-conflict/>).

The blogs reflected knowledge of community-driven practices of survival and peace building from the social and solidarity economy practitioners in rural and civil war-torn Colombia. In this way, the blogs also provided an international platform for the expression of different knowledges from those advanced by 'hegemonic and powerful' sectors, which attack and undermine the marginalised, according to Carcelén Ordoñez and Sarango Macas (2018). In the context of participation in political action in a public sphere, contributing to the blog gave the opportunity for learning from those whose knowledges tend to be delegitimised because such knowledges are practical and values- and context-driven within academia and therefore do not conform to standard expectations, as discussed in Chapter 1.

### **6.2.5 What influence did the practices have on participation?**

The processes involved in this collaboration had a ripple effect. Melba reported that the social/solidarity economy organisations themselves, having received students for the first time, were open to the possibility of doing so again. One of the students took the initiative to spend the semester following the research activity working with the organisation she had researched. She did some journalistic work in more depth with them about their situation which had become precarious due to the property boom in this part of Colombia. This property boom meant that the increasing financial value of the land on which they worked threatened the community-based activities which had little financial value and possibility of profit to the landholder.

One of the students involved reflected:

My aspiration is basically that through my participation in the pilot project in Colombia, Erasmus Mundus can make visible an organization from the solidarity economy sector which has a different approach and that struggles day by day to contribute to the enrichment of society (Student involved in blog activity in written communication to Melba, 28.10.2013. Translated. Data archive, Blogs – Student reflection on blog activity).

Melba also stated that some of the organisations contacted through the project research were prompted to engage in self-reflection about their communication

processes. She has subsequently worked with them, creating a community of inquiry (Eikeland 2006b). She commented,

It opened a panorama of reflection from within – hey we're important – how can we organise things better? ... I don't know if this applied to their actions in general, but certainly in the field of communication, they did reflect on what they were doing (Transcript of audio recording 2.5.2016. Data archive, Melba Quijano, p.9).

In Chapter 1, and with reference to authors such as Appadurai (2000), I discussed the division between the academic who produces knowledge and the practitioners who supposedly apply the knowledge of others to their practice. In the example above, this division had been disrupted, with the social movement practitioners positioned in a knowledge creation as well as an activist role and the academic as an activist as well as a knowledge producer. Melba developed insights into the generative potential of fusing academic and practical knowledge. The students had in-depth conversations with people from organisations previously outside their sphere of experience as part of their practice and research. People in the organisations reflected on their practice with a view to taking action to improve it.

Her collaboration with the project has also influenced the focus of Melba's doctoral work, which she defined as investigating the social and solidarity economy and the peace process in the post-conflict context of Colombia. As she says

... this learning is ... possible if networks are established between local academics and social practitioners, but it's also like that same network extends beyond the local and reaches regional and international networks (Transcript of audio recording 2.5.2016. Data archive, Melba Quijano, p.5).

### **6.3 Insights and discussion: creating spaces of participation in political action**

In the following sections, I develop some of the themes of this thesis in relation to the activities described above. In order to do this, I also draw on the

theoretical frameworks set out in Chapter 2. As previously explained, these evolved as explanatory frameworks to enable me to theorise my developing practice. First, I consider how the concept of epistemic justice in participation played out in this context; second, I reconceptualise my understanding of centre and periphery in terms of participation, and use complexity theory as an explanatory framework to articulate aspects of this reconceptualisation; third, I explain how this critical episode influenced and changed my understandings of dialogism. I then revisit the importance of the axiological level in political action to explain how it featured in this critical episode. This understanding leads me to become explicit about the importance of personal relationships in political action.

### **6.3.1 Participation in political action and epistemic justice**

In Chapter 2, I explained the principle of epistemic justice which became central to my thinking about participation in political action and knowledge creation. This principle was exemplified in Chapter 5, in which I discussed the importance of fostering spaces in which different types of knowledge could be articulated and how this played out with participants from the global North and global South. I explained how this 'space' needed to be at the generative and conceptual stage in which people pose questions they consider relevant. In the first chapter of this thesis, I argued that universities favour a specific type of epistemology. I argued that this bias is unjust because it excludes many people, such as those who are positioned by academia as 'practitioners', and those with knowledges which do not fit into the techno-rationalist 'norm': for example, peoples with so-called indigenous or traditional knowledges; and who prefer to work primarily with tacit and personal knowledges (Polanyi 2009; and 1958; McNiff 2017, p.49). I also argued that this approach can limit available knowledges which are needed to address important questions facing humanity.

In the critical episode presented in this current chapter, I aim to show that a form of epistemic justice developed through the work of Melba and in the work carried out involving her, her students and the social and solidarity organisations they visited. She gave an insight into her practice and the influence on her thinking:



The learning that has stayed with me is that it is possible to build bridges between academia and social practices with ethical considerations around who ends up with that knowledge and what that knowledge is for. I think in that sense the collective construction of knowledge is what motivated me most of all (Transcript of audio recording 2.5.2016. Data archive, Melba Quijano, p.4).

Reflecting on the collaboration, Melba discussed the approach the project emphasised and how it had influenced her thinking about research. She saw great potential in the co-construction of knowledge between herself as an academic and organisations in the social and solidarity field:

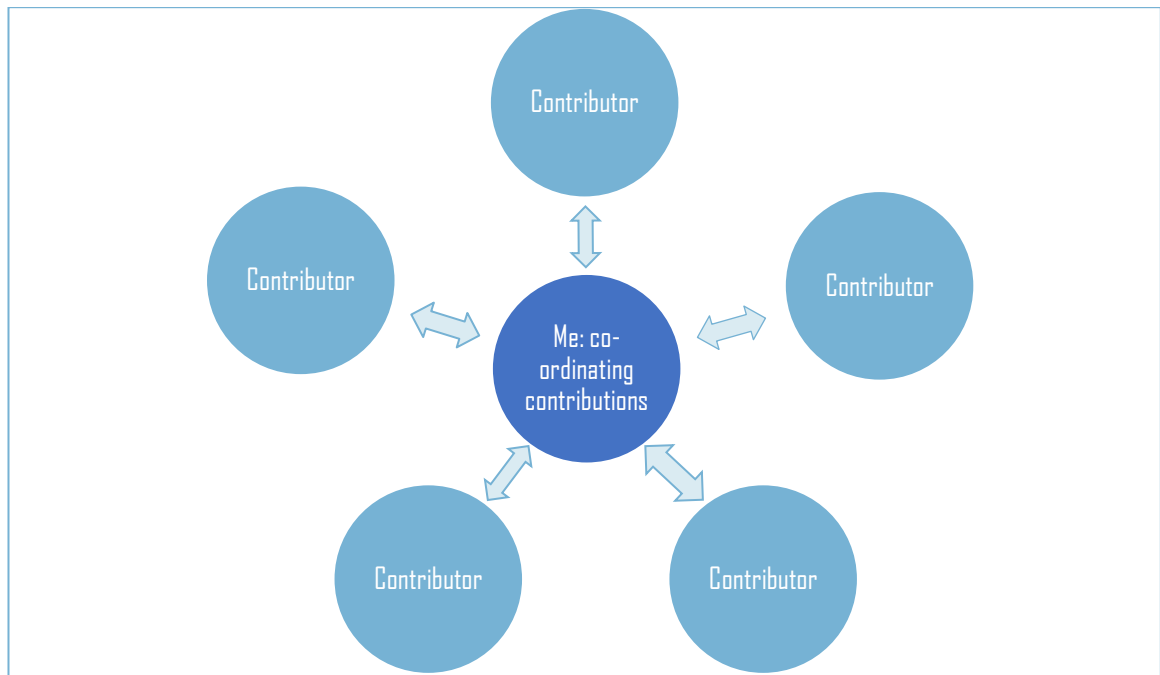
I think the timing of the project also coincided with what was happening in my personal life with my doctorate and seeing between the global north and south the thoughts of Boaventura de Sousa [Santos] on the logic system of the south and starting to reflect on the debate around knowledge and not just academic knowledge or social practices, what is knowledge for... I think what challenged me most was the idea of the collective construction of knowledge. The project brought me closer to these practices but also helped me recognise for example .... [the] knowledge that organisations have like the Mujer y Futuro foundation in their specific field of gender, and the work of organisations like the Cacao Cooperative with all their knowledge, their wisdom, the farmers' technical knowledge, the more popular knowledge that CoCuza [Comité Cultural del Barrio Zapamanga] has (Transcript of audio recording 2.5.2016. Data archive, Melba Quijano, p.4).

Spaces of participation between those currently inside and those outside the university offered opportunities for creating embodied knowledges which address issues relevant to the communities in which the knowledge is conceived and articulated. This participation, I believe, is an expression of a journey towards epistemic justice, in the form of the co-construction of knowledge by those practising in the field and academics. As argued in Chapter 5, this is necessary for participation in political action. I will now turn to another aspect running through my research – that of the centre and the periphery and the implications for participation in political action in terms of how this organisational structure is conceptualised.

### **6.3.2 Revisiting centre and periphery – towards polycentricity**

In Chapter 2, I explained the post-colonial theory of centre and periphery, drawing on, for example, Bhabha (2004), Connell (2007), Santos (2016) and Mignolo (2002). This theory was explained more fully through an account of my practice with others in Chapter 5. In that chapter, I explained this issue in relation to the collaboration between partners from global North and global South. With the emergence and autonomy of Melba's community of inquiry – something which had not been organised or initiated by Catalina and me – I began to see my practice in a different way: as seeking to create spaces which would encourage people to create their own, self-organised and self-initiated spaces rather than as assuming I needed to create all the spaces and guide their content. This reconceptualisation was not a sudden shift in my thinking. It was more that I came to see the fuller implications of what Catalina and I were aiming for in the project. These fuller implications were that people would take control of the agenda, self-organise and create their own 'centres'. I realised that this organisational structure was in line with my beliefs in democratic participation and of people having agency in their own lives. This meant that my role was to aim to create the conditions in which that might happen rather than positioning myself as a central reference point.

In Section 6.2.3, I discussed the practices around the publication of articles on the project blogs. I explained how my thinking about the purposes of the blogs changed during their development. I had initially felt I had an obligation to provide content, albeit inviting contributions from others. It was an opportunity to showcase the work of others. At that time, I did not conceptualise this idea in the way that I now see it in light of my reflection on those experiences – that I was putting myself in the centre (see Figure 6:5 below). The reflective writing referred to above in which I aim to develop a more reflective voice, while reflecting a very worthwhile aim, does attest to this ego-centricity.



**Figure 6:5 Co-ordinating the blog using the centre and periphery model.**

As explained in Chapter 2, Polanyi identifies a structure which is 'polycentric'. I found that polycentricity gave a name to what was emerging from practice: practice which aimed towards greater participation of people in taking action in ways they saw relevant and about issues of concern to them. My mental images of my developing practice at this stage of the project focused on the autonomous flourishing of many centres of political action, taking the form of polycentricity, and I saw this self-initiated autonomy as more compatible with people being agents in their own lives, and with the expression of different ways of knowing. In the following sections, I will explain this change of mental image further in relation to the critical episode exemplified by the blogs.

In theory I knew that the structure of social media can be represented as a complex network with multiple nodes and connections. However, my practice seemed to demonstrate my belief that all connections led back to me and to Catalina, as joint project co-ordinators: an unarticulated position which, when articulated, can be seen to be unsustainable in the sense that the activities would ebb and flow with our efforts. It promoted participation, but such participation depended on my efforts, and my focus about what was important, which can be against the interests of participation in political action.

The collaboration with Melba meant that she could develop her own practices in her own way independent of Catalina and of me, stimulated by the international platform of a blog and linked to a project and prestigious funding body. This was a polycentric enlarging of political action in the public sphere, in which participants from a variety of backgrounds could participate as peers in the co-creation of knowledge around an issue of concern

When Melba participated, she created a 'centre' and her own public sphere in Bucaramanga, Colombia. She formed a community of inquiry with students and practitioners in the field and the students offered written contributions to the wider public sphere through the medium of the blog. This initiative gave rise to other centres, such as that expressed in the renewed impetus for reflection on practice expressed by the solidarity organisations which had collaborated. The blog became a platform in which to report and publish action that was happening in the physical world. Through this collaboration there was mutual learning and encouragement between centres in Bucaramanga and a centre in York.

The blog was a platform which promoted or consolidated other examples of dialogical action. For example, a group of women managing a microfinance scheme to support their own business development in Nairobi (unrelated to the social economy project) used the blog to report on their progress, something which the founder and mentor of the group, Mary Kiguru, stated had fostered a more reflective approach by the women on what they were doing. An example can be seen in Figure 6:6 This is the third example of the use of the blogs referred to above in Section 6.2.3. Mary stated

The (blog) posts are a way for them to reflect about what they are doing to improve their lives: 'This is what I have done with the money and this is what the money is doing'. It has allowed them to reflect about what they are doing with their businesses (Transcript of audio dialogue, 12.3.2016. Data archive, Mary Kiguru – Transcript of dialogue, p.2).

**Sujali women transforming their families and their community**

By Margaret Meredith | February 22, 2015 0 Comment

*Article written by Mary Kiguru, founder and mentor of the Sujali Self-Help Group, Nairobi, Kenya. For more articles about the remarkable journey of these women and the way they have transformed their businesses with microcredits, please [click here](#).*



It was Valentine's day, so I decided to visit Sujali group of women ... to talk about love for our businesses. I visited five of the women. It was a hot morning, 28°C and dusty... not the kind of weather a farmer desires, but we have to deal with this.

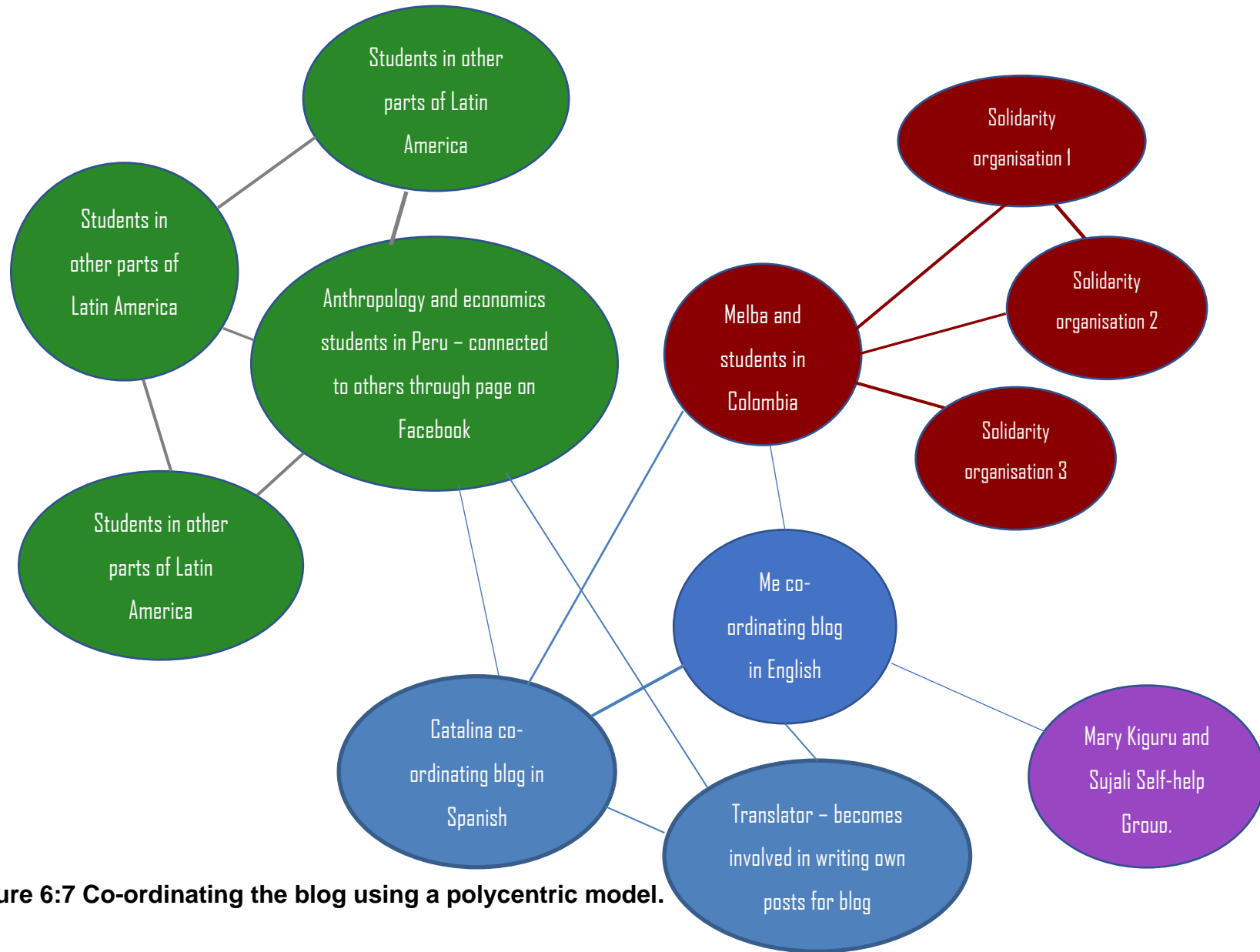
Rispa is a farmer but the weather does not deter her efforts in anyway. She is always determined. I found her busy in her farm. She has a green house, she has just completed harvesting tomatoes, but due to the heat, there have been terrible flies laying eggs in the tomatoes. But to supplement her tomatoes she planted "Pili Pili Hoho" aka Paprika/Capsicum and has a nursery for Spinach. Amazingly, after such blazing heat on this day, clouds formed and it RAINED that night and has been rained ever since Valentine's night!

**Figure 6:6 Screenshot of a blog post by Mary Kiguru, February 2015**

The publication of posts on the English blog, and therefore their position in the public domain, built further on the women's already strong sense of responsibility to honour their commitments to the group. The blog gave an external face to existing centres of action, prompting greater reflection on these actions. The blog posts about the microfinance journey of the Sujali women can be seen at <https://blog.yorks.ac.uk/socialeconomy/category/sujali/>

As a further example of many centres emerging through the use of social media within the project, a Facebook group, suggested by Catalina and subsequently established and managed by students of economics and anthropology in Peru, attracted student members in other parts of Latin America and led to some contributions to the blog in Spanish which were translated into English.

This emergence of many, inter-related, centres is shown in Figure 6:7. In this conceptualisation, the connections or relationships are key. I will return to this theme in Section 6.3.7.



**Figure 6:7 Co-ordinating the blog using a polycentric model.**

### 6.3.3 Political action and complexity theory

In the ways explained above, the blogs, and the wider use of social media, provided a stimulus for a series of interactions, some of which clearly demonstrated unexpected 'emergence' and 'self-organisation' – two key ideas from complexity theory (Mason 2008), introduced in Chapter 2 – within the overarching space of the project. Complexity theory brings insights to the possibility of the emergence of new knowledge, understandings and actions generated by collaborating groups of people. I will now discuss these in relation to the experiences and actions explained above.

The 'aspatial' and 'open-ended' nature of the online environment, identified by Miller (2011, pp.200-201) and referred to earlier, was realised in the specific form of the project blogs. Crucially, they provided the means to enable the expression of diversity around the issue of the social economy and the engagement of academics in this field, establishing a range of possible responses to the issue in focus. This range of possible responses is a key aspect for facilitating emergence, according to Davis and Sumara (2005, pp.459-460). People and groups could 'express their differences' while at the same time 'operating as a unity' (Goldstein 2007, p.82) with other participants within the overarching project. The intercultural and interdisciplinary nature of the project meant that there was great potential for diverse responses: for example, when Melba discussed collaborating from the perspective of the academic discipline of social communication, this was a novel response to the overarching values driving the project in a way Catalina and I had not previously contemplated.

The blogs became a space for expressing these responses through linking people with one another and with a common concern, in the online and the physical world. When people in universities, social enterprises or conferences expressed an interest in the project and wished to participate, the blogs made such participation achievable in a direct and immediate way (although usually it involved a number of discussions and email interactions) which meant that, importantly, interest could turn into involvement and contribution. The blogs became a mechanism to prompt ideas to interact and be knitted into more sophisticated possibilities, referred to in Chapter 2, and something Davis and

Sumara (2005, pp.459-460) argue is important for enabling emergence within complexity theory. The blogs provided a means through which nascent ideas could emerge into self-organised action in ways that were open-ended and offered a flexible time scale able to fit in with that of a university course.

It was in the processes of engagement that learning and action became defined. The action and interpretations generated were not pre-stated and were allowed to unfold. It was 'inquiry-driven rather than discipline driven' (Montuori 2008, p.xxvii). In this way, the outcomes emerged and were sustained through shared endeavours, rather than through prescribed learning objectives or linear action. In Chapter 2 it was argued that for emergence of political action there needs to be decentralised control of knowledge, effort and outcomes (Davis and Sumara 2005, pp.459-460; Morrison 2008, p.18). This decentralisation, or emergence of new centres, was evident in the case of Melba's work with her students and the social and solidarity organisations. She liaised with Catalina and me, and our role was to facilitate her ideas for action through providing an international platform in the form of the blogs.

### **6.3.3.1 Nodes and connections**

Within Cartesian science the behaviour of the whole could be approached and understood in terms of the properties of its parts. Complexity theory or systems science has a different approach: properties of parts are not intrinsic to them, but rather can only be understood within the larger whole (Capra 1997, p. 37). Arendt talks of a 'web of relations' (1958, pp.182-184), in which action is negotiated and takes place between people.

Within the series of events described in this episode, all actors played a critical part, some at its inception, others later on: Catalina, Melba, Melba's students, the people in the social enterprises, myself, and others. Each of us did something unique, something that could only be done by that unique person, drawing upon their own agency and understandings from a unique cultural and personal perspective. However, in this way, the action as a whole could not be understood simply by looking at individuals. The work and the achievement was intrinsically relational. It was based on connections rather than specific individuals. There was a back-and-forth in our interactions as we took action



and were influenced by the actions of others. This back-and-forth from and between multiple centres – our university, Melba's university, the social organisations – also took place in the dimension of time, as our actions and interactions were informed by previous experiences, and affected our understanding of our previous actions. The success of the work relied partly upon the possibility of fluid communication and flexibility within the network. The polycentric structure enabled the emergence of groups of people who organised themselves in taking action.

The activities were situated in a specific time and specific places by the participation of people with inter-related concerns and agendas, expressed through actions and speech-as-inter-acting-and-inter-thinking. It was dialogic. Each actor influenced the web of relations by their actions and speech, and was influenced by it through the inter-relatedness of the other myriad conversations and actions taking place within it. As Capra states, 'the overall consistency of ... interrelations determines the structure of the entire web' (1997, p.39). Individual actions had consequences, direct or indirect, expected or unexpected, revealed or hidden from view depending on one's place in the web, which itself was potentially fluid. It conformed to one characteristic of Arendt's action (1958): the inter-related nature of action within the web of relations – no one person could claim credit for the sequence of actions that ensued. It would even be difficult to attribute it to a 'group': where did the group, or the web, begin or end? This is the richness of the total, to be found in the diversity of styles and voices, and not attributable to any individual person. The endeavour relies upon many people, connected in networks, exercising their agency.

This approach is in contrast to the emphasis often placed on the individual, the strong leader, who 'concentrates ... power in his or her hands' (Brown 2015, p.1). Through the activities focused on the blogs, what we experienced was a community of enquiry with strong, rich connections, emergence and self-organisation.

Santos talks of 'ecologies of knowledges' (2016). I believe the model of practice explained above could be seen as a form of an ecology of dialogues and actions in which the connections and the inter-relatedness were of greater

significance than the centres or individuals within the spaces of action. This relational structure also draws on 'ecological thinking' (Code 2006).

The idea of ecology captures the multi-dimensional, inter-relational nature of the dialogues and the action which took place within the project: with those present, previous dialogues and those projecting into the future, interdependent, 'combin[ing] the stability of structure with the fluidity of change' (Capra 1997, p.172), aiming for sustainability but challenged and replenished by the emergence of new ideas and new contexts. It also embraces a relationship-centred view of identity, rather than an ontology of personal identity formed through the autonomous mind (Gergen 2009): it assumes the relational premises of complexity theory in human relations.

#### **6.3.4 Dialogism and the balance of process and product in political action**

The processes of coming to common understandings and of carving out spaces of difference and spaces for commonality explained in the previous chapter had been very rich in terms of relational and dialogic learning, bringing to mind Bakhtin's insight of 'coming to know one's own language as it is perceived in someone else's language, coming to know one's own belief system in someone else's system' (1981, p.365). However, it was very demanding in terms of time and we had deadlines we needed to observe: the project would last for three years and a huge amount of work needed to be completed. The success or failure of the project would, very reasonably, be evaluated by the funders in terms of outputs.

In this section I articulate the deepening of my understanding of the significance of the participative processes within our relationships. This realisation also presents a dilemma in the form of the tension between taking care and spending significant amounts of time over relational processes within a time-limited project which is judged on outputs.

The blogs were not one of the outputs specified in the bid for funding of the project. Rather, and as explained previously, they emerged from conversations between project partners. Therefore, in the work on the blog and the collaboration involved, I was one step removed from the sense of responsibility

around the development of the project handbook, which was a 'deliverable' of the project and kept my focus on the output. When the activity was not directly part of a required output, I was able to step back and see more clearly and reflectively the deep value of the process.

I realised that although I have a long-standing belief in processes which promote the ontological participation of participants and stakeholders, I could see that in some ways I was valuing these processes because I viewed them as a potentially just and participative means towards a just end. In the episode described in the previous chapter, I was closer to the school of thought that sees dialogic processes as instrumental, as a means to an end, in the sense explained in Chapter 2 where I drew on Burbules (cited 1993 in Sidorkin 1999, p.14) and Lefstein and Snell (2014, p.21). There was a change in my thinking that becomes evident during this current episode - towards seeing the relational processes themselves as embodying a practice of justice, and in this way as encompassing an end in themselves.

My reflections led me to realise that thinking about process as an inclusive and fair way towards an end potentially missed the transformative nature of dialogic interaction as a process of justice in itself in its possibilities of 'turning towards' the other and creating shared understandings. I began to understand these processes as fundamental 'things in themselves', and as being a place where engaged participation and deep, transformational learning happened. For me this took the form of understanding others to a greater extent, and myself, and the inter-relations that created newness. The focus of our investigation was about knowledges and practices in the social and solidarity economy; around valuing many knowledges and promoting justice in how value is understood. What I came to understand more deeply was that the relational processes in themselves potentially promoted epistemic justice and changed my notion of value. My understanding of value of the project was heavily balanced towards the end product – the handbook. I came to rebalance this to a greater extent towards the value of the relational processes, where learning happened in the richness of these interactions and relationships. In this sense I began to see these dialogical relationships and on-going personal transformations they

brought about not simply as ends-in-themselves but expressions of epistemic justice in themselves.

