Book Review / Compte rendu

Kennedy, Michael D. (2015). *Globalizing knowledge: Intellectuals, universities and publics in transformation.* Stanford: Stanford University Press. Pages: 424. Price: $34.95 USD (paper).

Reviewed by Janet Donald, PhD FRSC, Professor Emerita, McGill University

This book is about the conjuncture of knowledge and the global community, hence central to universities. The author, Michael Kennedy, is Professor of Sociology and International Studies at Brown University, and was the first Vice-Provost for International Affairs at Michigan University. His thirty years of analyzing social transformation, particularly in Eastern Europe and the Middle East, provide background for the pivotal theme in the book: the need for cosmopolitan intellectuality viewed in terms of consequential solidarity. The wider audience of higher education experts may find these higher order abstract sociological concepts and their ramifications challenging. Good chapter notes and bibliography aid considerably; a glossary would help the reader greatly. The effort required to comprehend this text is worthwhile, however; it describes a tantalizing set of schemata for wisdom and world improvement. There is too much in this book to be encapsulated in a 1200 word review, but an examination of the chapters will provide some highlights.

The introductory challenge is for intellectuals, their institutions and networks to rearticulate a culture of critical discourse around global public responsibility. Using a hermeneutic approach, Kennedy proposes to explain first how globalizers recognize learning offered by other times and places. Globalizing knowledge depends upon the ability to recognize and change perspective. Articulation is a keyword implying a measure of fit between cultural products and the social environment that enables their production and consequence. In the first chapter, on knowledge, Kennedy introduces the notion of an epistemic community that operates as a network of professionals in which network programmers have particular goals, and "switchers" control connections among networks. Markets, the economic dimension of globalization, the flow of energy, and public mobilizations are critical concepts. The chapter ends with the recognition that universities are indispensable in the equation of global knowledge as they train the future strategic actors.

In Chapter 2, on responsibility, Kennedy focuses first on intellectuals, those who create, generate and apply culture. The power of knowledge, that distinguishes the autonomous intellectual, is contrasted with the intellectual relevance and consequence of activist intellectuals who are able to align with power, whether of justice, advising, or participating in social movements. An example of a networked public intellectuality is the ezine Jadaliyya website, a source of critical analysis of the Middle East. Activist intellectuals who were able to articulate and thus have had marked consequences for their nations include Vaclav Havel, who documented the discrepancy between law and reality in Czechoslovakia, the economist Ricardo Lagos of Chile, and Ashraf Ghani in Afghanistan.

Legitimations, the topic of Chapter 3, returns to the function of the university in globalizing knowledge. An early issue is increased isomorphism across universities in emphases on research, enrollment patterns and curricula, and a concomitant increasing resemblance among societies across the world. In a brief history of area studies Kennedy notes its definition through the lens of security. Professional schools – architecture and urban planning, environmental studies, public health, public policy, law, business, medicine, engineering, and schools of information – are examined in terms of their international or globalizing tendencies. In chapter 4, on engagements, Kennedy begins with the effect of the revolution in information and communication technology on global publics, increasing their power as arbiters of government policy. He analyzes the Occupy movement intensively as a transformative public, then broadens the discussion to public sociology and institutional responsibility.

In Difference: Recognizing global contexts, Chapter 5, the main thesis is that "publics can exist only in contexts", and that "different kinds of knowledge are variably affected by the contexts in which they are elaborated." Imperialism, ethnocentrism, neocolonialism, and feminist discourse are key concepts. In a series of tables, Kennedy shows the number of social science articles on particular countries in different periods. For example, the average number of articles per year in sociological journals from 1890 to 2009 ranges from 331 for France to 17 for Afghanistan and 32 for Yugoslavia. Kennedy focuses attention on the "Yugoslav experiment" as an example of "an attempt to create a new kind of transnational identity." In Chapter 6, the conversation is extended to connectivity and global flows of knowledge, people, wealth and weapons that "reconfigure our worldly imagination." The effect of the performance or culture industry is captured in the Russian Pussy Riot flow in 2012. Energy flow is another major topic, with security overtones in supply and distribution. Finally, the culture of learning and its now virtually unlimited information resources exemplify connectivity.

Design: Knowledge networks in transformation, Chapter 7, describes four varieties of increasing activism, from scholarly networks, those that lead with policy and consensus, struggle and vision, to a combination "in the struggle for democracy's extension." Kennedy observes that scholarly networks such as the Association of American Universities define their membership as the leading edge of innovation, and the World University Rankings are dominated by US universities. In policy networks such as the World Economic Forum, heads of state, CEOs, and "leaders from civil society" meet as stakeholders to discuss global issues, for example, reducing corruption in business and politics. The World Social Forum exemplifies the "struggle leading global knowledge network," in which the common objective is "against the social ills consequent on neoliberalism." The

most prominent example of the fourth variety, democracy leading networks, is the Academic Fellowship Program that supports scholars returning to their countries "to transform the knowledge institutions of which they are a part," and by that, "to extend the openness of the societies in which they live."

In chapter 8, Kennedy returns to the theme of the book, the need for cosmopolitan intellectuality and consequential solidarity. From the Arab uprisings of 2011 to the Tea Party rebellion in the USA, he discusses subjectivity as "expressions of systemic contradictions." One concern is the growing power of post-democratic political authority as exemplified by the European Council. He suggests countering this authority by an emphasis on politics over markets and, more specifically, social democracy built around equality and inclusion, with increased electoral power. The Young Academic Network has campaigned, for example, for a "youth guarantee" that ensures a job offer, further education or training after leaving education or becoming unemployed. Another case is the Anti-Counterfeiting Treaty Agreement on intellectual property, defeated in the European parliament on the basis of freedom of speech. A third example is Ukraine's Euromaidan, which began as a student movement but emerged as a diverse struggle on behalf of human dignity. Dangers for the world and expressions of solidarity, for example, the civil rights movement in the USA, lead to the conclusion that higher education institutions can use their own commitment to learning and publics to facilitate solutions.

In the final chapter Kennedy presents eleven theses on globalizing knowledge, beginning with its profound effect on institutional and intellectual transformation. The struggle over the allocation of resources in higher education (2), the concentration of university excellence in the United States (3), and the need for solidarity around the concept of knowledge as a public good (4), are followed by the changing nature of "the public" as communication among its members (5), universities as public partners (6), the need for universities to solve global problems (7), diversity versus ethnocentrism (8), the importance of knowledge networks (9), and justice, dignity and sustainability as animating concepts that go beyond national security (10). The eleventh and final thesis is for knowledge capacity building that encourages mutual, continual dialogue. This is a demanding but significant work. ❦