

publishes research of this nature, which is however, unsupported by funding. This example shows why a more in-depth study of Quebec research calls for consideration of projects that have been turned down by SSHRC and other funding agencies (the community is so small that Quebec scholars are almost never called on to evaluate requests by their colleagues), keeping in mind that Quebec research in languages other than French must also be taken into account. But this should be the goal of a more complete and ambitious assessment than what I propose here.<sup>8</sup>

## A List of Questions About How We Ask Questions Some Thoughts on KMb and Theatre

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The mixed case acronym, KMb, with its capital ‘KM’ and lower case ‘b,’ confuses my brain, conjuring some kind of Seussian unit of measurement like kilometres per megabyte. Upon second thought, perhaps this is not entirely so surreal, since KMb is indeed about making those information units go places and speedily. A relatively recent addition to scholarly parlance, ‘knowledge mobilization’ (KMb) came into general usage following the creation of the Community University Research Alliances (CURA) program of the Social Sciences Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC) in 1999 (“History”). Knowledge mobilization refers to processes that facilitate the sharing of research between research producers (usually university academics) and research users (usually community organizations). Aspiring to be more than merely a one-way transfer of knowledge, KMb also seeks to foster entry points through which knowledge users can proactively pitch problems to be taken up as research projects. Likewise, KMb aims to be collaborative, creating opportunities for academics and community partners to work together to define the problem, develop the methodology, collect data, and apply and assess the results. Explicitly through SSHRC and tacitly by other funding bodies, we are being encouraged (compelled?) to bring these community-oriented values and goals to the fore. My intent then in this brief “think piece” is to present a long list of questions, the answers to which, I hope, may in a small way contribute to our work in imagining what the ongoing development of KMb in theatre studies and theatre practice will look like.

Given its established roots in the fields of Health and Education, the majority of KMb projects tend to centre on issues pertaining to social justice, like poverty, food security, domestic violence, drug and alcohol abuse, mental and physical health (Hall, Israel et al., Strand et al.). What are the equivalent pressing contemporary issues in theatre and performance practice where collaboration with professional researchers would be an important positive intervention? One way that theatre is already making significant contributions insofar as KMb is concerned is in the field of Applied Theatre, where theatre is employed as a method for exploring variety of social justice issues (Quinlan, Barone and Eisner; Clover and Stalker; Finley; J. Knowles and Cole). These projects, which are by definition embedded in

community concerns, present rich opportunities to focus on theatre practice as the content of the research and not only the vehicle. By adding this additional focus, we might ask: What is the value of using theatre in community and educational programming? How can theatrical practice be improved to better support these aims? Beyond Applied Theatre however, I think the view of the road is less clear.

Who are the drivers and the beneficiaries of theatre research? Can we put theatre artists and theatre companies in the place of the usual community social service organizations? How might they as indirect beneficiaries become more adept at providing service? How might we describe and define in a theatrical context what this service is? How is knowledge and increased skill transferred to the primary beneficiaries of society at large, represented, I imagine, by the audience? How does the standard operational model of KMb in social sciences translate to the arts? If this is not a good fit for our field, then what alternate models of community-university partnerships can we develop?

After identifying potential community partners, the next questions relate to making contact and establishing mutually fruitful interdependent relationships. How might we invite community partners to define our research questions? How do they find us? At an institutional level, a number of portals have been created in the interests of fostering community-university (CU) networks. Typically these sites provide lists of research expertise and projects in progress. Consider Yaffle ([www.yaffle.ca](http://www.yaffle.ca)), the CU portal at Memorial University; the splash page invites visitors to “[s]uggest a research idea,” “[h]ighlight your work,” “[s]hare your interests.” Next questions: Are theatre and performance topics well-represented in these hubs? How do theatre and performance scholars better integrate ourselves and our work into existing networks? Does this model accommodate usual patterns of work in theatre studies and practice? Will we meet our expected community partners here? Is there a call for the creation of a specialized performance arts-based CU network? What would this look like? Apart from networks hosted by research institutions, in the arts, community partners—artists and theatre companies—have their own thriving networks (mailing lists, websites, blogs, feeds, talkback sessions), which are used dominantly for outreach to their own “knowledge users”—the audiences. What can academic research contribute to the enrichment of knowledge through these existing marketing-oriented networks? Can we imagine research networks that link all three partners—scholars, practitioners, and audience? What kinds of questions might be explored in this context?

The values of KMb speak not only to partnerships in the creation of research but also to the dissemination and application of that research. Is the initial force behind the flow of knowledge “producer push” or “user pull”? The motivation behind the movement of knowledge will shape the course and destination of the river. Measuring not just the transfer but also the impact of knowledge will need to factor in these ordinary push-pull patterns (Lavis). Scholarly publication is doubtless the most usual mode of transportation for producer-pushed knowledge. From a systemic point of view, this is where the most rewards lie for institutionally-affiliated researchers. In order to shift modes of dissemination, adjustments will inevitably need to be made to merit and promotion frameworks to recognize more community-oriented publication venues as professionally valuable in the support of KMb priorities. Hybrid community-university authorship-readership journals like *Canadian Theatre Review* and *alt.theatre* might represent a step along this path. What would even more “popular”

broad-based publications look like? Is there a call for a leap into “theatre journalism” that does more than review performances? We might take a cue from the current flourishing of longform journalism, moving beyond print to online aggregators like longform.org and longreads.com or from the immensely popular TED talk video series. Social media, of course, is all about mobilizing knowledge and building exchange networks. How best can this oft-dismissed genre of communications technology be employed to foster productive research exchange partnerships? How can the built-in exponential network structures of “follows” and “retweets” and “likes” be harnessed to the asking of serious and incisive questions?

What discipline specific barriers exist to the creation of more community-university partnerships? From the standpoint of financial compensation and job security, university-researchers and community partners operate in different realms. These differences are exaggerated in the arts where community partners are unlikely to be government agencies or even charitable NGOs. KMb partnerships will need to address essential inequalities between the freelance artist and the full-time, tenured researcher. We might ask questions like: How do artist-collaborators get paid? Who holds the money? It may be necessary to revise funding guidelines so that community partners can be grant holders (Flicker and Savan 33). Likewise, contributors from these two groups are subject to diverse reward structures. We need to recognize that while university researchers are under certain kinds of pressure related to tenure and professional promotion, community partners are subject to other pressures (25). What are these pressures for theatre artists/companies? How does research contribute to or detract from these community goals? Also it is not infrequently the case that theatre researchers are also theatre practitioners and vice versa. What are the benefits/limitations for research and for practice when working with such a two-hatted creature? What ethical implications come into play in this situation?

(With apologies to Dr. Seuss) We have brains in our heads and feet in our shoes, and we can steer ourselves in any direction we choose. With KMb, there is much to do, with her and me and him and you. Oh, the places that knowledge might go.

## Honouring the 3 R's of Indigenous Research Methodologies

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Cree scholar Shawn Wilson states in *Research is Ceremony: Indigenous Research Methods*:

[O]ne of the great strengths that Indigenous scholars bring with them is the ability to see and work within both Indigenous and dominant worldviews. This becomes of great importance when working with dominant system academics, who are usually not bicultural. As part of their white privilege, there is no requirement for them to be able to see other ways of being and doing, or even to recognize that they exist. Oftentimes then, ideas coming from a different worldview are outside of their entire mindset and way of thinking. The ability to bridge this gap becomes important in order to ease the tension that it creates. (44)