Focusing on processes largely as a means to arrive at outputs may mean that opportunities for such transformational learning are lost. These relational opportunities are embedded within the process of working in dialogical relations with others. As such, there is an irreducibility between relational processes and outputs. Indeed, they are sometimes one and the same. It is in the mutual interaction that the purpose of the activity can be found. In the series of events leading to the publication of the blog posts, and my subsequent reflections on these, the final output of the posts represented just an end point to a series of deeply enriching interactions, in which the essence of relational forms of learning were contained. A focus on these interactions as a means to an end would miss or undervalue the inter-relational processes.

So, I realised that if my aim is to promote spaces of participation, this needs to be realised in the 'doing', in actions of people and in the relationships between them. These relationships become ends in themselves, as well as a means towards more tangible ends. In a 'process' versus 'product' debate, 'process' could mean many things. I would add the descriptor 'relational' to process, to emphasise the dialogical conceptualisation of such processes.

### **6.3.5 Political action as dialogical political action**

Hannah Arendt (1958) sees action as a way of expressing our uniqueness and therefore, together and in sum, our plurality. Participation in political action requires, by her definition, an embracing of plurality. According to Bakhtin (1981, p.365), this also means seeing difference as a gift towards greater understanding of self and others. It is about inter-action between people and negotiated ways forward. In viewing the process of dialogue and interaction as ends in themselves as well as a means, I believe Arendt's theory of action has much in common with the forms of relational dialogism I considered in Chapter 2. The relational view of dialogism, which sees the inter-relationality of the dialogic process as an end in itself, and embodying a form of epistemic justice, is a form of Arendt's 'web of human relationships' (1958, pp.182-184). In this web, the in-between of the process of interaction assumes great significance.

The people referred to in this current chapter had spaces in which they could act in self-motivated and unique ways. The project, and specifically the blogs and other social media as platforms within the project, gave them a way of knitting ideas into more sophisticated possibilities (Davis and Sumara 2005, pp.459-460).

Action in Arendt's terms means starting something new. This newness is, perhaps, intrinsic to dialogism: surprise can be manifested in the interactions (Stern 2013). Political action places an emphasis on the fact that the endeavour itself starts something new around an issue of concern in the public sphere. In order to reinforce these points, I refer to my understanding of political action as dialogical political action.

My growing awareness of relational forms of learning has brought me to an understanding that the more that tangible products or outputs are prioritised as a driving purpose, as is the case in much of education in the UK, the more there is a danger that relational processes will be considered irrelevant or inefficient, and the outputs themselves become detached from senses of purpose. This is a theme I will return to in Chapter 8 in relation to the purposes of higher education.

### **6.3.6 A common concern – the axiological level**

In the previous chapter I explained how I believed that, even within the diversity of the participants, the project had a common centre (Buber 2004) or concern, and this worked on the axiological level. Spaces for activities become spaces of participation in political action when we can express who we are, or our natality (Arendt 1958). Melba expressed the motivation of purpose and personal agency:

For me it's interesting the effect of being linked to projects like this as a teacher, because it has a political edge. How does it affect lesson plans for example, as it did with me? How does it affect the reflections of the class, critical thinking in the class? How can we, starting from these experiences, reflect on the realities closer to us for constant reflection and action within teaching. But on the other hand, as well as being a teacher, this type of partnership makes you think, if I'm not

doing research to change things, to work with organisations that need these sorts of alliances, then what is it for? (Transcript of audio recording, 2.5.2016. Data archive, Melba Quijano – Dialogue, p.1).

In this way, Melba articulated that there is scope to express personal values and participate in morally committed action even when the system one is working in does not prioritise these values:

it feels like it helped me feel sure that we can make positive change, we can do things ... things can be done within the system (Transcript of audio recording 2.5. 2016, *ibid*, p.4).

The difference between participation as activity and participation as morally committed action in the public sphere can be drawn out here. In the excerpt of the conversation above, Melba is expressing a moral engagement in her thinking and actions, and a transformation in both.

### **6.3.7 The foundational importance of relationships**

This chapter has, in part, been about letting go of control from one centre and creating spaces for other centres to emerge and develop. The chapter has also raised the importance of trusting relationships between participants in dialogical action. In Chapter 5, I discussed the importance of a common concern in dialogic relationships, and how this common concern was related to the values held by participants. There, I argued that these values were expressed in different ways, but broadly encompassed issues such as justice, equality and what it means to realise our humanity. These relationships, based upon commitment to a common concern and upon trust, were the glue that bound participants to the whole project as they created their own spaces of autonomous activity.

The explicit realisation, and ability to articulate, that this relational aspect is fundamental to creating spaces of politically-motivated action came to me during a conversation with Melba Quijano in January 2018, in her role as a meta-informant to my research, a role which I explained in Chapter 4. In this conversation, I tried to explain to her what my thesis was about and I talked about the chapter which included her collaboration in the blog. I brought in

themes such as justice, freedom and Hannah Arendt's theory of action. In her response she indicated what had been a key element for her:

If Catalina and Maggie as people who come to present the project don't put their human nature into it, probably Melba and everyone else...[pause]. What is it that makes the project go beyond those outcomes we knew were going to happen? Because it was obvious that any university would've been interested, what we were saying about the way academic interests see things here [in Colombia],... but I feel like the thing that makes it special is the added value of that. It's an English university sure, but it was the people there that showed the project in a different way and wove together those relationships (Transcript of audio recording, 19.1.2018. Data archive, Melba Quijano – Dialogue, p.3).

During the critical episode explicated in this chapter, it had become clear to me that an important part of 'doing' the blogs, and indeed, 'doing' the project was in 'being' with others while we worked together to deepen our understandings in relation to our own place and context in the world. The deeper learning and the most satisfying form of praxis was the development of dialogical communities of inquiry. As Stern (2013, p. 50) points out, '[p]erhaps most significantly of all ... [the] partners in conversation are more important than the topic' (citing Noddings 1994). In thinking about process and product and the balance between them, it is the relational processes promoted between actual people who freely chose to engage that was the basis of the dialogical action of the project.

### **6.3.8 Polycentricity and relationships**

Project collaborators worked in their different spheres, in different parts of the world. Catalina and I met with them as necessary in order to report on and coordinate our actions within the larger project which bound us together on an axiological level. As illustrated in Figure 6:7, Ana María and other project partners in Peru worked with students and social and solidarity economy organisations in some remote and rural parts of the Cusco region. Other partners did the same in their own regional spheres, some working with students, others forming alliances with other academics and NGOs to carry out the work.

Melba worked with her students and the grassroots, solidarity organisations in Colombia. We met on Skype or emailed on a 'need to know' or 'need to talk' basis. Mary Kiguru wrote blog articles collaboratively with others to explain their microfinance work which was happening independently of the project. I entered the articles into the blog as they arrived by email from a mutual colleague, not meeting Mary in person until after the completion of the project.

I believe that the trusting relationships which developed between participants and motivated by common values both enabled, and were enabled by, individuals and groups using their own initiative to undertake field work in their own unique way within the wider project. Attempts to exert control from the centre would, in my view, have stifled this interaction and inhibited the emergence of autonomous groups.

The relationship of trust needed to be on all sides – sometimes people were going against the flow in their own institutions and needed to know their efforts would be supported and contribute towards the wider project. There were a few times when it emerged as likely that the main driver for participation had been personal interests. I believe that that is the responsibility of each one. If my practice is to be participative, dialogic and seeking spaces for people to realise their natality, it would be incoherent and inconceivable in a practical sense to be fighting a rear-guard action to curtail participation and freedom.

Structures were provided, and particularly in relation to research ethics, but I believe that any sense that people will be motivated to show initiative when they are overly-directed rather than trusted to do the job well – within a 'tick list culture', for example – is misguided. Rorty (1999) advises against imagining that you 'have something more to rely on than the tolerance and decency of your fellow human beings' (p.20). Conversations needed to be held, relationships built, and ways forward agreed, but I agree with Rorty. Belief in the decency and good faith of the other and a communicative relationship with them reinforced their self-motivation and self-organisation within the project. This approach contrasts with the manifestations of 'quality' and compliance which currently tend to be prevalent in higher education and which, instead, promote standardisation. Dialogical action has unpredictable consequences (Arendt 1958, p.230), and the illusion of being able to control these



consequences is contrary to the ideal of freedom, according to Berlin (2003a). Rorty (1999, p.23) argues that we can, however, replace 'certainty with hope' and 'domination with stimulation' (pp.32-34).

Many collaborators associated themselves with the project because they were attracted to its aims and values. Exploring what their particular interests and concerns were within their own context enabled ideas to be developed and turned into politically-motivated action. Creating spaces within the project for such people to be agents to take it forward in their own unique way, whilst maintaining trusting links to Catalina and myself, enabled the emergence of new spheres of action.

## **6.4 Conclusion**

The blogs proved to be a virtual means for fostering participation in the physical world when the focus was on work developed through relationships rather than on considering the outputs – the blog posts themselves – as the main purpose. As my 'blogging journey' progressed, I came to envisage a series of written posts, contributed by a variety of people, to articulate their thinking and practices within the social and solidarity economy, and in this way create spaces for political action. During this journey my thinking changed to see its power for creating a space of participation in political action in the way it could generate relational activity, where the written posts formed only a small part of a bigger story about how we can interact and form relationships with one another, and take action together around issues of common concern. The perspectives of individuals were not subsumed or merged (Bakhtin, Holquist, and Emerson 1986, p.7): they did not lose their own specific meaning. Rather, the blogs provided a space in which they were connected, and those connections fostered learning and transformations in thinking. The emergence of these transformations could not be explained as linear cause and effect, but as dynamic and emergent. Complexity theory, however, does provide a theoretical framework to explain such actions and interactions.

In this chapter, I have explained how my thinking and practices evolved and shifted, and have provided evidence in the form of excerpts from dialogues with participants that through our interactions others, too, experienced a

change in their thinking, with implications for practice. In my case, the transformations were around the idea of centre and periphery and the reconceptualisation of this organisational structure into polycentricity. I also explain an evolution in my thinking about the importance of processes of dialogism and relational learning, which can be crowded out and rendered irrelevant by an over-emphasis on outputs.

In the following chapter, I show how I worked towards another practical expression of these ideas, and how they continued to evolve, at the end-of-project conference.

## **Chapter 7 - Turning towards the world: the end-of-project conference**

In this chapter I draw on the conference at the end of the project as the critical episode from which I have gathered data relating to creating spaces for participation in dialogical political action in my practice. This data is used to inform my analysis and interpretations. I revisit the themes related to this which emerged during my research: those of epistemic justice and political action; the notion of the centre and the periphery in power relations; and dialogism and political action.

In Chapter 5, I explained and investigated the strategic planning meetings which took place at the beginning of the project. Drawing on Buber's idea of 'turning towards' the other in a dialogic relationship (2002, p.25), I characterised episode as 'turning inwards'. In the second episode, in Chapter 6, I used the development of the blog as a means to consider how we reached beyond the initial group of partners and opened up participation in the political action of the project, which I theorised as 'turning outwards'. In this present chapter, comprising critical episode 3, I am 'turning towards the wider world' to act within it and with others in it.

Chapter 5 dealt with my understanding of participation and its relationship to epistemic justice. In Chapter 6, I explained how such participation was promoted in practice by moving from a centre and periphery model towards opportunities for polycentricity, in which people can set their own agendas and take political action in ways that they consider important. I explained how more centres spun out from this and I used the concepts of emergence and self-organisation from complexity theory. Also using complexity theory as a framework, I considered the importance of the relationships between people taking action and the fact that the action depended on the connections between people at least as much as the individuals. I discussed how the polycentricity as an organisational structure was an important part of this.

In the previous two chapters, I have explained my developing understanding of dialogism, and of the intrinsic value and transformative potential of the

dialogic meeting of two or more people who have different perspectives and are prepared to 'turn towards' the other. I discussed in Chapter 6 how this process, in itself, held epistemic justice within itself.

In Chapter 7 I use existing literature to gain insights into the opportunities offered by conferences for creating spaces of dialogical political action and consider how this literature relates to my own learning so far. I then present the third critical episode, comprising specific elements of the conference and the spaces it provided to foster participation. Then, in my analysis of these, I return to the main theoretical ideas of this thesis and consider them in practice. I give examples of how dialogism was promoted in the activities of the conference and how people from very different contexts interacted. I explain the intentional process of promoting polycentricity by enabling different groups to set the agenda and the development of my thinking around ideas of polycentricity. I provide evidence to test the validity of my claim that the conference was a transformative experience for some participants.

So, the chapter is structured as follows:

1. I use literature to consider the opportunities offered by a conference.
2. I present the end-of-project conference and explain the spaces created for participation.
3. I discuss the insights and learning towards creating spaces of dialogical political action.

## **7.1 What opportunities might a conference offer?**

In the previous chapter, I addressed the idea of the online medium as a space for political action. In the same way, a conference is a space for interactions between people, offering its own affordances, possibilities and challenges.

In contrast to a blog, our conference was a synchronous, in-person event. Conferences can offer the potential for many simultaneous encounters and interactions between people with different backgrounds and experiences. There is potential to illuminate personally and communally held conceptual and discursive limits (Foucault 2000; Hayward 2000), and to interact with people in

a multitude of ways whose thinking and practices are influenced by different discourses and who have different assumptions which underpin their thinking and practices. There can be the immediate 'back and forth' of speaking and responding offered by synchronous communication. Such interactions can generate insights which can be shared with the whole group. The nature of a conference where people gather in the same physical space (rather than a virtual conference) means that there will be opportunities for understandings and insights to be shared and gained within formal and informal conversations; and for people to eat together, develop relationships, and see one another as more than the ideas they espouse or the system they may represent. It therefore offers great potential as a public sphere: a space where people from a variety of backgrounds can engage with one another dialogically.

In Chapter 6, I discussed the generative and exponential nature of complexity in the social sphere. Such complexity was shown in the many forms of communication developed throughout the project. The conference represented a coming together of ideas and forms of communication as well as in and through the forms of interaction amongst people.

However, the opportunities offered by face-to-face conferences are sometimes not fully taken up. Drawing on Freire (1972), Ravn (2007) refers to a 'banking' model of conferences, in which delegates are considered to be empty vessels to be filled with the knowledge of experts. Wiessner, Hatcher, Chapman and Storberg-Walker (2008, p.367) argue that conferences too often rely on 'one-way communication' at the expense of discussion or ways of integrating the information in theory, research and practice and do not encourage 'interaction, engagement and reflection among participants'. From my own learning, explicated in the previous chapters, this type of structure and communication represents a missed opportunity for learning with and through others in dialogic relations, which can be transformative.

Even where there may be interaction, participants typically leave conferences with 'their own' learning, but with little understanding of the overall learning that could benefit their scholarship or practice, according to Wiessner, Hatcher, Chapman and Storberg-Walker (2008, p.368). The theorisations presented in previous chapters underline the importance of common purpose and of the

relational, rather than individual, nature of learning. In addition, the usefulness of conference evaluations is problematised by Kordts-Freudinger, Al-Kabbani and Schaper. They argue that they should be geared 'toward the learner, toward the future' (2017, p.30).

Narrow conceptions of who should attend are highlighted as missed opportunities by some. For example, Walkington, Hill and Kneale (2017, p.417) and Wood, Louw and Zuber-Skerritt (2017, p.120) lament the lack of participation of students in conferences for their personal and professional development; and Neves, Lavis and Kent Ranson (2012, p.8) advocate the importance of 'balancing the power of typically dominant groups' by placing emphasis on increasing the participation from 'low- and middle- income country attendees' to promote diversity of perspectives. In Chapter 5, I problematised the idea of participation as necessarily enabling the representation of difference.

The underlying premises and conduct of a conference may suffer from a 'colonialist perspective', according to Lee et al. (2013), which they argue is an 'inelastic practice with no accommodation to the otherness of the international colleague, because the otherness is still largely unseen or seen as inferior' (p.91). They argue that there is a need to 'move into a contested, unstable space where identities can be explored, interrogated, problematized, blurred and engaged with and cultural change may take place within the post-colonial perspective' (p.91). In this 'post-colonial' context they investigate the hallmarks of effective collaboration that 'assist international colleagues in creating together a flexible and nuanced global educational development practice' (p.92) in relation to a conference held in China with participants from the host country and from the US, Australia and Europe.

Lee et al.'s research links to my theorisations about epistemic justice. Using epistemic justice specifically as a lens gives a different tool for analysis in order to build upon their work. I would note that Lee et al.'s conference centred on a theme – academic development, and China's need for such development – which positioned global North as more knowledgeable and China as in need of this knowledge. Although my research is not focused on China, the point I wish to draw out here is that in the 'post-colonial' conference described in Lee

et al.'s paper, the paradigm of 'more knowledgeable' and 'less knowledgeable' seems not to have been challenged. In Chapter 1, I argued that the dominance of the English language as the default and central language of academia renders many people unable to contribute to research or to learn from it, and therefore contributes to epistemic injustice. Lee et al.'s paper did not address this issue. I will return to these themes in later sections.

A common denominator of the models of conferences described in the literature, according to Kordts-Freudinger, Al-Kabbani and Schaper (2017, pp.29-30), is their focus on participant-driven, interactive conference methods, in short: that they have a culture which is 'participatory, not passive'. Wiessner, Hatcher, Chapman and Storberg-Walker (2008) identify a need to create spaces for what they call 'new learning': going beyond sharing information and instead making knowledge construction and learning focal points. This emphasis is also a characteristic of action research.

Drawing on the work of Ravn (2007), the model of the 'learning conference' is advocated by Louw and Zuber Skerritt (2011), contrasting this with the assumption that delegates are passive recipients of the knowledge of others. They argue that the learning conference is a type of temporary learning organisation, and envisage a similar philosophy, aspiration, practice and outcome to the 'learning organization' identified by Senge. Such an organisation fosters an environment in which members act and 'learn to learn together' as equals for the benefit of the whole, expressing ideas and challenging themselves in a culture of cooperation and trust.

[A learning organisation] provides a work environment that is open to creative thought, encouraging members to draw from knowledge within the organization to strengthen their ability to think critically and creatively (Louw and Zuber Skerritt 2011, p.290, drawing on Senge 1990).

If a conference has the descriptor 'learning', it is important to identify the type of learning envisaged. Drawing on Habermas's three knowledge interests: technical, practical and emancipatory, a learning conference would have its learning aspiration primarily located in one of these knowledge interests, be it overtly or less consciously.

The conference which forms the focus of this chapter had emancipatory knowledge interests in, for example, its aim to challenge assumptions of the legitimacy inferred on some types of knowledge over others; and the central importance of the English language in academia. It aimed to challenge assumptions that were previously taken-for-granted as fixed, opening up new questions and new horizons of possibilities of how to be and how to act in the world. It would offer the possibility of 'practical critique that takes the form of a possible transgression' (Foucault 1984, p.45) from the arbitrary limits present in the mental models which inform our actions.

## **7.2 The end-of-project conference**

The conference took place in York from 1st-3rd September 2015. Building on my developing understandings as articulated in the previous chapter, the conference was planned with the concept of many centres of learning and spaces of autonomous activity, or polycentricity, as a guiding principle for dialogical political action. The value of apart-ness within a connected whole informed the planning of spaces in which different people and their interests and concerns could lead. We aimed to create spaces for smaller 'single interest' groups, deliberately mixed interest groups, participants from global North or global South (or both together) leading sessions; spaces of single language, spaces of mixed language; sessions led by students, social enterprise practitioners or academics, or a combination of these; and spaces focusing on spoken presentation, spaces focusing on dialogue, spaces focused on artefacts, spaces where participants could pose a question or theme and invite others to join them and spaces where insights gained separately could be fed back to the whole. In this way, we aimed to provide opportunities in which people of different backgrounds would be 'centred' at different times and in different types of relational spaces. This can be seen in the conference programme, pages 15-25. An excerpt can be found in Appendix 3, and the full programme in the Data archive (Conference – Conference programme August 2015). In what follows, I will examine some of these activities in more detail.

In the previous chapter, I identified the importance of the development of trusting relationships within processes of collaboration. One example of such



a collaboration within an increasingly trusting relationship was with Laura Kreiling. The meetings for the purpose of writing a blog post, as explained in Chapter 6, were the context for our interactions and from which other collaborations evolved. These culminated in her making significant contribution to the end-of-project conference theme and organisation, leading the communications team within it, and co-ordinating the writing of the Conference report (2015).

Mindful of the importance of participants setting the agenda, one year before the event, elements were co-designed with a local steering committee and with project partners and collaborators (see Conference report 2015, p.4). Skype conversations with partners and collaborators were held to plan the conference. Some of the ways in which these influenced the conference will be explained below.

### **7.2.1 Conference theme**

The conference was envisaged as multi-sectorial and aimed towards an issue of concern around which people representing different roles and sectors, and global North and South, would have a contribution to make. The publicity material on the website stated:

Cross-sector collaboration is at the heart of social entrepreneurship cultures which are nurtured by the quality of their relationships. Collaborations are based on the values embodied by social entrepreneurship, such as mutual respect, reciprocity, solidarity, common good and respect for the environment.

Universities have a clear and distinctive role in promoting both social entrepreneurship cultures and cross-sector partnerships. This conference aims to address the question, 'How can higher education foster interactions between the current economic systems (public, private and social) to promote social enterprise cultures for human-centred, sustainable development in our communities?' (Conference report 2015, p.3).

## **7.2.2 Enlarging the public sphere of dialogical political action**

As referred to in Chapter 2, Fraser (1990) questions the idea that it is possible for all people to take negotiated, collaborative action in the public sphere. She suggests that some groups are unable to contribute to it because informal, structural obstacles to participation can persist. In the following sections I explain how we addressed this in the conference. As co-ordinators of the conference, Catalina Quiroz-Niño and I considered how collaboration as peers could be recognised within its design, so that spaces and processes would promote and not limit participation.

### **7.2.2.1 Participants**

Information was sent to contacts and networks built up during the project and we aimed to ensure a diversity of participants' backgrounds, roles and perspectives. One hundred and three people participated, from 21 countries in Africa, Asia, Europe, North and South America. Catalina and I worked to ensure the conference would disrupt the theory/practice binary so marked in many academic conferences, according to our experience and reports from others. In keeping with the aims of the project, we also aimed for plurality in perspectives that could create a space in which assumptions would be explored, blurred and engaged with (Lee et al. 2013, p.91).

Participants came from the academic, social economy, private sector and policy-making spheres. The budget was managed to enable four scholarships for people who had contributed significantly to the development of the project handbook who would otherwise have been unable to attend. This management facilitated the attendance of, for example, two participants from Cuba and was one of many ways in which the contributions were balanced to enable participation from people and perspectives less often represented in conferences (Neves, Lavis and Kent Ranson 2012). More information about the participants can be found in the Conference report (2015, pp.60-62). This plurality was noticed by participants, who made statements in their conference evaluations about the way that 'the methodology prioritised diversity, which worked well for the Conference and for diversity' and appreciated 'the opportunity to hear from and meet with international practitioners and not just

the usual suspects'. The sense of equality between participants was noted by one, who appreciated a 'sense of parity, everyone engaging with one another as peers, and this was as much due to careful programming as the nature of socially astute delegates!' One participant noted in their conference evaluation that 'There was good variety and plenty of space to listen and to engage and each delegate seemed to have their moment'. The evaluations can be found in the Conference report (2015, pp.48-52) and in Appendix 5, where the evaluations in Spanish have been translated into English.

### **7.2.2.2 Language**

The conference was conducted through the medium of two languages. It was designed around a recognition of equal status, as much as possible, between English and Spanish as the main languages with interpretation from and to either language being available for those who needed it. As such, there were no 'non-[name of language] speakers' who were positioned as having a deficit. Participants spoke one or both of the languages of the conference. Some bilingual participants were also asked prior to the event to 'buddy up' with those who spoke just one of the conference languages for particular small group sessions. Bilingualism was indicated on conference badges and participants were invited to approach people with 'bilingual' badges to assist when necessary.

Some of the participants' conference evaluations (see Conference report 2015, pp.48-52, and Appendix 5) suggest that this was an enriching experience. Participants commented 'it seemed to make a big difference that there were two languages used throughout the conference – richness!' and '... speakers and audience ... appreciated the bilingual nature of the conference'. It was also seen as an opportunity to 'Meet ... interesting people with whom I would have been unlikely to coincide and debate any other way'.

### **7.2.3 Dialogical conference activities**

As stated above, participants came from a diversity of contexts and would have been likely to hold a diversity of perspectives and priorities. Based on our previous work and previous learning, Catalina and I aimed to create a variety of spaces to promote dialogical interaction between the participants. Different

people and different groups would form what could be called a 'centre' at different times, in which they could set the agenda to a greater or lesser extent. These were sometimes based on smaller groups in which a characteristic, such as language or professional role, was the unifying factor. The intention was to promote many centres of interest – a form of polycentricity. In the context of designing the end-of-project conference, I theorise this organisational structure as 'moving' or 'shifting' centres (Ngũgĩ Wa Thiong'o 1993, p.4). At other times all participants would come together.

### **7.2.3.1 *The social economy fair***

The social economy fair was an event taking place over two hours in the afternoon of the second day, in which local social enterprises and others were invited to set up stalls to demonstrate and discuss their activities and practices with conference participants. Sixteen social enterprises and social enterprise support organisations participated (for more details see <https://www.yorks.ac.uk/social-economy/conference-2015/social-economy-fair/>). In addition, some university-based participants were invited to furnish a stall showing the cross-sector collaboration practices between the university and local community, with the aim of explaining and showcasing their practices and as a stimulus for dialogue. The event also encompassed poster presentations as these also fitted well with a space in which people moved around and used visual and tactile stimuli as a focus for discussion. A buffet was provided by a local social enterprise.

It was conceived as a 'free' space in which people could arrange to meet and continue conversations with people they had already found common ground with, or with new people, and with the artefacts and practices of the social enterprises as a starting point for dialogue. The interaction of international participants and the mainly local social enterprises provided a stimulus for dialogue in which particular cultural and contextual assumptions could be questioned because they were not necessarily shared. Participants could engage with others or take a complete break from conference activities.

The event was planned and organised by master's degree students from the Business School at York St John, overseen by the director of the master's

programme, Chris Mortimer. With the concept explained above in mind, Catalina and I acted as clients to the students whose role was to organise the event. It was an opportunity to take a polycentric approach to the conference in which a group, in this case Chris and her students, could self-organise and have their own input into the way in which the event was organised.

The interaction took place between the two groups of people in the event development: between the social enterprise practitioners who tend to have particular, and well-articulated, visions of the purposes and practices of business in society; and the students, who had expertise in business administration. In this way, the interaction was designed to provide opportunities for mutual learning.

Chris Mortimer reflected on the social economy fair and the influence the experience had on her MBA students (transcript from recorded interview (7th July 2016))

[The social economy fair] was an additional event, which I think was brilliant, and it made the conference quite special and very different from normal conferences.

