Chapter 5
The Relationship of Community Engagement With Universities' Core Missions

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5.1 Introduction to Part II

This part explores a central university–community engagement conundrum, namely its fit with universities' core missions, and how 'ideas' of engagement move through the institution. At the heart of this conundrum, we see a certain slipperiness around the concept of engagement. There are so many different mechanisms by which universities can engage, and many universities are already extensively engaged with outside partners, that this leads to an under-specification of the engagement idea. In Part II, we argue policies encouraging engagement can suffer from stimulating discrete adjuncts to existing activities rather than magnifying what already takes place within institutions. This part explores how engagement is embedded within universities' existing activities, using the classification developed in Chap. 1 (cf. Sect. 1.6).

Engagement raises risks for universities, and although university–community engagement might potentially create university benefits, those benefits must be clearly specified and their attendant risks explicated. There are very institution–specific requirements for engagement to be adopted and accepted by a university, not just pertaining to the benefits, real or potential, that engagement creates, but they have to be accepted within the wider university. In Part III, we argue that the concept of engagement is compatible with the idea of a contemporary university, but that a series of debates have framed the 'idea of engagement' in three mutually reinforcing ways, as contingent, low-status and peripheral. This also frames the way within which universities adjudge particular real engagement activities and affects how they become anchored within universities.

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Part II deals with understanding how—given university–community engagement's relatively low intrinsic and external status—particular institutions may embrace or otherwise undertake engagement. We do this to develop a sense of the boundary conditions necessary for anchoring community engagement within different kinds of universities. This part includes three empirical chapters with quite different perspectives; all essentially corroborate the point that good institutional intentions are not sufficient for successful university–community engagement.

The framing of university–community engagement within institutions means that even serious and principled attempts made by universities to engage with communities face pressures to compromise these ideals. The results can reinforce community engagement as institutionally peripheral, giving an appearance of opportunistic rather than principled institutional behaviour, and the raising generation of resistance to university engagement from communities who see their hopes and desires of engaging with universities compromised by their supposed partners. The three empirical chapters in this part tell, with varying degrees of optimism, the constraints that this places on engagement activity.

In Chap. 6, Lynne Humphrey explores how community engagement in one Scottish university was framed by a much wider set of policy pressures. Scotland is renowned for its emphasis on education as a public good, but has nevertheless followed similar trends to the rest of the United Kingdom in recent years with instrumentalisation and increased emphasis on commercialisation and the delivery of accredited courses rather than community learning. Exploring an activity which won an award for engaging with excluded communities, even external recognition was insufficient to allow the activity to fit with the wider university culture. Lynne's chapter concludes raising questions about university–community engagement's potential to achieve meaningful institutional change given universities' other drivers and pressures which work against the principles underlying effective university–community engagement.

In Chap. 7, Laura Saija offers her reflections on a set of engagement projects in which she has been intimately involved, the University of Catania engaging with the city of Librino. She argues that university–community engagement was an emergent feature shaped by institutional predispositions to engagement, a feeling that it fitted with the idea of the university, an imminent need in the new town of Librino, and the efforts involving a research project, LabPEAT, in which she played a role. The overwhelming message is the length of time taken for institutional change, and the sense of frustration this can breed, both within communities, but also with researchers trying to change localities. Laura emphasises the importance of socialised university–community learning as the basis for change, but also for the agency of the university in wanting to learn those lessons and improve its societal impacts.

Chapter 8 presents one university example, Salford University, in the North West of England, which has attempted to lead as an institution in stimulating engagement. The university's background was one in which local partners were important stakeholders for Salford. However, attempts to promote civic engagement had proven unsuccessful, and resistance was rising in the institution in response to core resources being devoted towards subsidising loss-making engagement. The university decided that a future as a successful civic university was dependent on profitable engagement,

and engagement becoming a core part of university employees' activities. The university created the Academic Enterprise unit to focus on a change effort and university-wide cultural shift. James Powell and Karl Dayson argue that effective engagement needs a confluence of strong leadership, institutional enthusiasm, autonomy and incentives to achieve the necessary change.

