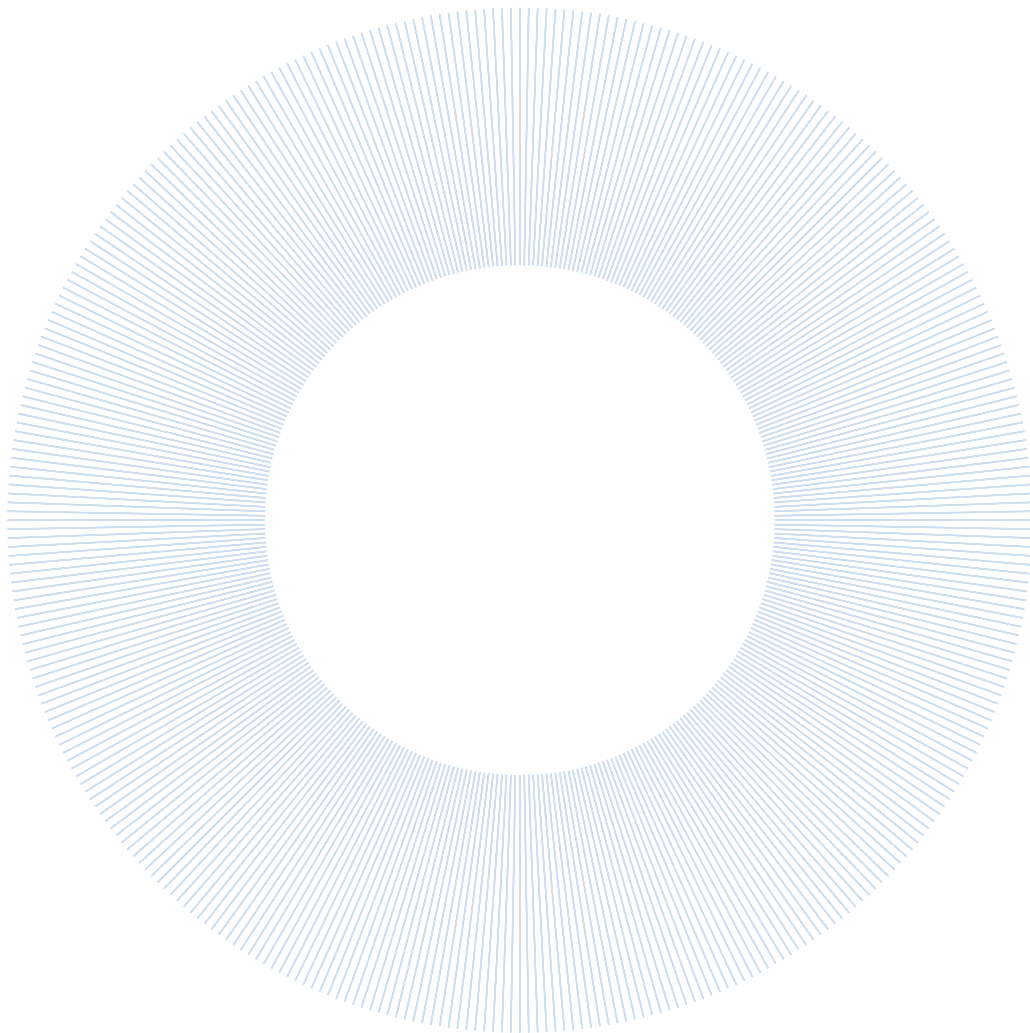


Evidence and Insight:
In Search of the Distinctiveness
of the University as a Site of
Knowledge Production



Tim May

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Insights captures the ideas and work-in-progress of the Fellows of the Institute of Advanced Study at Durham University. Up to twenty distinguished and ‘fast-track’ Fellows reside at the IAS in any academic year. They are world-class scholars who come to Durham to participate in a variety of events around a core inter-disciplinary theme, which changes from year to year. Each theme inspires a new series of *Insights*, and these are listed in the inside back cover of each issue. These short papers take the form of thought experiments, summaries of research findings, theoretical statements, original reviews, and occasionally more fully worked treatises. Every fellow who visits the IAS is asked to write for this series. The Directors of the IAS – Veronica Strang, Rob Barton, Nicholas Saul and Chris Greenwell – also invite submissions from others involved in the themes, events and activities of the IAS. *Insights* is edited for the IAS by Nicholas Saul. Previous editors of *Insights* were Professor Susan Smith (2006–2009), Professor Michael O’Neill (2009–2012) and Professor Barbara Graziosi (2012–2015).

