

UKSG webinar Q&A

'Knowledge justice on the internet: different ways of knowing and doing'

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Questions that came during the presentation:

“Q: For those of us in teaching, or teaching-supporting positions (in universities), how do we teach students to navigate and succeed in the system of scholarship while also working toward changing that system?”

- **Kira:** We all exist in systems of power/privilege, etc. that we need to navigate, and at certain times we have more power to effect change than others; those of us with more power/privilege in certain contexts *need* to use that influence to push for change where our colleagues lower down in the hierarchy might not be able to. We are sometimes oppressors and we are sometimes oppressed, and the key is to recognize when we are code-switching. And we should never forget that presence is a form of activism. For the times when we have to navigate systems of exclusion/oppression with little space to challenge them, our *being in the room* is also a form of activism. Sometimes you have to gain membership into the club in order to change the club rules. But only if we are all truly working to change the system from whatever position (of power/authority) we occupy in that system will we be able to achieve greater knowledge justice.
- **Anasuya:** This is a great question, and one that everyone who inhabits current institutions (whether of scholarship, politics, philanthropy... or any other) faces in some way. But there's a special and specific nature to teaching where we all have to use the master's tools to transform (or burn down, depending on your view) the master's house (to paraphrase Audre Lorde). I think it begins with faculty supporting students to constantly question the received systems of knowledge, the versions of history they've been given, and changing the ways and what they study and learn. And as Kira says, this sometimes needs a form of context switching so we're conscious and intentional about being in the system while questioning it. Think about your own research or curricula: how do you design it, with whom do you design and partner your courses or your research, whom do you teach, who's missing, what questions do you ask your students...? How do you write your own papers, who do you cite? What are the similar expectations of your students? And more than anything else, we all need to support students and colleagues who are asking these radical questions and doing this radical transformative work themselves.
- Resource: [Our Stories, Our Knowledges](#) (Esp. Part 4)

- Resource: Centering Knowledge from the Margins, our embodied practices of epistemic resistance and revolution (freely available for download till the end of August)
- Resource: Decolonising SOAS
- Reading: Free Black University

“Q: How might we help give students the vocabulary to challenge academic staff who may not see non Western-centric voices as legitimate sources?”

- We’d highly recommend starting with Kristie Dotson’s Epistemic Oppression and Miranda Fricker’s Epistemic Injustice. They are both academics who speak in the language of academia about the implicit biases we bring to our understanding of what constitutes ‘legitimate’ knowledge. It can be useful to have a few examples to hand as well -- to illustrate how a single artifact/source might not tell the whole story. See, for instance, Anasuya’s keynote at the MIT Grand Challenges summit.

“Q: In New Zealand tech sector organisations are actively encouraging NZ Government on steps needed to overcome the #DigitalDivide of those excluded from the Internet. See <https://internetnz.nz/blog/five-point-plan-digital-inclusion-covid-19-and-beyond>. This doesn't IMHO sufficiently address gaps from Lack of Accessibility for disabled users, Housing Insecurity and Poverty. Do you have good stories or resources for how accessibility is built into design thinking and decision-making anywhere else?”

- **Kira:** Unfortunately, there isn’t enough participatory design in these spaces, which could better inform government policy on closing the digital divide. For example, in the UK, a key barrier to accessing many services is that people don’t have e-mail accounts, and many email accounts require two-factor authentication, so they have a hard time setting one up without a mobile (smart) phone. Two factor authentication is a barrier built into many platforms that disproportionately excludes the poor. More research/observation of user experiences from the ground up *could* inform policy (and platform design!), but it requires a recognition of the value of those users’ knowledge/insights. Something I like to reference here is the ‘curb cut effect’ -- which basically says that if you design for ‘vulnerable’ or marginalized groups, everybody benefits.
- **Anasuya:** There was a powerful keynote by Hīria Te Rangi, a Maori technologist and activist at the National Digital Forum in November 2019, that I’d highly recommend watching. I was lucky enough to be in the audience, and it was brilliant and transforming personally, and for many of those around me.

“Q: 80% of NZers are online but some can't use full range of services because of structural issues, e.g. smartphones can surf the net but not download most job forms or government documents. Nor can users easily compose, format and upload CVs on smartphones. What models would work well for net services that need document access?”

- **Kira:** Participatory design! And a more diverse tech sector! We need the people who are making the decisions about how to design technologies/platforms to look more like the people who *use* these technologies (i.e. all of us!).
- **Anasuya:** And in addition, for more governments and other institutions to adopt Free and Open Source standards, software, hardware and licenses as their key tools, because these are built to be far more accessible than those created by proprietary, profit-driven tech companies.

“Q: Should we seek to widen the franchise of who's included in written records, as well as broaden the types of knowledge capture, we recognise?”

- Yes, absolutely! Our archives of all kinds need to be more inclusive of marginalized voices. This starts with recognizing whose voices are missing in different mediums/spaces -- including in written records.

“Q: What was the name of that scholar again who writes about embodied knowledge? And the feminist theorist on epistemic injustice?”

- Michael Polanyi wrote about tacit knowledge (which Anasuya calls embodied knowledge), and Miranda Fricker about epistemic injustice.