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The Civic University and the City¹

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Why cities

I would begin by outlining at a high level what I see as the significance of the city to the university and the university to the city. These are themes which underpin much of the analysis that I want to present

The first and obvious point is that most universities are located in cities. More importantly, this perforce means that universities cannot avoid a relationship with the myriad of other institutions and communities that also inhabit the city, particularly others also involved in the production and distribution of knowledge and public bodies like local authorities responsible for the city and the wellbeing of its citizens. Amongst these institutions universities can be said to have a special status, often alongside teaching hospitals, as urban ‘anchor institutions’.

The Work Foundation defines anchor institutions as:

“Large locally embedded institutions, typically non-governmental public sector, cultural or other civic institutions that are of significant importance to the economy and the wider community life of the cities in which they are based. They generate positive externalities and relationships that can support or ‘anchor’ wider economic activity in the locality. Anchor institutions do not have a democratic mandate and their primary missions do not involve regeneration or local economic development. Nonetheless their scale, local rootedness and community links are such that they can play a key role in local development and economic growth representing the ‘sticky capital’ around which economic growth strategies can be built”

In the case of universities their main location, in comparison with private firms, is fixed within the current home city. Notwithstanding possible expansion to other nearby or far away campuses it is where they have considerable sunk investment in buildings and strong identification with place. For example my university remains named legally ‘The University **of** Newcastle’. On **past** experience Universities have generally been immune to institutional failure or sudden contractions in size and therefore act as a source of stability in local economies, buffering against the worst effects of periodic downturns. They are therefore particularly important as anchor institutions in weaker economies.

Most importantly anchored universities are **of** the city not just **in** the city

My second point is that seeking to be anchored in and part of the city raises normative questions for the university about the requirement for academic practise to be of relevance to the place in which academics live and work as citizens. This normative question has been raised by an editorial in the prestigious academic journal Nature. This was based on an analysis of the geography of the most frequently cited scientific papers which revealed a concentration of this academic output in the leading cities of the world. The analysis prompted the editors of Nature to ask:

“Why do so many scientists ignore the needs of our cities: researchers who benefit from the opportunities of cities should ask what they can give back”

The current director of the LSE, Craig Calhoun, in a famous paper entitled “The university and the public good” hints at an answer when he writes:

“We treat our opportunities to do research not as a public trust but as a reward for success in past studies. Rewards for research are deeply tied up with the production of academic hierarchy and the relative standing of institutions”

But, significantly, Calhoun goes on to say:

“Public support for universities is based on the effort to educate citizens in general, to share knowledge, to distribute it as widely as possible in accord with publically articulated purposes”

In an equally perceptive analysis of the contribution that the university can make to the public good, Gerard Delanty writes:

*“The great significance of the university is that it **can be** the most important site of connectivity in the knowledge society... (and)... a key institution for the formation of cultural and technological citizenship ... (and)... for reviving the decline of the public sphere”*

More recently in his treatise on The Public Value of the Social Sciences John Brewer who will be this year’s Lord Patten lectures in this series unpacks the word ‘public’:

“Use of the adjective ‘public’ not only implies fundamental questions about accountability but also poses additional queries about to whom should we as social scientists feel accountable and shifts the focus towards our responsibility by asking to whom should social scientists primarily feel obligated...Public social science has both a research and teaching agenda and involves a commitment to promote the public good through civic engagement”.

Although none of these authors are specifically writing about cities or indeed all disciplines within the university I hope you will see the connection to a narrative I will be developing about the civic university and the city and its relation to the wider society locally as well as globally.

My third reason for linking the university and the city relates to the nature of the urban development process. Much academic writing on the city recognises that we cannot only view the city as an economic engine or physical place – which it is – but also a node in a network of local and global social, cultural and political interactions. Put more simply the development of the city is about businesses that generate jobs, the people who live there and the institutions of urban governance connecting these domains.

The University in the City

Any university is perforce a key element in the built environment of the city and a major employer. In Newcastle the two universities employ 3,500 academic staff and 4,300 support staff across a wide range of occupations, from the highest to the lowest grades. Expenditure on goods and services in the region is estimated to generate further jobs bringing the total to almost 17000 jobs. The services include construction – most of the cranes on the skyline in the city are linked to university expansion including student accommodation – legal and financial services and consumer services – retail, hotel, leisure and culture. The local authority will attest to the importance of

national and international conferences linked to the universities for hotels and other venues. All of this ignores the effects of student expenditure.