5.2 Introduction to the Chapter

This chapter seeks to highlight and make explicit some of the tensions and issues that arise in the course of these chapters, and to provide insights into how activities framed as peripheral, contingent and voluntary can become significant in the perspective of a particular institution. This chapter begins from the perspective that a university can be regarded as a set of groupings with different, and sometimes competing, interests. For community engagement to become a serious institutional interest, engagement must offer something to each grouping within the university. But the value is not an intrinsic property; it is shaped through institutional dialogues and discussions, and therefore effective engagement must be rooted in the development of a consensus that it is institutionally valuable.

Those institutional dialogues are shaped by the wider networks within which universities are situated. It is not enough for a single institutional leader to declare a commitment to engagement—that engagement idea must be plausible and implementable for a range of other actors. This chapter explores the dynamics of these institutional dialogues as a means of understanding university–community engagement. In order to understand this process of relevant engagement this chapter takes four steps.

Firstly, we provide a taxonomy of the kinds of university activities where engagement—in this case—defined broadly to cover all kinds of external activity as well as engagement specifically with excluded communities. Secondly, drawing on a framework developed by Ruiz Cortez in a Latin American context, modified by reflection on the European situation, we then argue that engagement intensity may vary from superficial public relations to engagement representing a critical perspective for rooting the university in the world. Thirdly, we explore how this diversity of activities and intensity can hang together in a single institution. We offer a study of how different university constituents told stories about engagement's importance as a means of reconciling tensions and contradictions in trying to hold diverse and diverge activities together within a single institution.

This suggests that engagement is anchored within universities in different ways, underpinned by activities in which different groupings within the university build shared engagement understanding. But at the same time, there are clearly barriers which universities face in engaging with excluded communities (Table 5.1), just as excluded communities face barriers (Table 1.4) in engaging with universities (cf. Sect. 1.5). The conclusions deal with the conceptual and practical implications of this idea that engagement is an emergent outcome which must continually be reaffirmed in its institutional setting.

Table 5.1 Barrier universities face in engaging with communities. (Source: after OECD 2007; Perry and Wiewel 2005)

Type of barrier	Barrier typically faced by university in engaging with socially excluded community
Management choices	Community engagement not required by core university governance documents, statutes, social compacts
	Absence of institutional strategy for community engagement that drives institutional change within HEI
	Absence of office/planning organ promoting community engagement at high level in HEI
	Community engagement as part of senior management responsibility too broad to effectively be fulfilled
Financial incentives	Lack of dedicated funding stream for community engagement by universities
	Incentives for universities to attract students from deprived communities then help them find employment elsewhere
	Absence of core funding mechanisms to finance specific activities for working with deprived communities
	Other government funders of universities do not demand universities engage – health, regeneration, culture …
Skills for engagement	Lack of rewarding of staff by HEIs for community engagement in terms of career development and promotion
	Community engagement seen centrally as something peripheral, optional extra, for hobbyists and enthusiasts
	Tendency to do 'research on a community' not 'work in partnership with a community'
	University lacks subject or disciplinary base with skills easily absorbed by communities such as social policy …
Fit with regional needs	University lacks physical proximity or adjacency to the communities that could benefit from their skills base
	The university lacks "roots" in particular communities so these communities voices not heard by the university
	The absence of an articulate and demanding community who can help the university to do things
	The university 'problematises' the community, as something that resists estate development or intimidates students
Staff orientation	Third parties (RDAs, councils) divert university impact into other things such as employability training
	Communities engaged with as consultancy, and funders of that work lie elsewhere, so community not central
	Staff more focused on building global contact network than local connections
	Excluded communities not seen part of the "natural university community", so avoided or ignored by university
Student direction	Town/gown tensions keep students out of the communities which could potentially benefit from their presence
	Creation of student enclaves means local students do not have a demonstration effect to encourage community into HEI
	Difficulty of rewarding community engagement by students in degree in terms of quality assurance demands
	Squaring engagement training in disciplines with the demands of accrediters and professional bodies e.g. RTPI
	Orientation of community career routes as being professionalised, so focus on professional bodies not communities

