

In Praise of the University as (potential) Public Anticipatory Resource

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How do universities, think about, act upon,
create space for and influence 'the future'

...

And how might this be changing as university-
society partnerships change?

Universities with all their imperfections,
represent the crucible within which our future
will be formed. Boiling, steaming, frothing at
times, a new amalgam must somehow be
created within them if we are to surmount our
social problems and rediscover the civic virtues
on which our society depends

(Frank Rhodes, President of Cornell)

The distinctive nature of the 'futures work' of multi-faculty universities

The tensions around 'futures work' between universities and societies

The new university forms that might emerge...

WUN 'Universities & the Art and Science of Anticipation'

Richard Sandford, John Morgan, Adam Nelson

UNESCO Knowlabs Programme

Riel Miller, Roberto Poli, Ted Fuller

RCUK/AHRC Connected Communities Programme

Bryony Enright, Johan Siebers

University of Bristol, Social Sciences 2030

Tom Osborne

What is the relationship between 'the university' and 'the future'?

Temporality is culturally specific
Geography and history matter

The futures orientations of the multi-faculty university

Stewardship

Reflexivity

Modelling

Critique

Experimentation

Education

The Accountability Problem – relations
between universities and societies

The Knowledge Problem – relations between
different forms of knowledge

some scientists would say, actually, I can generate knowledge that, if implemented, could change that forward trend. Now, none of us [social scientists and philosophers on the table] would claim I think to do that, but on that table over there [pointing to computer scientists and epidemiologists] maybe they would, and that would change the picture entirely [...] potentially they can come up with an invention. Now they may turn to us and say – I've no idea how to get this implemented, that's a political issue, bring in the philosophers ...

... yes, we've a lot of clout...[says the philosopher in the group]

....I've noticed your skills over the years ... [laughter]

... But they can generate a different kind of knowledge that could play out in the bigger pattern if implemented, which is of course, the exciting thing about a university, in that it does embrace people generating all these different kinds of knowledge. That's why universities are exciting places.

That's why the interdisciplinary thing is the key to the universities, but it has to be operationalized.

Most of the climate scientists I know look to the social sciences to do that [address the political issues], they say 'this is not my area', you know, and 'what are you doing about it' and I say frankly, I don't know and it's awful.[...] they're expecting this division of labour to work and it doesn't work because they're generating the data that's showing how dreadful everything is and ...

... the social scientists are sitting there going !@!*

... writing a book about cultural studies or something

The Accountability Problem – relations
between universities and societies

The Knowledge Problem – relations between
different forms of knowledge

The Ethical-Democratic Problem – relations
between people in working in and on futures

The Connected Communities Programme

An experiment in exploring how communities and universities might work together to create new knowledge about 'community'



327 projects – ranging from 6 months to 5 years.

On topics that cover everything from hyperlocal journalism to arts and dementia to local food communities to poverty action to