Both institutions have seen a significant growth in student numbers from 40,000 ten years ago to more than 50,000 now. The Further Education College also has 3,500 higher education students. Significantly the number of overseas students has doubled. It has been estimated that these each of these students adds £25k to the local economy and equally important add to the cultural vitality of the city.

All of this can be referred to as the **passive** impact of higher education on the city. But the civic university working with others to shape the the physical form of the city in the public interest and **actively** engaged with the city's business, cultural, political and social life and linking each of these spheres to the global arena will be playing a key role in the development of the city. It may be assisted in this process by bridging or intermediary organisations that sit between the universities as a knowledge generators and civil society – organisations like Newcastle Science City, Centre for Life, the Lit & Phil, the Mining Institute the Great North Museum which together form the 'knowledge ecology' of the city.

The university and the development of the city

In my book with Paul Vallance on *The University and the City* we review the evidence from across the world on how universities are actively contributing to place making, to innovation and urban economic development and to social development and I would now like to share with you some of the findings.

In terms of *place making* the expansion of universities has led to demand for more space and this has generally been linked to the suburbanisation of campuses as universities have sought to find what Thomas Bender in his seminal 1988 book on the university and the city has referred to as '*semi-cloistered*' spaces in the midst of the city to meet the work and leisure needs of students and academic communities'. In other instances university sites have been dispersed all over the city reducing their impact. Similarly science parks supposedly to accommodate businesses linked to universities have been established on the urban periphery. But more recently there has been pressure to open out university campuses to the city and science parks have been experiencing an urban turn towards sites that are more mixed in function and integrated into the fabric of the city. In this trend universities have been involved in local regeneration projects and the development of cultural quarters and media hubs and in the case of the University of Ulster in Belfast developing a new campus to bridge the sectarian divide. While these are generalisations based on international experience it will be apparent that developments in Newcastle put us at the forefront in terms of the physical integration of universities with the city through developments on this two university campuses, the developments at Science Central and the campus for ageing and vitality on the former General Hospital site.

In terms of the *contribution of universities to business innovation*, NESTA has highlighted the shift away from a linear model based around the exploitation of knowledge to a co-production model which highlights the important role of users, service, open and social innovation. This involves different sets of knowledge, entrepreneurs, selection mechanisms and ways of allocating capital and people to innovative projects. NESTA suggests that a range of quintessentially urban partners, including civic universities can be involved. So this new reality for innovation highlights the importance of personal contacts between a wide range of actor and agents and this underscores the advantages of urban agglomeration. Students can be a key part of this mix. They can act as knowledge transfer agents through work placements linked to their course. If these students are

subsequently taken on in the organisation this will establish the social relation with their teachers on which subsequent links can be built.

Turning to *social development* universities, cannot avoid the inequalities present in most large cities where they are located, not least because of its likely impact on attracting students and staff from elsewhere. They are also expected to recruit more students from disadvantaged backgrounds and this can be done by work with schools within the city. Cities are also under fiscal stress and expected to deliver more services in a joined up way to the local population. As NESTA suggest social innovation can be seen as one way of doing this. The Board of European Policy Advisors has defined social innovation as :

“Innovations that are social in both their ends and their means. Specifically, we define social innovations as new ideas (products, services and models) that simultaneously meet social needs (more effectively than alternatives) and create new social relationships or collaborations. They are innovations that are not only good for society but also enhance society’s capacity to act. The process of social interactions between individuals undertaken to reach certain outcomes is participative, involves a number of actors and stakeholders who have a vested interest in solving a social problem, and empowers the beneficiaries”

This implies extending the dominant model for university external collaboration from the so called ‘triple helix’ of university, business and government to a ‘quadruple helix’ which embraces civil society. More specifically to quote two recent reports for the European Commission:

“The Quadruple Helix, with its emphasis on broad cooperation in innovation, represents a shift towards systemic, open and user-centric innovation policy. An era of linear, top-down, expert driven development, production and services is giving way to different forms and levels of coproduction with consumers, customers and citizens.”