5.3 Communities as Significant to Universities

The reality of contemporary universities is of facing multiple pressures from a range of stakeholders, and choosing which pressures to address by identifying which is the most urgent, as either the greatest threat or the most secure route to institutional survival (Jongbloed et al. 2007). Engagement with excluded communities can only therefore be of strategic interest to the university when it is seen as being responding to an urgent pressure, or at its most extreme, a crisis. Webber (2005) tells an interesting story of the rise of community engagement in the (private) University of Chicago. The University of Chicago was located for historical reasons on the lower south side of Chicago, in the Woodlawn community. In the late 1950s and early 1960s, this city district faced a shift in its resident population, from a primarily settled owner–occupier population to a more transient, landlord–renter market. There was also an ethnic population shift, with an increasing proportion of African–American residents, something regarded as highly negative. This posed a significant problem for the university, because of its potential to reduce its attractiveness as a place for students and academics. From this perception of a sense of crisis, the university found itself drawn into community engagement.

This engagement did not arise out of a philanthropic wish of the university to better the lives of its near neighbours, but a sense that ghettoization in the city blocks around the university campus was making the institution less attractive to staff and students. Even then, the university's original idea was not to work with the community to improve the situation, but rather to try to redevelop the campus, gentrify the surrounding area and displace the problem communities. The effect was to stimulate a reaction and a struggle from the community, which mobilised into the Temporary Woodlawn Organisation (TWO) to resist university gentrification and campus development plans, Webber noted:

> the Temporary Woodlawn Organisation pioneered many of what would become the most effective community organising techniques of the 1960s: rent strikes, picketing of overcharging retail merchants and overcrowded public schools and sit-ins at prominent corporate offices. ... In Woodlawn ... the university did not have a base of community support; it was seen as an invading force and symbol of institutional dominance. (p. 73)

This community mobilisation forced the university to abandon its plan to acquire residential property in Woodlawn for redevelopment; that activism also led the university to later support two community housing projects and 'a Woodlawn experimental public school district was later developed jointly by Woodlawn community leadership and the university' (p. 73). It was only when the university was directly under community attack that it began supporting activities belonging to the classic university–community engagement canon, including the development of improved housing and schools services. But the most interesting lesson from Webber is that the University of Chicago only engaged when it had no other choices—in order to redevelop its campus and thrive as an institution, it had to engage with its socially excluded neighbours.

Our argument in this chapter is not that crisis or extreme situations are necessary for effective community engagement, but that engagement will only thrive when it 'fits' in some ways with universities' existing core activities. This means that there are two dimensions defining university engagement, firstly the kinds of activities that universities deem as core (cf. Sect. 1.6.1) and then secondly, how well a culture of engagement allows engagement to fit with these activities. This latter variable can be further subdivided into how far these activities join up to create a sense of value for engagement and how far these activities are embedded within universities' core activities, processes and structures. To do this, we explore a framework proposed by Ruiz Bravo which tries to establish embeddedness as a series of levels, from minimal to central.

5.4   Levels or Modes of Engagement by Universities

Ruiz Bravo's (1992) model based the significance of university engagement activities on the extent to which they become an 'institutional guiding principle' for other activities. Ruiz Bravo (1992) classifies universities' engagement significance to core activities based on commonalities of functionalism, scope and commitment to engagement, each mode of governance representing a qualitative improvement on the preceding level. These levels correspond to the extent to which engagement can be said to represent a guiding principle for other activities, from one end of the spectrum being completely detached from the university, to the other representing the philosophical foundation of the university. At its most basic, a university providing information about itself to community stakeholders has an almost negligible impact on the university itself and were that activity to cease, then the change would be invisible to the university. At its most significant, where engagement provides a means of rooting the university in its host society, the termination of that engagement would completely change the nature of the institution:

1. Providing information.
2. Public relations.
3. Dissemination of academic findings.
4. University as a cultural influence.
5. Critical engagement.