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EVIDENCE AND INSIGHT: IN SEARCH OF THE DISTINCTIVENESS OF THE UNIVERSITY AS A SITE OF KNOWLEDGE PRODUCTION

There is a gamble taking place with the future of universities and tackling the issue of what makes these institutions distinctive as a site of knowledge production is core to their future prosperity. It is surprising, however, how little attention is given to this issue. The university is being forged in the name of particular interests and in the process frustrated ambitions often align to unrealisable expectations and, from there, the path to cynical resignation is open. Tackling this is not for the university alone. Those outside the confines of research communities and who are frequently marginalised from public consideration need to be more involved: not in the tokenism that often informs participation but in deliberations and decisions that mobilise knowledge. This is not easy given the power imbalances that exist, but it is also where imaginative possibilities can be produced. This article examines these changes over time and concludes with a call for 'active intermediation' in knowledge production, not as an exception but an institutionally embedded set of practices with implications not only for the university but for what constitutes a successful university career.

Introduction

While attending the Institute of Advanced Study in Spring Term 2016, I used the opportunity to work on two books. The first was an examination of reflexivity and its relation to society and social scientific knowledge and the second was an interdisciplinary, comparative study of the dynamics between the knowledge economy, urban development and universities (May and Perry, 2017, 2018). In the acknowledgements to these books my co-author and I referred to the experiences that informed these publications, which comprised work for different organisations – private, public and voluntary – over a period of 15 years. These clients included universities who were concerned to extend their socio-economic engagement practices with their localities. As social science researchers, employed by a university, we were required to meet a target income each year to cover salaries, office rental and associated costs.

Those experiences led to particular reflections. For the purpose of this article, these focus on academic excellence, mediated through the cultures in universities, processes of peer review, the Research Excellence Framework and the relevance of our work as judged by varying stakeholders. In running a research centre underpinned by these dynamics, our attention was turned to relations between the authority of the knowledge we generated and its applicability to those who funded our work. Our investigations meant moving into territories in which unease was a frequent visitor. This was not helped by the metrics deployed to capture these dynamics short-circuiting understanding through a selectivity that does little to generate learning about the relations between the content of knowledge and the contexts of its interpretation (May with Perry, 2011).

The issues we encountered in this journey are the subjects of this article. First, it provides an overview of changing expectations on the role of the university in society against the backdrop of socio-economic transformations. Second, I consider what this means for knowledge production and the distinctiveness of the knowledge in these institutions. I then move on to consider one way in which a university might meet contemporary challenges and what that means for

ensuring it remains a distinctive site of knowledge production as compared to other types of organisation who would regard their purpose as being similar. If it does not possess such a legitimate identity, its viability is placed in question. My observations are based on the UK in respect to research activity, but I also draw upon international, comparative insights to illustrate similarities and differences.

The Shifting Sands of Institutional Position

The university has been held to be a site of knowledge production and transmission that occupies a place of relative autonomy from society. Its distinctiveness lay in a distance to constitute explanation. Although some accounts are informed by a nostalgic yearning for a bygone era of autonomy, history stands as a corrective to such a view. The idea of the 'ivory tower' may be seen as a phase in its development (Barnett, 2000). In the UK and German universities we find long-established relations between engineering departments and laboratories (Pickstone, 2000) and in the United States land-grant universities were set up to meet local needs, whilst the Ivy League has long associations with industry (Newfield, 2003). Despite such associations, these institutions acted as buffers from external pressures through a contract which underpinned funding, manifest in the belief that academics can manage their own affairs (Guston, 2000). Knowledge was produced based on a trust that derived from a position within a particular organisation. From this point of view, a combination of a knowledge-based disposition and distance constituted the distinctiveness of the university as a site of knowledge production.