[The students] ... were all international students, only here for a year so they are doing their master's. ... What was really interesting is most of them never ever come into contact with this thing called social enterprise or social economy, because they all come from cultures where making money from business at the moment is really, really important....

So introducing students to this idea of social enterprise is really interesting, and they're like, "Well why would people do it? If they're not making money from it, why do they do it?" So it opens up a huge dialogue about the importance of business within society and how business has to look after the society in which it operates. So, it's starting to touch on those more ethical things. But also, in a lot of these countries there is no national health service. There is no social welfare system. And if the countries want to grow everybody has to be given the opportunity of taking part in that growth. ...

I think for a lot of the students when they met a lot of the social enterprises in real life they were like, “Ah! Actually I can now understand where this would fit within my country and the gaps that it would help alleviate.” ...

Two of [the students] went on to do their dissertation about social economy and social enterprise in their own countries (Transcript of audio, 7.7.2016. Data archive, Chris Mortimer, pp.4-5).

In the above passage, Chris is explaining that seeing real enterprises which exist for social purpose and engaging with them had broadened the students’ thinking about what was possible. The idea of socially engaged, ethical business changed from being a utopian and practically unachievable idea to a face-to-face engagement with real people carrying out practices in real contexts. The students had experiences which give meaningful exposure to, and engagement with, people who embodied practices and concepts which were new to them. The experiences offered the possibility of questioning discourses and boundaries in which their own understandings and practices were enacted.

Considering the principle of dialogical political action in the public sphere in terms of both process and product, the social economy fair created ‘real world’ relational processes for international business students to work with social enterprises. It also created a product that would continue the process in the form of an opportunity for international conference participants to meet a variety of social entrepreneurs from Yorkshire and further afield. Process and product were inseparable parts of the same whole.

### ***7.2.3.2 British Council Canada Students for Social Impact ‘wrap up’ activities***

In Chapter 6, I explained how some of the many encounters Catalina and I had during the lifespan of the project emerged into new possibilities of collaboration, gaining their own momentum and developing self-organised centres of activity. One such encounter was with Elizabeth McCallion, who was co-ordinating an exchange programme called Students for Social Impact (SSIM) on behalf of the British Council Canada, in which ten British and ten

Canadian students were undertaking summer placements in social enterprises in each other's countries, being mentored by the enterprises and doing research into an aspect of their work.

The timing of the conference coincided with the end of the SSIM programme and provided an opportunity for the students to present their research to a wider audience and take part in other conference activities as part of their 'wrap-up' event. The British Council Canada sponsored places for all the students and the two co-ordinators to participate in the conference.

The contact with Elizabeth McCallion and her fellow SSIM co-ordinator, Ceecee Quinne, enabled discussion to take place during the conference design stage about how students would participate in ways that would support their development on the exchange programme, and how their own knowledge and experience might be drawn upon for the benefit of other conference participants. In this way, and drawing on the idea of polycentricity, the SSIM participants would form their own self-organised centre and lead presentations which were open to all conference participants.

The students were allocated time to present their work to conference participants during times in the conference schedule for parallel research paper presentations. None of the participating students had previously attended academic conferences and, in the previous months expressed some concerns to their SSIM co-ordinators about what they might have to offer. A teleconference between the students, Elizabeth, Catalina and myself was organised beforehand to discuss these concerns and to answer their questions.

In the lead up to the conference, Catalina and I recruited some 'allies' amongst project partners and collaborators to attend the students' research presentations at the event itself, to act as critical friends and to provide constructive feedback and advice. In this way we could assure the students that their audience were informed of the background to the presentations and were there to provide constructive feedback. Initially, they were envisaged as closed sessions, but in agreement with and through conversations with Elizabeth and Ceecee, became open to all. In the conference, other people

from both academia and social enterprises attended them. Reflecting on the experience of presenting research at the conference, one student commented:

Throughout the summer most students were like 'I have no idea what I'm doing, ... this is crazy. I'm just a student ...' But the ones that have come here and presented, it's like 'This is such a good presentation. You've gathered so much ...'. It's really interesting to see that along the way they're not really confident in what they've produced, but at the end it's like 'wow', look what you've done (SSIM student, Data archive, British Council students video).

In Chapter 5, I discussed the importance of people making a contribution to the 'whole' specifically from their unique experience and insights. In the context of the conference and in conversation with Elizabeth and Ceecee, the importance of the students making a contribution to the conference that they, as students, were uniquely placed to do was discussed. As the project and the conference aimed to influence practices in higher education, the students were ideally placed to make a contribution about how universities could best raise awareness and prepare students for the social enterprise sector. This contribution was discussed with the students during the teleconference mentioned above and by Elizabeth and Ceecee during their contact with the students.

The students participated in a workshop facilitated by Catalina and myself which took the form of a structured dialogue, using the 'Consensus workshop method' (ICA International no date), in which students worked individually and then in small groups to organise their ideas about what universities could do on a practical level. During the conference, the students presented their ideas to academics and to the European commissioner for education who attended the conference. Elizabeth McCallion, SSIM co-ordinator, commented about the students:

They made some really useful and interesting recommendations for different things that universities can do to try and encourage social entrepreneurship and raise awareness about social entrepreneurship opportunities amongst their students (Conference video 2015).



A mentoring relationship emerged between some academics, social enterprise practitioners and students. Tim Curtis, an academic from the UK, explained

What's really intrigued me about the conference – there's been students working alongside the academics. ... it's really important that we're building in how the students themselves begin the journey for social entrepreneurship. Most of the students I've spoken to didn't [use] academic terms, but they had a sense of social justice, a sense of social injustice, but they didn't know how to do anything about it. They've gone and worked with an organisation ... and seen how people are solving problems and then come back and are talking in a very literate way about social enterprise and social impact and all the academic things. So the challenge ... is starting the student on the journey. Once they're on the journey, teaching's really easy, but how do we help them transition from what I call 'seeing a social problem' and then knowing what to do about it? That's the thing I'm taking away from this conference (Video recording, 3.9.15. See Data archive, Conference – Tim Curtis).

This relationship of mutual learning was expressed by one student who stated that she 'felt like there've not been any barriers' (Katy Corderoy, SSIM student Conference video 2015). Her changing world view is alluded to in a tweet 'What #YorkSSEConf and #SSIMexchange has really taught me is that there is a problem with the system, not me...' (Katywoof 2015).

The contribution of the SSIM students to the conference was a professional development activity. As importantly, it enabled them to make a contribution to the public sphere of political action in the present, and as more than *potential* experts or *future* valued contributors, which I believe can subtly diminish the contribution of the person and the group in the here and now. In the conference design, they were positioned as what I would call 'beings' who have agency and expertise now, rather than as 'becomings' requiring professional development before their work can be taken seriously as a contribution to the learning of others.

### ***7.2.3.3 Enabling participants to influence agendas***

The dialogue prior to the conference with SSIM students and co-ordinators described above was an example of involving participants at the planning, conceptual stage before these are firmly set. In these discussions with the co-ordinators we agreed to brief project partners and collaborators who would be present in the conference about the student presentations and asked them to act as critical friends to the students. At the request of the co-ordinators, spaces were timetabled in which the students and co-ordinators could meet as a group, and learning workshops were organised on agreed themes of relevance to the students, such as facilitative leadership, and preparing a social business plan. Group calls were also held with the students themselves several months prior to the conference to answer questions about the format and the expectations for their presentations about the research they had undertaken in the social enterprise placements. We also discussed how we would organise interaction between the students, academics and the EU education officer in attendance, focusing on student perspectives of how higher education institutions could raise awareness and promote socially focused entrepreneurship within their curricula and as a possible career choice for students.

This principle of fostering participants' influence on the conference agenda was applied in other ways. For example, as part of the registration process, participants were asked to state their expectations for the conference. The full list of participants' expectations can be seen in the Conference report (2015, pp.52-53) and in Appendix 4. One common theme was the desire to meet others and learn from their experiences and practices. This confirmed the importance of the participative conference methodology, as well as the provision of less structured time such as the social economy fair, as explained earlier. There were also some expectations which had a specific focus within the general theme of the conference. Partly to address these specific focuses, participants were invited to propose topics for discussion in the final afternoon of the conference and invite others to join them. It was based on 'open space' methodology (Owen 2008), in which participants in a gathering can propose a topic and invite others to coalesce around them. Participants can stay with a

topic for as long as they feel they are contributing or gaining something from the dialogue. This approach was informed by the principle of the importance for political action of people raising questions or establishing points of interest and concern for possible collaborative action referred to in Chapter 5.

#### ***7.2.3.4 Parallel sessions***

Twenty-four people presented research papers in parallel sessions (see Conference programme, pp.37-41) in addition to the British Council Canada students and those presenting posters, as explained above. In order to facilitate the widest possible participation, Catalina and I worked with some potential participants to support them in the preparation of their research presentations. For example, two university-based practitioners, who were not positioned as academic staff within their university, had initiated and spearheaded an innovative programme to form meaningful connections between students and the local community around a theme of common concern. They expressed interest in presenting an account their work but claimed to have no idea how to make it into an academic presentation. When we had Skype and email contact, it was clear they had identified a practical problem they wished to address through their work and could explain this problem and articulate it as a research question. They could give a rationale for the study and substantiate it from government publications; they had a defined group they were working with and a means of collecting data about the evolution of the programme; and they could clearly explain what they had found out about how to make improvements to implement the next phase of the programme, and how and why they had made a contribution to the field. In other words, they had the highly relevant material to present an action research project at the conference. They presented their work at the conference and it attracted the interest of other participants who could identify with the aims of the programme.

#### ***7.2.3.5 Small group discussions***

Small group, 'round table' discussions took place in parallel. These were an interchange between self-selecting participants of experiences, ideas and

proposals about the role of universities and curriculum innovation and were divided into themes:

- a. Universities, social entrepreneurship, principles, values and social capital;
- b. Universities, social entrepreneurship modus operandi and public, social policies;
- c. Universities, social entrepreneurship and social responsibility;
- d. Universities, social entrepreneurship, ecosystems and competences.

(See Conference programme, p.51 in Data archive).

Each was facilitated by a project partner or collaborator and a keynote speaker or other guest from the conference. A representative from each round table fed back to all conference participants. Examples of the outline of the presentations can be seen on the conference website:

<https://www.yorks.ac.uk/social-economy/conference-2015/round-tables/> and a screenshot is shown below in Figure 7:1.

York St John University  
Universities Developing Social Entrepreneurship  
1<sup>st</sup> – 3<sup>rd</sup> September 2015



Social and Solidarity Economy Curricula means....	
Designing educational framework with different timeframe.	Considering different ways of learning from different methods.
Respecting different points of views, different practices. There is no one truth.	Being aware of cognitive colonialism
Thinking about multiplicity and different practicality	Taking into account Indigenous knowledge
Review what skills are people /students taught at university	Playing as instrument to learn.
Practice in real world that you might come to understand through work placement as part of curriculum.	Creating meaning collectively instead of having a book to read it from. It's an explorative process.
Enhance team work; group-based assessments	Fostering field based (reality related); research-approach, evidential-based






**Figure 7:1 Screenshot from participants' presentation.**

### **7.2.3.6 Keynote presentations**

In the conference design, we aimed for a balance of representation from global North and global South and for a diversity of perspectives. For example, one

keynote speaker, from the global South, spoke in Spanish against the central proposition of the conference – that cross-sector collaboration was desirable. Another speaker, presenting in English, had extensive experience of working in the international banking sector before entering academia. Simultaneous interpretation was provided from Spanish to English, and English to Spanish. Where presentations were submitted according to an agreed deadline, they were translated and notes were given to participants in their conference packs.

### ***7.2.3.7 Bringing the dialogues together around a common concern***

Earlier in the chapter, I referred to the issue raised by Wiessner, Hatcher, Chapman and Storberg-Walker (2008) of participants having their own learning experience in a conference but gaining little understanding of others' learning that could benefit their scholarship and practice. Arendt's (1958) notion of political action involves dialogue around an issue of common concern. To promote sharing of such 'common-ness', Catalina and I gave consideration to how this greater sense of the whole of the multiple dialogues around the issue could be shared and recorded in a way that starts to overcome the limitations of multiple, synchronous dialogues and form products to reflect the process.

Bringing the dialogues together was achieved in three main ways: firstly by gathering participants together at the end of the day for a summary of the day, in which project collaborators collated and reported many of the points from parallel sessions and focus groups and reminded participants of some of the main points raised in keynotes. This report was presented at the end of day 1 and the beginning of day 3. Conference evaluations stated it was, 'Super useful to have the summary each day', while another participant 'Loved the summary of the sessions' (Conference report 2015, pp.48-52 and Appendix 5).

In the foyer of the conference, participants' expectations, which had been solicited prior to the conference itself as explained in Section 7.2.3.3, were displayed on a wall. Alongside statements of expectations, participants were invited to develop a 'working wall' or 'Hub' of responses and comments as the conference progressed, in which they could summarise any new insights they had developed during the parallel sessions, any new actions they plan to take

in the light of their learning and experiences in these sessions, and new contacts they would like to make to discuss specific themes arising from the sessions. A photograph of the Hub can be seen in Figure 7:2.



**Figure 7:2 Conference working wall or 'Hub'.**

As previously stated, the conclusions of the small group, round table sessions were reported back to all participants.

A conference report was created which summarised keynote and parallel session presentations, key points recorded from the round tables, participant pre-conference expectations and post-conference evaluations, contact details and photographs of the event. It was made available online (Conference report 2015). It provided a means of bridging the synchronous nature of the communication within the conference and the advantage of asynchronicity, which enables reflection away from the 'live' event as explained in Chapter 6. A video of the conference was also produced (Conference video 2015). Links to these two summaries of the conference were emailed to participants.

### **7.2.3.8 Participant reflections on the methodology**

A participant recorded in their evaluation that 'Changing between the type of activity made 10 hours of continuous activity possible without them becoming

boring and/or repetitive'. Significantly, it 'meant not only changing activity but also interacting more directly with conference colleagues'. Another stated in their conference evaluation

I see an added value in the positive combined methodology used. This was created through facilitation of exchange and discussion with flipcharts, forming groups around unresolved issues, the daily summaries given by one of the volunteers, the coloured paper technique for bringing together perspectives, actions and contacts.

There was the 'cross-pollination of shared values across continents also the debates and shifts of terminology that happened as a result of the interaction', and 'it encouraged constant exchange between participants and possible involvement in future projects, as well as serious and deep theoretical discussion', according to other participants (Conference report 2015, pp.48-52, and Appendix 5).

### **7.3 Insights and discussion: Creating spaces of participation in dialogical political action**

In the following section, I will discuss my learning and theorisations of the activities of the conference described above, and how they can be used to support my knowledge claims. I will do this by discussing the themes identified in previous chapters of this thesis as important factors in creating spaces of participation: epistemic justice, polycentricity and dialogical interaction. I will then return to the axiological level of political action.

#### **7.3.1 Centre and periphery: from polycentricity towards moving centres for epistemic justice**

In Chapter 6, I discussed my developing understanding of the importance of many centres, or polycentricity for spaces of participation which encompass the idea of epistemic justice. The conference aimed to put this idea into practice within a time-limited context with a set group of people: people who had different experiences, interests and backgrounds. This polycentricity was demonstrated in, for example, the centring of the British Council SSIM students who gave perspectives – as students – about the practices of universities. The

social economy fair practitioners could also be seen as a centre. In the sense that the conference was conducted in two languages, rather than one, the use of English was positioned as not being the unquestioned linguistic centre, opening up the possibility of the legitimization of another linguistic 'centre'.

In the previous chapter I discussed the self-organising centre formed by an academic in Colombia, and how this gave rise to other emergent centres. In the context of the conference, the temporary nature of each centre was intentional and apparent. They were dynamic rather than static as one waned and another emerged. We aimed to avoid 'settled' centres in as far as we could identify them. The various activities and diversity of perspectives were part of the conference design to create spaces in which transformation could occur through the constant questioning of norms and the mix of perspectives.

The end-of-project conference enabled me to further develop my understanding of challenging the assumptions and practices of power intrinsic to the centre and the periphery. I would argue that the idea of a 'centre' of power relationships is not fixed. It may apply in relation to one attribute but not others. It might apply to language – for example in speaking English – but not to professional role or to form of knowledge. One might be able to explain their practical knowledge of the field while others were immersed in wider theoretical perspectives. In the conference, spaces were created which 'centred' different groups according to different attributes at different times.

The dynamic, emergent and inter-relational nature of the interactions within the conference can be understood and theorised with reference to complexity theory in which there is 'structure with fluidity of change', according to Capra (1997, p.172); to Arendt's 'web of relationships' as the 'in-between' of the process of people acting and speaking to one another (1958, pp.182-184); and to the 'ecologies of knowledges', rather than one form of dominant knowledge which excludes other knowledges, identified by Santos (2016). In this theorisation, the whole is made through the relationships and the processes which enable these to develop. No part was fragmented from the whole, because people were part of different 'centres' interacting with those 'not centred' at that moment. There was a fluidity of position in relation to others in



this sense. The conference theme formed the common concern, referred to in Chapter 5 in relation to Buber (1965, cited in Morocco 2008, p.15).

Reviewing the 'many centres' idea of polycentricity, I identify these as 'moving' or 'shifting' centres where the focus is on processes and 'the centrality of the means to enable the expression of diversity around the issue' (Davis and Sumara 2005, pp.459-460). 'Moving centres' is a way of theorising spaces and processes in which different people and groups can emerge at different times as a centre with the group's norms and assumptions setting the agenda for others rather than in isolation. They remain or dissipate as other centres emerge. This approach is in contrast to my previous understanding of polycentricity which, on reflection, I had conceptualised as a whole with many centres, but I had not considered their fluid and changing nature to a sufficient extent.

As referred to earlier, Lee et al. (2013) discuss a conference from a (post-) colonial perspective. Their work invites reflection on the norms and practices within conferences which legitimise or de-legitimise certain types of participation based around knowledge. In this chapter I believe I, along with others, have demonstrated and practised post-coloniality in a conference. In addition, I believe we extended this concept by including a notion of epistemic justice: by ensuring that the theme was one all could contribute to as different equals, rather than a topic that positioned the global North, for example, as more knowledgeable. We also challenged the taken-for-granted use of English as the academic lingua franca, as the official medium of conference business. In epistemic terms, it meant that different knowers could express their knowledge in their most familiar language. At that moment, their own language was centred and the other language, peripheral. Later, this centring would be reversed.

Hannah Arendt argues for understanding and judging by oneself or with an open mind and across disciplinary boundaries, rather than relying on preconceived categories. Such 'thinking without banisters' (Nixon 2012, p.116) – exploring issues for oneself and attempting not to be conditioned by other people's categories – is key for the creation of a just public sphere of action. I argue that in the process of centring and de-centring at the conference, there

was an opportunity to identify previously unnoticed 'banisters' and reassess their usefulness.

In the conference, we did not set out one ideological agenda or another in terms of a response to the conference theme. We just aimed to provide a space in which we could question ourselves from many perspectives and encourage others to do the same. Participation has been highest, or deepest, in my practice when I have stood back and not worried about filling the space myself with content or with rigid structure. In this chapter and the previous two, I have reflected on whose voice is normally predominant, or expected, in a gathering around an issue: who would be expected to speak and how, and who would be expected to listen. It is then possible to give consideration to how other voices, normally less dominant, might gain equal status in an event by changing the focus and challenging the normative assumptions about authority.

Creating spaces for moving centres, I believe, fosters plurality in participation, where plurality is understood as equality and difference (Arendt 1958, p.175). Young discusses policy to support the notion of different but equal, what she calls a 'heterogeneous public' (2011, p.183). In the previous sections, I show that I have demonstrated heterogeneity in my practice. Furthermore, Young (p.167) discusses the importance of creating spaces for difference. In the conference, there were spaces for difference whilst maintaining the focus of a common concern.

### **7.3.2 Dialogical political action**

In the previous sections of this chapter I have explained how spaces were created in the conference for dialogical interactions. I used the words of participants to demonstrate their engagement within these spaces and their perceptions of some of the implications. I will now revisit ideas from previous chapters, and then extend these through analysing the data from the conference.

In Chapter 6, I explained how I came to gain a deeper understanding of the processes of dialogism as an end in themselves, which can encompass epistemic justice as well as meaning making. In that chapter, I explained how

using online synchronous group meetings was useful and was an intrinsic part of the possibility of an international project of the type we carried out. I also outlined some of the limitations: primarily the difficulty of a more spontaneous type of interaction. Within group meetings, the medium lent itself to a focused, technical kind of dialogue. It lacked the possibility of social or spontaneous interactions which were unstructured and undirected, at least in the way we used it.

In the strategic planning meetings explicated in Chapter 5, I highlighted the importance of informal interactions, such as those which can take place when eating together, as a way of reducing intensity, diffusing possible tensions and generating a different type of interaction: of getting to know one another in a more complete way. In my experience in conferences, there is a difficult balance to be struck which addresses this tension between structured and unstructured time, which is often expressed in conference programmes as defined activities and breaks or 'time off'. Sometimes the most interesting interactions are snatched between the tightly timetabled and focused activities and as such they are curtailed. These interactions can happen in the spaces which are less structured and more fluid, in between the settled structures of presentation and organised group exchanges in a conference, or in institutional life more widely.

In aiming to address this structure/free space balance dilemma, the social economy fair provided a space with new stimuli in the form of the social economy practitioners and their stalls along with the poster presentations, but it was a space for a completely non-structured approach to interaction and dialogue of the type that I have not (yet) experienced in a professional capacity online. It enabled people to dip in and out of interactions as they wished. The absence of this type of informal interaction was highlighted as problematic in online exchanges in Chapter 6. It was a form of planned non-structure, perhaps 'polythematic and chaotic' in Sidorkin's terms (1999, pp.74-76). It was a type of Matusov's 'free range' or 'ecological' approach to dialogue, referred to in Chapter 2, where people could 'move in and out of the interaction, remain silent, change and modify the themes, and engage simultaneously in several activities and agendas' (Matusov 2018, p.295).

### 7.3.3 Internal dialogues

In an email dialogue with a conference participant, Miwon Choe, an academic from Western Kentucky University, USA, I was prompted to reflect upon the idea that the creation of spaces for interaction with others would be of lesser lasting value if it was not accompanied by a corresponding internal dialogue.

Miwon commented:

So, the York conference did open up and created a space for dialogue, reflection, and re-framing of my practice. The conversation that took place was not just inter, but intra within myself as an educator of the arts and what they mean for whom we serve.

Reviewing my data revealed several comments from participants that alluded to this internal dialogue on an axiological level, a level of engagement which I discussed in Chapter 6.

For example,

It has made me reconsider the way the values of the social and solidarity economy can pervade everyday life, not necessarily through direct enterprise, so these values will continue to inform my actions all the more.

And

there is a lot of learning to take from these occasions where you are able to evaluate your own practice and to improve on it (Conference report 2015, pp.48-52 and Appendix 5).

The comments by Ana María Villafuerte and Catalina Quiroz-Niño, recorded in Chapter 5, Section 5.2.7.2, are articulations of internal dialogues and meaning-making. This thesis itself reflects my own internal – as well as external – dialogues in this respect. All of these have gone beyond taking activities and interactions at immediate face value and demonstrate personal reflections about these and their significance to the individual. They are illustrations of how dialogical political action can transform us as individuals, just as we aim to transform our world. Dialogical political action creates spaces to challenge our world view, by showing that other world views are possible. It

exposes boundaries and limits in our ways of knowing the world (Foucault 1984; Hayward 2000) and enables us to cross them if we wish.

### **7.3.4 Dialogical political action and social hope**

As discussed in Chapter 1, one of the limitations of academic critique is that it stops short of providing alternatives to current structures and realities and can therefore be less strong on pointing towards hopeful futures. In the project explicated in this thesis, the form of critique was practical in that it enacted alternatives and offered opportunities for 'social hope' (Rorty 1999). I argue that the project was profoundly hopeful in that it provided opportunity for transforming values into practices, and that this was an aspect which, in itself, promoted participation in political action. It appealed to the power of values and of personal agency and collective action. In the end-of-project conference, I aim to have shown that our form of critique was emancipatory. It was about transforming our thinking and intentions into political action, and through such transformation, about hopefulness.

In his closing address at the conference, Emeritus Professor of York St John University, David Maughan Brown stated:

The Social Enterprise project we are celebrating today, one of whose outcomes has been this conference, offers an alternative way of both perceiving and interacting with the world.

I have been to many university conferences over the years. The only ones that have come close to being infused with the energy and commitment to a cause of this one were conferences held in South Africa under the shadow of apartheid whose aim was, in one way or another, to bring an end to that crime against humanity.

[The project] represents an energy and commitment that has at its heart those three ... leadership values ... Fairness, honesty and integrity (David Maughan Brown, Conference video 2015 and Conference report 2015, pp.12-13 where the full closing address to the conference can be read).

Hopefulness is alluded to by others during the conference or in their evaluations. The following are some examples of these:

Coming to this conference [the students] were able to experience almost a global movement and a global community (Ceecee Quinne, SSIM organiser. Conference video 2015).

As students it's hard to find people who are really looking to make a change ... it's very rare that you'll find someone standing at the front of the room talking about how they want to change the world and this is their plan and this is what they're doing. So I guess I just really felt inspired by those people (Ashley Dujlovic, SSIM student, Conference video 2015).

One participant alluded to the power of hopefulness based around values:

The idea of social contribution, the better and bigger part of our place beyond the individual pursuit of happiness. This helps my students to feel they belong to this community of sharing and fairness. It is great to dream for a better future for themselves! :))

Others considered their actions in the future:

- Taking part in the conference has made me more aware of everything from my consumption habits to the way in which my work can have transformative effects if only on a small scale. It was truly inspiring attending the conference, I left with lots of ideas and keen to do new projects.
- It has made me reconsider the way the values of the social and solidarity economy can pervade everyday life, not necessarily through direct enterprise, so these values will continue to inform my actions all the more.
- It has given me a wider understanding of social enterprise and what is possible when you think differently. I have already thought about how I can influence the use and support of social enterprises in my work (Conference report 2015, pp.48-52 and Appendix 5).

## 7.4 Conclusion

In this chapter I have aimed to show how spaces of meaningful participation of many people with different experiences were created in a conference. I have explained developments to my thinking about dialogism, and to ideas about polycentricity and how these emerged from and influenced practice.