Further detail on these five sophistication levels for university engagement is given in Table 5.2. This classification is additive, so that outcomes and activities at higher levels include those already taking place at the lower levels. A university engaging through a 'public relations' mode will provide information as well as involve itself in social forums in an informal way. Progression between the classes involves a double effort. Firstly is developing capacities which deliver new kinds of activities and outcome and secondly is creating a discourse of the value of engagement that sees those values being accepted as legitimate for the university.

Our own contribution is in arguing that just as universities may combine different conceptually distinct activities in a single engagement process, so different groups

Table 5.2 A developmental model of modes of university/society engagement with external communities. (Source: Ruiz Bravo (1992) (translation: P. L. Younger))

Mode of engagement	Objective of engagement	Characteristics of relations	University aim	Scope of societal response	Typical examples
1. Providing information	Informing society of university's plans, projects, opportunities and problems	Indirect: general public awareness raising	Providing a positive image for HE in society, and being open about activities	"The university exists and is socially important"	News bulletins, press releases, commentaries, media announcements
2. Public relations	Providing information; developing community rapport; shared events	Direct university presence, but temporary and topic specific	Achieve acceptance of university as active social partner (more activity…)	"The university is a present, active community participant"	University representatives in cultural and arts groups; informal discussions
3. Dissemination of academic findings	Dissemination of university knowledge base in teaching & research	Direct university participation in societal debates and discussions	Shape public opinion, build and strengthen a critical learning society	Reflection on university position, then acceptance, rejection, critique	Conferences, round-tables, congresses, symposia, seminars, exhibitions
4. University as a cultural influence	Improve academic thinking & discussions with critical societal perspectives	Direct, permanent social presence as partner; reactive to community demands	Promote reflexive attitudes in community and desire to evolve	New demands on university from social partners; new forms of action	Capacity-building courses, technical assistance, advisory services, free chair
5. Critical engagement	Enriching societal development fed back into university practices	Joint continuous, planned university/community interaction & governance	Forming a transformatory societal coalition based on reflective principles	Active participation in developing activities and driving change	Participatory social change in social/economic/environmental fields

within the university may have distinctive reasons for accepting or rejecting community engagement. Here, we agree with Callon (1999) when he notes that different kinds of engagement sophistication make sense for different kinds of disciplinary and institutional orientation.

> It is difficult to imagine, for example, how particle physics could submit to [community involvement] when, in order to succeed, it had to cut itself off from the public and work in the secrecy of its laboratories, behind huge esoteric equipment. On the other hand, the organisation and production of knowledge on problems concerning the environment, health or food safety could easily fit into [democratic oversight or community involvement] and the hybrid forums they organise. (Callon 1999, pp. 93–94)

Universities, as inter alia Baumunt (1997) reminds us, represent diverse communities of academics with different disciplinary orientations, epistemologies, ontologies, politics and value systems with diverse orientations towards engagement's value and validity. In our framework, we explain the marginalisation of engagement practices within a university as the dominance of validation perspectives which regard—for reasons that may be entirely intrinsically valid and internally logical—engagement as being something superficial, over perspectives which would accept 'deeper' engagement.

5.5   Community Engagement Within one Institution

The validation of competing university engagement perspectives is not always resolved through a 'winner-takes-all' situation: The persistence of contact-time intensive studies in medicine and engineering in parallel with much lighter touch studies in the humanities shows that university curriculum boards can be flexible and accept multiple manifestations of what makes a course valid. More generally, Barnett (2003) inter alia reminds us that the institution of university has evolved fuzzy macro-governance processes in order to hold these sometimes competing rationalities and activities together (Barnett 2003). The complex nature of universities means that their internal groupings are loosely coupled, with inter-linkages and inter-dependencies not always immediately evident (Greenwood 2007).