In terms of the institutional boundaries affording this relationship, we see fluctuations over time in the direction of influence between research and broader social developments; thereby providing for a two-way relation in which ideas and practices shape each other (Burke, 2000). For instance, in the United States: 'The research university has always had enormous experience with business. It has had nearly a century and a half of practice pursuing truth and personal development in the context of economic development. Even in instrumentalist terms, the university was the place where knowledge would determine the shape of economics, and not the other way round' (Newfield, 2003, p. 223). Links between the state and industry became stronger after 1945, with applied research conducted in specialist state research institutions (Gummett, 1991). However, in general, the focus of the university remained on 'blue skies' research as part of a phase of development in which knowledge was regarded as a 'motor of progress' (Ruivo, 1994).

As we enter the 1970s we find a questioning of the capability of scientific research, conducted in universities, to provide social and economic benefits. The focus moves to how knowledge can be directly applied to 'solve' national problems mediated through a greater emphasis on the idea of 'relevance'. Then, by the 1980s, a new paradigm arises in which science is viewed as a 'strategic opportunity' accompanied by a focus on growth, foresight, university-industry partnerships and links between science and innovation (Ruivo, 1994). Whilst relevance is interpretatively elastic, we see the function of the university moving to being a 'service' to the economy. In this climate European universities are informed that they can no longer harbour notions of a medieval conception of their role and should adopt more 'business-like' attitudes. Clear policy steers to access 'third stream funding' occur with an emphasis on pursuing 'enterprising activities' (Marginson and Considine, 2000).

By 2010, 60 per cent of the world's research and development spending was estimated to come from industry (Resnik, 2010). Eurostat, the statistical office of the European Union, estimated this at 64 per cent in 2014. To provide stimulus for the EU's competitiveness, an increase to

3 per cent of GDP by 2020 for research and development (R&D) was one of the five headline targets for the EU's 2020 strategy (Eurostat, 2015, p. 1). With €238 billion spent on research and development in 2014, expectations of knowledge to deliver economic benefits were high. At the time of writing, it is not surprising that Brexit negotiations leave such levels of investment in question. In the meantime, interests lobby for the continuation of funding in order that the UK does not lag behind in terms of its global competitiveness.

The contract that enabled boundaries between universities, expectations of knowledge and powerful interests is more porous. Universities, reliant upon public funding, have less immunity to pressures for change and reform and exist in increasing climates of competition to secure resources. They are now expected to provide a range of benefits, outputs and 'deliverables' in teaching, outreach and exploitation of knowledge and products. To remain distinctive they have to do so according to the same educational and research standards as before, yet within quicker time frames for the purpose of demonstrating relevance to external demands. Attention focuses on the need to increase business expenditure on R&D and exploit private scientific research. In this space the university becomes both a tool and target for public policy; a transformative agent to accelerate realisation of the promise of knowledge for economic benefit, as well as an economic actor in its own right. As a result, their contributions to society are framed in particular ways. As the UK Russell Group of Universities put it from studies of impact, they can: 'show that research underpinning the case studies has resulted in at least £21 billion of wider economic benefits – 100 times the initial investment' (Russell Group, 2015, p. 4).

Reforms can be instigated from the 'bottom-up', but in the current climate they tend to be driven by government in terms of the pressures of globalised competition. If the knowledge they produce is trusted according to the previously noted social contract, they are no longer trusted to reform themselves in ways that are deemed necessary to extract economic benefit. Extraction of certain forms of value is based on greater intervention into university life and this poses key challenges for institutional structures, organisational cultures and judgements of worth. Spaces of increased uncertainty mix with desires for organisational control manifest in metrics. Indicators of excellence include international league tables and universities are judged by business performance manifest in regulatory systems and performance indicators, not by reference to public service. So we see a clear shift from a public service ethos based upon professional judgement, to an entrepreneurial orientation with measures deploying an increasing array of indicators of research excellence and user relevance.

Aspirations and expectations are reorientated. The rhetoric of the 'entrepreneurial' or 'enterprise' university sees claims concerning the importance of partnerships with 'stakeholders'. A comparative study of European universities identified five elements underpinning this trend: a strengthened steering core; expanded developmental periphery; diversified funding base; stimulated academic heartland and an integrated entrepreneurial culture (Clark, 1998). Contributions to an International Management in Higher Education (IMHE) conference in 2000 spoke of convergence and divergence in response to external engagements, but with an underlying direction towards the 'entrepreneurial/innovative university' (Davies, 2001). Neoliberal, market-oriented practices are found in university life and apparent in a focus on managerial efficiency, cost effectiveness, employability, benchmarking, league tables and audit accountability; all of which take place within a 'new managerialism' (Collini, 2017; May and Perry, 2006; Pels, 2003; Strathern, 2000). Culturally, a paternalistic proceduralism is now argued to characterise these institutions where we find academic freedom coming second to other concerns (Furedi, 2017). In terms of funding, these institutions are now part of an austerity politics which is not seen as 'something optional or avoidable, but as something imposed' (Pollitt, 2016, p. 135).