Earlier in this chapter I stated that Fraser (1990) questions the idea that it is possible for all people to take negotiated, collaborative action in the public sphere because informal, structural obstacles can work against such participation. Such obstacles render certain publics 'not constituted' to be able to participate. In the case of some academic conferences, people sometimes treated as having less to offer include students or those not using Western conceptualisations of knowledge. People often excluded include those with practical knowledge in the field. In this chapter, I have demonstrated how Catalina and I, in co-ordinating the conference, aimed to create spaces, promote relationships and work with people so that these barriers were transgressed (Foucault 1984, p.45) by engaging in practices which highlighted such boundaries by breaching them. I have theorised the practices we engaged in as 'moving' or 'shifting centres' with a view to working towards epistemic justice. Such practices can promote the possibility of people becoming 'constituted' in Fraser's terms, where each person or collective of people is positioned as equally different and each is positioned as able to make a worthwhile contribution, to the enrichment of themselves and others. In theorising in this way I am arguing that it is the understanding of the public sphere, who 'the public' is, and how processes can include or exclude that needs to change, not the people currently excluded.

In the next, and final, chapter, I bring together the main themes of this thesis. I reflect upon what I have learnt through my research and consider some of the implications on a personal, institutional and theoretical level.

## **Chapter 8 - Reconceptualising academic practice as dialogical political action**

In this thesis I have aimed to accomplish two main things: first I have attempted to develop a theory of academic practice; and second I have set out to articulate a process of researching my practice in which I have developed explanatory frameworks for academic practice from explicitly values-based practices.

So now, in this chapter, I summarise what I believe I have achieved in my PhD research. I reflect on its significance in articulating my theory of academic practice, from which I make my claim to be contributing to knowledge of the fields of academic practice and higher education. I draw conclusions which, I trust, contribute to a conceptualisation of the role and responsibility of the academic towards creating spaces for participation in dialogical action. In this, I claim to have made an original contribution to knowledge of the field.

I then reflect upon the processes I have engaged in as part of my research in order to come to the point where I feel authorised to make this claim. In doing so, and as a key aspect of the whole, I will explain what I have learnt about practice as a context for theorising and about writing as a research method. This learning is ongoing and is an unfinished story of learning through research. I explain the significance of my research approach and the contribution it might make to existing literatures on academic practice and higher education.

At the end of this section I revisit the three levels of the analogy of 'turning' which have been used with reference to Buber (2002) in this thesis to explain the dimensions of my practice. This time, I consider them as more of a continuous cycle of reflection, action with others and theorising as public explanations for practice in the world.

The practices recounted within my research are viewed as a microcosm of what I feel higher education could be: spaces of participation in dialogical learning and in political action, towards the achievement of 'social hope' (Rorty 1999). So, in the third section of the chapter, I consider some of the



implications of my research for academic practices and for aspects of higher education. I do this by adapting the three different dimensions of 'turning' used previously in this thesis. This time turning inwards refers to the individual level and the role of the academic; the second is the institutional level that deals with matters of how higher education institutions could work within in the paradigm of dialogical political action in specific areas of policy and practice – a form of turning outwards; and the theoretical implications of offering explanatory frameworks underpinning practices of dialogical political action are represented as 'turning towards the world'

The chapter concludes with reflections on whether I might have carried out my research differently, in light of the fact that processes have themselves taken an emergent form, rather than keeping to a pre-planned course of action. I consider the influence of the research processes articulated in this thesis on my future life trajectories and priorities.

So, the chapter is structured in the following way:

1. I consider the significance of my research.
2. I expand upon my claim to knowledge, in which academic practice is reconceptualised as dialogical political action, first presented in the Introduction to the thesis.
3. I reflect upon the research process
4. I consider the potential implications of my research for the individual academic, for higher education institutions and for theory.
5. I explain what I might have done differently in my research and where I go now.

## **8.1 The significance of my research**

As explained in the Introduction to this thesis, my writing has been on at least three interwoven levels. On one level, I have told the descriptive story of academics and practitioners in the field from global North and global South as we collaborated in a research project on a matter of common concern. On the second level I have highlighted the development of what participants in the project, as people from very different backgrounds, learned through the

process of our collaboration. And on a third level, in this context I have articulated self-reflections in which I explicate my developing understandings of my values in practice and in theory as a form of researching self-in-company-with-others.

Throughout the thesis I have explained the development of my practices and the theoretical frameworks which have both informed and been informed by, and thus developed from, these practices. The framework for my knowledge claim is based on an understanding of personally held values which place importance on the participation of people in issues in which they have an interest, the recognition of plurality, and the conviction that people are equally different. I view these issues as matters of justice.

My concerns about higher education and my role as an academic within this sector were articulated in Chapter 1. In that chapter I expressed concern about the narrow view of knowledge often taken by institutions in the higher education sector. As explained in that chapter, the epistemology often favoured by universities prioritises the development of propositional knowledge based on techno-rationality, which is abstract, reductionist, supposedly values-free, and assumes the predictability of certain interventions leading to understandable consequences. I argued that such knowledge is inadequate for understanding the social sphere and for human development, which requires more tacit and context-specific knowledges.

I also raised my concerns about the interests driving knowledge creation, and that these tended to incentivise self-serving research practices for individuals and institutions, rather than prioritising service to a wider sense of public interest. I highlighted two particular concerns with this: first, that such a view of knowledge excluded many types of knowers and many types of knowledges and that this exclusion was unjust in itself; and second, that the consequences of this epistemic injustice led to a potential impoverishment within the domain of knowledges which are needed to address the complex kinds of issues faced by communities and wider humanity. In Chapter 1, I argued that in the social sphere, values and purposes should be articulated in knowledge creation. Such generation of knowledge should recognise world views and existing

understandings of people with a legitimate interest in the issue and should be motivated by ideas of human development.

The following chapters of the thesis comprised my practical and theoretical responses to these concerns. The social and solidarity economy project that Catalina and I developed, explained in Chapter 3, was based on the idea that all over the world people have developed practices and ways of ascribing value to their lives which prioritise community and well-being over currently dominant perspectives of profit-at-all-costs; and second, that these practices and the knowledge and values that underpin them should be more visible and present in academia itself and in theorisations of issues of great importance to the public, such as the economy.

The project became a public sphere of action in which Arendt's (1958) ideas of natality and plurality were enacted towards a matter of common concern. The practices presented in Chapters 5-7 in the form of episodes, and my critical analysis of them, document and explain my developing understandings of taking practical action with others towards an issue of concern. These were driven by my underlying values of participation and equality in difference.

## **8.2 My knowledge claim: Reconceptualising academic practice as dialogical political action**

My theory of academic practice is based upon practical and theoretical responses to the exclusion of many people in domains of knowledge creation and the belief that all should be positioned as having the capacity to create knowledge and to use this capacity in matters in which they have a stake and an interest. A key element of this involves participative and relational practices in which people from different contexts take collaborative action towards knowledge creation in the public sphere.

I call this dialogical political action and it is based on the following four aspects:

- My practice has been carried out in participative ways which I theorise as being grounded in a commitment to the uniqueness and agency of individuals, as part of striving towards the goal of ensuring epistemic justice.

- My theory of practice recognises the importance of dialogic processes of interaction between people and the transformative potential of these.
- I draw conclusions which contribute to a conceptualisation of the role and responsibility of the academic towards creating spaces for participation in political action.
- I draw out the practices embedded within my research and view them as a microcosm of what higher education could be: spaces of participation in dialogical learning and in political action, towards social hope.

The practical theory I have developed in my research takes Hannah Arendt's idea of action in the public sphere as its overall conceptual framework. As explained in Chapter 2, Arendt's (1958) concept of action is based on two conditions of humanity: that of natality, the capacity we all have to act as agents, capable of original thinking and of bringing something new into the world; and plurality, that as humans, we are equal and distinct (p.175). Arendt's theory of action combines an idea of spaces and processes and gives them the overtly political dimension of people voluntarily collaborating because they wish to focus on a matter of common concern.

Her work has strong resonance with my own values, and it has provided a sculptor's armature to build around (McNiff 2017, p.83) of democratic and just relationships in domains of knowledge creation in a public sphere. The use of Arendt's work and the exploration of its implications in theory and practice give rise to my reconceptualisation of academic practice as dialogical political action, in which personal and professional values are expressed as individual contributions towards a common purpose; and as the creation of spaces for relationality between people as equals towards negotiated ends.

Arendt's work deliberately lacks practical detail and avoids formulaic application. Such formulation would negate the power of people in their differences and in their specific contexts coming together to take negotiated action around an issue of concern to them. As Buckler (2012, p.100) argues, Arendt's theory of action

is not presented as a model to be recreated or a blueprint to be followed; a claim which ... would be very much contrary to the form and substance of Arendt's political thought.

The inherent flexibility in Arendt's theory potentially gives it relevance to many situations. In my research I have aimed to develop practical ways of enacting Arendt's theory of action. In doing so, I believe I have also built upon her work in theoretical ways. I will now summarise these with reference to my research.

### **8.2.1 Epistemic justice and the commitment to the uniqueness and agency of individuals**

My awareness of the idea of epistemic justice had taken hold of my thinking from the beginning of my PhD research and, as explained in Chapter 3, was an important element of the bid for funding of the social economy project. I was aware of, and troubled by, the way in which people can be marginalised and discredited in relation to their ways of knowing. It seemed to me that some people, especially those with practice-based and personal or traditional knowledges, were being diminished in the perceptions of others. Such people were marginalised from contributing to wider conversations about policy and practice and about the knowledge and values that should drive these. I had seen this marginalisation clearly in situations referred to in the Introduction to this thesis, such as in the use of ICT in education and in the indigenous communities in Guatemala. However, it was in the data analysis phase of my PhD research that I found a way of naming this issue, first referring to it as epistemological injustice. I then found the concepts of 'epistemic' and 'cognitive' injustice in the literatures, including writers from the global South (for example, Santos 2007; Visvanathan 2009). These writers have identified and theorised cognitive justice for many years to identify the injustice of the dominance of Western, techno-rationalist knowledges over indigenous ways of knowing. Writing, significantly in the global North, Fricker (2007) has theorised the concept of epistemic injustice, which means being marginalised in our capacity as knowers.

I have argued in this thesis that the concept of epistemic justice gives the conceptual space to identify a potential injustice in a wide variety of knowledge relationships, such as those between hemispheres referred to above. In my research, I have addressed this injustice in practical ways and have extended the idea to injustices which occur between those with abstract and objective knowledges, favoured by academia and as referred to at the beginning of this

chapter, and the knowledges held in communities outside academia in people's everyday practices.

My theory of academic practice identifies justice in its epistemic form as central to people's ability to contribute to a public sphere of action. It means all being included as equals in their capacity as knowers, in a context in which there is recognition of the legitimacy of many types of knowledge and of many types of knowers. My theory is based upon a number of aspects which have emerged from the practices explicated in this thesis. I will now summarise these with reference to examples where they emerged from, or could be seen in, practice.

My theory of practice highlights the importance of participants contributing to conceptual inputs towards the agreed matter of concern, and input into identified purposes and relevant questions. This contrasts with approaches in which the issue for investigation is determined by 'experts' (Easterly 2013), which can mean that conceptual understandings are pre-determined and finalised by a relatively narrow group of people.

#### ***8.2.1.1 Example of working towards epistemic justice in my practice***

In Chapter 5 I explained how the social economy project partners had opportunities to provide input into conceptualisations of the social economy. Each contribution was accepted and woven into the bigger picture of the criteria which would be used to decide which social economy organisations to approach. This bigger picture was negotiated by the whole group.

It follows that the topic in focus needed to be one in which all parties are positioned as having personally meaningful knowledge to contribute and are not viewed as having a deficit of knowledge for others to address, theorised by Freire (1972) as a 'banking' model of practice in which some are positioned as donors and others are recipients. In my understanding, all are acknowledged in their capacity as knowers, and all as capable of making a contribution to knowledge creation. For example, in Chapter 7 I explain how students participating in the end-of-project conference were positioned as experts on how universities could raise awareness amongst students of the possibilities for, and opportunities in, socially-focused entrepreneurial endeavours.

Practice based upon dialogical political action aims to avoid divisive binaries and instead seeks common concerns in which the group can find ways of moving forward together. For example, in Chapter 5 I explain how Catalina and I avoided pursuing a path towards a definition of the social economy, arguing that it was a multi-faceted issue in the literature and that the diversity of backgrounds of project partners would have made any definition potentially divisive. Instead, we opted for the less precise, but more inclusive, development of criteria of organisations we would approach; and we worked with partners on weaving these criteria into something the whole group could feel able to accept, and to accept ownership of.

In many of its manifestations, epistemic injustice can be based on power and on forms of establishing the validity of such knowledge. The development of the project handbook and blogs was a move to challenge this power and create a public sphere in which many could legitimately participate. Excerpts from the handbook and the blog can be seen in Chapters 3 and 6. In these examples, people can be seen to be providing explanatory frameworks for, or theorising, their everyday practices. These practices were focused on the well-being of their communities.

My theory of practice acknowledges and aims to address power issues. In doing this it aims to work with people to prepare or 'constitute' them for participation in the public sphere of action (Fraser 1990). For example, in Chapter 7 I explained how Catalina and I worked with potential participants in the end-of-project conference to identify the unique contribution they could make to the learning of others. In this way, the academic can be a catalyst for political action in which all can be recognised as having the capacity to generate legitimate knowledge. Working towards epistemic justice in this way is part of their 'epistemic responsibility' (Code 1987), in my view.

### **8.2.2 Polycentricity and moving/shifting centres**

Although dialogical relationships are important to address our 'reciprocal incompleteness' (Santos 2016, p.212), my theory of dialogical political action recognises the importance of spaces apart from others, or in groups in which issues can be explored in culturally appropriate ways and as an assertion of a

positive sense of group difference (Young 2011). In my theory of academic practice as dialogical political action, spaces for many, emergent and self-organised centres are created, and these are connected to the matter of common concern. An approach is fostered in which such centres themselves are dynamic and not fixed entities, as explained in Chapter 7. In the end-of-project conference, different groups – for example, students and social economy practitioners – were centred at different times. In Chapter 6, I explained how the blog enabled people to coalesce around an activity and create spaces of political action within their own centre.

### ***8.2.2.1 From centre and periphery towards polycentricity and moving centres – an organisational structure for dialogical political action***

In engaging with post- and de-colonial literatures, I have encountered the concept of a centre and a periphery, which I have found useful in explaining organisational structures in which certain norms and practices are ‘centred’ with greater legitimacy and norms and practices different from this are positioned with a relative deficit of legitimacy. This concept has given me the opportunity to put a name to the structures in which epistemic injustice can operate in the domain of knowledge. I have found it provides an explanation and a challenge to relationships based on power, such as those between practising academics and people in practice in other settings; and between academics in global North and global South. In my theorisation of academic practice, spaces are created in which people can develop their own centres, for example for investigations into concerns in their own particular contexts. Spaces created by an academic can foster this emergence.

### ***8.2.2.2 Examples of polycentricity in my practice***

Considering who or what is centred in learning relationships has influenced my practice and my understandings of it. For example, in Chapter 6, the use of the project blogs fostered a centre of practices in the project to emerge in Colombia, in the form of a community of inquiry (Eikeland 2006b). I explained how the concept of a centre and a periphery enabled me to realise that I had been mentally putting myself in the centre. Ideas such as polycentricity, and a



developing understanding of complexity theory, helped me to name practices of organisational structure in which spaces can be created which foster the possibility of the emergence of autonomous groups taking political action in their own ways and forming their own centres. In the end-of-project conference, this idea was enacted by deliberately centring different groups at different times and enabling them to drive the agenda at such times. I called this moving or shifting centres. This could be seen in, for example, the way that the linguistic 'centre' shifted from English to Spanish and back again, challenging the notion that English is the accepted language of the centre in academia.

Polycentric and moving or shifting centres within my theory of practice, and the inter-relational nature of dialogue and action by people in different places and with different roles gives rise to the idea of dialogues within political action as an 'ecology of dialogues'. This idea was exemplified by the number of different actors and inter-related, self-organised actions in creating the blog posts described in Chapter 6. The fluid centring and decentering of groups of people which was part of the end-of-project conference design, explained in Chapter 7, was an example of this approach in a different context.

An important aspect of polycentricity and moving centres within my theory of practice is that the centres are connected by values and an axiological response to the matter of concern. Processes of dialogical political action are driven and informed by the idea that political action itself is values-based: it has some end in view of an outcome or change which is considered 'good' by participants. This judgement of the 'good' is values driven. Therefore, learning based upon political action needs to enable the expression of diverse values around the issue in focus and the critical examination of these by the individual in relation with other people.

Contributions to the project handbook and the blogs were 'saturated' with values and purposes (Nixon 2008, p.42) and the practices they gave rise to. Some of the many examples of this available in the project outputs have been highlighted in my thesis. For example, in Chapter 3, in her explanation of the practice of time banking, Viv Chamberlin-Kidd draws attention to the values

informing the practices: that all can be involved, that everybody can do something important and that people are valued equally.

### **8.2.3 The importance of dialogic processes of interaction between people and the transformative potential of these**

In my conceptualisation of academic practice as dialogical political action, epistemic justice may be seen as an end to be worked towards, while ideas about polycentricity and moving centres can contribute to theorising the organisational structure in which such justice might occur. Dialogism is an approach to interpersonal relationships within this conceptualisation of practice. I will now focus on dialogism within this theory.

#### **8.2.3.1 *Dialogism***

My research has given me greater insights into the foundational importance of dialogic – of Buber's (2004) subject-to-subject – relationships expressed through the care taken in processes of interaction and finding practical ways of recognising plurality. In Arendt's terms, my research has given me insights into recognising the equality and distinction of each person (1958, p.175) in practical and theoretical ways. In this thesis I have explained how my thinking changed from seeing dialogism as a just means to an end, towards seeing it as the end-in-itself in terms of enabling deeper understandings of oneself, of others, and of the world. In this way, I have argued that it has the potential for recognition of the other and their ways of knowing, and therefore of a move towards epistemic justice. Means and ends are part of the same ethical approach to practice in this conceptualisation. My theory of academic practice as dialogical political action comprises a number of features based on the principles of dialogism. In what follows I will summarise these.

#### **8.2.3.2 *Academic practice as dialogical political action***

In the previous section I discussed the importance of space to accommodate the axiological level in political action. To enable this accommodation, I have explained how collaborative action usually involves identifying a matter of common concern to potential participants: one that is important to the

individual and their relationship to the wider world. In this sense it is inherently relational.

Within this common concern, the focus is not on dissolving difference. Rather, in my theory of practice the aim is to create new knowledge and common understandings and connections out of difference. For example, dialogues between conceptualisations developed in the global North and the global South were illustrated by the interest of a leading academic in the idea of a 'social and solidarity' economy, as explained in Chapter 5, Section 5.1.1.9.

Throughout the episodes of practice presented in Chapters 5-7, I have shown a development of my practice from inviting others to participate in a project initially developed from conceptualisations Catalina and I had, to working towards finding structures which enable others to exercise their agency, starting with their own 'take' and conceptualisations of the issue. In relation to an epistemology of mastery and control, this evolution of my practices within the project would be a failure and a loss of personal agency. Opting instead for an epistemology that sees dialogic relationships and participation as a more just way of living, I have deepened my understanding of the relational nature of knowledge.

In Chapter 7 I gave examples of the responses of conference participants to dialogic engagement between people of difference and the possibilities this engagement offers for transformational learning. Such dialogism is both internal and external. In Chapter 7 I draw upon Miwon Choe's words about 'internal dialogue'. In Chapters 5 and 6 I cited examples of meaning-making – perhaps itself reflecting a form of internal dialogue – of the significance of our actions by some participants in the project. These included making this world more human (Catalina Quiroz-Niño), reconciliation in difference (Ana María Villafuerte) and embracing difference, challenging prejudice and promoting justice (David Maughan Brown).

In my theory of academic practice, process and product are part of the same whole, with the latter being an expression of the former. For example, in Chapter 6 I explain how a focus on the processes of investigation by students in Colombia was motivated by the opportunity for specific outputs in the form

of blog posts, but that the processes involved relational forms of learning for the students and others involved, including academics and practitioners in the social organisations.

My theory of practice recognises that spaces and processes for dialogue need to be structured and facilitated, and that although potentially 'messy' and unpredictable they are not chaotic. This structuring and facilitating has the potential to acknowledge a variety of perspectives if it is planned and led by different people from different professional and cultural backgrounds. The end-of-project conference, described in Chapter 7, worked on the basis of creating planned spaces which were open-ended within a structured framework for participants to engage in dialogue. In the strategic planning meetings of Chapter 5, the processes of working individually, in small groups and in larger groups provide an example of organised structures which are planned to aim to be open for a variety of responses and, I argue, enable rather than limit participation. Berry draws attention to 'regarding structure as closure' or on the other hand 'as enabling, as an opening' (1985, cited in Sidorkin 1999, pp.15-16). I believe Catalina and I achieved the latter of Berry's alternatives.

Within 'enabling, opening' structures, I believe the example above also shows the importance of moving into agreed actions and ways forward, rather than remaining at the level of drawing out differences between people and their perspectives. In this respect, in Chapter 6, I highlighted the usefulness of the project blogs being a means of turning interest in the project into the possibility of active participation and contribution.

Finally, my theory of practice recognises the importance of the human factor in fostering spaces of participation in political action, and how this is living ethical-relational practice and cannot be reduced to a schema or set of abstract theories. In Chapter 6, I discuss the foundational nature of trusting relationships in dialogical action, which transcend formulas and checklists of actions and strategies.

As an academic my theoretical contribution, enacted in practice with others, has largely been devoted to providing a platform for the articulation of many knowledges and understandings and for dialogical action around issues which

necessitate the participation of many people in full recognition of our differences. I have aimed to show in this thesis that the social and solidarity economy project gave an opportunity for many people from diverse cultures and backgrounds to link our stories together to create something in common. Adapting Freire's idea of 'nam[ing] the world in order to transform it' (1972, p.135), we re-wrote the world, with each of us in it as an individual and with 'us' in it collectively expressing our work and hope towards a better world.

My theory of practice brings together my learning from engagement with practice and with the literatures. I have argued that dialogical political action can take place between participants who are ontologically prepared to take political action around a common concern which is framed in open-ended and inclusive ways. The consequences are unpredictable (Arendt 1958, p.230) and sometimes transformative. Like complexity theory, my theory of practice is viewed as a dynamic and complex process of inter-relationality in which difference becomes a source of strength, adaptability and transformation in response to its environment. My theory conveys the idea that our dialogues can become interrelated in political action. It also conveys the need for continuous adaptation and struggle, a reality that I feel is intrinsic to the journey of working towards ethical relationships and epistemic justice.

### **8.3 Reflections on the research process**

In this section I will reflect upon the processes I have engaged in during my research. A key feature underpinning my research methodology has been using practice as a context for theorising. So, first I will consider the significance of this and the contribution it might make to existing literatures in the field of academic practice and higher education. I will then reflect upon the process of writing as a research method.

#### **8.3.1 Practice as a context for theorising**

In the Introduction to this thesis, I stated my belief that it is possible for an academic to take a proactive stance of practical critique towards the manifestation of ideologies and practices which conflict with personal and professional values. I argued that this meant going beyond an attitude of resistance and moving towards practices which enact a renewal of vision and

purpose. My thesis is a record of my work in trying to do this. I trust it shows how I have avoided the tendency identified by Barnett (2015b, p.5) to write a philosophical piece which gives little clue about how things might be different, and in which the message seems to be that we wouldn't start from here. In the research articulated in this thesis, I have 'started from here' in real practices and with identified others, all of us with our own interests, agendas, hopes and limitations. I hope I have shown that my conceptualisation of academic practice as dialogical political action is not just possible, but that it also opens possibilities for different learning and different destinations than those currently offered by traditional forms of academia. I have shown that if we conceive of things differently and do things differently from ways established within current orthodoxies, we can get different outcomes – if this is what we want.

My research has gone beyond the propositional domain and is rooted in practice, in which doing is the context for a practical form of theorising (Eikeland 2006a). I contrast the articulation of my research with Barnett's (2015b, p.5) identification of another standard category of writing about higher education: that which is 'unremittingly bleak', or what I view as the genre of theorising hopelessness. I believe I have, instead, theorised the hopefulness of practising and articulating well-grounded practices which are based on the conviction that all have the capacity to generate knowledge and to act upon our values in practice with others and with social intent.

What I hope to have done is offer theory and practice as an inseparable whole in a form of academic activism in which I have aimed to develop a theory of dialogical political action for my practices as an academic. In Chapter 1, using the words of Peter McLaren, I highlighted the importance of theory in 'undergirding everything we do' and in 'organiz[ing] people to and in the world' (in Borg, Mayo and Sultana 1998, pp.372-373). Theorising my developing practices has for me been a form of what hooks (1991) calls 'liberatory practice'. In developing dynamic theories around my practices, I have found my own voice to 'undergird' what I do, to 'organise myself' in the world and to make sense of my practices. It has given me the opportunity to realise my 'natality' (Arendt 1958, p.175): to have a unique voice and to enact a unique vision in the world.

This voice has been in dialogic relationships with others – inside and outside of academia – whose words and ideas are drawn on in this thesis. These words are from both past and present, from ‘real’ conversations and from engagement with literatures. These dialogic relationships have given me conceptual tools to adapt and explain previous tacitly held understandings (Polanyi 2009), and to create new spaces to consider my practices in different ways. In doing so, I have developed a form of critique in action which is implicit in my reconceptualisations of practice, the offer of alternative bases for them, and their enactment within lived experience. If they also offer critical tools and insights and are ‘relatable’ (Bassey 1999, p.46) for others in their contexts, if they lead to others conceptualising their practices in ways which enable a deeper practical expression of their values, then this would be another manifestation of the idea of emergence (Capra 1997) and of the ‘unpredictability’ (Arendt 1958, p.191) of the consequences of dialogical political action.

This form of practical theorising has enabled me to make sense of and develop my values in practice. I have not just applied theoretical frameworks to practice: in other words, I have not taken a model and studied whether it is more or less relevant to a situation and how the model might illuminate practice. Rather, during my study, my theoretical frameworks have emerged from within my practice. The importance of such a form of theory is not so much that it offers concepts for greater and greater conceptual analysis, with the danger that this poses of neutralising potentially radical ideas and domesticating them firmly in the academy. Rather, the development of dynamic theories emerging from my practice has helped me to view things – practices, relationships, values – in a new way and to put a spotlight on different aspects of the matters in focus. Such practical theorising has created spaces for me to think about my practices in new ways, as explicated in the previous section.