Universities could therefore have different internal coalitions who validate and value engagement in very different ways. Whilst previous studies have tended to regard engagement as either a standalone activity or a strategic university priority, this either makes engagement look 'small' and marginal, or on placing the agency for change exclusively with institutional leaders. From this novel perspective, community engagement depends less on being a critical institutional mission, rather that there are enough people in the institution that regard community engagement as being a valid university mission. What studies of engagement and the third mission have yet to seriously consider is this negotiation and compromise process, where, to stereotype hideously, Nobel-prize winning physicists can continue in glorious, theoretical isolation, whilst engaged sociologists can begin from interesting practical problems, and both agree to respect the value and validity of the others' work.

The corollary is that an excellent engaged university need not be an institution where everyone is forced to engage at any cost, but those who valued it were supported, and their efforts were strategically exploited. This recasts engagement's marginalisation as part of a political negotiation process within universities where a fear of undermining research undermines engagement (cf. Sect. 1.4.1). We see these indirect marginalisation processes evident in the following three chapters. Lynne Humphrey explains how concerns over funding led to the marginalisation of an award-winning engagement project. Laura Saija notes how the university's unwillingness to relinquish its position as an institutional expert undercut attempts to drive community improvement. James Powell and Karl Drayson have a slightly more positive story of a highly supportive institution, but at the same time highlight the reality of sceptical colleagues resistant to the value of university–community partnerships.

Our heuristic above of the tension between the disengaged Nobel prize winner and the engaged social scientist is something of a parody which is clearly unrepresentative. In order to gain a better insight into the ways in which universities discuss their engagement activities, we explore how the different constituencies within universities validate and understand what matters to them about engagement, as a precursor for understanding the kinds of conditions around which consensus may emerge. To do this, we use a study of universities in three UK regions to ask what different constituencies exist around engagement and how do they attempt to construct a compromise around appropriate forms of engagement.

5.6 Six Stories of University–Community Engagement

To explore the extent of commitment to engagement, we explored the ways in which university staff create narratives around community engagement. We report findings from the Economic and Social Research Council-funded research project 'Universities and community engagement'. As part of this project, we went to all of 33 universities located in three UK regions, the North East, the North West and Scotland, and undertook interviews with over 100 staff. At each institution, we interviewed a selection of typically two to four internal stakeholders to attempt to understand how they defined engagement as a mission for their institution. The interviews for this research were undertaken in the first half of 2008, and the material provided dates from that period. To understand the dynamic of the negotiation of the meaning of engagement within universities, we explored the justifications and validations which interviewees offered for undertaking engagement, the conditions under which engagement would be validated from their perspective. We also attempted to understand where and by whom these stories were told, and how these stories related to wider university structures.

Our research project was rooted in a community of practice methodology, in which exploring story-telling and narratives provided one means of understanding those communities—these narratives define group boundaries, what is important to the group, collective group learning, and the telling of those stories represents a community activity in themselves (Benneworth 2007). We studied the university's

engagement periphery as a community of practice, but in the course of analysing the data, we were struck by the fact that similar stories repeatedly emerged within different kinds of institution. Below, we highlight six stories told, and we found examples of these stories being told across all kinds of institutions visited.

Even in institutions with very different de facto community engagement rationales, there were common ways of framing and validating community engagement. On that basis, we have sketched out two things. Firstly are the main stories told about engagement, from which it becomes possible to see the engagement validation strategies. The second was in situating those stories within particular kinds of group within the university. We were rather surprised to find that the disciplinary differences were not as great as might have been expected (although we only interviewed with researchers who were actually engaged). It was between different layers of the university where we found that people talked about engagement in very different and distinct ways, between senior managers, business development staff and academics.

The six different validations for engagement encountered in the interviews were:

- *Social responsibility*: Community engagement was part of expectations on the university to be a good citizen.
- *Institutional development*: Community engagement allowed the university to access resources which could fund capital campus developments.
- *Seizing opportunities*: Community engagement raised conceptually interesting questions that stimulated new fields of research.
- *Serving the market*: Community engagement kept the university in contact with key markets for recruitment in excluded communities.
- *Commitment to 'the cause'*: Community engagement was pursued within the autonomy of academic freedom as something ethically desirable.
- *Personal self-advancement*: Community engagement allowed particular activities to be delivered that supported an individual or research centre.