“The shift towards social innovation also implies that the dynamics of ICT-innovation has changed. Innovation has shifted downstream and is becoming increasingly distributed; new stakeholder groups are joining the party, and combinatorial innovation is becoming an important source for rapid growth and commercial success. Continuous learning, exploration, co-creation, experimentation, collaborative demand articulation, and user contexts are becoming critical sources of knowledge for all actors in R&D & Innovation”

Although the role of digital technologies is central to this perspective, this does not necessarily mean that geography no longer matters. Indeed the city as a living lab for testing new ways of organising the delivery of services in a sustainable and inclusive way, for example to an ageing population, is influencing public policy all over Europe.

Contentious issues

Each of these areas linking the university to the city is not without both challenges and opportunities. This is inevitable. To once again refer to Thomas Bender:

“I propose that we understand the university as semi-cloistered heterogeneity in the midst of uncloistered heterogeneity (that is to say the city...). Because of this difference, relations between the two are necessarily tense, and they cannot be assimilated into one another. To do so, either practically or conceptually, is to empty each of its distinctive cultural meaning and falsify the sociology of each”

In terms of physical development there may be tensions between the optimal strategy for the expansion of the university estate in terms of location and function with projects that have an urban

development or regeneration focus targeted at the needs of the city. This includes issues around student housing.

In the field of business innovation there may be pressure for university research to focus on the needs of current business whereas universities as institutions partly protected by public funding are sources of what Paul Vallance has called ‘slack’ in metropolitan innovation systems. So by virtue of harbouring non-commercial activities that cannot be supported by the local private sector, universities can potentially add to the adaptive capacity of the metropolitan economy, particularly SMEs. But this potential is tensioned against the immediate opportunities of working with the best companies regardless of location and the absorptive capacity of local businesses.

In terms of social development different parts of the academy may be active in shaping national social policy in fields such as housing, welfare and health but are not incentivised to bringing this back home in terms of influencing their own institution and city. Similar strictures apply in the field of cultural policy and practise.

These specific tensions are all underpinned by those between the external civic role of the university and the internal processes within the university which are heavily influenced by the higher education policy environment within which it operates. Public universities are now principally influenced by national governments. City governments in most countries have no formal responsibilities for higher education. They are in principal only accountable for what goes on in their ‘patch’. A city may have several higher education institutions within its boundary but no powers to develop a city or region wide higher education system to meet a range of local needs. It could be said that this is because the work of a university is not bounded by any specific territory. It operates within a national higher education system which in this country and many others does not have an explicit concern with territorial development issues. Because higher education is now a global business a key driver for many universities is position in national and international league tables which are heavily weighted in favour of recognition for research with its very straightforward metrics of citations of individual academics. These rankings pay little regard to contributions to civil society where the metrics are much more complex.

Whilst city interests might expect a corporate response from THE university this does not recognise that the **traditional** university is a loosely coupled organisation composed of disciplinary based units driven by higher education metrics and with only limited horizontal or vertical co-ordination. In such universities responding to external needs is easier at the level of the academic unit than the entire university.

As the Director of the Royal Society of Arts, Matthew Taylor, has commented:

“Local public agencies (like councils) often find the authority structure of universities opaque and diffuse; this is a barrier to collaboration. While the relative autonomy of faculty from the university administration is a virtue, and the tendency of academics to view the hierarchy of their discipline as more important than the hierarchy of university leadership is inevitable, it still leaves the problem for universities of how – as institutions – to mobilise to meet shared challenges and pursue overarching objectives”.

Addressing the ‘shared challenges’ to which Taylor refers requires an institutional response from a wide range of disciplines in recognition of the fact that the latent drivers for public accountability to which I have referred can manifest themselves most visibly at the city level. ‘We have a university in our city but what is it doing for us?’ – might be a question raised by local politician. Delivering an institution wide response opens the issue of the internal management of the

university. I would now like to consider this under the heading of business models of the university.