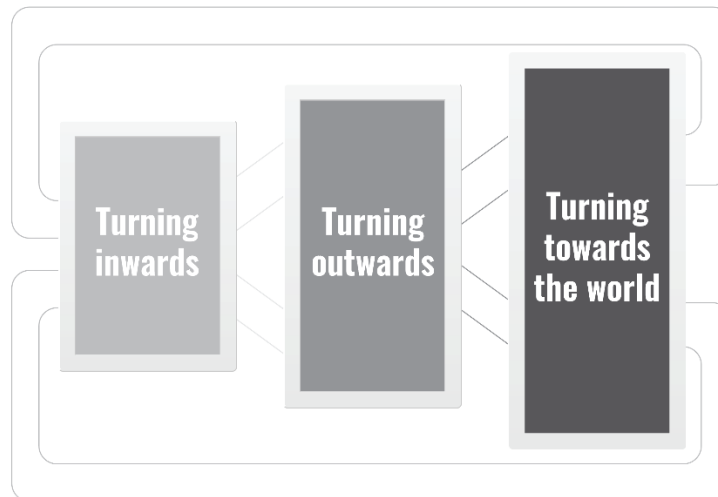
### **8.3.2 Writing as a research method**

In Chapter 2, I discussed the dialogic interaction between reflections on my experiences with others in the project and with the literatures. The medium in which I could make sense of this dialogic engagement, and the space which

has enabled it, has been writing and re-writing. This dialogic writing space has been a place in which I have been able to find meaning in my experiences, something which Hannah Arendt calls a 'need of reason' (1978, p.15). It has been a dialogic conversation about what is important and why within my practices and it has been fluid and changeable. Along with Arendt, I contrast this search for meaning with the notion of the search for an objective, overarching and fixed 'truth' (1978, p.15), which has not been relevant to my work, embedded as it is in the complex relations of the social sphere.

The critical episodes presented in Chapters 5, 6 and 7 draw on Buber's theory of dialogism as a form of 'turning towards' the other (2002, p.25). As explained in Chapter 4, in the first iteration, I adapt Buber's idea to explain my practice as a form of 'turning inwards' to develop understandings between and within a small group of academics; in the second critical episode, I explain the process of deliberately 'turning outwards' from the group to include other collaborators; and the third critical episode is theorised as an action of 'turning towards the world' as people from many backgrounds and contexts came together. In writing as an investigation of my thinking and a research process, I have experienced another form of Buber's 'turning', this time in turning towards myself to find meaning in my practices – a new form of turning inwards. The diagram first presented in Chapter 4 therefore becomes a cycle, as shown in Figure 8:1. In this, the personal reflections of turning inwards in personal reflection, turning outwards towards others and acting in the wider world, are continuous and mutually informing aspects of a life of inquiry.





**Figure 8:1 The cycle of turning inwards, outwards and towards the world (based on Buber 2002, p.25).**

## **8.4 Implications of academic practice as dialogical political action**

In order to discuss the implications of my research I will adapt the three ways of turning shown in Figure 8:5. First, I ‘turn inwards’ to discuss some personal implications, as an academic, of my theory of practice as dialogical political action. Then, I ‘turn outwards’ to consider implications on an institutional level for universities. Finally in this section, I discuss the theoretical implications as a form of ‘turning towards the world’. These three categorisations are influenced by Noffke and Somekh (2013, p.1), who argue that action research has ‘professional, personal, and political dimensions’; and McNiff, Edvardsen and Steinholt (2018, p.13), who add ‘the theoretical’ as a further dimension of action research.

### **8.4.1 Turning inwards: personal – the academic**

In my research I have shown how academics, including myself, can be creators of spaces and facilitators of processes in which our differences can be expressed around a matter of common concern. This means that I view the purpose of my academic action-taking, or activism, as enabling the collaborative action of others, with others, inside and outside of academia. It is encapsulated by the Tao Te Ching:

Hollowed out, clay makes a pot.

Where the pot's not is where it's useful.

Cut doors and windows to make a room.

Where the room isn't, there's room for you (Le Guin 1998, p.14).

My responsibility as an academic is to create spaces for dialogical action: in the words of the Tao Te Ching, to create pots and rooms. These are structures and spaces which, although created by the academic, are not filled by them. Rather such structures and spaces exist for the collaborative creation of new knowledge and the development of new understandings through dialogic processes. They are spaces in which people may exercise their agency in collaboration with different others. These are not free-for-all, chaotic spaces. Like pots and rooms, they are purposefully designed. In dialogical political action, the design is manifested in the processes in which people are enabled to inter-relate and through which new structures and ideas emerge towards common aims in which they have an interest. In this way, and through demonstrating the feasibility of such structures and spaces, I believe, academics can provide and model 'references and frames for social, political and economic debate' (Weber 2002, cited in Maughan Brown 2016, p.18) and for action, and in taking a broader view of what counts as legitimate knowledge in the social sphere enable 'new pathways for human development and wellbeing' (Leask and de Wit 2016, no page), in which people are recognised in their capacity as knowledge creators in practice, and such knowledges are critically examined.

#### ***8.4.1.1 Working in a sector which enacts values different from those personally held***

In the Introduction to this thesis, I referred to MacIntyre (1985, p.194) to highlight the distinction between institutions and practices. He argues that institutions are concerned with both 'internal' and 'external goods'. They are involved in acquiring money, and they are structured in terms of power and status. According to MacIntyre, practices need institutions to sustain themselves. He warns that without virtues, without 'justice, courage and truthfulness', practices cannot resist the corrupting power of institutions.

During my research, I came to understand the extent to which the emphasis on dialogical political action on an issue of common concern, and the emphasis on processes of inter-relatedness are currently counter-cultural in higher education and, from a reading of MacIntyre, probably counter-cultural in many institutions, which need to sustain their interests in terms of prestige, and predictable systems and hierarchies of control.

When setting out in my research, I initially saw higher education as a major force in reinforcing, reinventing and restating the current paradigm. I have not significantly changed my mind in this respect. However, as time went on, I came to see opportunities to exercise my agency less in terms of challenging the interests of the university as an institution and more in terms of developing my own practices towards a realisation of my values. I hope this thesis attests to the idea that academics in collaborative practices with others can develop their influence in the world.

### **Tactics and strategies**

De Certeau's distinction between 'strategies' and 'tactics' (1988) adds another layer to MacIntyre's understanding of institutions and practices. Institutions, according to De Certeau, employ strategies. They seek to engage in strategic policies and practices which consolidate their institutional power. They are inflexible and fortress-like in looking after their interests. Ordinary people, however, use tactics: day to day practices which can be agile and opportunistically find spaces within the overarching strategies to act in ways they see as appropriate. In this way, ordinary people have some power even within the institution.

As McNiff argues (in Stern 2016, p.101)

"Ordinary" people don't appreciate how powerful they are, and they don't see the power that they've got by the very fact that they are alive. They can use that power in shrewd and canny ways.

In Chapter 4, I referred to the use of the tactics in relation to the positioning of the bid for funding for the project. I explained that the rationale behind the Erasmus Mundus funding stream was to 'promote European higher education' to those from outside the EU and encourage applications to courses and

research opportunities. This was a perspective that was of concern to Catalina and myself. We argued in the bid that in order to remain relevant and attractive to non-EU citizens, European education needed to understand, and embed into its understandings and curricula, a greater understanding of non-European regions of the world (Data archive, Bid for funding and feedback – ema3\_application\_2012, p.22). We used tactics within the ambit of a multinational institution's strategies of self-promotion.

In Chapter 3, I stated that the bid for funding for the social economy project also referred to the lead university's mission statement: to provide 'open and progressive higher education that embraces difference, challenges prejudice and promotes justice' (pages 26-27 of bid document). Many universities have mission statements with a strong basis in values. These, I believe, provide opportunities for academics to create spaces in which such values are in the forefront of their activities as they seek to take dialogical political action with others – students, those outside the university community, other academics – in ways which they find just and meaningful. 'Ordinary' academics who find themselves at odds with some of the policy directions and practices of their institutions can be tactical and agile in their everyday practices in working in ways compatible with the institution's sense of itself, such as its mission statement and declared interests.

In Chapter 4, I also explain how some of the things Catalina and I wished to achieve in the university in more general terms finally found their expression in the end-of-project conference. This was a space of employing tactics in order to work in ways that became closed off more generally in the institution.

Earlier in this section, I quoted the Tao Te Ching as capturing my understanding of academic practice: 'Where the room isn't, there's room for you'. It is also possible to interpret this in a different way: that within the overarching 'room' of the institution, there is 'room for you', spaces in which to engage in practices which are driven by personal values.

Considering participation in such spaces of dialogical political action highlights the need to create spaces for many approaches and epistemologies, and, crucially, to keep such spaces open, bearing in mind that organisers may hold

values-based positions which are different from those of many participants. This consideration can lead to the need for recognition of two fundamental values of academic practice: first, the belief in all as capable of original thinking and with the capacity to participate in domains of knowledge in which they have a stake; and second, that of respect for difference as a fundamental value. This is a belief that plurality in the backgrounds and world experiences of participants in learning and in knowledge creation processes should be recognised as offering a potentially significant and transformative gain in the social sphere.

#### **8.4.2 Turning outwards: the institutional – higher education as public sphere**

My research re-envisioning higher education as a context for dialogical political action. I argue that my research has demonstrated the reality of a microcosm of democratic participation, recognising and valuing diversity and plurality in the context of knowledge creation, 'work[ing] with the understandings of the world, so as to develop those understandings' (Barnett 2018, p.98).

Arendt's idea of public sphere communicates a space in which many perspectives are held and deliberated upon. In a higher education context, action by participants may take many forms which are consistent with the dialogical and political intent of Arendt's theory.

Conceiving of academic practice as taking dialogical political action potentially gives rise to emancipatory forms of relational learning for the academic and for those within their sphere of influence. Such dialogical political action is world-facing, rather than academia-facing, and invites the questions, 'Who has perspectives on this issue?', 'Whose perspectives are missing?' and 'How can all parties work in collaborative ways and contribute to knowledge creation together?'

There are some specific aspects of institutional practice in which the institution interacts with the world outside of academia which I will now explore in relation to my theory of practice.

#### **8.4.2.1 Internationalisation of higher education**

The international nature of my research enables me to make a contribution to knowledge about practices of internationalisation in higher education. As stated in Chapter 1, I believe internationalisation should serve wider purposes than institutional commercial interests, such as the development of pluralistic educational experiences and transformational learning for individuals and the communities they work within.

In this thesis I have argued that much knowledge in the social sphere is relational and context-driven and does not take the form of a static 'object' which can be bought and sold. Knowledge which has the power to transform the individual recognises the capacity each has for personally meaningful knowledge creation. It cannot be transferred from one, as 'transferer' or donor, to the other, positioned as 'transferee' or recipient. This situation would place one party in a position of power in terms of the type of knowledge that will be transferred and the interests this serves.

I have shown how internationalisation in the form of international partnerships between academics and students can lead to mutual enrichment through the promotion of understandings, and of transformative learning for individuals. In line with my beliefs and values around plurality, I have aimed to show in my research that encounters and inter-relationality between those from universities in the global North and global South, can lead to dialogical learning and can be personally transformative.

For example, in Chapter 5 I argued that as a Western university wishing to engage in forms of internationalisation which do not reinforce neo-colonial patterns of domination, it was vital to ensure that participation of all academics in the participating institutions was negotiated at the earliest possible stage, and to engage in processes to ensure that the focus of the collaboration would be one to which all parties can contribute on an epistemic level.

#### **8.4.2.2 Partnerships between academia and other organisations**

In this thesis, I have used the idea of epistemic justice as a framework to investigate and identify power relationships between 'academic' social science knowledge, which tends to focus on theory for others to apply in practice, and

is considered superior within academia, and one generated by practitioners in the field through their practices. I have tried to show how the social economy project aimed to challenge these distinctions and acknowledge the capacity of practitioners to offer explanatory frameworks for their practices.

The theory of dialogical political action envisages moves towards identifying matters of common concern between academics and community organisations. These might be schools, organisations in the voluntary sector and so on, in which practitioners within them are positioned as equals with academics in their capacity to identify issues and establish the questions relevant to the investigation and the action, and as equals in their capacity to investigate matters of concern. This would contrast with approaches which see community organisations as fields of data to be analysed by academics to answer questions identified within academia. The impulse would be towards democratising knowledge creation by making it more participative.

#### ***8.4.2.3 Academic conference organisation***

In Chapter 7, I reflected on the norms and practices within conferences which legitimise or de-legitimise certain types of participation based around knowledge. If conferences are to be a public sphere of action – of dialogical political action – it would be important to ensure that the theme is one all can contribute to as different equals. A focus that positions specific people as the only ones with legitimate knowledge or with the correct ideology would not foster a dialogical approach.

If an aim of the conference is to promote participation in knowledge domains and recognition of participants as knowers, then the moving centres approach explained in Chapter 7 could offer useful insights to promote participation and highlight the contributions of many different people. The dynamic nature of collaborative projects can be highlighted through this approach. Creating spaces for many and different people and groups to be centred, and ensuring that such individuals and groups are supported, if and where necessary, in their preparation, can promote plurality in participation and lead to transformative learning experiences, as discussed in Chapter 7.

In the social and solidarity economy social and/or environmental consequences of practice are considered alongside financial viability. In Chapters 5 and 7, a premise of my practice was the desirability of face-to-face dialogic encounters between people from different continents. Online practices described in Chapter 6 were one way of limiting the need for long distance air travel and the environmental consequences of this. I drew attention to the limitations of such online means. This raises questions about the types of experiences and encounters that can justify long distance travel and encounter. In the research articulated in this thesis, this is an issue I have not yet been able to reconcile in my thinking.

#### ***8.4.2.4 Refocusing the purposes of higher education***

In higher education in the UK and elsewhere, there is a tendency to prioritise tangible products or outputs, such as publications, which can be transformed into numbers to calculate their 'impact'. As discussed in Chapter 1, such numbers are ranked and hierarchies between institutions established. This can give the impression of an understanding of relative quality, of improvement and a sense that education can be controlled and systemised. As I argued in that Chapter, such a system is laden with unarticulated values and assumptions and can be statistically flawed. It tends to serve the interests of the already powerful and become detached from any sense of purpose beyond economic viability and prestige.

I have argued in this thesis that the university should stand up and struggle for more significant purposes than this. Viewing the university as a public sphere of dialogical political action means working with a diversity of people on matters of common concern and fostering the knowledge creating capacities of such people. This is a higher education sector which positions itself at the service of the public. It prioritises the contribution it can make to addressing urgent problems faced by communities through the co-creation of knowledge and development of understandings between academia and individuals and communities outside of academia. I believe that my research has shown how these ideas may be realised in practice.



If higher education were to orient itself in this way, it would mean reconsidering the balance between process and outputs in research, towards a process orientation – relational learning processes – to a much greater extent than currently tends to be the case. This would necessarily involve longer research timescales than the current approach highlighted in Chapter 1, in which academics tend to be incentivised to consider what research questions are answerable in a short time frame.

In these ways, the university can position itself as a specific public sphere for public service in knowledge domains. The university is uniquely suited to facilitating and leading this role, given its commitment to knowledge, to research, and to reason or ‘reasonableness’ (Barnett 2003, p.160), its social capital, and its human and physical resources.

### **8.4.3 Turning towards the world: the theoretical**

In Chapter 1, I argued that as producers, validators and disseminators of knowledge, and of processes of knowledge creation, universities are highly important institutions to society.

I argued that the knowledge frameworks favoured by universities are premised on the presumed overarching legitimacy of dominant, techno-rationalist types of knowledge in which theory and the application of such theory to practice are separate issues. I drew on Toulmin (1990) and Berlin (2003b) to state that these epistemologies are underpinned by a belief that human nature and society can be fitted into exact rational categories; and are based on the idea that certainty in knowing is possible. In my theory of practice, such epistemology is one of many epistemologies within ‘existing ecologies of knowledges’ (Santos 2016): appropriate for technical tasks, but inadequate in the complexity of the social sphere.

With Gaventa and Bivens I argued that the knowledge required to address the issues of our times needs to be ‘adaptable and epistemologically pluralistic’ and draw on the fullness of experiences and diversity of the world (2014, p.72). I have argued for greater emphasis on collective, political action which promotes public engagement on an issue of common concern; and on spaces and processes of agency and inter-relationality, which implies a different

epistemology. In this way of knowing practical action and theorising are part of the same act of practising as an academic.

### **8.5 What would I do differently? Where do I go now, theoretically and practically?**

The learning from my research has taken the form of a process of emergence. My initial outline research plan does not even begin to hint at the changes in direction that transpired as different opportunities arose, and of the messiness of engaging in collaborative action with others in real-life practices. Similarly, I was not able to anticipate the profound effect of close engagement with the literatures on my thinking. They have given me powerful new conceptual tools to explain and develop such practices and for thinking differently about them. My research has been a journey of sense-making and of deepening my understandings in the meanings of my practices. I could not have plotted the journey in a different way because I only developed an understanding of where I might be going during the journey itself: a case of ‘designing the plane while flying it’ (Herr and Anderson 2015, p.83); and eventually seeing the journey, and the plane design process, as continuous. A different type of research journey, which already had an understanding of an end point at the beginning of the process, could perhaps have been more straightforward. But such a journey would not have interested me because it would have involved a different type of relationship with others and with knowledge.

Salmon (1988) talks of the ‘consequences’ of knowledge and that we cannot ‘but live out the moral possibilities’ (p.19) our knowledge gives us, because the process of coming to know involves transformation. Although with hindsight I can see many ways in which my research journey could have been less personally demanding, I have learnt things which are immensely valuable to me and transformative to my thinking and practices and which I could not envisage now being without. This thesis has aimed to articulate some of these. Salmon continues, ‘knowledge is not the end of the story, but rather the beginning of a new, qualitatively different chapter’ (1988, p.19). In this sense, I cannot say I would do anything differently in my research. However, my point

of departure for the continuation of my research will be new because of the deep learning I have experienced to find myself here.

As explained in the Introduction to this thesis, it was higher education institutions that signed legal agreements as partner organisations in the project. They were also able to receive payments and could therefore dedicate more time to the project. The nature of the funding meant that the research design was driven by academics at the beginning. In a future project, I would aim to set the parameters such that academic practitioners and those practising in the field in question work together at the outset. This would offer greater possibilities of dialogic learning between those with different roles, rather than difference based on geo-cultural issues.

In the Introduction to this thesis, I presented the idea of a 'life of inquiry' (Marshall 2016, p.xv) and illustrated it with four snapshots from episodes in my life and my reflections upon them. The following is a reflection, also in the form of a snapshot to open a piece I may write in the future.

### **Snapshot 5 (2020)**

#### **Looking back on new beginnings**

The practice of taking action with others, with people from very different backgrounds from my own, combined with critical engagement with literatures, has been transformational for me. I had expected to learn about the issues in focus within the different contexts, and I had hoped participants in the project would develop new understandings together which would contribute to practices of justice and social hope. What I had not expected was that the process itself would turn the spotlight, or the mirror, onto my own subjectivity and understanding of my own assumptions in ways that would challenge my assumptions and my practice.

The learning process involved in doing my doctoral studies changed my sense of who I was and where my future contribution lay in two main ways. The first way in which I had changed was that I saw myself as a writer with something to say. I had previously had no fear of writing but did not see this activity as an important part of myself and did not feel I had anything original to say. At some point during my PhD studies this changed, and I realised I had developed a

voice I had not previously been aware of and used, and increasingly perceived myself as an activist and as a researcher as part of the same act of practice.

At many indefinable points during my doctoral studies I found that knowledge of some of the literatures became personal in their meaning to me. Arendt (1958) explains that a characteristic of action is its inter-related nature within the web of relations – no one person could claim credit for the sequence of actions that ensued. I have discovered that the richness of the total is in the diversity of styles and voices, and not attributable to any individual person. The endeavour relies upon many people exercising their agency and operating in a network. In the same way, I believe that my writing reflected the web of relations in which I was writing, which included the participants in the project, the people who have spoken to me through their literature, and the people with whom I have had many conversations about my developing research, some of whom were mentioned in the Acknowledgements section of my thesis, and some not. The thesis felt like the product of an extended process of dialogism.

The second way in which my research has influenced me is to affirm the desire and possibility of working together with others across, and strengthened by, our differences. The global context at the time of completing my PhD was one of seemingly increasing polarisation and retrenchment into fixed positions based on political binaries and manifestations of inequalities. I aimed to direct my academic activism towards creating spaces of participation where people could participate as equals, towards issues of concern held by such people. As an academic activist I aimed to explore how political action around issues of common concern could also be a context in which divisions between people were challenged.

So, keen to explore new horizons of action and research into that action, a new phase of collaborative project work and of writing, including collaborative writing, now begins.

## References

- Adams-Hutcheson, G. and Longhurst, R. (2017) 'At least in person there would have been a cup of tea': interviewing via Skype. *Area*, 49 (2), pp. 148-155.
- Akdağ, E. and Swanson, D.M. (2018) Ethics, power, internationalisation and the postcolonial: A foucauldian discourse analysis of policy documents in two Scottish universities. *European Journal of Higher Education*, 8 (1), pp. 67-82.
- Allan, B. (2018) *Scientific cosmology and international orders*. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.
- Amin, A. (2009) (Ed.) *The social economy: international perspectives on economic solidarity*. London, Zed Books.
- Amorim, A. and Ryan, C. (2005) Deleuze, action research and rhizomatic growth. *Educational Action Research*, 13 (4), pp. 581-593.
- Andriotti, V. (2011) *Actionable postcolonial theory in education*. New York, Palgrave Macmillan.
- Appadurai, A. (2000) Grassroots globalization and the research Imagination. *Public Culture*, 12 (1), pp. 1-19.
- Appadurai, A. (2006) The right to research, *Globalisation, Societies and Education*, 4 (2), pp. 167-177. DOI: 10.1080/14767720600750696.
- Apple, M. (2000) *Official knowledge: democratic education in a conservative age*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn. London, Routledge.
- Apple, M. (2012) *Education and power*, 3<sup>rd</sup> edn. London, Routledge.
- Arendt, H. (1958) *The human condition*. Chicago, University of Chicago Press.
- Arendt, H. (1978) *The life of the mind*. London, Harcourt, Inc.
- Arendt, H. (2006 [1963]) *On revolution. Introduction by Jonathan Schell*. London, Penguin.
- Bakhtin, M.M. (1981) *The dialogic imagination: four essays. Edited by Michael Holquist*. Austin, University of Texas Press.
- Bakhtin, M.M., Holquist, M. and Emerson, C. (1986) *Speech genres and other late essays*. Austin, University of Texas Press.
- Ball, S.J. (2012) Performativity, commodification and commitment: an I-spy guide to the neoliberal university. *British Journal of Educational Studies*, 60 (1), pp. 17-29.
- Barnett, R. (2003) *Beyond all reason: living with ideology in the university*. Buckingham, Open University Press.

- Barnett, R. (2013) *Imagining the university*. Abingdon, Routledge.
- Barnett, R. (2015a) In search of a public: higher education in a global age. In: Filippakou, O. and Williams, G. eds. *Higher education as a public good: critical perspectives on the theory, policy and practice*. New York, Peter Lang, pp. 15-27.
- Barnett, R. (2015b) *Thinking and rethinking the university: the selected works of Ronald Barnett*. London, Routledge.
- Barnett, R. (2018) *The ecological university: A feasible utopia*. Abingdon, Routledge.
- Bassey, M. (1999) *Case study research in educational settings*. Maidenhead, Open University Press.
- Bateson, G. (2002) *Mind and nature: a necessary unity*. Cresskill, NJ, Hampton Press.
- Beck, R.M. (2018) Language as apparatus: entanglements of language, culture and territory and the invention of nation and ethnicity. *Postcolonial Studies*, 21 (2), pp. 231-253. DOI: 10.1080/13688790.2018.1462085.
- Bender, T. (2005) From academic knowledge to democratic knowledge. In: Robinson, S. and Katulushi, C. eds. *Values in higher education*. St Bride's Major, Aureus Publishing Limited.
- Berlin, I. (2003a [1952]) *Freedom and its betrayal: Six enemies of human liberty*. London, Pimlico.
- Berlin, I. (2003b [1959]) *The crooked timber of humanity: chapters in the history of ideas*. London, John Murray.
- Berlin, I. (1969) *Four essays on liberty*. Oxford, Oxford University Press.
- Bhabha, H. (2004) *The location of culture*. London, Routledge.
- Biesta G. (2009) Good education in an age of measurement: on the need to reconnect with the question of purpose in education, *Educational Assessment, Evaluation and Accountability*, 21 (1), pp. 33-46.
- BIS (Department for Business, Innovation and Skills) (2016) *Success as a Knowledge Economy: Teaching Excellence, Social Mobility and Student Choice. White paper*. London, Crown copyright. Available from [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/523546/bis-16-265-success-as-a-knowledge-economy-web.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/523546/bis-16-265-success-as-a-knowledge-economy-web.pdf) [Accessed 2<sup>nd</sup> January 2020].
- Bok, D. (2003) *Universities in the marketplace: the commercialization of higher education*. Princeton, Princeton University Press.
- Bonk, C. and Graham, C. (2006) eds. *The handbook of blended learning: global perspectives, local designs*. San Francisco, John Wiley & Sons.

Bradbury, H. (2015) Introduction: how to situate and define action research. In: Bradbury, H. ed. *The SAGE handbook of action research*, 3<sup>rd</sup> edn. London, SAGE, pp. 1-12.

Bryzheva, L. (2006) Superaddressee or who will succeed a mentor? *Studies in Philosophy and Education*, 25, pp. 227–243. DOI 10.1007/s11217-005-3462-y.

Borg, C., Mayo, P. and Sultana, R. (1998) Revolution and reality: an interview with Peter McLaren. In: Pinar, W. *Curriculum: toward new identities*, New York, Garland Publishing Inc., pp. 355-376.

Bourdieu, P. (1992) *Language & symbolic power*. Cambridge, Polity.

Bourdieu, P. (1993) *Sociology in Question*. London, SAGE.

Boyer, E. (1996) The scholarship of engagement. *Journal of Public Service and Outreach*, 1 (1), pp. 11-20.

Brookfield, S. (2019) Transformative learning and the awareness of white supremacy. *Phronesis* 7 (3), pp. 63–69.

Brown, A. (2015) *The myth of the strong leader: political leadership in the modern age*. London, Vintage Books.

Buber, M. (2002 [1947]) *Between man and man*. Abingdon, Routledge.

Buber, M. (2004 [1937]) *I and thou; translated by Ronald Gregor Smith*. London, Continuum.

Buchanan, I. (2000) Introduction: Other people: ethnography and social practice. In: Ward, G. ed. *The Certeau reader*. Oxford, Blackwell Publishers, pp. 97-100.

Buckler, S. (2012) *Hannah Arendt and political theory: challenging the tradition*. Edinburgh, University of Edinburgh Press.

Byrne, D.S. (1998) *Complexity theory and the social sciences: an introduction*. London, Routledge.

Cannizzo, F. (2018) Tactical evaluations: everyday neoliberalism in academia. *Journal of Sociology*, 54 (1), pp. 77–91.

Capra, F. (1997) *The web of life: A new synthesis of mind and matter*. London, Flamingo.

Carcelén Ordoñez, J. and Sarango Macas, L. (2018) La comunicación online como herramienta para el fortalecimiento de la ECUARUNARI [Online communication as a tool for ECUARUNARI strengthening] *Revista ciencia e interculturalidad [Journal of science and interculturality]*, 23 (2), pp. 258-272.