These six stories tended to correspond with different levels of the institution, with the first two being primarily told by university senior managers concerned with the university's public face, the second two by university senior managers concerned with the maintenance of core university activities, and the third two by individuals and research centre directors actually involved in engagement. We now present these engagement stories, and the emerging insights for understanding how community engagement can become an integrated component of universities tasks, summarising this in Table 5.3. Some of the key distinguishing characteristics of the six stories are summarised in the table.

5.6.1 Senior Management with Outside Stakeholders

5.6.1.1 Social Responsibility

All universities recognised that their wider public duty went further than purely delivering funders' targets. For some institutions, their commitment to community

Table 5.3 The first typology of drivers of university engagement with socially excluded communities

	Senior management motivations		Business unit motivations		Staff/unit motivations	
	Social responsibility	Institutional development	Seizing opportunities	Serving the market	Commitment to 'the cause'	Personal self-advancement
Why engage?	To demonstrate fulfilment of the social contract: blue skies research benefits humanity	To develop a set of infrastructures that could not otherwise be funded	To ensure that staff can take any opportunities that might enrich teaching and research	To maximise recruitment and retention by building awareness of community dynamics	Out of an ethical concern to help solve the problems which are being researched, a praxis commitment	To generate a stream of activities that fulfil tenure/promotion criteria around teaching and research
Key mechanisms	Supporting charitable/voluntary activities which cost the university and help communities	Building new campuses with funding streams that require engagement be demonstrably delivered	Administrative change & PR in the university-task groups, venture funds, champions	High levels of pastoral support for excluded students, contact with their friends/family	Community activism, using the community as a laboratory, presenting community findings elsewhere	Indistinguishable from 'committed' individuals but with less accent on participation and more on exploitation
Influence on teaching	Sporadic and unplanned, 'festival' approach with senior managers and press releases	Campus becomes a focus for community-based modules and experiences which may be compulsory for students	Where relevant, community links enrich teaching experience through placements and content	Curriculum design in selecting modules/courses that meet the demands of local communities	Provides real world examples for inclusion in lectures—longer term influences professional course and provision	Provides real world examples for inclusion in lectures but less influence in terms of professional development

Table 5.3 (continued)

	Senior management motivations		Business unit motivations		Staff/unit motivations	
	Social responsibility	Institutional development	Seizing opportunities	Serving the market	Commitment to 'the cause'	Personal self-advancement
Influence on research	Helps university to make a case for research that could potentially serve the needs of excluded communities	Campus acts as outpost in excluded communities where exploratory missions can be arranged	Potential for focus on research with community application for those academics with that interest	Allows HEI to shape local research environment in certain fields through contact with stakeholders	Community involved in 'co-production' of knowledge with the researcher, so a co-dependency	Use of community as laboratory to develop new theories, win research projects and prestigious publications
Community benefits	Access to university resources (physical, intellectual) at subsidised rate—more aware of HEI	Campus can act as a driver of regeneration and anchor for gentrification activities, local employment created	Placements etc. can provide services, build capacity and louden the voice of the community	Graduates remain in community and learn a skill set to help them improve own environment	Increasing their power in governance networks, and control over own local situation	Greater external representation of the community in external decision-making networks – communities are not easily manipulable…
Conflict areas	'We don't believe you want a genuine partnership' limited community influence over university decisions	University may seek to create profit via gentrification displacing local communities	Reliant on enthusiastic academics and strong leaders—risk of the institutional pendulum	Information asymmetries, so enrolling people on profitable courses, not really building their voices	Within university around academic freedom and tenure; RAE tail wagging engagement dog	Balancing preserving academic position with ensuring community stay enthusiastic for activity

engagement did not go much further than a kind of 'Corporate Social Responsibility'(CSR), acting as good, ethical citizens and being mindful of their impacts on others. Most universities had some kind of staff and/or student volunteering programme which ran on a voluntary, negotiated basis which embodied a CSR approach. Those who validated community engagement through this approach stressed ensuring that the university had evidence that the institution fulfilled a wider public role, without necessarily demonstrating that what they did was valued by the users.