Business models of the university

I have already referred to the entrepreneurial university model outlined by the American sociologist Robert Burton Clark in 1998. This was designed to help transform the traditional university, hence its subtitle ‘*organisational pathways to institutional transformation.*’ His model consists of a strengthened steering core (or what we would now call executive team), an enhanced developmental periphery(composed of intermediate organisations like science parks and centres for continuing professional development) , a diversified funding base (reducing dependence on state funding) and a stimulated and more entrepreneurial academic heartland. It is this model that underpins the triple helix framework extolled by Henry Etzkovitz of universities, business and government and now adopted by governments across the world. This framework focusses on research and science, technology and business. It neglects teaching except in the field of student entrepreneurship, the role of humanities and social sciences, place based communities and civil society more generally. My colleague Louise Kempton and I have therefore produced an alternative model of the civic university which I would like to introduce by defining first a non-civic university. Such a university maintains a strict separation of its teaching and research with research performance judged by academic publications in peer reviewed journals and teaching judged by student satisfaction scores. There is a third mission on the periphery of the university and a hard boundary between the university and the outside world. The focus of management is on income generation from its external work, chiefly with the largest businesses. There are lots of unconnected bottom up external initiatives, largely below the radar screens of senior management.

In contrast the civic university integrates teaching, research and engagement with the outside world such that each enhances the other. Research has socio-economic impact designed in from the start and teaching has a strong community involvement with the long term objective of widening participation in HE. Most importantly there is a soft boundary between the institution and society. To turn this into a practical way in which institutional leaders and managers can appraise their own organisations we have identified seven dimensions of the civic university. These are:

1. It is *actively engaged* with the wider world as well as the local community of the place in which it is located.
2. It takes a *holistic approach* to engagement, seeing it as institution wide activity and not confined to specific individuals or teams.
3. It has a strong *sense of place* – it recognises the extent to which its location helps to form its unique identity as an institution.
4. It has a *sense of purpose* – understanding not just what it is good at, but what it is good for.
5. It is *willing to invest* in order to have impact beyond the academy.
6. It is *transparent and accountable* to its stakeholders and the wider public.
7. It uses *innovative methodologies* such as social media and team building in its engagement activities with the world at large

We recognise that universities aspiring to be civic universities are on a journey of institutional transformation and position themselves at different points along each of these dimensions from civic engagement being embryonic to fully embedded in the customs and practises of the institutions.

The connected city and region

Realising the potential of the civic university will not only depend on what the university does but also on the capacity of its city partners in the public and private sector. In a review of university/ city and regional partnerships across the European Union, Louise Kempton and I have developed a framework to characterise the connected region.

As in the case of the civic university I would like to start by characterising the disconnected city and region. In terms of higher education we might observe the following:

- Seen as ‘in’ the region but not ‘of’ the region
- Policies and practices discourage engagement
- Focus on rewards for academic research and teaching

In terms of the public sector we might observe:

- Lack of coherence between national and regional/local policies
- Lack of political leadership
- Lack of a shared voice and vision at city region level

In relation to the private sector the picture might be:

- No coordination or representative voice with which to engage
- Motivated by narrow self interest and short term goals
- Dominated by firms with low demand or absorptive capacity for innovation

Lastly in terms of the mechanisms for connecting Higher Education into the development of the city and region the following might be observed:

- No boundary spanning people
- Focus on supply side, transactional interventions
- Ineffective or non- existent partnership
- Lack of a shared understanding about the challenges
- Entrepreneurs ‘locked out’ of regional planning

In the connected city region the following might be observed in higher education:

- Generating intellectual and human capital assets for the city region

In the case of the public sector:

- Developing coherent policies that link territorial development to innovation and higher education

For its part the private sector would be:

- Investing in people and ideas that will create growth

The three pillars of this triple helix would be connected by HEIs providing skilled people and commercialisable research for the private sector and analytical work to underpin public policy interventions. All three pillars would work together to shape evidence based policies that support smart specialisation.

I would now like to provide some evidence from our book on how the universities in four English cities are meeting three urban challenges – environmental sustainability, health and cultural development. For practical reasons we were unashamedly Newcastle focussed comparing this city one of the others other around a single theme – with Manchester around sustainability, with Sheffield around health and with Bristol around cultural development. We undertook documentary analysis and in depth interviews in 2010 with key actors inside and outside of the universities. The date is important as most participants were discussing collaborations in progress before the financial crisis and many of these were financed by the regional development agencies. To compare the promise and the practice of one aspect of civic engagement I conducted an online survey of a 1 in 3 random sample of academics in all disciplines in six universities (Newcastle, Northumbria, Sheffield, Sheffield Hallam, Bristol and the University of West of England) regarding the intended impact of their research. We received 700 responses, a response rate of 30%. Before sharing with you some of the insights of our interviewees I will outline some of the survey results.