Carnell, E., MacDonald, J., McCallum, B. and Scott, M. (2008) *Passion and politics: academics reflect on writing for publication*. London, Institute of Education.

Carr, W. and Kemmis, S. (1986) *Becoming critical: education knowledge and action research*. London, Falmer Press.

Chambers, R. (2017) *Can we know better? Reflections for development*. Rugby, Practical Action Publishing Ltd.

Chomsky, N. (1967) The responsibility of intellectuals. *The New York Review of Books*, 23<sup>rd</sup> February. Available from <https://www.nybooks.com/articles/1967/02/23/a-special-supplement-the-responsibility-of-intelle/> [Accessed 9<sup>th</sup> May 2017].

Chomsky, N. and Otero, C.P. (2003) *Chomsky on democracy & education*. London, RoutledgeFalmer.

Charles, M. (2018) Teaching, in spite of excellence: recovering a practice of teaching-led research. *Studies in Philosophy and Education* 37, pp.15–29, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11217-017-9568-1>.

Clarke, M. (2012) The (absent) politics of neo-liberal education policy. *Critical Studies in Education*. 53 (3), pp. 297–310.

Code, L. (1987) *Epistemic responsibility*. Hanover, N.H., Published for Brown University Press by University Press of New England.

Code, L. (2006) *Ecological thinking: The politics of epistemic location*. Oxford, Oxford University Press.

Cohen, L. Manion, L. & Morrison, K. (2011) *Research methods in education*, 7<sup>th</sup> edn. Abingdon, Routledge.

Collingwood, R.G. (2002 [1938]) *An autobiography*. Oxford, Oxford University Press

Collini, S. (2012) *What are universities for?* London, Penguin.

Collyer, F. (2018) Global patterns in the publishing of academic knowledge: global North, global South. *Current Sociology* 66 (1), pp. 56 – 73.

Conference report (2015) *Universities developing social entrepreneurship through cross-sector collaboration conference*. 1<sup>st</sup> – 3<sup>rd</sup> September 2015. York St John University, UK. Available from: [https://www.yorks.ac.uk/media/content-assets/social-economy/conference/Conference\\_final\\_report\\_web-version-no-emails.pdf](https://www.yorks.ac.uk/media/content-assets/social-economy/conference/Conference_final_report_web-version-no-emails.pdf) [Accessed 1<sup>st</sup> January 2020].

Conference video (2015) *Universities developing social entrepreneurship through cross-sector collaboration*. Available from: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nea88NM3Lc> [Accessed 1<sup>st</sup> January 2020].

Connell, R. (2007) *Southern theory: Social science and the global dynamics of knowledge*. Cambridge, Polity.



- Connell, R. (2017) Southern theory and world universities. *Higher Education Research & Development*, 36 (1), pp. 4-15, DOI: 10.1080/07294360.2017.1252311.
- Connell, R., Pearse, R., Collyer, F., Maia, J.M. and Morrell, R. (2018) Negotiating with the North: how Southern-tier intellectual workers deal with the global economy of knowledge. *The Sociological Review*, 66 (1), pp. 41-57.
- Cranton, P. (2016) *Understanding and promoting transformative learning: a guide to theory and practice*. Virginia, Stylus Publishing.
- Dadds, M. (2008) Empathetic validity in practitioner research. *Educational Action Research*, 16 (2), pp. 279-290, DOI: 10.1080/09650790802011973.
- Davis, B. and Sumara, D. (2005) Complexity science and educational action research: toward a pragmatics of transformation. *Educational Action Research*, 13 (3), pp. 453-466.
- Deakin, H. and Wakefield, K. (2014) Skype interviewing: reflections of two PhD researchers. *Qualitative Research*, 14 (5), pp. 603-616.
- De Carvalho, J.J. and Flórez-Flórez, J. (2014) The meeting of knowledges: a project for the decolonization of universities in Latin America. *Postcolonial Studies*, 17 (2), pp. 122–139.
- De Certeau, M. (1988) *The practice of everyday life*. Berkeley, California, University of California Press.
- Defourny, J., Hulgård, L. and Prestoff, V. (2014) eds. *Social enterprise and the third sector: changing European landscapes in a comparative perspective*. London, Routledge.
- Dill, D. (2009) Convergence and diversity: the role and influence of university rankings. In: Kehm, B. and Stensaker, B. eds. *University rankings, diversity and the new landscape of higher education*. Rotterdam, Sense Publishers, pp. 97-116.
- Djerasimovic, S. (2014) Examining the discourses of cross-cultural communication in transnational higher education: from imposition to transformation. *Journal of Education for Teaching*. 40 (3), pp. 204-216. DOI: 10.1080/02607476.2014.903022.
- EACEA (Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency) (2016) Erasmus+. Building on experience: testimonials of Erasmus Mundus promotion projects. European Union. Available from [https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/sites/eacea-site/files/erasmus\\_building\\_on\\_experience.pdf](https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/sites/eacea-site/files/erasmus_building_on_experience.pdf) [Accessed 1<sup>st</sup> December 2019].
- EACEA (Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency) (2019) *Capacity building in the field of higher education*. European Commission. Available from <https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/erasmus-plus/actions/key->

[action-2-cooperation-for-innovation-and-exchange-good-practices/capacity-building-projects-in-field-higher-education\\_en](#) [Accessed 1<sup>st</sup> December 2019].

Easterly, W. (2013) *The tyranny of experts: economists, dictators, and the forgotten rights of the poor*. New York, Basic Books.

Eikeland, O. (2006a) Phrónêsis, Aristotle, and action research. *International Journal of Action Research*, 2 (1), pp. 5-53.

Eikeland, O. (2006b) Condensing ethics and action research. *Action Research*, 4 (1), pp. 37-48.

Eikeland, O. (2008) *The ways of Aristotle*. Berlin, Peter Lang.

Elliott, J. (2009) Building educational theory through action research. In: Noffke, S. and Somekh, B. eds. *The SAGE handbook of educational action research*. London, SAGE, pp. 28-38.

Escobar, A. (2007) Actors, networks, and new knowledge producers: social movements and the paradigmatic transition in the sciences. In: Santos, B. de S. ed. *Cognitive justice in a global world: prudent knowledges for a decent life*. Maryland, Lexington Books, pp. 273-294.

European Commission (2011) *Supporting growth and jobs – an agenda for the modernisation of Europe’s higher education systems*. Available from [http://ec.europa.eu/assets/eac/education/library/policy/modernisation\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/assets/eac/education/library/policy/modernisation_en.pdf) [Accessed 1<sup>st</sup> December 2019]

Fals Borda, O. (1987) *Ciencia propia y colonialism intelectual: los nuevos rumbos [Our own science and intellectual colonialism: the new paths]*. 3<sup>rd</sup> edn. Bogatá, Carlos Valencia Editores.

Fals Borda, O. (2015 [1979]) Cómo investigar la realidad para transformarla [How to investigate reality to transform it]. In: Moncoyo, V.M. (antología y presentación) *Orlando Fals Borda: una sociología sentipensante para América Latina [Orlando Fals Borda: a thinking-feeling sociology for Latin America]*. Mexico, Siglo xxi editores, pp.253-302.

Fanon, F. (2017 [1952]) *Black skin, white masks*. London, PlutoPress.

Felber, C. (2012) *La economía del bien común. Prólogo de Juan Carlos Cubeiro* [The economy of the common good]. 7<sup>th</sup> edition. Barcelona, Deusto.

Felt, U. (2017) Of timescapes and knowledgescapes: retiming research and higher education. In: Scott, P., Gallacher, J. and Parry, G. eds. *New languages and landscapes of higher education*. Oxford, Oxford University Press, pp.129-148.

Fitzgerald, T. (2012) Tracing the fault lines. In: Fitzgerald, T., White, J. and Gunter, H. *Hard labour? Academic work and the changing landscape of higher education*. Bingley, Emerald, pp. 1-22.

- Foucault, M. (1977) *Discipline and punish: The birth of the prison*. Harmondsworth, Penguin.
- Foucault, M. (1980) *Power/knowledge: selected interviews and other writings 1972-1977*. Edited by Colin Gordon. New York, Pantheon Books.
- Foucault, M. (1984) *The Foucault reader: an introduction to Foucault's thought*. Edited by Paul Rabinow. London, Penguin.
- Foucault, M. (2000) *Power: essential works of Foucault 1954-1984. Volume 3 edited by James D. Foubion*. London, Penguin.
- Friedman, M. (2002) *Martin Buber: the life of dialogue*, 4<sup>th</sup> edn. London, Routledge.
- Freire, P. (1983). *Pedagogy in process: the letters to Guinea-Bissau*. New York, Continuum.
- Freire, P. (1972) *Pedagogy of the oppressed*. London, Penguin.
- Freire, P. (2005) *Teachers as cultural workers: letters to those who dare teach*. Expanded edn. Boulder, Colorado. West View Press.
- Fricke, M. (2007) *Epistemic injustice: power and the ethics of knowing*. Oxford, Oxford University Press.
- Ferguson, C. (2012) *Inside job: the financiers who pulled off the heist of the century*. London, Oneworld.
- Fraser, N. (1990) Rethinking the public sphere: a contribution to the critique of actually existing democracy. *Social Text* 25/26, pp. 56-80. DOI: 10.2307/466240.
- Frazer, E. (2014) Power and violence. In *Hannah Arendt: key concepts*. Abingdon, Routledge, pp.155-166.
- Gadamer, H-G. (2013) *Truth and method*. London, Bloomsbury.
- Galbraith, D. (1998) *Writing as a knowledge-constituting process*. Available from: [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/228638362\\_Writing\\_as\\_a\\_knowledge-constituting\\_process](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/228638362_Writing_as_a_knowledge-constituting_process) [Accessed 2<sup>nd</sup> January 2020].
- Gambardella, D. & Lumino, R. (2016) Measuring university-based research in Europe: competing indicators and underlying assumptions. *International Review of Sociology*, 26 (3), pp. 424-439.
- Gauch, H. (2012) *Scientific method in brief*. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.
- Gaventa, J. and Bivens, F. (2014) Knowledge democracy, cognitive justice and the role of universities. In: Global University Network for Innovation ed. *Higher education in the world 5: Knowledge, engagement & higher education: contributing to social change*. Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 69-73.

Gaventa, J. and Cornwall, A. (2008) Power and knowledge. In: Reason, P. and Bradbury, H. eds. *Action research: participative inquiry & practice*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn. London, SAGE, pp. 172-189.

Gergen, K. (2009) *Relational being: beyond self and community*. Oxford, Oxford University Press.

Gergen, K. and Gergen, M. (2008) Social construction and research as action. In: Reason, P. and Bradbury, H. eds. *Action research: participative inquiry & practice*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn. London, SAGE, pp. 159-171.

Gilborn, D. (1995) Racism, modernity and schooling: new directions in antiracist theory and practice. First draft. *Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association*. San Francisco, CA, April 18-22, 1995. Available from: <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED383801.pdf> [Accessed 2<sup>nd</sup> January 2020]

Goldstein, J.A. (2007) A new model for emergence and its leadership implications. In: Hazy, J.K., Goldstein, J.A. and Lichtenstein, B.B. eds. *Complex systems leadership theory: new perspectives from complexity science on social and organizational effectiveness*. Mansfield MA, ISCE publishing, pp. 61-92.

Gradovski, M. (2017) Minding the gap between dialectical and dialogical: use of Bakhtinian concepts in Norwegian educational studies. *Knowledge Cultures*, 5 (4) pp. 110-122.

Gray, B. (2017) Under fire. Neoliberalising higher education: language and performing purpose in corporatised universities. *South-North Cultural and Media Studies*, 30 (5), pp. 745-750.

Gray, J. (2013) Isaiah Berlin: *An interpretation of his thought*. Oxford, Princeton University Press.

Greenwood, D. and Levin, M. (2005) Reform of the social sciences, and of universities through action research. In: Denzin, N. and Lincoln, Y. eds. *The SAGE handbook of qualitative research*, 3<sup>rd</sup> edn., pp. 43-64.

Grootjans, J. (2010) White skin black masks: a personal narrative on benevolent racism. In: Brown, V.A., Harris, J.A. and Russell, J.Y. eds. *Tackling wicked problems through the transdisciplinary imagination*. London, Earthscan, pp. 225-232.

Habermas, J. (1979) *Communication and the evolution of society*. London, Heinemann.

Hay, I. (2008) Postcolonial practices for a global virtual group: the case of the international network for learning and teaching geography in higher education (INLT). *Journal of Geography in Higher Education*, 32 (1), pp. 15-32.

Hayward, C. (2000) *De-facing power*. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.

Hazelkorn, E. (2015) *Ranking and the reshaping of higher education*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn. Basingstoke, Palgrave MacMillan.

Heikkinen, H., Huttunen, R., Syrjälä, L. and Pesonen, J. (2012) Action research and narrative inquiry: five principles for validation revisited. *Educational Action Research*, 20 (1), pp. 5-21.

Herr, K. and Anderson, G.L. (2015) *The action research dissertation: a guide for students and faculty*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn. Los Angeles, SAGE.

Hodgson, G. (2009) *Letter to the Queen of England*. Available from <http://www.feed-charity.org/user/image/queen2009b.pdf> [Accessed 15th April 2013].

hooks, b. (1991) Theory as liberatory practice. *Yale Journal of Law & Feminism*, 1 (4) Article 2, pp. 1-12.

Hordern, J. (2016) On the making and faking of knowledge value in higher education curricula. *Teaching in Higher Education*, 21 (40), pp. 367-380, DOI: 10.1080/13562517.2016.1155546.

ICA International (Institute of Cultural Affairs) (no date) *ToP facilitation*. Available from <http://www.ica-international.org/top-facilitation/>. [Accessed 1<sup>st</sup> January 2020].

Inglis, F. (2003) Method and morality: practical politics and the science of human affairs. In: Sykes, P. Nixon, J. and Carr, W. eds. *The moral foundations of educational research: knowledge, inquiry and values*. Maidenhead, Open University Press, pp. 118-133.

James, M. (2012) An alternative to the objectives model: the process model for the design and development of curriculum. In: Elliott, J. and Norris, N. eds. *Curriculum, pedagogy and educational research: the work of Lawrence Stenhouse*. Abingdon, Routledge.

Kai Wah Chu, S., Reynolds, R., Tavares, N., Notari, M. and Wing Yi Lee, C. eds. (2016) *21st century skills development through inquiry-based learning: from theory to practice*. Singapore, Springer.

Katywoof (2015) *What #YorkSSEConf and #SSIMexchange has really taught me is that there is a problem with the system, not me...*[Twitter post]. Available from <https://twitter.com/Katywoof/status/639588452820979712> [Accessed 2<sup>nd</sup> January 2020].

Kemmis, S., McTaggart, R. and Nixon, R. (2014) *The action research planner: doing critical participatory action research*. London, Springer.

Kemmis, S., McTaggart, R. and Nixon, R. (2015) Critical theory and critical participatory action research. In: Bradbury, H. ed. *The SAGE handbook of action research*, 3<sup>rd</sup> edn. London, SAGE, pp.453-445.

Knight, J. (2013) The changing landscape of higher education internationalisation – for better or worse? *Perspectives: Policy and Practice in Higher Education*, 17 (3), pp. 84-90.

- Kordts-Freudinger R., Al-Kabbani, D. and Schaper, N. (2017) Learning and interaction at a conference. *New Horizons in Adult Education and Human Resource Development*, 29 (1), pp. 29-38.
- Laclau, E. (2005) *On populist reason*. London, Verso.
- Lather, P. (1991) *Getting smart: feminist research and pedagogy with/in the postmodern*. London, Routledge.
- Latour, B. (2004) Why has critique run out of steam? From matters of fact to matters of concern. *Critical Inquiry*, 30, pp. 225-248.
- Leask, B and de Wit, H. (2016) Reimagining the HE curriculum for the 21st century. *University World News*. Available from <http://www.universityworldnews.com/article.php?story=20161122185905336> [Accessed 2<sup>nd</sup> January 2020].
- Leathwood, C. and Read, B. (2013) Research policy and academic performativity: compliance, contestation and complicity. *Studies in Higher Education*, 38 (8), pp. 1162-1174.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/03075079.2013.833025>.
- Lee, V.S., DeZure, D., Debowski, S., Ho, A. and Li, K. (2013) Enhancing international collaboration among academic developers in established and emerging contexts: moving toward a post-colonial perspective *International Journal for Academic Development*, 18 (1), pp. 89-103.
- Lefstein, A. and Snell, J. (2014) *Better than best practice: developing teaching and learning through dialogue*. Abingdon, Routledge.
- Le Guin, U. (1998) *Lao Tzu Tao Te Ching: a book about the way and the power of the way*. Boston, Massachusetts, Shambhala Publications, Inc.
- Louw, I. and Zuber-Skerritt, O. (2011) The learning conference: knowledge creation through participation and publication. *The Learning Organization*, 18 (4) pp. 288-300.
- MacIntyre, A. (1985) *After virtue: A study in moral theory*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn. London, Duckworth.
- MacIntyre, A. (2009) The very idea of a university: Aristotle, Newman, and us. *British Journal of Educational Studies*, 57 (4), pp. 347-362.
- Marginson, S. (2008) Global field and global imagining: Bourdieu and worldwide higher education. *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, 29 (3), pp. 303-315. DOI: 10.1080/01425690801966386.
- Marginson, S. (2009) Global university rankings: some potentials. In: Barbara M. Kehm, B. and Stensaker, B. eds. *University rankings, diversity and the new landscape of higher education*. Rotterdam, Sense Publishers, pp. 85-96.
- Marshall, J. (2016) *First person action research: living life as inquiry*. London, SAGE.

Matusov, E. (2018) Mapping dialogic pedagogy: instrumental and non-instrumental education. In: Rosa, A. and Valsiner, J. eds. *The Cambridge Handbook of Sociocultural Psychology*. Cambridge University Press, pp. 274-301. <https://doi.org/10.1017/9781316662229.016>

Mason, M. ed. (2008) *Complexity theory and the philosophy of education*. Chichester, Wiley-Blackwell.

Maughan Brown, D. (2016) Values in higher education: articulation and action. In: McNiff, J. ed. *Values and virtues in higher education research: critical perspectives*. Abingdon, Routledge, pp. 18-32.

Max-Neef, M. (2004). *Fundamentos de la transdisciplinaridad* [Fundamentals of transdisciplinarity]. Universidad Austral de Chile, Valdivia. Available from <http://ecosad.org/phocadownloadpap/otrospublicaciones/max-neef-fundamentos-transdisciplinaridad.pdf> [Accessed 1<sup>st</sup> December 2019]

Max-Neef, M. and Smith, P. (2014) *La economía desenmascarada: del poder y la codicia a la compasión y el bien común*. [The unmasked economy: from power and greed to compassion and the common good]. Barcelona, Icaria Editorial.

McNiff, J. (1988) *Action research: principles and practice*, 1<sup>st</sup> edn. Basingstoke, Macmillan.

McNiff, J. (2011) New cultures of critical reflection in Qatar. *Educational Action Research*, 19 (3), pp. 279-296.

McNiff, J. (2013) *Action research: principles and practice*, 3<sup>rd</sup> edn. Abingdon, Routledge.

McNiff, J. (2014) *Writing and doing action research*. London, SAGE.

McNiff, J. (2017) *Action research: all you need to know*. 1<sup>st</sup> edn. Los Angeles, SAGE.

McNiff, J., Edvardsen, O. and Steinholt, M. (2018) 'Impact', educational influence and the practice of shared expertise. *Educational Action Research*, pp. 803-819. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1080/09650792.2018.1426469>.

Memmi, A. (2003) *The colonizer and the colonized*. Forward by Jean-Paul Satre. Introduction by Nadine Gordimer. Abingdon, Earthscan Publications Ltd.

Mendoza, K. (2015) *Austerity: the demolition of the welfare state and the rise of the zombie economy*. Oxford, New Internationalist.

Meneses, M.P. (2007) Subjects or objects of knowledge? International consultancy and the production of knowledge in Mozambique. In: Santos, B. de S. ed. *Cognitive justice in a global world: prudent knowledges for a decent life*. Maryland, Lexington Books, pp. 353-374.

Meredith, M. and Quiroz-Niño, C. (Coords.), Arando, S., Coelho, L., Silva, M.F. and Villafuerte Pezo, A.M. (2015) *Enhancing studies and practice of the social and solidarity economy: A reference handbook*. Available from <http://www.yorksj.ac.uk/socialeconomy> [Accessed 2nd January 2020].

Meredith, M. and Quiroz-Niño, C. (2020) La competencia reflexiva del personal académico en los estudios y prácticas de la economía social y solidaria [The reflexive competency of academic staff in studies and practices of the social and solidarity economy]. In: Pérez Muñoz, C. and Hernández Arteaga, I. eds. *Economía social y solidaria en la educación superior: un espacio para la innovación (tomo 1) [ Social and solidarity economy in higher education: a space for innovation (volume 1)]*. Bogotá: Ediciones Universidad Cooperativa de Colombia, pp. 21-51. DOI: <https://dx.doi.org/10.16925/9789587602234>

Mezirow, J. (2018 [1978]) Transformative learning theory. In: Illeris, K. ed. *Contemporary theories of learning: learning theorists ... in their own words*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn. Abingdon, Routledge, pp. 114-128.

Mignolo, W. (2002) The geopolitics of knowledge and the colonial difference. *The South Atlantic Quarterly*, 101 (1), pp. 57-96.

Mignolo (2018) The invention of the *human* and the three pillars of the colonial matrix of power. In: Mignolo, W. and Walsh, C. eds. *On decoloniality: concepts, analytics, praxis*. London, Duke University Press, pp.153-176.

Miller, V. (2011) *Understanding digital culture*. London, SAGE.

Mitchell, M.T. (2006) *Michael Polanyi: The art of knowing*. Wilmington, Del., ISI Books.

Montuori, (2008) Foreword. In: Morin, E. *On complexity*. Cresskill, N.J., Hampton Press, pp. vii-xliv.

Moreira, D., Henriques, S. and Aires, L. (2015) The changing conditions of academic identity: the case of the Portuguese Open University. In: Evans, L. and Nixon, J. eds. *Academic identities in higher education: the changing European landscape*. London, Bloomsbury, pp. 203-220.

Morrison, K. (2008) Educational philosophy and the challenge of complexity theory. In: Mason, M. ed. *Complexity theory and the philosophy of education*. Chichester, Wiley-Blackwell, pp. 16-31.

Morin, E. (2008) *On complexity*. Cresskill, N.J., Hampton Press.

Morgan, J.W. and Guilherme, A. (2014) *Buber and education: dialogue as conflict resolution*. London, Routledge.

Moroco, L. (2008) Unconventional dialogic distinctions 'between' Buber and Bakhtin. *NCA 94<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference*, San Diego, CA. 21<sup>st</sup>-24<sup>th</sup> November. Available from [http://citation.allacademic.com//meta/p\\_mla\\_apa\\_research\\_citation/2/5/8/6/8/pages258682/p258682-1.php](http://citation.allacademic.com//meta/p_mla_apa_research_citation/2/5/8/6/8/pages258682/p258682-1.php) [Accessed 1<sup>st</sup> December 2019]



- Murphy, T. and Sage, D. (2014) Perceptions of the UK's research excellence framework 2014: a media analysis. *Journal of Higher Education Policy and Management*, 36 (6), pp. 603-615. DOI <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/1360080X.2014.957890>.
- Neves, J., Lavis, J. and Kent Ranson, M. (2012) A scoping review about conference objectives and evaluative practices: how do we get more out of them? *Health Research Policy and Systems*, 10 (26), pp. 1-11.
- Ngũgĩ Wa Thiong'o (1993) *Moving the centre: the struggle for cultural freedoms*. Oxford, James Currey.
- Niesche, R. (2014) *Deconstructing educational leadership: Derrida and Lyotard*. London, Routledge.
- Nixon, J. (2008) *Towards the virtuous university: the moral bases of academic practice*. London, Routledge.
- Nixon, J. (2011) *Higher education and the public good*. London, Continuum.
- Nixon, J. (2012) *Interpretive pedagogies for higher education*. London, Bloomsbury.
- Nixon, J. (2015) Inequality and the erosion of the public good. In: Filppakou, O. and Williams, G. eds. *Higher education and the public good*. New York, Peter Lang, pp.163-177.
- Nixon, J. (2017) Struggles *within and for* higher education. *Journal of Educational Administration and History*, 49 (1), pp. 1-6, DOI: 10.1080/00220620.2017.1252739.
- Noffke, S. and Somekh, B. eds. (2013) *The SAGE handbook of educational action research*. London, SAGE.
- Noroozi, N. (2016) Philosopher-teachers and that little thing called hasty decolonization. In: Grosfoguel, R., Hernández, R. and Velásquez, E. eds. *Decolonizing the Westernized university: interventions in philosophy of education from within and without*. London, Lexington Books, pp. 137-156.
- Nussbaum, M.C. (1997) *Cultivating humanity: A classical defense of reform in liberal education*. Cambridge, Mass., Harvard University Press.
- Olssen, M. and Peters, M. (2005) Neoliberalism, higher education and the knowledge economy: from the free market to knowledge capitalism. *Journal of Education Policy*, 20 (3), pp. 313-345.
- Olssen, M. (2016) Neoliberal competition in higher education today: research, accountability and impact. *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, 37 (1), pp. 129-148.
- Owen, H. (2008) *Open space technology: a user's guide*, 3<sup>rd</sup> edn. San Francisco, Berrett-Koehler Publishers.

- Pearce, J. (2003) *Social Enterprise in Anytown*. London, Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation.
- Platt, J. (1981) On interviewing one's peers. *The British Journal of Sociology*, 32 (1), pp. 75-92.
- Plowman, D.A. and Duchon, D. (2007) Emergent leadership: getting beyond heroes and scapegoats. In: Hazy, J.K., Goldstein, J.A. and Lichtenstein, B.B. eds. *Complex systems leadership theory: new perspectives from complexity science on social and organizational effectiveness*. Mansfield MA, ISCE Publishing, pp. 109-127.
- Polanyi, M. (1958) *Personal knowledge: Towards a post-critical philosophy*. London, Routledge & Kegan Paul.
- Polanyi, M. (2009) *The tacit dimension*. Bristol, University of Chicago Press.
- Proulx, R. (2009) World university rankings. The need for a new paradigm. In: Kehm, B and Stensaker, B. eds. *University rankings, diversity and the new landscape of higher education*. Rotterdam, Sense Publishers, pp. 35-46.
- Quartiroli, A., Knight, S., Etzel, E. and Monaghan, M. (2017) Using Skype to facilitate team-based qualitative research, including the process of data analysis. *International Journal of Social Research Methodology*, 20 (6), pp. 659-666.
- Quiroz-Niño, C. and Murga-Menoyo, M.A. (2017) Social and solidarity economy, sustainable development goals, and community development: the mission of adult education & training. *Sustainability* 9 (12), pp. 1-16. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su9122164>.
- Ravn, I. (2007) The learning conference. *Journal of European Industrial Training*, 31 (3), pp. 212-222.
- Rawls, J. (1999) *A theory of justice*, revised edn. Oxford, Oxford University Press.
- Readings, B. (1996) *The university in ruins*. London, Harvard University Press.
- Reason, P. and Bradbury, H. eds. (2001) *Action research: participative inquiry & practice*. London, SAGE.
- Reason, P. and Bradbury, H. eds. (2008) *Action research: participative inquiry & practice*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn. London, SAGE.
- Restrepo, P. (2014) Legitimation of knowledge, epistemic justice and the intercultural university: towards an epistemology of 'living well', *Postcolonial Studies*, 17 (2), pp. 140-154.
- Ridley-Duff, R. and Bull, M. (2015) *Understanding social enterprise: theory and practice*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn. London, SAGE.
- Rodríguez, R. Co-ord. (1998) *Cholb'al Q'ij: Agenda Maya 1998*. Guatemala, Editorial Chosamaj and Editorial Maya Wuj.