The Organisation of Knowledge Production

These institutional reforms are embedded in wider processes. The aim is to produce a 'world-class' competitive higher education system that will succeed in a global knowledge market where diversification, stratification and hierarchy all feature – 'moving forward'. In the United Arab Emirates (UAE), the number of licensed colleges and universities grew from five to fifty-eight between 1997 and 2008, with only three being government funded: 'The expansion in higher education opportunities was mainly driven by high economic growth in the UAE economy and the increase in investment made by the private sector in higher education institutions in the Gulf region in general' (Ahmed and Alfaki, 2016, p. 53). Whilst diversification challenges the idea of environmental forces simply structuring particular organisational outcomes, research on these processes between 2006 and 2016 concluded: 'In an environment where the alternative to convergence – which assures membership of "the club" – is isolation, the local works in symbiosis with the global and local adaptation and divergence become functional for convergence on the main global principles' (Caruana, 2016, p. 66).

The need to be competitive, cost-effective and respond to the market has the effect of turning the institutional gaze towards commercialising activities in research and teaching. In the context of constraints on public funding, universities have sought alternative support from private sector funds and a wider range of interests shape university education with student fees in the UK orientating the focus towards ranking in customer satisfaction surveys. Indeed, expanding student numbers may be a condition of increasing income streams to service institutional debt when the very limitation of intake has historically been assumed to be an indicator of quality. Research funding is explicitly linked to the production of 'socially robust' research with stakeholders and the idea of 'impact' (Bastow, Dunleavy and Tinkler, 2014) is more prominent in the allocation of funds for the 2021 Research Excellence Framework. Quality control has moved beyond the cognitive context of the epistemically less permeable boundaries of the earlier phase of 'Mode 1 science' (Nowotny, Scott and Gibbons, 2001).

Interpretations of these effects converge around concerns regarding the intensification of environmental pressures on the distinctiveness of institutional life (Radder, 2010). A process of re-engineering these organisations has occurred via: 'a directed process of market construction, each move designed to protect the elite and expose the majority. At the same time, the gamble involves running the risk of subprime degrees. Existing quality assurance, which has its faults, is supplanted by "value for money", a "risk-based" system, and a regulator tasked with promoting competition. Caveat emptor!' (McGettigan, 2013, p. 185). The rise of the 'market-university' is viewed as a loss in quality, autonomy and distinctiveness. Subject to a process of 'McDonaldisation', it is seen as a dehumanising place to work (Ritzer, 2015). An emphasis upon the search for innovation implies a freedom and preparedness to take risks. That stands in direct tension with the narrow focus on efficiency, auditing requirements, user engagement and meeting identifiable outputs, as well as cost-centre budgeting that manifests itself in an organisational silo mentality.

Justifications for the salaries of strategic university managers, on the basis that they reflect the attributes found in the private sector, do not stand up to scrutiny in terms of the reasons for the changes that have occurred in the UK economy (Dorling, 2015; Meek, 2015; Sayer, 2015). In the meantime, stress and anxiety increase as academics are expected to do more, with less. Learning from experiences is met with an indifference that does seek to understand difference within what has been a general move from collegial to executive decision making (Currie, 2004). The results have been seen as justifications for cruelty (Parker, 2002) and even symptomatic

of 'psychotic' states (Sievers, 2008). Organisationally, politics tends to become sealed within sub-units that claim distinctiveness through what they achieve in terms of narrow measures, as opposed to how they do so as if a concentration on the organisational learning that derives from the latter would be reducible to peculiarities of the individuals who comprise them (May, 2006). Such techniques of organisational individualisation see staff being: 'subject to neoliberal competitions for merit through coercive systems of evaluation and their freedom of speech has been drastically curtailed. Thus neoliberalism supports a deeply political and authoritarian view of public higher education whilst claiming to banish "liberal" political indoctrination from universities' (Levin and Greenwood, 2016, p. 4).