Research impacts

In the survey we asked respondents to distinguish between the direct and impacts of their research – if you like the primary and secondary beneficiaries. Not surprisingly the principal focus of most academics is on knowledge creation followed by the transfer of this through education. Impact on the economy and society across a wide range of areas from public policy through to cultural enrichment is a secondary concern. It follows that the primary intended beneficiaries of most academics research are peers in their own discipline followed by their own students. Notwithstanding the triple helix rhetoric only 10% of academics intend their research to have direct impact on private businesses. And only 20% see their work as directly contributing to technological development. However academics do anticipate their research as having a secondary impact on a wide range of beneficiaries in civil society, most notably professional associations, the third sector and the general public. This lends support to the quadruple helix model. Moreover when we separated out those who said the intended impact of their research was on one of our urban challenge themes we found these academics were more likely to be seeking an impact on other disciplines and civil society across the board.

But to what extent are these intended impacts geographically targeted? The most obvious point is the majority of academics do not intend their research to have an impact on particular places. However there are pronounced differences between disciplines. Academics in the social sciences and humanities are most likely to want their research to have a place specific impact. In

contrast the hard sciences which have been the focus of much effort in terms local economic development initiatives are even less likely to look to specific locations for research impact.

There are also important differences between universities in terms of geographical focus. Again not surprisingly academics in the former polytechnics in our three cities are more likely to want their research to have a geographically specific impact. Interestingly this orientation is greatest in the northern cities which have a lower level of prosperity than Bristol which is arguably an extension of the South East ‘golden triangle’. This lends weight to the view that some academics are influenced in their priorities by the place in which they work.

Universities and sustainable cities

We probed this point by focussing on our three urban challenge themes. I will start with sustainable city development. Reviewing the documentary evidence it was clear that universities in our cities were working hard to minimize the environmental footprint of their estates. More significantly they were involved in economic development and regeneration initiatives involving the public that have a strong environmental dimension, such as Science Central in Newcastle and the Manchester Low carbon Economic Area and Manchester Corridor. Academics through their national and international roles as were influencing the debate about sustainable cities and the regulatory environment with which energy production, distribution and consumption operated. In this process they were contributing to what can be referred to as multi-level governance. We observed academics from different disciplines engaging with the city as an urban laboratory. The city was simultaneously the object of study, the setting for field research and the site for collaboration, experimentation and intervention. A few quotations from a selection of academic and non academic interviewees will put flesh on these bones:

Starting with Newcastle Science City:

“ There are cities in England that have great areas of science and we recognise this, but it won’t be of any use to anybody unless it has an economic and social impact. ... The strategy is to have a place where you can demonstrate tangibly what the theories are about: so linking industry, and academia, and entrepreneurship, and the local population. And making sure that, in the case of Science Central, all this works together as a kind of extended part of the city, but also a demonstration of what Science City is about.”

“ In the Energy and Environment [science city theme], what you had really was a disparate set of activities; you know where individual academics are engaged with relevant private and public sector players for their specialism, but not a lot of integration really. And the integration is still something of a holy grail. But I think, actually, having the development site on Science Central offers us the opportunity to finally do some of that for real. And some of it is [already] happening, at the level of for instance, having ARUP [the big civil engineering consultancy] involved in the technical aspects of the master-planning now. I feel we’re genuinely in a situation where there’s two-way learning going on with ARUP, because we’re able to use Science Central as a conversation piece”.

“The notion of treating our city and its region as a seedbed for sustainability initiatives is a potent one... the vision is of academics out in the community, working with local groups and businesses on practical initiatives to solve problems and promote sustainable development and growth. This necessitates that we proceed in a very open manner, seeking to overcome barriers to thought, action and engagement; barriers between researchers and citizens, between the urban and the rural, between the social and natural sciences, between teaching research and enterprise”

Moving to Manchester:

“One of the central pieces is this low-carbon laboratory, where we will be recognising and exploiting the fact that we have two universities, a health trust and a city council, plus a number of private sector partners, all in the same vicinity, all working together. And so what we’re very keen to create there is an evidence base approach to a lot of work that’s coming forward, using the intellect that is in the universities, and using technology; to capture what’s going on now, to capture it during the change, and to capture it again post the change”.