Rorty, R. (1989) Solidarity or objectivity? In: Krausz, M. ed. *Relativism: interpretation and confrontation*. Notre Dame, Indiana, University of Notre Dame Press, pp. 167-183.

Rorty, R. (1999) *Philosophy and social hope*. London, Penguin.

Rowland, S. (2006) *The enquiring university: compliance and contestation in higher education*. Maidenhead, Open University Press.

Said, E.W. (1994) *Representations of the intellectual: the 1993 Reith lectures*. London, Vintage.

Said, E.W. (2003) *Orientalism*. London, Penguin.

Said, E.W. (2004) *Humanism and democratic criticism*. New York, Columbia University Press.

Salmon, P. (1988) *Psychology for teachers: an alternative approach*. London, Hutchinson Education.

Salö, L. (2017) *The sociolinguistics of academic publishing: language and the practices of homo academicus*. Cham, Switzerland, Palgrave MacMillan.

Santos, B. de S. ed. (2007) *Cognitive justice in a global world: prudent knowledges for a decent life*. Plymouth, UK, Lexington Books.

Santos, B. de S. (2015) *If God were a human rights activist*. Stanford, California, Stanford University Press.

Santos, B. de S. (2016) *Epistemologies of the south: justice against epistemicide*. London, Routledge.

Schön, D. (1995) The new scholarship requires a new epistemology. *Change*, 27 (6), pp. 26-34.

Seitz, S. (2016) Pixilated partnerships, overcoming obstacles in qualitative interviews via Skype: a research note. *Qualitative Research*, 16 (2), pp. 229-235.

Sen, A. (1999) *Development as freedom*. Oxford, Oxford University Press.

Sennett, R. (2013) *Together: the rituals, pleasures & politics of cooperation*. London, Penguin.

Shahjahan, R. and Morgan, C. (2015) Global competition, coloniality, and the geopolitics of knowledge in higher education. *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, 37 (1), pp. 92-109, DOI: 10.1080/01425692.2015.1095635.

Shiller, R. (2010) How should the financial crisis change how we teach economics? *The Journal of Economic Education*, 41 (4), pp. 403-409. DOI: 10.1080/00220485.2010.510409.

Sidorkin, A. (1999) *Beyond discourse: education, the self, and dialogue*. New York, State University of New York Press.

Simons, M. and Masschelein, J. (2009) The public and its university: beyond learning for civic employability? *European Educational Research Journal*, 8 (2), pp. 204-218.

Soh, K. (2017) The seven deadly sins of world university ranking: a summary from several papers. *Journal of Higher Education Policy and Management*. 39 (1) pp. 104 -115.  
<http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/1360080X.2016.1254431>.

Sun, T. (2019) The problem with applying Western theories that don't fit. *University World News March*, 15<sup>th</sup> March. Available from <https://www.universityworldnews.com/post.php?story=20190312130941220> [Accessed 2<sup>nd</sup> January 2020].

Sperlinger, T., McLellan, J. and Pettigrew, R. (2018) *Who are universities for? Re-making higher education*. Bristol, Bristol University Press.

Stern, J. (2013) Surprise in schools: Martin Buber and dialogic schooling. *FORUM: For Promoting 3-19 Comprehensive Education*, 55 (1), pp. 45-58.

Stern, J. (2016) *Virtuous educational research: Conversations on ethical practice*. Frankfurt am Main, Peter Lang Edition.

Thomson, P. and Gunter. H. (2011) Inside, outside, upside down: the fluidity of academic researcher 'identity' in working with/in school. *International Journal of Research & Method in Education*, 34 (1), pp. 17-30, DOI: 10.1080/1743727X.2011.552309

Tomlinson. M. (2017) Introduction. In: Tomlinson, M. and Millie, J. eds. *The monologic imagination*. Oxford, Oxford University Press.

Torres, C.A. (2011) Public universities and the neoliberal common sense: seven iconoclastic theses. *International Studies in Sociology of Education*, 21 (3), pp. 177-197, DOI: 10.1080/09620214.2011.616340.

Toulmin, S. (1990) *Cosmopolis: the hidden agenda of modernity*. New York, Free Press.

Toulmin, S. (2003) *The uses of argument*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.

Toulmin, S. (2007) Preface: How reason lost its balance. In: Santos, B. de S. ed. *Cognitive justice in a global world: prudent knowledges for a decent life*. Maryland, Lexington Books, pp. ix-xv.

Tripp, D. (2012) *Critical incidents in teaching: Developing professional judgement*. London, Routledge.

UNESCO (2015) *Rethinking education: towards a global common good?* Paris, UNESCO Publishing. Available from <http://www.unesco.org/new/fileadmin/MULTIMEDIA/FIELD/Cairo/images/RethinkingEducation.pdf> [Accessed 2nd January 2020].

Velásquez, E. (2016) Introduction. In: Grosfoguel, R., Hernández, R. and Velásquez, E. eds. *Decolonizing the Westernized university: interventions in philosophy of education from within and without*. London, Lexington Books, pp. ix-xvi.

Vessuri, H., Guédon, J-C. and Cetto, A-M (2014) Excellence or quality? Impact of the current competition regime on science and scientific publishing in Latin America and its implications for development. *Current Sociology* 62 (5), pp. 647-665. DOI: 10.1177/0011392113512839.

Visvanathan, S. (2009) The search for cognitive justice. *Knowledge in question, a symposium on interrogating knowledge and questioning science #597*, May. Available from [https://www.india-seminar.com/2009/597/597\\_shiv\\_visvanathan.htm](https://www.india-seminar.com/2009/597/597_shiv_visvanathan.htm) [Accessed 2<sup>nd</sup> January 2020]

Walkerline, V. and Studdert, D. (2016) Rethinking community research: inter-relationality, communal being and commonality. Palgrave Macmillan, London.

Walkington, H., Hill, J. and Kneale, P.E. (2017) Reciprocal elucidation: a student-led pedagogy in multidisciplinary undergraduate research conferences. *Higher Education Research & Development*, 36 (2), pp. 416-429.

Wegerif, R., Doney, J., Richards, A., Mansour, N., Larkin, S. and Jamison, I. (2019) Exploring the ontological dimension of dialogic education through an evaluation of the impact of Internet mediated dialogue across cultural difference. *Learning, Culture and Social Interaction*, 20, pp. 80-89.

Wegerif, R. (2008) Dialogic or dialectic? The significance of ontological assumptions in research on educational dialogue. *British Educational Research Journal*, 34 (3), pp. 347-361.

Wegerif, R. (2013) *Dialogic: education for the internet age*. Abingdon, Routledge.

White, E. (2014) Bakhtinian dialogic and Vygotskian dialectic: compatibilities and contradictions in the classroom?, *Educational Philosophy and Theory*, 46 (3), pp. 220-236, DOI: 10.1111/j.1469-5812.2011.00814.x

Wiessner, C.A., Hatcher, T., Chapman, D. and Storberg-Walker, J. (2008) Creating new learning at professional conferences: an innovative approach to conference learning, knowledge construction and programme evaluation. *Human Resource Development International*, 11 (4), pp. 367-383.

Wilkinson, R. and Pickett, K. (2009) *The spirit level: why more equal societies almost always do better*. London, Allen Lane.

Winter, R. (1989) *Learning from experience: principles and practice in action-research*. Lewes, The Falmer Press.

- Winter, R. (1996) Some principles and procedures for the conduct of action research. In: Zuber-Skerritt, O. ed. *New directions in action research*. London, Falmer Press.
- Wood, L., Louw, I. and Zuber-Skerritt, O. (2017) Enhancing postgraduate learning and development: a participatory action learning and action research approach through conferences. *Action Learning*, 14, pp. 120-135.
- Young, I.M. (2011 [1990]) *Justice and the politics of difference. With a new forward by Danielle Allen*. Princeton, N.J., Princeton University Press.
- Yunus, M. (2007) *Creating a world without poverty: social business and the future of capitalism*. New York, Public Affairs.
- Zandee, D. and Cooperrider, D. (2008) Appreciable worlds, inspired inquiry. In: Reason, P. and Bradbury, H. eds. *Action research: participative inquiry & practice*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn. London, SAGE, pp.190-198.
- Zimmermann, J. (2015) *Hermeneutics: a very short introduction*. Oxford, Oxford University Press.
- Zuber-Skerritt, O. ed. (2017) *Conferences as sites of learning and development: Using participatory action learning and action research approaches*. London, Routledge.

## Appendix 1: Research timeline and data collection

My research is divided into three phases:

Phase 1: Data gathering (2012-2015). Within this there are three sections which loosely correspond to the beginning, middle and end of the social economy project in which my study is located.

Phase 2: Analysing and making sense of the data (2016 – 2018)

Phase 3: Writing (summative?) accounts of my developing practice (2018-2019)

### Terminology

Project partners: Academics from universities formally recognised within bid for funding;

Project collaborators: people who collaborated in the project activities and research as it developed, but were not formally recognised in the bid

### Phase 1: Registration for PhD studies. Extensive reading around social justice (2011-2012)

### Phase 2: Duration of social and solidarity economy project. Data gathering (2012 – 2015)

Data was gathered in a range of forms, as set out below. The sections highlighted in yellow below are used as evidence in the chapters that follow for my developing practice and understandings of practice.

*(Phase 2 cont.)* Critical episode 1 (Chapter 5) - Strategic planning meeting with partners and beginning the project handbook.  
At this stage of my research, my concern was with participation in knowledge creation for the benefit of others. That is, my focus was on the creation of knowledge from a greater number of perspectives and including people whose knowledge was often delegitimised. I later call this epistemic justice to name the intent behind my practice.

The critical episode mainly focuses on the processes used to begin writing the handbook, at the beginning of the project. As can be seen from the timeline below the activities involved in writing the handbook extended throughout the three years of the project. Evidence was drawn from the data from some of these later activities to support claims about my learning and practice within the strategic planning meeting.

Timeline	Activities	Who was involved?	Data gathered from: <i>(Plus reflective writing throughout)</i>
October-November 2012	5-day strategic planning meeting Project handbook started – chapters defined, questions outlined	Project partners: 4 from Peru 2 from Spain 2 from Portugal 2 from UK (myself and Catalina as project co-ordinators)	-Participant evaluations from meeting -Meeting report for partners and university authorities -Photographs showing development of ideas (writing on cards moved around on 'sticky wall').
September 2012 – March 2013	Collaborative development of questionnaire and interview questions for development of project handbook	Project partners/ external international advisors (3 volunteer academics from UK, Chile, Mozambique).	Versions of developing questions. Feedback from advisors
September 2012 – August 2015	Monthly Skype meetings and bilateral meetings between partners	Project partners	Written agendas/minutes
November 2012 – March 2013	Contact with Erasmus Mundus Students and Alumni Association (EMAA) and Skype meetings with	Presidents of EMAA Chapters (Africa, Europe, Far East, Latin America, Middle East, North	-Emails -Document sent to explain potential participation



	individuals to explain project and discuss opportunities for involvement	America,) and members (6) of Chapters of EMAA.	-Blog posts from EMAA members
November 2012 – March 2015	Field work of project. Semi structured interviews between project partners/students of collaborating universities and social economy practitioners, in 5 continents. This was incorporated into the writing of the project handbook.		-Questions, collaboratively developed between partners. -Audios and transcripts of interviews between academics/students and social economy practitioners. -Handbook: Practical cases sections, from Africa, Europe, Latin America; Dialogical sections.
February 2013	Launch of blog in English and Portuguese; and in Spanish (June 2013)	Project partners.	Blog posts Dialogue with contributors
May 2014	Visit to 15 universities in Latin America. Presentations and meetings with academics and students. Meetings with social economy practitioners Focus groups with academics, policy makers, students, practitioners in social and solidarity economy. Theme of focus groups: what needs to be included in the handbook, based on your experience and context?	Academics, managers and students in universities. Focus groups Cuba: students, academics, social workers; Colombia: academics, social and solidarity economy practitioners; Mexico: students, academics, social and solidarity economy practitioners.	-Reports of meetings and focus groups. -Blog posts from collaborators -Reports/photos from field work in rural/urban areas (face to face interviews). -Some use as data for master's work using project data. -Handbook: Practical cases sections, from Africa, Europe

			Latin America; Dialogical sections; Literature reviews
2014/2015	Writing literature reviews from four regions – Africa, Europe, Latin America, North America	Project partners (6), project collaborators (3).	Literature reviews in handbook, divided into geographical regions
September 2014	Award of highly commended in Times Higher Education international collaboration of the year.		Application document
January – May 2015	Dialogue between partners to analyse findings	Project partners (6)	'Dialogical Sections' – within five chapters of handbook.
October 2015	Handbook published in print and online	Project partners (6), project collaborators, including writers and translators. Written contributions from people in 17 countries.	240 page project handbook in each of English, Spanish, Portuguese.
Timeline	Activities	Who was involved?	Data gathering strategies
<p>Critical episode 2 (Chapter 6) Blogs</p> <p>In this critical episode I come to an understanding of the importance of people creating their own spaces of action based on their own values, contexts and interpretations, empowered by links to others. In my analysis of the data I see this a form of decentering myself and my practice.</p> <p>I also increasingly see justice in processes of interaction between people in themselves, as well as means to ends of knowledge creation.</p>			
February – June 2013	Blogs launched in English, Portuguese and Spanish	2 project partners, plus MM and Catalina	Blogs, emails, meeting minutes Screen shots of visits on world map
May 2013	Initial discussions with Melba Quijano about creating blog posts with her students (Colombia)	Catalina, Melba	

2013	Publication of micro credit activities by self-help group in Nairobi on project blog	Mary Kiguru/Collaborator	Blog posts
September 2013	Facebook page launched in Spanish by students in Peru	Students in Peru	Activity on Facebook page
August – December 2013	Student blog posts created in Spanish	7 students Colombia, Melba Quijano	Blog posts, no. of visits
January - February 2014	Blog posts translated into English. Published in English and Spanish	Collaborator/translator	Blog posts, emails, tweets
Timeline	Activities	Who was involved?	Data gathering strategies
<p>Critical episode 3: End-of-project conference (Chapter 7)</p> <p>In this critical episode, practices of decentring my practice as explained in Critical episode 2 have become more intentional, and I purposefully seek opportunities to do this. In this episode, in which the participants are together in the same physical space of a conference, I seek to create spaces in which norms and assumptions are decentred, firstly through interactions between people from different contexts and roles and secondly through the practice of centring different groups at different times. I become increasingly aware of the transformational aspect of this to thinking and being.</p>			
September 2014 – August 2015	Establishment of and meetings with conference steering committee	Conference steering committee	Agendas/minutes
July 2014 – August 2015	Development of web page and publicity materials. Dissemination through networks. Creation of conference programme. Contact (email/Skype) with conference participants: feedback on presentations; requesting information about languages spoken and expectations for conference.		Publicity materials, conference programme. Participants' expectations. Conference paper submissions

January 2015	Initial meeting with Elizabeth McCallion, British Council Canada, Students for Social Impact Co-ordinator		Emails
July 2014 – April 2015	Invitations for key note speakers. Working towards balance in gender/language/ global North-South	Catalina Quiroz	Emails
May – July 2015	Teleconference meetings with British Council Students for Social Impact	18 Canadian/British students, Students for Social Impact co-ordinators, Catalina Quiroz	Emails
May – August 2015	British Council students plan presentations for conference	18 Canadian/British students, Students for Social Impact co-ordinators	Conference video, conference report, videos of presentations,
April –May 2015	Meetings with Master's students from business school	Students, Director of master's course (Chris Mortimer), Catalina Quiroz	Emails
April - August	Development of concept, logistics, marketing for social economy fair at conference	MBA students, Chris Mortimer	Conference video, conference report, conference evaluations
August 2015	Workshop with British Council students	18 Canadian/British students, Students for Social Impact co-ordinators, Catalina Quiroz	Consensus workshop method report?
September 2015	End of project conference, including:	103 participants from 23 countries	Participant conference evaluations. Conference report. Conference video
	Poster exhibition		

	Interview between project collaborator and British Council co-ordinators		Conference video
	Interview with two British Council students		Conference video
	Research presentations		Participant abstracts
	Round tables led by project partners and collaborators		Conference report.
	Social economy fair and universities' stalls to showcase practice.	Local and international social enterprises, MBA students	Conference report. Conference video. Conference evaluations.
	British Council student presentations	British Council students, co-ordinators, other conference participants	Videos Conference report
	Keynote addresses		Keynote address videos. Conference report
	Closing address by David Maughan Brown (Emeritus Professor, York St John University)		Audio and transcript. Conference video
	Interview with Rory Ridley-Duff		Video, transcript
Data from activities in York St John (not developed into specific critical episode, but enabled contact with staff who contributed to the episodes above)			
September 2012 – August 2015	Meetings with staff at own university (strategic leaders, admin, academic) – all faculties to present project and discuss relevance to their work. Presentation to deans and deputy deans of all faculties. Establishment of social enterprise group at York St John.		Emails  Agendas

June 2014	Presentation and workshop with staff from initial teacher education	13 staff from department.	Audio recording, transcript, report of meeting with photographs of written responses
General data (relevant to whole project)			
September 2015	Project evaluation meeting with EU assessor.	6 project partners and Erasmus Officer	Audio recording of meeting. Transcript. Email follow-up
November 2015	Final report of project submitted to Erasmus	Project partners (6)	Letters from universities explaining how they would use the handbook/ dialogic methodology in developing handbook, used as evidence in final report.
<p><b><u>Phase 3: Analysing and making sense of the data (2016 – 2018)</u></b></p> <p>In this phase, I examined the data, read extensively and used writing as a way of analysing and making sense of the data. There were conversations and themes which caught my attention from the data as exemplifying a deeper understanding of participation. Within this overarching theme of participation, I asked myself questions about the purposes of participation and developed a focus on justice – knowledge justice. Participation in dialogue and collaborative action within difference seemed to create the conditions to question assumptions and create new knowledge together.</p> <p>To follow up data gathered between 2012-2015, I had dialogues with participants to discuss their reflections on the project, follow up things they had said which I had recorded in field notes, and to discuss my developing theorisations of practices within the project.</p> <p>In order to check and deepen my understandings of some of these I asked for further dialogue with some partners/collaborators and recorded these with their permission.</p>			



(Phase 3 cont.)			
Timeline	Activity	Further enquiry about	Data verification strategy?
May 2016	Skype dialogue with Melba Quijano (project collaborator) (dialogue 1)	Understanding and action towards epistemic justice in relation to 'theorists' and 'practitioners'.	Audio recording, transcript (translated)
February 2016	Face to face dialogue with Mary Kiguru (project collaborator)	Responses of the women from the Sujali Self-Help group to the publication of their work on the blog. Responsibility of the academic to create spaces for articulation of knowledges through practices	Audio recording
July 2016	Face to face dialogue with Chris Mortimer (project collaborator)	Dialogic processes and personal transformation	Audio recording, transcript
December 2016	Email dialogue with Ana María Villafuerte (project partner and co-author of handbook) (1)	What she had learnt from participating in the project. What it had enabled her to do. Understanding and action towards epistemic justice between 'North/South'. Co-construction of knowledge as peers.	Email
January 2017	Skype dialogue with Laura Kreiling (Erasmus Mundus Students and Alumni Society)	What she had learnt from the project. Trust	Audio recording and email
October 2017	Recorded dialogue with Catalina (fellow co-ordinator of project)	What she had learnt from co-ordinating the project.	Video, transcript

		Importance of personal agency in axiological level. Importance of questioning.	
January 2018	Face to face dialogue with Melba Quijano (project collaborator) (dialogue 2)	Developing themes in my research, such as justice .... She focused more on the importance of human factor and integrity. Justice in human interactions.	Audio recording, transcript
January 2018	Email exchange with Miwon Choe, following face to face meeting	What she had learnt from participating in the conference. Internal dialogues	Email
40. February 2018	Email dialogue with Ana María Villafuerte (project partner and co-author of handbook) (dialogue 2)		Email
<u>Phase 4: (2018 – 2019) Writing accounts for others</u>			



## Appendix 2: Screenshot of slides for presentation at SRHE conference

Screenshot of slides from presentation at the Society for Research into Higher Education conference 'Higher education as if the world mattered', April 2013.

**The curriculum: including the voice of experience**

Margaret Meredith  
Catalina Quiroz Nillo  
Erasmus Mundus Social Economy Project  
25<sup>th</sup> April 2013

During this presentation we aim to:

1. Describe the project.
2. Explain the methodological approach.
3. Show the content of the project handbook.

**1. The project**

What is the project about?  
What issue are we aiming to address?  
Who is involved?  
What is the proposed outcome?  
[www.yorksj.ac.uk/socialeconomy](http://www.yorksj.ac.uk/socialeconomy)


- "Higher education institutions bear a profound, moral responsibility to increase the awareness, knowledge, skills and values needed to create a just and sustainable future"

(Cortese 2003 cited in Kreber 2013)

Social Justice in Higher Education ↔ Social Justice through Higher Education

**2. Our methodological approach**

Dialogism "Looks upon knowledge as constructed, negotiated, and (re) contextualised in situ and in socio-cultural traditions; and in dialogue with others."  
(Linell 2003)



**Qualitative and quantitative methods**

- Survey content
- Typical cases
- Dialogical focus groups
- In depth interviews
- Case studies

**The handbook content**

I Epistemology and values	II Identity and profile	III Media: Classical, Rhetorical, administrative, operational	IV Professional responsibilities	V S.E. post practice within the field	VI Social capital	VII Social responsibility and interdependence	VIII Partnership and paradigms of dialog

**Evidence of interest from academics & practitioners**

- Over 2000 visits to website.
- Blogs:  
in Portuguese over 2500 visits  
in English : over 3000 visits
- Over 30 associated partners over the world
- Erasmus Mundus Alumni Association Africa, America, Asia and Europe

## Appendix 3: Excerpt from Conference programme

### Day 2: Wednesday 2 September

Experiencing the power of cross-sector collaboration		
Time	Place	Activity
9.15	De Grey Lecture Theatre	Plenary session 3: <b>Hiroshi Ishida</b> , Caux Round Table, Japan <b>Saioa Arando</b> , Mondragon University/Mondragon Knowledge Innovation
10.20	De Grey Foyer	Coffee break and networking
10.50	De Grey rooms	Parallel sessions in English and Spanish and British Council: Students for Social Impact (SSIM) programme session: see annex 1 for details
12.20	See information in De Grey Foyer	Choice (continuation of previous day): Round tables -- feedback from groups), or Learning skills workshops
13.30	Holgate Refectory	Lunch and networking
15.45	De Grey	Presentation (De Grey) of best practices in cross sector collaboration:  From Argentina: Universidad de Quilmes, <b>Claudia Alvarez y Natalia Lindel</b> From UK: Ed-venture Frome, <b>Neil Oliver y Biz Bliss</b>
-		<b>Fair (Temple Hall): <u>Social enterprise and co-operative fair</u></b> (open to non-delegates) - local social enterprises will be showcasing their work Showcase of best practices by universities in cross-sector collaboration for social enterprise;
19.00	Temple Hall	Exhibition of conference posters; <b>5pm</b> Light buffet - provided by a Yorkshire social enterprise 'Confianza'
19.30	Meet in De Grey Foyer	Historic York tour (optional)

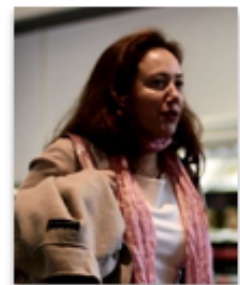
## Appendix 4: Participants' pre-conference expectations

(Taken from Conference report 2015. English only. Spanish participants' expectations can be seen in the Conference report)

To put in context this evaluation, we would like to share the expectations people expressed in their registration form and that informed the organization, content and methodology of the conference:

### Pre - conference English delegates expectations and outcomes

- Networking with people who are interested in social entrepreneurship
- Listen to the latest academic research and practices in the field of social economy
- Knowledge of co-operatives and social enterprises
- The most important thing for me is to get new ideas about my Organisation and my research and to learn from others to see if I can improve what I am doing
- Increasing knowledge, meeting contacts
- Sharing best practices, learning from others, networking
- New contacts made. Inspired by the potential of academic and social entrepreneurship worlds converging. Potential for new collaborative projects. (Not too much then!)
- Presenting the Connecting Communities project and connecting with other HEIs working on social enterprise projects.
- Contacts and sharing best practice; new collaborative projects
- Greater attention to the microeconomics of successful delivery by social enterprise organisations
- Deepening knowledge, networking
- Learn about cross-sector case studies from all over the world, networking, connecting with similar projects worldwide
- Create networks and learn more about social and solidarity economy in higher education in order to support these processes in Finland.
- Networking, learning more about SSE, sharing experience, future collaborations
- Interest in better understanding how 1) students can and are engaging in social enterprise, both in university and when they leave and 2) how in principle and practice universities are ensuring that social entrepreneurship theory and practice occurs across disciplines.
- Connections with a global network of likeminded people in the world of social entrepreneurship and business, with a particular emphasis on the underlying ethical values that help each of our organizations to operate at peak performance. This is achieved when the human relationships are built on the basis of integrity, care and conscience which build trust.
- Networking and getting to know what is new in the field of social entrepreneurship
- Learn more about how others are integrating social economy ideas into higher education. 2) Networking
- Learn from others experience, share best practice
- Build partnerships for development of projects on solidarity economy themes
- Better understanding how social entrepreneurship can create more dynamic local economies
- To under social economy from the practitioners' point of view as well firm up my understanding of how universities can play a role in bringing together the private, public and social in their role of teaching and research
- Networking, exchange of experiences in curricula for Solidarity Economy
- Networking, new opportunities for our Business Programme and greater awareness of initiatives of change and its business programme's (TIGE) work
- Getting to know better this network and how our university could contribute to it



## Appendix 5: Conference participants' evaluations

**How would you rate the conference methodology (i.e. combination of keynote speakers, parallel sessions, round tables, learning workshops, spaces for discussion, social enterprise fair)? (Multiple choice so recorded separately).**

**Please explain the reasons for your answer to the previous question**

I found the conference very engaging

Good mix. Really appreciated the interactive workshop and fair, I would say more than the speakers, whose talks I found quite dense, too much information on the power points - could have been more engaging.