The relations between the apparent exceptionality of an academic character who produces the content of cutting-edge research in isolation, as they do so in these changing contexts, mix with these tactics with the result that uneasy parallels emerge between managerialism and academic professionalism (May and Perry, 2013). Rather than examine the relations between context, content and consequence in knowledge production (May with Perry, 2011), we see an emphasis upon issues associated with, for example, heterogeneity, distributed expertise, user relevance, collaboration and the construction of knowledge by knowledge exchange units as if it were amenable to understanding through supply and demand. Knowledge, culture and creativity are directed and harnessed for innovation and economic ends within ever tighter time frames to ensure use and applicability.

Time and distance, combined with methodological rigour, are frequently invoked as the defining criteria for the university as a distinctive site of knowledge production. The former no longer accords with the experiences of academic staff and the slow movement has found its expression in calls to transform academic life (Berg and Seeber, 2016). What consultancy, high-tech company or R&D division of a transnational corporation would say that the work they produce is without methodological rigour? Therefore, do we seek distinctiveness in a combination of elements? Would those not include exhibiting care and support in collegial practices and providing a culture that learns not just from success but also failure and so shuns the often farcical features of best practice? Whilst the boundaries are not simply being torn down, they are being dismantled in the name of a promise of knowledge whose effects are reproduced in elitist conceptions of socio-economic development (May and Perry, 2018).

The work that goes into avoiding general consideration of the question of distinctiveness is considerable. Managers resort to narrow constitutions of environmental necessity. If that culture continues, these institutions are just reflections of dominant social interests and should cease all talk of distinctiveness in terms of distance and proximity, social mobility, access, fairness and the rhetoric that surrounds recruitment practices. Nor is that assisted by those for whom such necessities are used as weapons against those who resist changes because they speak on behalf of an apparently unproblematic economic reality. With that wholehearted embrace come disparaging glances at those who do not understand the supposed self-evidence of environmental determinants. In wholesale translation we see higher education institutions becoming subjected to modes of organisational control that lose connection with purpose, as if that were an indulgence, through a preoccupation with process.

What results is a separation between the production of knowledge and its contexts through means to determine the 'how' of organisational practice via organisational audit. The overall result is that the 'why' and 'how' of knowledge are subsumed within the narrow confines of the measurability of 'what': external income generation, citation indexes, league tables and publications in suitable international outlets. We see a clash in knowledge practices in universities leading to displacement, embrace, calculated adjustments, along with withdrawal

and varying forms of resistance. Whenever someone reaches for self-evidence and refuses to ask questions, another question arises: if strategic management of universities is no more than the translation of necessity, what exactly is the justification for the salaries they receive? None of this is assisted by the unfortunate parallels that exist between managerialism and academic professionalism in which, as suggested earlier, the play of individual exception feeds a pervasive individualism (May and Perry, 2013; May with Perry, 2011). The casualty is an institution the distinctiveness of which lies in the promotion of learning.

Universities tend to be top-down, hierarchically siloed institutions, in which disciplines are divided through faculties, colleges, schools and research groups. They are subject to cost-centre budgeting that does little to promote imaginative collaborations across disciplines and between other organisations but effects control that many embrace. Units may be set up outside normal structures to be the exception according to aspirations to excellence, but what is learnt from such ventures tends to be a secondary consideration, and they are often subject to mistrust and misunderstanding; being exceptions, moreover, they are vulnerable to managerial whim and, ultimately, institutional absorption. To embark on organisational learning brings content and context together, which questions the idea that exceptional individuals will flourish despite, not because of, the institutions in which they operate. We can see this process in action when so-called 'stellar' academics are beamed into institutions without any embedding of the content of their work with cultural contexts, as if the idea of their presence were sufficient for transformational effects. They add to this separation by being 'in' but not 'of' the organisation through an attribution of value to their work. Relational understanding, essential to understanding ourselves through and with others (Bauman and May, forthcoming), evaporates.