“There is some interest, I think, in the way ... the EcoCities brand, which is gaining some purchase around the region, now could actually provide a larger context for the Corridor work. ... I’m potentially really excited about it because I think this idea of the Laboratory, provides us with a real spatial focus. It gives a kind of material context to those relationships. I mean everyone’s got an interest in what happens on Oxford Road, so it gives you a reason to come together”

Universities and healthy cities

Turning to the health challenge facing cities we see a mutual dependence of public health services and university medical faculties. They are in separate governance domains but joined together by many types of organisational and personal linkages of a financial and informal character. There is a well established work based learning model for medical students and the hospital and local population acts a living laboratory for clinical academics. While acute medicine and public health are in different universities the latter is now a key function of local government. This is leading to three way partnerships. Again some quotations from our interviewees from and health organisation will exemplify these urban relationships. From the university side in Newcastle one interviewee notes:

“Our single biggest engagement programme, bar none, is our clinical engagement programme with the NHS. ... It dominates numerically and financially every other thing that we do. ... There’s huge understanding inside the relevant parts of the academy about what makes them tick, what’s likely to go down well with them, and what won’t go down well with them”

“We are absolutely reliant on the clinicians to get good data on every birth in the region, every pregnancy, every outcome. Without meticulous attention to detail by doctors and midwives, you wouldn’t have a dataset worth analysing. ... So we’re reliant on them, but they also get regular data fed back to them on their outcomes, and that is gold dust to them, in terms of clinical audit. So it’s a two-way relationship; they’re reliant on us, we’re reliant on them, and it’s mutually beneficial.”

From the NHS side:

“The relationship is more than just partnership; it’s inextricably linked. Without a range of key academics, who, if they don’t deliver on their side of the fence, our business suffers. If we don’t deliver for some of the academic objectives, and research objectives that are set by the University ... they suffer too. We’re joined at the hip ... because we’re in the research and innovation game together, we’re in the training and education game together You can’t pick and choose on the relationship”

In terms of public health work based learning is a key mechanism for Sheffield Hallam University:

“We’re continually revising our curriculum, in partnership with our stakeholders - the strategic health authorities, the acute trusts, the PCTs - in order to be one step ahead in terms of anticipating the need. ... We are very much wedded to work-based learning delivery, and particularly when you’re talking about part-time, postgraduate [students] our unique selling point is that you learn

by using your day-job, and so the assignments are actually around projects that will take your organisation forward as well as yourself “

Universities and creative cities

Finally in relation to the contribution of universities to the creative city we observe that the diversity of the cultural sector in cities mirrored by diversity of creative and artistic disciplines taught, researched and practised in universities – visual arts, music, drama, creative writing . The academic units in the universities and the constituent communities of students and staff have a strong identity with and connection to urban cultural life. These are fields where the hierarchy of research ratings between ‘old’ and ‘new’ universities does not apply – practise led research and teaching used in art, design and media fits particularly well with the mission of new universities. Finally we observe the campus providing cultural venues – university museums, theatres, art galleries, media labs and also the shared use of off campus sites where practise, teaching and research are linked.

Thus one of our interviewees from Northumbria University observed:

“I think what we are attempting to do is to try and crack that nut that a lot of fine art departments have to crack, which is how do you work in a professional practice environment that’s recognised by students and postgraduates, but also works to the needs of a research culture What kinds of resources do you need? ... Really the model you want to put forward is a sort of relationship of art and the city; so very metropolitan, very urban. It’s not on campus, its right in the middle of town”.