Mixed approaches are helpful, and the lengthy breaks allowed for ample networking.

There was a great deal of variety which allowed participants to engage with the areas they were most interested in and also enabled networking across the various groups represented.

Pace and variety of presentation and conference as a whole. Sufficient opportunities for networking and yet no time lost.

Nice variety meant that more of the time was relevant to me personally as not all of the keynote speakers were.

Very welcome departure from standard methodology which tend largely to feature talking heads.

The variety of different kind of sessions was good and kept the participants of the event fresh.

I have not been to a conference previously but I felt that the format of the conference changed enough so I didn't get bored.

It was an interesting selection of discussion topics, but with so many parallel sessions it was a shame that they were spread thin in terms of attendance numbers, and it also meant having to miss forums that I would have liked to go to. As always, there was a lot to see/do/hear and not enough time for further conversation or digestion. Even breaks/lunch included, one has to deal with that. :-) But still, I would vote for less is more .

You had a little bit of everything which was great as not all conferences have this. good mix and sufficient offer for choice

The open session format was a bit messy and could have been explained better, but otherwise the methodology was solid.

There was good variety and plenty of space to listen and to engage and each delegate seemed to have their moment. It would have been good to see more of the social entrepreneurs from the fair alongside the keynotes in the plenaries.

It allowed practitioners and theorists to learn from each other: integrating all aspects in a very satisfactory way.

Great variety of engaging activities!

This conference included many opportunities to learn from knowledgeable guests, and network with interesting people from all around the world.

Good mix

It is always good to have a mix of whole conference and some elements of break-out choice. This worked well for our Workshop - much better than expected.

The quality of the keynote speakers such as Prof Hiroshi Ishida was excellent.

The workshops and round tables that I attended were very stimulating.

Very good mixture, as typified by two very different but absorbing talks on the final day.

Perhaps a bit more interactive sessions

Would have been good to have more time for round table

Loved the summary of the sessions, and tea/coffee break for networking sessions, and also brain chill out time from inspiring yet intense topics. There was a sense of warmth and support from all the participants and the size of the conference was just right to get to know and meet each other.

There was a collection of topics and ways to participate

I think the methodology was good except that it was going to be good idea to let the participants experience both the learning workshops as well as the round tables or indeed to have different learning workshops. For instance, the learning workshop/round table was continued to the following day. The social enterprise fair was a good idea because it gave the practical perspective of the social economy.

It was organised very well.

The keynote speakers were inspiring, there was a great range of content in the parallel sessions, we were delighted to be able to present at the parallel sessions, the learning skills workshop that I attended was of very high quality, and the open space forum at the end was, for us, an excellent opportunity to collect our thoughts sum up our learning. I think the conference methodology was really well conceived and delivered. Excellent.

It was easy to follow and there was an overall cohesiveness to the entire conference. The events were structured evenly, yet the sessions themselves were varied and highly engaging, which kept everyone highly interested throughout.

**Please make a comment about the usefulness of the learning skills workshop/round table you attended**

It was valuable and very interactive. There was a lot of discussion which I found useful.

It was very well held and very useful. The methodology was explained by actually doing the methodology, which was a very useful learning tool and I felt engaged throughout.

Being exposed directly to the passion of the Latin American delegates for solidarity was enriching.

It was a useful introduction to facilitative leadership and pitched just right for the audience who attended.

The leadership one was very informative and I enjoyed the experiential learning style

The workshop would have needed a better participation method and better scheduling to be more useful.

As I am studying business at university, the leadership workshop didn't expand my knowledge but I enjoyed how it was run. It was the highlight of my conference.

The initial idea of a round table I found very attractive. I am sorry to say that I was disappointed by the actual form: one very brief conversation and one plenary exchanging output. The strength of this form for me would be: open space, deeper exploration of issues, less output-driven.

I was part of the organising team so I am biased! But I can say our discussion was valuable and interesting as there were so many different nationalities in the room sharing experience. We all shared email addresses and I have already been in touch with 3 participants.

Useful in gaining insight about different leadership styles, but I don't know how personally useful to myself it will be for the foreseeable future.

I wish I could have attended more of these: on reflection I would have preferred a round table, as many attendees were students or the organisation speaking, leaving little interaction with other social entrepreneurs or academics.

Good

Really useful

Learned a lot and made some valuable connections

Extremely useful! I definitely learned a lot about the financial aspect of how to set up your own social enterprise.

It was interesting to just engage with very knowledgeable people and to share ideas and experiences.

Family illness prevented attendance

I was a Presenter, so n/a.

I led the Five pillars of trust workshop and so it is up to others to comment on its usefulness.

Thought-provoking discussion from real experts/veterans in the SEE. It was the first time i considered the descriptor solidarity in the context of the social economy. I enjoyed the open-mindedness of the discussion, especially considering the degree of real authority in the room on the topic.

Fairly useful business planning discussion.

I would have liked more time- We were just getting started, it seemed, and people were worried about organizing feedback to full group.

The round table workshops gave us an opportunity to share and re-conceptualize what matters for us to carry on our work as educators, community leaders, and organizers.

It was very informative and connected with interesting people who are practitioners in the field of social entrepreneurship. It was also useful in that many ideas I had in my head around nexus between livelihood and economic justice were made clear

The Five pillar of trust: Encouraging ethical and social values in the multi-sector context was highly educative and informative.

I didn't manage to attend many.

Really well delivered. Perfectly pitched for the audience.

The round table discussion I was involved in was highly engaging and gave the speakers present the opportunity to openly debate an array of possible solutions and outcomes in view of developing social entrepreneurship in the university context. Personally, I was glad that I attended this particular round table discussion as the central topic was of deep interested to me.

### **What did you most like about the conference?**

The networking opportunities

The diversity of countries represented, the extreme effort the organisers went to, how welcome I was made to feel, the theme.

Meeting new people from a Latin American culture

I really enjoyed the keynote speakers and also the presentations from the SSIM students

Quality of presenters and participants. So much expertise gathered under one roof. It was a fantastic event to show off our work as part of the Students for Social Impact program

The methodology (although I was not able to attend the workshops or Round tables) and the quality of the keynotes.

The variety of backgrounds of people. It was good not everyone was an academic. Also, it seemed to make a big difference that there were two languages used throughout the conference - richness!

The leadership workshop.

the international atmosphere

It was an excellent opportunity for showcasing projects and networking.

The richness of the program, many good conversations/networking, a broad and realistic overview on the subject.

The variation of nationalities and the design.

inspiring presentations and good energy from participants. Participation of young people. Very special and individual attentiveness from Catalina and Margaret. Solutions focused attitude of organizing team. Brochure sent in advance. Chance to network with developed professionals and learning about a variety of projects in other countries I had not previously heard of.

There was a sense of parity, everyone engaging with one another as peers, and this was as much due to careful programming as the nature of socially astute delegates! The British Council students were an excellent inclusion.

The diversity of the approaches

How do I choose? mainly the cross-pollination of shared values across continents: also the debates and shifts of terminology that happened as a result of the interaction.

Very well done

Length of events was perfect!

Opportunities to Network and engaging speakers

The food

It was a relaxed environment and it was good to engage with highly interesting and engaging ideas for how we can move forward in a collective way

Mix of talks and people



The real energy of the many young people and the sense that this is a vibrant community, exploring new questions and problems but who are, yet, to come to too many firm conclusions.

Meeting and getting to know people, some of whom will remain in touch.

At an affective level, the lunches. At an intellectual engagement level, the plenaries Networking and some of the presentations, particularly the BC Session Listening to the experiences of the Canadian exchange in SSE.

Opportunity to hear about what's happening in Europe, to meet new colleagues from Latin America, to share perspectives..

Meeting and getting acquainted the like minded people around the world and knowing that there are groups of dreamers who believe that we can be a part of positive and constructive forces to share our resources, including ourselves. Would like to see this to continue.

People, participants and openness of the atmosphere. It was very informative and I gained a lot of information and knowledge form the three days I attended

It is difficult to state as most of the things I liked would get a similar rating

The inspiring keynote speakers, the organisation, the interpreting booth plus interpreters, the optimism and energy the conference engendered and the interaction between people from around the globe seeking ways to make the world a better place.

I found the conference to be of very high quality. I thought the keynote speakers were excellent, the facilitative leadership learning skills workshop was genuinely useful, the conversations I had around the margins of the conference were inspiring, and the opportunity for the students to present as part of the conference was exceptionally valuable. In addition, I particularly appreciated:- the enthusiasm and expertise displayed by the conference organisers- the daily wrap-ups- the video at the end of the conference- the facilitated open space - the opportunity to hear from and meet with international practitioners and not just the usual suspects The variety and diversity of the delegates who were present at the conference as well as the fascinating discussions that took place during and outside formal activities.

**In which way do you think the conference will influence your work/life?**

I am more knowledgable about social enterprise and the role that post secondary institutions play

It was great as a way of getting a macro picture of the context social enterprises are working in, to see our social enterprise in a midst of others, and to be aware of the academic interest in the world of social enterprise.

Building new partnerships and influencing another continent with my work.

It has given me a wider understanding of social enterprise and what is possible when you think differently. I have already thought about how I can influence the use and support of social enterprises in my work.

It will encourage me in my working supporting SSE initiatives.

I have a much broader understanding as to what the social economy

I made important contacts and learned new things that will help me think about my next step in working life or a possible research career.

I will bear the concepts of collaborative working for social enterprise in mind for my future career.

n/a

We have made some useful contacts that will be followed up.

It was a solid benchmark of what I am already doing and opens up to possible new projects.

It has opened my eyes to a new emerging movement - the solidarity economy movement

hopefully I can integrate some of the ideas in my institution and inspire colleagues  
Forced me to think more about the nature of interdisciplinary learning and how it can be enhanced within post-secondary institutions.

It has made me reconsider the way the values of the social and solidarity economy can pervade everyday life, not necessarily through direct enterprise, so these values will continue to inform my actions all the more.

I am part of the team so...

what will change? My work will integrate - i will be exploring links for students from south africa to europe and from canada and uk to south africa. - i want to contribute the links to african philosophies of communitarianism / ubuntu to social economies.  
Rory's talk will influence the way I think about social enterprises.

Realising there is a wide support of people who recognise the issues in Higher Education and the business world

I'm currently about to work with the Vice-President of Research and Innovation at my school to find ways to disseminate the knowledge and contacts I've gained from this conference amongst my fellow students.

It has influenced me as I will be looking to support a friend in setting up a social enterprise in Blackburn. It has also influenced the way in which i think university curriculum should be developed.

contacts

I have more resources/ insight to teach on solidarity economics, in my Social Entrepreneurship and Enterprise Modules; the connections with our Workshop participants has already led to some beginning collaborations.

It is helping to build an international coalition of the like-minded.

I am going to research more how the South American universities quoted work.I shall definitely look at ways of engaging more effectively with the SEE culture than I am doing at the moment, as my life as an activist is compartmentalised into left wing activist and microeconomist.

Great contacts made and a feeling that there's a whole world of social entrepreneurs out there doing their thing

Made some good international contacts and also strengthened some existing links within Sheffield in particular.

I hope to develop working relationships with some of the people I met.

The idea of social contribution, the better and bigger part of our place beyond the individual pursuit of happiness. This helps my students to feel they belong to this community of sharing and fairness. It is great to dream for a better future for themselves! :))

I am already involved with environmental programme where social enterprise is one of the features in developing livelihood.

I hope to initiate some of the ideas I learnt to my work place and country at large. I hope to use the contacts I established to create networks for the institution I work for, my country as well as myself.

I am more aware of what social enterprise means and how many people are ready to move away from the consumerist model we are being fed.

The conference has shed light on the notion of social entrepreneurship as well as helping me familiarise with the concept of a social and solidarity economy. The resourcefulness and the numerous possible alternatives to our current global economy has motivated me to carry out further research into the field.

**How do you think the conference could be improved?**

N/A

I found some of the longer presentations a bit unengaging because they attempted to convey too much information. The more interactive sessions and workshops the better I think.

Link with the FETSE project in EMES and the International Cooperative Business Education Consortium to increase the international participation across networks. Not sure there is anything I would want to be critical of as the balance felt right to me.

I would be hard-pressed to think of a way of improving it except to say that, with hindsight, I (MC) would have liked to have briefed everyone who was going to be presenting especially those using videos and complex presentations. Too often speakers arrived late and ill-prepared.

I felt like more people would've benefitted from our presentations and learning about our program

the order of the keynotes. e.g. Rory Duff not at the end. The dual language was a challenging aspect... by narrowing the topic down, it could be

It was a little too ambitious in the number of different sessions on offer, sometimes less is more!

See 13 and 8.

It would have been better to have an English pack and a Spanish pack - I found finding certain information a bit confusing.

In overall I think the conference was well prepared and organised. Sustainability of impact always difficult, but some kind of follow up networking. All e-mail addresses should be circulated.

Greater clarity on organisational fronts (i.e. signing up for the workshops/roundtables) and some non-overlapping scheduling for the parallel sessions

More space for creating tangible outcomes and commitments, and for sharing these with the rest of the delegates.

It was perfect - if anything - more of all of the above - so add another day? Did not want to get back to the mundane and frantic daily work. Here is a suggestion: Ensure the reflection and collaboration process gets started in forced reflection times at the end of sessions, to ensure the capture of the changing thoughts and possible work together is started already before we leave for our varied contexts... More talks on how to integrate social enterprise to higher education.

I would have liked to have been able to visit some of the other parallel learning skills sessions, perhaps if some of them could be repeated for other times?

You need to organise better social activities in the evening e.g. a conference meal / pub crawl

Scale-up. Do what you did for more people, with a wider range of topics. Always tricky, as you lose some of the intimacy, but it was a little too small in parts.

No comment.

MORE ATTENDEES. Needs a plan to treble your audience as it such good VFM.

See Q8

The topic was cross sector collaboration, however there was very little opportunity or facilitation of cross sector collaboration between universities and practitioners. It felt like attending module and was mostly theoretical and case study based. Certain academics were allowed to dominate, I suspect because they like the sound of their own voices.

Nothing much comes to mind (apart from accomodation in the dorm...)

Have another one soon and more publicity.

it would be better if the conference invited people form Africa, Small Holder farmers and Civil Society Organisation to share their practice and vision with other world delegates.

Generally it was good.

It couldn't. Well done organisers.

The only issue I encountered was around access to wifi. It would be great if wifi was reliably available throughout the campus including in the accommodation. But a small issue and I believe that the conference organisers addressed the issue as best they could.

I have very little constructive criticism to provide, if none at all. As far as I am concerned, the conference was a complete success and I congratulate the organisers for their ability to put together such a useful and memorable event.

### **Comments about the interpretation**

For the most part it was good. I understood the translation well. Sometimes it didn't flow well.

It was very competent

Excellent translation services throughout.

It is always difficult for the interpreters to 'keep up' with the presenters and may have been easier for them if the presenters had given them a script of what they

were going to say. However, I think they did very well to keep up with the presenters and were very skilled at their task.

Still felt it was slightly difficult to keep up with those presentations at times

Outstanding

I found the interpreters very good and I feel like I understood the presentations even though they were in a different language.

it worked very well, many thanks! problems with microphones could be improved.

It was good overall, but some technical issues might need to be sort out next time!

It was very clear and easy to use.

Translation was helpful

Even as a speaker of both conference languages, it was useful and interesting to have clarifications/impressions at times. The system allowed conversations to be had throughout the conference.

Even not having used, because I speak both languages, I think it is very important to have these kind of services, in special when the conference is about making visible the invisible, lots of times because of the language

I listened to the keynotes in Spanish via the translators, and used the translators to make connections with south american delegates who wanted to make urgent connections, and have very specific communications: and the interpreters managed to translate over language, over continents, and to convey values and principles and complex technical aspects: so much more than a simple translation service! well done.

Really smooth and effective!

Great.

Well done!

The interpreter for the Mondragon Keynote - Spanish to English was exceptionally good. I was sitting near the interpreters' booth and could see how hard they were working.

Interpretation excellent; but I would also like you to congratulate your technical staff who were on the ball with everything I attended. The dining room staff were also very helpful.

It was a good service however, sometimes it was not easy to tell whether one's volume was slightly higher or not. Maybe there is a need for sound proof for the earphones.

Having an interpreting booth with three interpreters was brilliant. It worked very well and speakers and audience of appreciated the bilingual nature of the

conference. English native speakers were relieved that English did not always have to dominate. The message it sent out was that YSJ is inter-cultural. The interpretation service was brilliant.

### **Participants' evaluations**

(Translated from Spanish. Original evaluations can be seen in the Conference programme 2015)

***How would you rate the conference methodology (the combination of keynote speakers, parallel sessions, roundtables, workshops, discussion spaces, social enterprise fair)? (This was multiple choice, and so separately recorded)***

***Please explain your answer to the previous question.***

To build something complex requires work in different areas, with different objectives. Different objectives require different tools. And the tools had clearly been adapted to the objectives. Many congratulations to the organisers.

Because of the need to choose (and choose to miss) sessions, there was variety that allowed us to identify contacts and themes for following up and gathering more information.

The conference was full of moments of high participation. Although there were parallel sessions, we were always able to present the conclusions from the other sessions for all the participants. Also there were discussion spaces with everyone.

The methodology prioritised diversity, which worked well for the Conference and for diversity.

Innovative design of workshop type activities. Creative in getting the most out of the conference assistants. Super useful to have the summary each day.

There was something for everyone and topics were very interesting, all well organised, everything was great.

Generally good. There was a lack of space for exchanging ideas in the keynote talks (in some there were a few minutes for questions, others didn't even give the chance to ask questions)

A methodology that didn't get stuck in theory but moved towards taking action and motivation

There wasn't a space for discussion between students and researchers, a space might have been opened up for that.

This methodology offered diverse options for the participants.

Generally I found the organisation excellent. It was possible to end up wanting to take part in other activities taking place at the same time but I appreciate that this is the best way to provide variety and include broader themes in such a short time.

I see an added value in the positive combined methodology used. This was created through facilitation of exchange and discussion with flipcharts, forming groups around unresolved issues, the daily summaries given by one of the volunteers, the coloured paper technique for bringing together perspectives, actions and contacts.

Presentations were suitable and a decent length. Topics to attract different interests

There was a lot of space for dialogue and developing concrete ideas for action. I loved the interaction with students.

It would have been good to have interpreters in all the sessions so people could have gone to the session that most interested them rather than divide up by language.

It was very interactive and participative. A new and original conference method that enabled participation and networking between participants.

The variety of topics and formats was appealing but with so much choice all at once it was hard to prioritise

The organisation of the conference was brilliant in general, it encouraged constant exchange between participants and possible involvement in future projects, as well as serious and deep scientific discussion. It was great!

Changing between the type of activity made 10 hours of continuous activity possible without them becoming boring and/or repetitive.

Doing different activities meant not only changing activity but also interacting more directly with conference colleagues.

Firstly I'd highlight the punctuality and organisation, but just as much the level of the delegates and the plurality of the universities represented. Personally it allowed me to meet lots of people and go deeper into themes that I'm considering writing my MBA thesis on.

It made it possible to choose between different options or alternatives and make the most of the time even if in some cases it was inevitable that two activities that might be of interest to one person were on at the same time.

**Please comment on the usefulness of the workshop or roundtable in which you took part.**

Limited, but good and necessary. We can't make progress until we're using the same concepts. It was an essential and very constructive exercise.

1. Learned that it is possible and necessary to be decisive and disciplined to develop a culture and custom of innovation and creativity in collaborative work and personal environments. 2. There are methods to facilitate that. 3. We can identify and manage the personal impacts on an individual level produced in developing creative capacities.

This workshop showed the advantages of being in and having an effective and innovative team and the possibility of being a facilitator through quite an effective, practical and empowering methodology.



The roundtable was very productive because we found ourselves between different countries and cultures accepting the limits of the Western paradigm and talking about education, learning, knowledge(s) and some really important ideas. I found the presentation of third sector experiences very interesting.

It was useful on reflection but I would have expected a workshop to be of more practical use.

The interaction between different cultures and countries enriched the themes of the conference in both spaces and made new networks for multisectoral collaboration.

I didn't actively participate.

It fit well as it allowed the exchange of ideas and new possibilities for collaboration in the social solidarity economy.

Very interesting.

I benefited a lot from taking part in this roundtable, being able to visualise our different realities in different Latin American countries in terms of the development of the social solidarity economy, legislation around it and the current role of the state as well as the university. From this diverse perspective we were able to agree what actions should be taken to improve the chances of developing the ESS.

The roundtable I took part in gave the chance to share the situation in each country (Uruguay, Peru, Mexico, Bolivia, Argentina) in terms of the responsibility of the university to take a lead on public policy, with an emphasis on how to integrate academia with the real needs of the community, specifically through better teaching, research and social cohesion.

It gave me new points to develop in order to internalise and encourage innovative thought.

It set up the exchange of perspectives and laid out bridges between participants

Encountered different approaches to scaling up successful businesses and teaching the spirit of cooperation.

Very interesting, but not much time for what we might have been able to learn and practice. Neil Oliver is a very good facilitator who gave space for reflection on the different types of leadership as well as the ways in which we can have an effective working team.

It wasn't really a workshop, more like a presentation so it didn't meet my expectations even though the speaker was interesting. I was interested in something dynamic!

The roundtable was full of exchange and managed to integrate a lot of interesting ideas around cooperation in future research projects and work. Very smooth facilitation.

The workshop was extremely rewarding. At the Economics Department of Entre Rios University I am Director of the annual training programme in Management and Leadership of Human Talent. The content was very useful, as was the contact with Juan José Roca Escalante whose **??Global Person work??** I hope will be an interesting addition to the training programme we have been taking forward since 2012, 2015 being its fourth year.

Very useful and interesting. Excellent speaker.

**What did you like most about the conference?**

The energy. On top of the diversity, the alignments and differences, you could almost smell the positive energy that was in the air, with so many people ready to make the world better.

Meeting interesting people with whom I would have been unlikely to coincide and debate any other way.

I liked everything in general but in particular my surprise at hearing the welcome from the Vice Principal in Spanish and about her Yunus experience. I'd also highlight that the meal in the canteen on Thursday was from producers in the social economy.

The diversity of experiences present, academic as well as practical. The organisers' willingness to make sure at every moment that we felt comfortable.

The presentations and the roundtables and the fair.

It was a Euro-Latino space where various interpretations of the theme were put forward.

The multiculturalism. The dynamism. Not just keynote talks but also spaces for dialogue, discussion, knowledge creation.

The commitment from all the participants

The organisation, topics, punctuality, meals and the participants.

I liked several aspects. First of all the organisation and respect for the scheduled timetable, it meant we could make the most of every moment. Second, the attention from all the staff to every concern, making sure we were comfortable, always resolving any worry or need quickly and efficiently. The diversity of presentations, speakers, and methodologies (plenary, workshops etc.) was a great addition to the conference. And finally, the atmosphere of solidarity created between all the participants was marvellous.

The feedback processes; the experiences shared by Edventure and the UFPel virtual fair; also Rory's organisation of concepts.

The experiences of change in business approaches and the importance of the human factor within organisations.

All of it!

What each different country brought.

The closing reflections and the desire to act for a fairer world with more solidarity. The importance of seeing how many people are acting to improve complex situations in our economy. Learning from countries that have been in more complicated situations and have developed the creativity and the links to build another kind of economy.

The multilingual aspect.

The chance to combine a review of the topic in general, encountering good practice first-hand, and making contacts with interesting and nice people for future projects

The thorough co-organisation, the spaces created for real scientific, theoretical and practical exchange; tackling very interesting and even controversial topics that still need further research. I was fascinated by the ethos of respect and professionalism among the organisers, and the participants seemed to have been selected by country to be a fair representation.

The open-mindedness. The freedom of participants.

The quality of the speakers, the organisation and the way participants were treated as humans.

The precise organisation, their willingness to look after us throughout, the unconditional support from Catalina and the girls in the hall. It was a lovely experience and I'd love to be able to get the group together again and keep looking into and working on these themes.

The organisation, punctuality of the activities and the chance to listen to experiences from different parts of the world and make contacts for future collaboration.

### **How do you think the conference might impact your work or your life?**

Firstly with the huge amount of learning I took from it. Second, with the opportunities for cooperation and contacts.

Having the idea of the Social Solidarity Economy more at the forefront when hearing about possibilities in my daily activities and surroundings.

To a great extent! The conference made me aware of our economic reality dominated by a neoliberal capitalist system. I also realised all of this can be changed with small and powerful steps, such as consuming local products!

The Conference impacted my work even before it happened because Erasmus is very prestigious in Argentina. But it might influence me in future as it will let us work with more autonomy.

The conference gave visibility to my particular area of work which was very helpful as a way to make contacts and formulate research and project ideas.

Positively. In the work I'm doing with farmer cooperatives. It changed my mindset around what the solidarity economy is.

It gave me some ideas for my lines of research in the University.

It has motivated me to take action.

It changed substantially the way I envisage the social solidarity economy and the work of universities

Through the contacts made.

The main impact was rediscovering the wealth of ideas and challenges the SSE presents, and that we forget about in our day-to-day work. Also there is a lot of

learning to take from these occasions where you are able to evaluate your own practice and to improve on it.

Helping to continue and expand the network, both the existing network and the work between the representatives of the countries present, and collaborating with the structured Erasmus proposals.

Improving my toolkit of topics and knowledge to transfer to students

It changed the way I look at life, and the economy. The changing paradigm is beginning to find a way through.

It is vital in establishing synergies and gathering perspectives and knowledge.

Taking part in the conference has made me more aware of everything from my consumption habits to the way in which my work can have transformative effects if only on a small scale. It was truly inspiring attending the conference, I left with lots of ideas and keen to do new projects.

It gave me a new perspective on the economy that I didn't know before.

Totally! Processes refreshed, horizons opened.

It had an impact and will continue to do so for a long time. I don't know yet what the impact will be but I do know for sure it will be a point of development in my work as a social and cultural instigator.

Renewed enthusiasm for following the path of the new economy. I'll adopt similar working methodologies to those explained.

Widened my perspective and thinking around the social solidarity economy and relationships with others.

It has already been a comfort in my life... each journey, each new experience renews us on the inside. In terms of my work, every presentation and opinion adds to my work as academic secretary at the Economics Department of Entre Rios University. In my studies, the ideas discussed are helping me define the topic for the MBA I am working on, and which I have to sketch out by early 2016 and work on it in 2016 and 2017.

In terms of the work we face in the future in conjunction with the universities we made contact with.