5.6.1.2   Institutional Development

The funding freeze-and-squeeze on UK higher education in 1976–1995 meant that many universities ceased new capital investment programmes for a two decade period. Universities wanting to develop campuses during this period often looked to the availability of regeneration funding as a means of developing new facilities, particularly the urban development corporations in England, and for Merseyside, the Objective 1 programme. Subsequently, although new funding has been available, it has taken some time to come on-stream, and university campuses have a huge backlog of investments necessary to bring their estates up to their aspired-to world class status. A number of universities embedded campus developments within wider regeneration projects as a means of accessing regeneration funding to support campus development, and validated the attendant activity by the access to real estate investment resources it provided.

5.6.2   Core Business Units Delivering Teaching and Research

5.6.2.1   Seizing Opportunities

Engagement can be an important part of teaching and research activities, particularly for universities with professional education which involves much engagement with excluded communities. Given that universities largely do not micro-manage staff activities, creating an empowering environment allows staff to create rich teaching programmes and move into new research areas as the needs of the communities with which they work are changing. It was more problematic to create career incentives for engagement, so the most acceptable forms of community engagement were those that produced good courses and research outputs through effective engagement. In that sense, the engagement was validated as a means to an end, the end being the core university missions (and income generating activities) of teaching and research.

5.6.2.2   Serving the Market

All the universities were aware of the political sensitivity associated with the widening access agenda, increasing participation in higher education from communities

not traditionally oriented towards higher education. In England, the Office for Fair Access (Offa) regulates universities' recruitment to ensure that higher fees are not discouraging non-traditional students: Community engagement formed part of institutional agreements with Offa which in return allowed the higher top-up fees to be charged. Taster courses, summer schools, open access facilities all formed part of a case made that universities promoted engagement, as part of a claim to justify generating higher income for the universities.

For the newer universities more reliant on the attraction of non-traditional students, community engagement served another set of functions, which were related to access and recruitment, but also to retention of these students. Non-traditional students typically face a range of educational problems before their arrival at university; similarly, these students often needed more support whilst in university, both in terms of induction but also during crisis points, in the absence of personal or family social capital to know how to deal with these situations. Universities used community engagement as a means to improve their recruitment and retention by understanding the issues facing individuals and communities, to improve family attitudes to HE to try to compensate for lower individual social capital.

5.6.3   Individual Academics and Research Centres

5.6.3.1   Commitment to 'the Cause'

Beyond the four functional stories related above, there were individuals and groupings who were clearly ethically motivated in their desire to engage with excluded communities. Many individuals researched communities' problems as a means to develop better solutions, driven by the apparent injustices that they encountered in the course of their research. In the case of senior managers who came into post with those experiences, they could be used as examples to validate attempting a university-wide approach to engagement. The survey did not find evidence of engagement that had placed social justice over individual's benefits. There is insufficient evidence to argue that any of the universities studied were strongly motivated by an ethical commitment to social justice that came at an opportunity cost. However, some of the individuals felt they had struggled and made sacrifices in their professional lives in order to pursue an engagement agenda about which they felt passionate.

5.6.3.2   Personal Self-Advancement

There were also functional reasons for individuals and research centres to undertake community engagement, because it provided a competitive edge and was profitable in terms of grants, publications and teaching activities. It was not always possible to distinguish those who made a virtue out of a necessity (for engagement) and

those who were genuinely committed. Because universities could represent hostile environments for those whose engagement was seen to come at the expense of teaching and/or research, or whose resultant raised profile was seen as an unnecessary distraction, academics and centres continually managed the tension of engaging meaningfully, whilst ensuring that engagement could be represented as hitting other university or faculty missions and personal development plan targets.