Over 600 academics

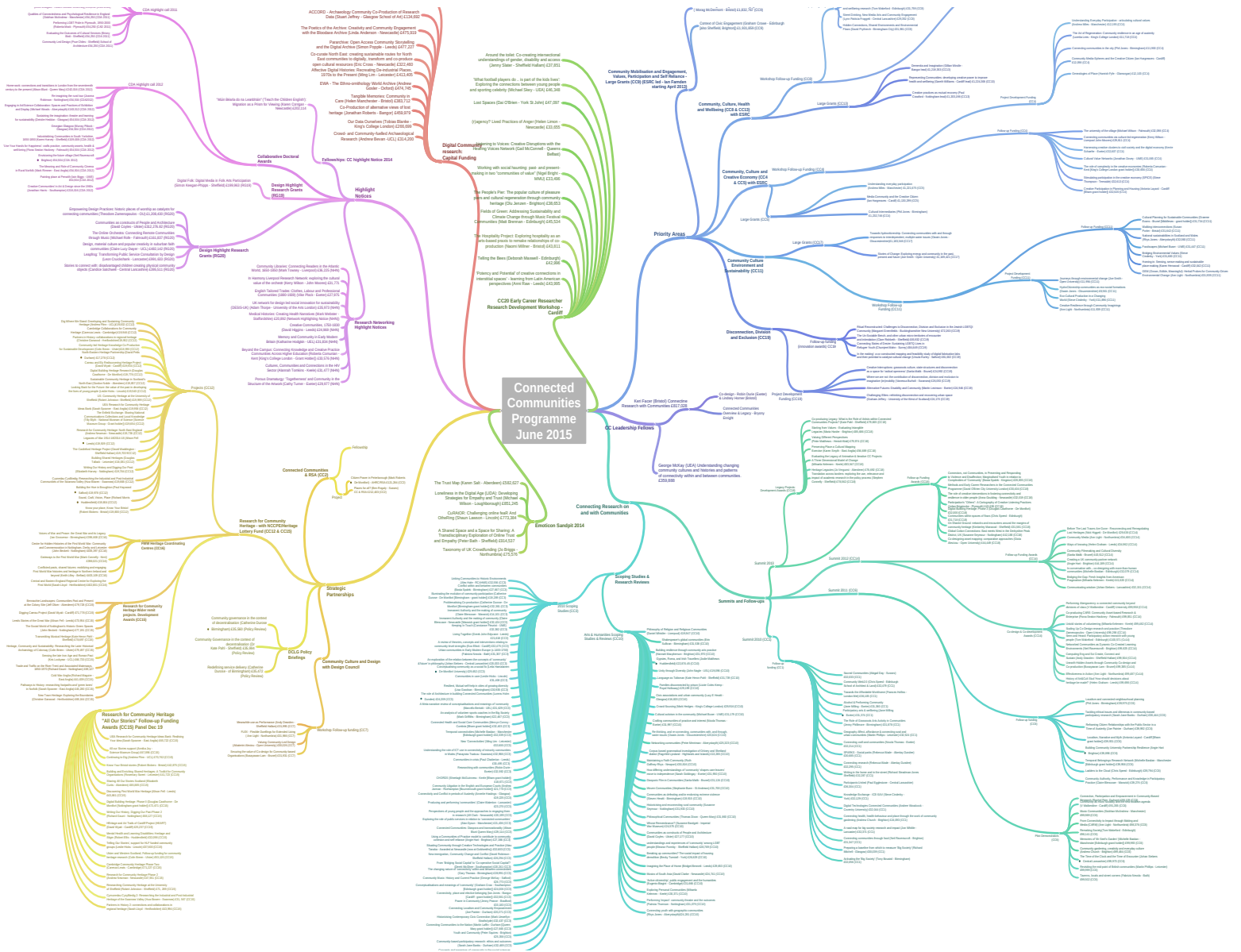
Over 500 community partners

Approx £30m in research funding

Community partners can be named as co-investigators

Projects have to demonstrate how partners are involved in collaboratively framing research design and conducting the research.

Two stage funding models for university-community co-design from the outset



Generalist & Learners
Makers

Advocates for a New
University

Entrepreneurs &
Opportunists

Accidental Wanderers



Research confident institutions

Robust civil society organisations

Voluntary/community groups

Freelancers and consultants

Activists, advocates and the gift economy

The Ethno-ornithology world archive

The ACCORD project

Creative Citizens & Hyperlocal

Productive Margins

Energetic Stories

Participatory and collaborative arts

People's and worker's history

Action and participatory action research

Co-design and user-centred design

Feminist, Critical race theory, post-colonial theory

Development Studies and environmental studies

Co-production – economics, law, health, policy studies

Open and Social Innovation

DIY, Punk, Hacker Movements, Social Movements



Tangible Memories

1. University-Community collaborations engender discussions about the *telos* of research

The project aims to help revive the stalled public and political conversations about energy by looking in a fresh way at its past present and future

... to inspire imagination about the future and create a momentum for change

At a critical time for the future.... Explores whether historical models... can be adapted to meet the challenges faced by community libraries

How best can we act in and upon the future?

Changing the historical record?

Experimenting and making?

Capacity building?

Foundational knowledge?