Demands for flexibility, adaptability and innovation in the current climate sit alongside those of standardisation. Engagement between disciplines, institutions and the groups outside the university are directly informed by structural and bureaucratic lines of accountability and management. Vertical and horizontal deadlocks often emerge that limit the capacity for new practices to arise, across and out of institutions, whilst preserving their sense of purpose and confidence in a changing world. Disparate and conflicting strategies exist and work to internalise ambiguities. It is perfectly possible for academics to receive communications from central management concerning the importance of engagement and impact, whilst also being urged to obtain research funds and target particular journals with high impact values in ever more rapid time frames in order to meet the next round of evaluation exercises. Organisational learning is left in the wake and communications become disjointed. This is not helped by universities collecting enormous amounts of information that has no bearing upon the capacity for creating intelligence concerning the relations between cultures of knowledge production, expectations of knowledge in terms of action, engagement with different groups and organisational cultures and structures.

Meeting Challenges: In Search of Distinctiveness through Active Intermediation

Another path is open to us. It is one where we can systematically create experimental spaces to investigate the relations between expectations, knowledge and practice in systematic collaborations with groups outside the university. Individual examples of this exist through the imaginative adaptation of researchers, but they need to be more systematic and valued in the university as a whole. There are differences within and between contexts and understanding those enables an explanation of variation in content, context and knowledge. Influencing

factors that inform the possibility of creating such spaces include: the capability to keep the justification *for* research and the application *of* research in abeyance; the political economy of institutional funding; the cultural contexts of knowledge production; the attributed value afforded to research by different audiences and ‘users’; the operating norms for what counts as good work and the existence of intermediaries, both inside and outside the university, who work to deploy knowledge with implications for the production-transmission-reception-application process.

In thinking about the creation of these spaces we have seen a proliferation of intermediary organisations involved in knowledge transfer and exchange activities in and around universities. Their rationale is given by the increasing drive for economic development driven by investments and patents in science and technology. All too frequently, relations between knowledge and action are represented as those between supply and demand in a characterisation that is minimally problematic and maximally destructive of the distinctiveness of the university and the role that knowledge plays in society. A product-based mentality has its place, but we need to focus on processes in which knowledge and action come together beyond a techno-economic myopia that is driven by the promise of solutions to problems which are not even yet identified! What might an alternative response look like? It is one which takes the idea of knowledge arenas, seeks to avoid the pitfalls of science park innovations and take seriously, in practice, what we have termed the ‘devilish dichotomies’ that inform knowledge production, transmission and reception (see May, 2011; May and Perry, 2011, 2016; Perry and May, 2010).

Increasing complexity, uncertainty and dialogue between science and society has resulted in shifting boundaries between the public and science, but also in intellectual property and public and private forms of knowledge (Harvey and McMeekin, 2007; Dreyfuss, Zimmerman and First, 2001). As social and technological problems have become larger, so the search for certainty has become more challenging. In efforts to manage this complexity, boundaries have been reconstituted to deal with and sometimes avoid an encounter with the issues that arise between knowledge and action. Allusion to the self-evidence of knowledge to relieve oneself of any interpretative responsibility towards others who are placed in differing positions is not uncommon. Models of reality slip into being the realities of models leaving what is known, how it is known and what might need to be done as a result and according to what capabilities, on the side lines. These gaps are filled with technology, methods and models claiming to be solutions to problems. The work of listening and learning is left to one side and becomes a problem of execution in practice, rather than the original conception of the issue – as if the two could be easily separated. It is a common issue that is shared across communities of practice and is also a gap in which much money is being made by those who peddle their panaceas.

We are living in times where the relations between credibility and applicability, excellence and relevance and belief and knowledge are under strain. The reasons cannot be readily dismissed by those encased in privileged positions that come from the insulation afforded by institutional boundaries, nor can the university be an echo chamber of self-evident realities that serve the interests of elites. The possession of knowledge looks very insufficient measured against the reality of the experience of dispossession in society. Particular forms of knowledge have been harnessed by powerful interests (Mirowski, 2014). Multi and transnational corporations know the university is still seen as a legitimate site of knowledge-producing activity. Thus, partnerships abound and are celebrated as demonstrations of vibrancy and relevance. Knowledge about the economy slips into being knowledge for the economy. At the same time, R&D capacity is at a premium in small and medium enterprises, the public and voluntary sectors. Information is big business with tech giants having ‘weapons of math destruction’ at their disposal (O’Neil, 2016). How our lives are being forged is increasingly at odds with how we might choose to

live (Jasanoff, 2004). The university is part of these transformations. Yet it has the potential to become a third space of learning, synthesis and exchange of knowledge between different groups; including those whose voices are often excluded, which leads to a disjuncture between publicly available narratives for understanding and conditions of life (Couldry, 2010).

