Contribution of Higher Education Institutions to Strengthen Socio-economic Development of Peripheral Regions

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Introduction

- Knowledge production increasingly important to UAS sector with regional focus
- Knowledge production takes place in ‘communities’: regional partners involved.
- Emerging regional knowledge production mission for UASs complementing human capital
- Better managing UAS regional knowledge mission: Lessons for policy & practice
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Part I

THE RISE OF KNOWLEDGE PRODUCTION IN UAS SECTOR
HEIs have a transformative potential

- Universities survived as an institution because they have always met societal needs
- HEIs today produce the building blocks of the knowledge economy, “knowledge capital”
- HEIs organise activities where society (firms, policy-makers, civil society) learn
University contributions to regional engagement

- Universities have always made many contributions
- Contributions come through different mechanisms
- Produced by different kinds of knowledge activity
- Of interest to various kinds of stakeholders
- Involving a range of societal users/ partners/ beneficiaries

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Area of university activity</th>
<th>Main areas of engagement activity</th>
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<td>R2 Research projects involving co-creation</td>
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<td>R3 Research commissioned by hard-to-reach groups</td>
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<td>R4 Research on these groups then fed back</td>
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<td>Service</td>
<td>S1 Making university assets &amp; services open</td>
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<td>S2 Encouraging hard-to-reach groups to use assets</td>
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<td>S3 Making an intellectual contribution as ‘expert’</td>
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<td>S4 Contributing to the civic life of the region</td>
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<td>Teaching</td>
<td>T1 Teaching appropriate engagement practices</td>
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<td>T4 CPD for hard-to-reach groups</td>
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<td>T5 Adult and lifelong learning</td>
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Source: Benneworth et al (2009)
But policy-makers have not found how to best stimulate them across the sector

- CERI (OECD) identified in 1982 how universities can support firms, governments & civil society
- One of the CERI exemplars was North East London Polytechnic Company (now UEL)
- Since then there have been a huge number of policy efforts to identify how to promote this
- There have been many failed policy efforts because hard to measure what matters
Promoting UAS applied research functions

- Accelerating pace of knowledge production
  - How to keep higher professional education up-to-date

- Research skills important in more sectors
  - The rise of the graduation project in FE colleges!

- Equipping UAS sector to:
  - Undertake applied research
  - Supervise graduation projects
  - Mobilise regional knowledge communities
Part 1

KNOWLEDGE PRODUCTION TAKES PLACE IN COMMUNITIES
A typical applied innovation project

Source: Gertner et al. (2010)
HEIs are integrated knowledge communities

University

- Academic leaders
  - Academic teachers
    - Postdocs
      - Ph.D.s
  - Degree courses
  - Research projects
  - Placements
- Post-grad students
- Undergrad students

Admin & services

- Department
  - Academic teachers
    - Postdocs
      - Ph.D.s
  - Degree courses
  - Research projects
  - Placements
- Post-grad students
- Undergrad students

Society

- Hosting placements
- Funding consultancy
- Guest Lectures
- Guest researchers
- Seminar speakers
- Fieldtrips
- Career Fairs
- ‘Living Laboratories’
- Giving interviews

Firms
Policy-makers
NGOs
Civil Society
The messy underlying reality of how these communities hang together

- Some tasks need central co-ordination
- Knowledge processes don’t follow identical paths
- Can’t impose single approach (tight coupling) on diverse paths
- University have to co-ordinate sufficiently respecting diversity
  → ‘Loose coupling’
Steering that through UAS structures

- a) the strategic role played by the *central steering core*, in articulating a shared vision and strategic platform for engagement;
- b) a supportive *administrative apparatus*, ensuring institutionalization of rules and procedures as well as support/incentive structures across the board;
- c) commitment of key individuals across the *academic heartland*, recognizing new external opportunities and directly engaging with external parties; and
- d) the *degree of coupling* between core and peripheral structures and activities, ensuring spill-over effects and mutually reinforcing synergies.
UAS engagement in periphery – where is the demand pull?

- Focus of PERIF-EU on peripheral regions without strong regional demand pull
  - Fragmented urban regions
  - Suburban shadow regions
  - Old industrial regions
  - Extractive/service regions
  - Extremely remote regions

- UAS may be only public knowledge provider!!

Nordland University campus, Mo I Rana, Norway. Regional college just upgraded to University status
Part I

THE EMERGING REGIONAL KNOWLEDGE BASED MISSION FOR UAS SECTOR
Estonia’s Regional College Network

- Local specialised colleges with strong links to local industries
- Supported by national universities in Tartu/Tallinn
- Became a focus for partners ‘in periphery of periphery’ to articulate joint vision
- Regional success despite lack of national HE policy support
College of Polytechnics, Jihlava, Vysočina (CZ)

- Founded by regional authority as focus point for leap rural→post industrial
- First public CR non-university college (private problems)
- Actively involved developing ‘social pillar’ in region (SSH)
- Problems in fitting social capital building with (turbulent) CR electoral cycles
Polytechnic Institute of University of Algarve

- Government led merger 1988 of Polytechnic & University
- Retention of regional focused faculties with UAS structures
- Polytechnic Institute has different regional community, helps integrate UAlg→region
- Injecting knowledge into local industries: tourism, textiles, agro-food
- BUT region a bit ‘overpowered’
Polytechnics in the oldest cross-border region

- INTERREG IV project Mechatronics for SMEs
- Collaboration between Hogescholen, Fachhochschulen, SMEs & universities
- Cross-border collaborations Dutch firms→Fachhochschulen
- Comparing to OECD study of cross-border RISs, very advanced form of co-operation
Part 1

BETTER MANAGING UAS REGIONAL KNOWLEDGE MISSION: LESSONS FOR POLICY & PRACTICE
Lessons for national policy-makers

- Creating new kinds of regional institutions in peripheral regions
- Creating new kinds of funding instruments to support regional applied research
- Removing unnecessary national pressures that hinder regional engagement (Eureg SW)
- What goes UAS engagement benefit in terms of core UAS process (excellence, quality…?)
- What does a world-class UAS look like and can we rank it?
Lessons for regional policy makers

- Avoiding the obsession with technology innovation – UASs do so much more
- Regional partners ‘cheerleading’ UASs
- Using UASs to counterweight University excellence drift
- Avoiding myth of critical mass & concentration in campuses
Lessons for UAS leadership/TTOs

- Regional leadership always informal, so sit at the tables where discussions happen
- UAS Level between regional authority research & universities
- Encouraging your ‘institutional entrepreneurs’ to do nice things
- Opening up UAS infrastructures for regional partners: ‘living laboratories’
Lessons for engaged UAS academics

- Finding where engagement adds value to your knowledge creation processes (students)
- Creating models for applied engagement beyond tech transfer/ SSH
- Findings ways to validate engagement activities internally
- Avoiding ‘accreditation drift’ to national norms