5.7 Discussion: From Rationalities to Classifying HEIs?

An exploration of the stories helps to shed some light on the question of why supposedly rational engagements are not supported by particular institutions. These stories provide a glimpse into these discursive processes and validation rationales, rather than allowing the validation of engagement by universities to be comprehensively mapped. Nevertheless, one recurring engagement question, excellently treated by Lynne Humphrey in her following chapter, is why despite universities being public bodies with a mission to engage, a public appetite for that engagement, and academics with an enthusiasm and capacity for engagement, do they fail to endorse and better manage that engagement activity?

This analysis suggests an answer to this question by making the point that as far as engagement is concerned, rational justification of that activity is necessary but not sufficient. There must apparently be multiple justifications, with different groupings within the university able to validate engagement in abstract and practical senses. The more generally engagement is accepted to be valid, the more fertile the ground is for the support and expansion of engagement; likewise, where there are fewer groupings who validate engagement, it becomes more marginalised (cf. Chap. 9).

Quite notable is no simple one-to-one correspondence between activities and validation strategies. In a single 'real engagement', there might be multiple rationalities at play, for example, involved in university–community engagement in the course of campus development projects. A socially responsible university will do it out of a sense of the need to 'be a good neighbour', a phrase which was often used in the course of our interviews, whilst consultation might also feed into developing new research and recruitment activities in neighbouring communities. Large campus developments within larger regeneration activities almost always require engagement, and of course good relations with the community are necessary for individuals seeking to prosecute research and teaching activities in these areas.

We claim this is interesting because of the role played by the validations in holding together coalitions of people around engagement. That meant in a single university situation, there might be people whose explanation, justification or rationalisation of the same event or situation was justified in terms of very different narratives. This is also a message which comes through very strongly in Robinson and Hudson's chapter (Chap. 10), where they note that the Durham staff volunteering scheme is justified in different ways, idealistic and opportunistic ways, by users, senior managers, business unit managers, and individual staff members. The strength of the scheme is in all

kinds of groups being able to validate the activity, which helps more people to be supportive of—or at least not resistant to—the scheme.

Robinson and Hudson's chapter exemplifies that discussions within universities do not take place at a purely abstract level, and relate to past activities, present challenges and future desires. University–community engagement is dynamic and evolutionary: Engagement takes place (and universities are heavily engaged with a range of publics), and the success and acceptance of those activities influence institutional debates about future directions. Those debates in turn shape institutional policies which influence the way activities take place, further influencing internal debates, policies and outcomes. This suggests that it is wrong to focus exclusively on the abstract idea of universities being engaged, and instead attention is required for the evolutionary journey through which universities *become* engaged.

This suggests a greater need to place particular engagement activities in their wider context, and to better understand two kinds of relationships. Firstly are those relationships between particular engagement activities and the wider universities, and secondly, are the ways that university decision-making is influenced by the wider political and policy environment, and the pressures from their most salient stakeholders. Progress and regression along that journey could potentially be gauged using Ruiz Bravo's models, with evidence for engagement activity measured against the balanced scorecard presented in Table 5.1.

It is important to emphasise that we are not advocating these models as some kind of tool to 'improve' in some way universities' engagement performances. Rather, in addressing the challenge of understanding society through understanding universities, and understanding engagement in its wider university context, there is a need to urgently come to terms with the multiple rationalities which underpin engagement. Success must be understood as much as a compromise between belief coalitions embedded within sets of university engagement practices, as the application of a particular best practice 'community engagement' methodology.

We conclude by returning to the point made earlier in this chapter: Universities are complex institutions, and there is not only one rationality within the institution. Activities are proposed, mobilised, supported and sustained, or otherwise, within complicated internal governance and resource allocation models nested within complementary discursive value and validation systems. Understanding why universities engage requires closer consideration of internal stakeholder relationships, and in particular how decisions around particular engagement activities are taken. It is to these particular institutional decision calculi that the next three chapters turn.

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