

The university and the city

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This book seeks to deepen the understanding of the spatial role of universities. It carves out a research niche by focusing on universities in their respective cities. From this angle, the authors seek to analyze both economically and non-economically motivated forms of interaction and engagement, with a special focus on the location-specific aspects that influence how universities interact and integrate with their surrounding communities.

The overall structure of the book is logical and the text has been kept concise. The introduction (Chapter 1) is followed by two parts. The first part of the book sets the scene by reviewing related literature. Accordingly, Chapter 2 discusses the place and role of universities in the urban and social development of cities. Chapter 3 gives an overview of the broad variety of economic impacts that have been related to universities, while Chapter 4 focuses on universities' role in innovation. Chapter 5 uses secondary material to look at the drivers and barriers of university engagement in the cases of Berlin, Jyväskylä and Rotterdam. The chapters of the first part of the book stand in a constructive relation to each other and introduce nicely the themes to which the second, empirical part of the book is to return.

This second part relies on original research to reveal the variety of ways in which the relations between the universities and cities have been organized in the UK context (Chapter 6) and in Bristol, Newcastle upon Tyne, Manchester and Sheffield in particular. The academic and policy fields at the focus of analysis relate to sustainability, health and culture (Chapters 7-9). This empirical analysis serves a reader interested in gaining a systematic understanding of recent developments of the university-society relationship in the UK. In line with the theoretical discussion in the first part, the empirical analysis is sensitive to the particular institutional contexts and inherent, mostly resource-related incentives that guide the research and teaching activities in different universities. The detailed accounts make it possible to understand why the universities' engagement with their home cities has taken place somewhat differently in the various cases, which enables the making of informed comparisons also with other contexts (see also Pinheiro et al., 2012). Some features of the cases are shown to have their origin in the national rather than regional or city institutions: for instance, an important national feature of the UK higher education sector is that the distinction between research-intensive universities and the teaching-oriented polytechnics was abolished in 1992. Yet, despite the shared university label, institutional differences tend to prevail: "Pre 1992" universities continue to match more closely with the idea of university as a pursuer of fundamental research (Rutten & Boekema 2009), while "Post 1992" universities tend more towards developing local linkages.

The readability of the empirical part of the book suffers somewhat from the fact that the case narratives necessarily involve a large amount of acronyms of various organizations and bridging structures. Keeping track of them requires concentration from the reader's part, especially as several changes have taken place during the analyzed period (which spans roughly from early 2000s to the

end of 2011). However, the acronyms are needed to tell, among other things, how the sustainability-related faculties from multiple universities were able to implement and collaborate around the “urban laboratory” concept in the cases of Newcastle and Manchester (Chapter 7). Under the theme of health (Chapter 8), in turn, the case of Newcastle is contrasted with that of Sheffield. The analysis describes how collaboration of academic faculty with NHS trusts structures the ways in which universities contribute to the maintaining and developing public health. The analysis under the cultural theme (Chapter 9) concentrates on the role of especially off-campus venues and facilities in bridging the universities and the cultural sector and public in the cities of Newcastle and Bristol. In addition to these specific points, these chapters and the discussion in Chapter 10 also raise interesting issues regarding the effects of the economic downturn at the end of the past decade, as well as the effects of the recent re-allocation of the public health service development responsibilities, upon the structuring of university-city relations in the UK context.

The shortcoming of the book is that the expectations created by the two parts of the book are not fully satisfied in the concluding Chapter 10. While the authors discuss and develop the themes introduced in Chapter 1, they refrain from creating the loop from the results back to respective international research. Empirically based theoretical propositions or comments would have made the book more exciting also for those readers who have no particular interest towards the UK context. Especially, geographically insightful propositions might have been made regarding the role of physical and shared sites and venues in structuring the nature of university-city relations. The analysis and discussion of the book suggest that joint research and demonstration sites play an important role in bringing together and motivating actors with various disciplinary and institutional backgrounds. The existence of such facilities seems to create the continuity that is necessary for maintaining multi- and transdisciplinary activities. The analysis even hints that the very location of these sites may affect the scientific, social and cultural outcomes produced. The existence of especially off-campus sites also appear to facilitate processes where the city environment and its population become both objects of scientific study and subjects that provide feedback and inspiration regarding the orientation of academic activities. It would be intriguing to see such insights being better conceptualized. Further work could discuss the findings beyond research that has already adopted the engagement-perspective. An interesting stepping stone could be a paper by Trippi et al. (2013) that compares the views that the literature on entrepreneurial universities, innovation systems, new modes of knowledge creation (mode 1 versus mode 2) and engagement models hold in regard to the regional role of universities. Taking steps to this direction would support achieving the implicit but clear aim of the book, i.e., bringing the holistic civic university idea on par with the idea of economically motivated entrepreneurial university idea.

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