Here we can draw upon increasing interest in 'deliberative', 'safer' and 'third spaces' linked to the idea of knowledge as commons (Comunian and Gilmore, 2015; Hess and Ostrom, 2007; May and Perry, 2018; Oldenburg, 2000). This does not presume a single model that can be replicated across contexts, but a commitment to ways of working that requires time to build trust. Much has been written about the 'endogenous imperative' for new modes of knowledge production, in which the interesting areas of research are at the intersections of disciplines (Gibbons et al., 1994) and an 'exogenous imperative' in which 'wicked issues', such as urban sustainability, require a different approach to knowledge production (Polk, 2015). To tackle these issues, inclusion and participation should be recognised as core to practice. It is important to build not only on the specialised knowledge of a few experts but also on the experience and knowledge of communities. That requires an acknowledgement that this is not an impediment to knowledge and learning, but a precondition. A movement away from an irresponsible politics of possibility for a few to a more dialogic approach is informed by this process. By seeking to constitute organisational spaces to create collaborative practices in universities, no claim is made that they represent solutions to pre-existing problems, or that they are conducted without issues arising in terms of power, expectation and a capacity and preparedness to act in terms of their outcomes.

Such a process draws upon recognition that we are situated in ways that give rise to certain values and world views, but there is a need to create *mediated spheres* that provide the grounds for understanding in a dynamic between existence and scientific accounts (May and Perry, 2017). The emphasis is upon generating intelligibility (Shotter, 1993). The critical task for those undertaking this work is that of boundary-spanning and sense-making between different realms: science and society, justification and application, epistemic communities and communities of practice and endogenous and referential reflexivity (May with Perry, 2011). It means working in and across different contexts. Mediation is an active task. Active intermediation is not a model to be implemented, but a set of practices in the interstitial spaces between research and other communities to generate learning. As such, it represents the active and constant effort of engaged scientific research that involves recognising and working at the boundaries that inform the content of knowledges and their potential applicability to contexts.

To engage with this it is not enough to critique at a distance. It means listening, learning and exchanging. Not through the prevalent forms of knowledge exchange, but in practices conducted by researchers themselves who wish to and are able to do this work. This is not another expectation with which to hold up a mirror to the inadequacies of academics; it is not something for everyone. As it is irresponsible to preach interdisciplinary to early career researchers who may be judged by disciplines that do not recognise such activity, so it is necessary to re-think aspects of the academic career. Are we all really producing new knowledge? Synthesising existing knowledges across disciplines according to understanding need through dialogue is a craft. It needs to be rewarded. This flies in the face of a landscape where innovation is so often the triumph of forgetting over memory and academics are judged according to how many stars they can achieve in a hierarchy of journal lists. History is being eradicated at the altar of entrepreneurialism and knowledge is being wrenched from those who are dispossessed and mobilised in the name of particular images that benefit the few, not the many (May and Perry, 2018). Why not celebrate a distinctive modesty through sustained efforts that come through

dialogue and collaboration and recognise that not only as a valuable part of university life, but what they stand for in society?

Arenas of collaborative knowledge generation and learning can be set up in universities at cross-institutional levels as experiments in which research staff from different disciplines come together to work on common issues. Their careers cannot be prejudiced by this and terms of secondment should be of sufficient duration to develop the relations and trust required to underpin practices with external parties. Coming together from different disciplines in this space with those from the public and voluntary sectors, local communities and small and medium business enterprises, is a challenge to the short-termism that informs the evaluation of knowledge and to those who readily denigrate views according to their absence of 'realism'. At present, these spaces of collaboration are filled with expectations mediated in different ways: for example, knowledge should be available to policy-makers in shorter time frames in easily digestible nuggets of insight. Yet policy-makers will tell you that they are time poor and learning is at a premium when so many are losing their livelihoods under conditions of austerity. It is only a question of time before private sector consultants fill the gap left by this inability to learn through experience and remembering and claim innovative practice as a result.