In terms of a physical space Bristol’s Watershed building which houses a cinema and the Pervasive Media Studio can be used to illustrate some of the mechanisms. Watershed is a cross-artform venue and producer, sharing, developing and showcasing exemplary cultural ideas and talent. It occupies the first floor of a historic Grade II* listed building at the entranceway to Bristol's Harbourside. Within this space the [Pervasive Media Studio](#), brings together a network of over 100 artists, technologists and academics from Bristol University and the University of the West of England to explore the future of mobile and wireless media. According to one academic in the studio:

“We as academics are really planning for five to ten years ahead, people in business are usually planning for the next quarter or the next six months or the next year. There are different temporalities, and one of the things that we can do is try to use our expertise to catch some of the things that they don’t really have time to reflect on, or have the analytical purchase on, and play it back to them, and help them enrich their own process”

The Watershed organisation itself can be classed as an intermediate organisation working between the digital businesses community in Bristol and the two universities. The relationship is described by its CEO in the following way:

“I think one of the benefits of working with academics is that they provide a kind of stability in the way we work. ... There is a space in the middle where they can collaborate which is the work that might come out in 2 to 3 years. And then there’s the horizon work, which the academy is in a much better place to look at, because it hasn’t got the commercial constraints. ... But the studio acts as a kind of gearing mechanism to try and help those timescales, agendas, cash flows, find each other and work together.”

“There is a 5 year collaboration agreement between the three [organisations] at a corporate level, which we are calling a creative technologies collaboration. It’s for research, innovation and teaching in what we are broadly calling creative technologies; so that cross- over space between what you would normally call creative content and what you would normally call digital computing. It is a mixed up space that none of us quite understand. ... So it is an active

collaborative space, which adds value to what the universities can do in their own faculties, on their premises, and on their own.”

I think these last quotations give a flavour to what can be identified as the role of universities in creating ‘slack’ in urban innovation systems. Watershed also exemplifies the importance of physical places where the academy, business and the community come together with an intermediate organisation. The legal partnership between two universities with complementary strengths and embracing teaching as well as research also illustrate key features of civic universities. Different structures for different knowledge domains can be found in the other cities.

Conclusion

Over the past decade we have seen radical changes in the way in which HE is funded and regulated AND in territorial governance - **the global- local agenda** - with limited consideration of the implications for universities as anchor institutions in local communities. Higher education is increasingly subject to the challenges of a global market, both reflected and fuelled by the competition driven by World University Rankings. These can have a profound effect on international student recruitment on which universities increasingly have to rely in order to balance the books. In this marketplace, and in a time of austerity, universities may lack the resources or motivation to collaborate with other HEIs to deliver public goods that embed higher education in the city and contribute to its economic, social, cultural and environmental development. If such activities do not directly feed into a university’s bottom line it may be forced or decide to disengage.

While some universities may thrive in the global marketplace for research, the mobility of academic staff and national and international students may mean the strong get stronger at the expense of others reinforcing what are already a very hierarchically structured national higher education systems. Markets produce winners and losers; in the case of higher education, this has inevitable geographical implications. Vulnerable institutions may appear in economically vulnerable places which may also be highly dependent on their universities as anchor institutions.

Many national governments seem poorly equipped to tackle this issue. Local government is under severe financial pressure especially in the most deprived parts of the country. Local Economic Partnerships have a tightly defined brief. Many national ministries responsible for higher education have no formal responsibility for what higher education is provided where. Their principal role is as a funders of higher education as a closed system and have no view on their importance as anchor institutions particularly in less dynamic places. They may not have the resources to bail out faltering institutions and this may be a real issue in places with single institutions, and no powers to promote local mergers in the public interest.

What is the way ahead? I would like to suggest that turbulent times for both higher education and city authorities should drive each to identify key areas of mutual interest, for example by using the city as a living laboratory for research and social innovation or addressing societal challenges such as an ageing population and environmental sustainability—challenges that present economic opportunities with both a local and global dimension. Other possibilities include work-based learning in small and medium-sized enterprises, as a way of enhancing graduate employability and establishing the social relations between academics and business; student enterprise programmes to boost numbers of potential new businesses; attracting mobile investment through global research links; and collaborative endeavours to create cities with ‘buzz’.

This is not just a local agenda for universities, cities. It requires universities to connect bottom-up initiatives supported by local authorities, local business interests and civil society to top-down mechanisms, for example those promoted by national ministries of science and technology .

But we also need to think about how to reinvent the civic universities that were so crucial to the development of cities many cities in the past, and sustain world-class higher education systems with an explicit territorial dimension, not just a few global players in capital cities. In short we need to more systematically link higher education and territorial development policies nationally as well as locally.

ⁱ Edited text of a public lecture first given in Newcastle University in February 2014