- *For me personally, if one child reports feeling better about themselves, feeling more positive, more confident – that's a success for me*
- *You know I've always struggled with this, I've always really struggled with this, you know. What exactly are we doing, why do we do the things that we do, and for what.*
- *a paper is probably not going to change our organisation at all, and it's not going to have that much impact... it's not going to be a big deal, and a lot of our young people will never know it exists*
- *We try to share an explicit understanding in our group about notions of reciprocity and the different types of outputs we produce and what the intrinsic/strategic worth of them is for each of us*
- *it's made a big impact on the way I've seen my job.*
- *The trust we have in friendship is something that is enabling [...] particularly of thought, creating this ability for thought and creative thought and deep thought*

2. University-Community collaborations
engender debate about what the university and
community will be *for each other*

The fantasy of 'the university' and 'the community'

The desire for authenticity, legitimacy and accountability (of the university from the community)

The desire for validation, credibility and status (of the community from the university)

The Productive Crisis

Identity

Purpose

Claims to Expertise

Belonging

Representation

3. Productive Crises engender different partnership models

Mode 1: Divide and Conquer

Mode 2: Relational Expertise

Mode 3: Mutual Learning

we knew that there'd be times when we felt like we'd be speaking different languages to each other. And so we talked about how we communicate with people in various situations that could be quite tense when you've got deadlines and you think somebody's not understood you. And it's because of actually it's a disciplinary thing, because you're talking about something completely ... it was quite a funny meeting, but ... I think as a team at that point we really agreed that we would respect each other's perspectives, whether we agreed with it or not.

And actually I think what's happened as we've gone along is that ... it's almost like you transcend something. You work on something and you think everybody's understood it, and then you realise well actually he's got a completely different perspective from that person and that person. But eventually you do all come round to something, that perhaps was slightly different from what you initially envisaged, but it's there and it meets what you want to do. So I think ... I guess from my perspective as a PI I really like that actually, and I think it's been having the guts to just let it happen. (Gemma, PI Large Grant)

Mode 1: Divide and Conquer

Mode 2: Relational Expertise

Mode 3: Mutual Learning

Mode 4: Colonisation and Confusion

Mode 1: Divide and Conquer (business as usual)

Mode 2: Relational Expertise (managed constraint)

Mode 3: Mutual Learning (transformation)

Mode 4: Colonisation and Confusion (collapse)

(Responses mapped onto Dator's 4 mythic narratives of the future)

4. A research programme is insufficient to address the ethical-democratic issues surrounding Universities' 'futures work'

1. Programmes reflect the make-up of the academy
2. Short term funding can cause harm
3. Research programmes don't compensate for the decline in adult and continuing education
4. And may lead to co-option of alternative positions from which to think education and research differently??



To conclude

1. The multi-faculty university has a unique capacity to address the complexity of how we might think about and act upon the future
2. There are questions of accountability, knowledge and ethical-democratic considerations in terms of how such capacity is exercised
3. The Connected Communities Programme (and other collaborative research initiatives) offer an insight into how the ethical-democratic challenge of combining public and academic knowledge might be addressed

The response to productive crisis of collaborative work offers multiple potential future trajectories

- Retrenchment
- Collapse in confidence
- Muddling along
- Or...
- New orientation

Mutual Learning as transformation -

Public Pedagogy (Masschelein)

Telos as the object of debate

The temporality of the ecotone – the ‘thick present’ (Poli, Adam) – the ‘meanwhile’ (Bogost)

A temporality in which ideas can grow in which the different orientations to the future that the university might bring are put into play and in which, through being required to account for themselves through discussion with ‘the other’ they come to explore how they might combine to create new futures.

A new facet to universities' distinctive relationship with the future?

Stewardship

Reflexivity

Modelling

Critique

Experimentation

Education

Participation

The participatory orientation has the potential to play the meta-role that philosophy once used to in our universities – it has the potential to help us work out how to knit together and negotiate between the university's different orientations toward the future and to reflect upon their ethical implications, not just for scholarship but for society.



Thank you

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The simple
stories they
tell us don't
make sense
anymore

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