Within universities, arenas of active intermediation will assist in addressing issues associated with interdisciplinary leadership. As a set of practices it will challenge the impact and engagement agendas which are narrowly constituted and take them into more systematic and general settings through collaborative working and even joint setting of research agendas. It provides a space to generate understanding and learning about knowledge and its role in society and will challenge institutional expectations that weigh upon parties; that also means academics who judge their success based upon narrow criteria. It should not, however, become another means to denigrate, but a recognition of different divisions of labour aimed towards a common end. After all, if knowledge is to benefit citizens more directly, the current situation is unhelpful and even destructive. If engagement and impact are to mean anything, they require bridge-building across the institution of the university in order to create spaces of possibility which demonstrate how it is still distinctive as a place of knowledge generation and learning.

Summary

In view of the elitist retrenchment in higher education that comes with the neoliberal gamble with universities (McGettigan, 2013), tackling the above issues is important for knowledge production and the future of the university. In these suggestions it is often easy to provoke reaction. After all: 'there are many intellectuals who call the world into question, but there are very few intellectuals who call the intellectual world into question' (Bourdieu, 2007, p. 23). The university is being reconfigured in the name of particular interests and in the process frustrated ambitions may align to unrealisable expectations and that can often lead to cynical resignation. These are not matters for the university alone. Those outside the confines of research communities and who are frequently marginalised from public consideration need to be more involved: not in the tokenism which often informs participation, but in deliberations and decisions that mobilise knowledge. This is not easy given the power imbalances that exist, but it is also where imaginative possibilities can be forged. It requires high degrees of effort from all those concerned and whose capabilities to act are variable. In effort, it is equal to the work that goes into constituting what has come to exist but remains hidden in presuppositions. It is time to move away from the frenetic efforts directed towards institutional reproduction in the name of narrow images of a future for the few, not the many.

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No.	Author	Title	Series
2008 Volume 1			
1	Boris Wiseman	Lévi-Strauss, Caduveo Body Painting and the Readymade: Thinking Borderlines	General
2	John Hedley Brooke	Can Scientific Discovery be a Religious Experience?	Darwin's Legacy
3	Bryan R. Cullen	Rapid and Ongoing Darwinian Selection of the Human Genome	Darwin's Legacy
4	Penelope Deutscher	Women, Animality, Immunity – and the Slave of the Slave	Darwin's Legacy
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9	Willard Bohn	Visual Poetry in France after Apollinaire	Modelling
10	Robert A. Skipper Jr	R. A. Fisher and the Origins of Random Drift	Darwin's Legacy
11	Nancy Cartwright	Models: Parables v Fables	Modelling
12	Atholl Anderson	Problems of the 'Traditionalist' Model of Long-Distance Polynesian Voyaging	Modelling
2009 Volume 2			
1	Robert A. Walker	Where Species Begin: Structure, Organization and Stability in Biological Membranes and Model Membrane Systems	Darwin's Legacy
2	Michael Pryke	'What is Going On?' Seeking Visual Cues Amongst the Flows of Global Finance	Modelling
3	Ronaldo I. Borja	Landslides and Debris Flow Induced by Rainfall	Modelling
4	Roland Fletcher	Low-Density, Agrarian-Based Urbanism: A Comparative View	Modelling
5	Paul Ormerod	21st Century Economics	Modelling
6	Peter C. Matthews	Guiding the Engineering Process: Path of Least Resistance versus Creative Fiction	Modelling
7	Bernd Goebel	Anselm's Theory of Universals Reconsidered	Modelling
8	Roger Smith	Locating History in the Human Sciences	Being Human
9	Sonia Kruks	Why Do We Humans Seek Revenge and Should We?	Being Human
10	Mark Turner	Thinking With Feeling	Being Human
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12	Arun Saldanha	So What <i>Is</i> Race?	Being Human
13	Daniel Beunza and David Stark	Devices For Doubt: Models and Reflexivity in Merger Arbitrage	Modelling
14	Robert Hariman	Democratic Stupidity	Being Human
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2	Zoltán Kövecses	Metaphorical Creativity in Discourse	Modelling
3	Maxine Sheets-Johnstone	Strangers, Trust, and Religion: On the Vulnerability of Being Alive	Darwin's Legacy

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5	Eduardo Mendieta	Political Bestiary: On the Uses of Violence	Being Human
6	Charles Fernyhough	What is it Like to Be a Small Child?	Being Human
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8	Andy Baker	Water Colour: Processes Affecting Riverine Organic Carbon Concentration	Water
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Insights

Insights is edited by Nicholas Saul, IAS Director and Professor of German Literature and Intellectual History.

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