Book Review

The Civic University: The Policy and Leadership Challenges

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Higher education is in the news across the UK. Student fees, the pay of (some) vice chancellors, the implications of Brexit and undergraduate admissions have each hit the headlines—particularly since the summer of 2017 and well into 2018. What has not been part of those news cycles, but is bound up within each debate, is a fundamental question that *The Civic University* addresses: what is higher education, and what are universities, for? This edited collection provides historical, international and theoretical perspectives that set out to answer both of these questions. The book is divided into three parts. The first five chapters are organised around the question 'Why the civic university?'. A further eight chapters, on 'The civic universities', review the countries that participated in the study (Finland, Ireland, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom) and the final two chapters address 'The leadership and management challenges' of the civic university. The seven dimensions of the civic university, presented for critique, provide the basis for analysing the various historical roots and theoretical debates about the university, and how forms of civic engagement may relate to the characteristics of 'best practice' within an institution.

However, the challenge that the book poses, and a question that remains, is how each dimension may relate to the contexts, and roles, that we each work within. A further question the book also raises, given the remit of this journal, is how widening participation is framed. One way of reflecting on this dilemma is by asking whether there is a 'double shuffle' (Hall, 2005), and struggle, between the perceived economic benefits of widening participation and demands for equity and social justice within the university (Burke, 2012). If so, how does this tension between these benefits and demands shape policy and practice in our diverse and different contexts?

In the introductory chapter, the editors set out a comparison between the model of the 'un-civic' and the model of the 'civic' university. In the former, boundaries separate teaching, research and those 'third mission' activities situated at the periphery of the university. By contrast, the civic university differs in two ways. First, the editors argue there is no core or periphery within the university and, secondly, the policy domains of teaching, research and

engagement overlap. They are not separate. In the model of the civic university, and in an overlap between teaching and research, the editors argue there is a mutual enhancement of the two domains. Why? They suggest teaching may relate to 'real world' issues and research to the applied work students produce. What is problematic about this overall argument? It is how widening participation is represented. For example, in the introductory model of the civic university, widening participation is situated in an overlap between the domains of teaching and engagement, but not teaching and research - or a final overlap between research and engagement. Elsewhere, widening participation is explicitly linked to student recruitment. Whilst it is welcome that marketing and admissions processes may name mature students, not just younger school and college leavers, as prospective students, it is the relative absence of connections between widening participation and either teaching or research in the rest of the book that may trouble other readers too. Why does this matter? Because if widening participation is restricted to spaces between engagement and recruitment it is limited. As Shanahan argues, 'the question of access must be inverted: it is not only a question of access of the excluded into universities, it is also a question of access of universities into the knowledge of the excluded' (1997: 71). By asking this question, we may extend access and participation into those spaces *between* teaching and research, and research and engagement, rather than simply limiting forms of policy and practice to narrower forms of engagement.

In chapters 2 and 3, Vallance and Hazelkorn offer historical and theoretical perspectives on the contested meanings of the civic university. These situate specific questions of access and participation within wider historical and contemporary contexts. Vallance draws on the work of Barnett (2007) to
highlight the implications of a university for a 'citizen' and a city, but also
the tensions between marketisation and globalisation for the civic university. These questions are fundamental. They are bound up with institutional purpose and identity and the seven dimensions and developmental framework of the university that underpin each chapter. The scope of this framework is
expansive. Dimensions include the primary feature of a civic university: 'its sense of purpose'. This may then combine with other dimensions, including
a 'sense of place' and the use of innovative methodologies to explore new
emerging (but also recurring) challenges. For example, Hazelkorn places these dimensions in a theoretical context by asking how civic engagement, and the civic university, may relate to modes of knowledge production. Building on the work of Gibbons et al. (1994), Hazelkorn compares modes 1, 2 and 3 of knowledge production. It is a mode 3 of knowledge framework that may include dialogue between university policies and practices and diverse community movements and needs. In turn, Hazelkorn argues these dynamic new modes of knowledge may shape new institutional models of practice and research. Whilst this optimism, in the second chapter, is welcome, the third chapter does not address how marketisation frames students' diverse experiences within differentiated forms of higher education.

What is also largely missing from this analysis, and these perspectives, is a review of the *extended* possibilities of widening participation within either national or institutional contexts. For example, in England between 2001 and 2011, one form of policy and practice situated widening participation within notions of 'raising the aspirations' of some young people and increasing their participation in higher education. A series of initiatives that began with *Excellence Challenge*, in 2001, and *Partnerships for Progression*, in 2003, provided the basis for the national *AimHigher* programme that ended on 31 July 2011. This work between universities, schools and colleges represented one, but not the only, strand of widening participation. However, widening participation did not begin with New Labour in 1997 or with

this work in 2001. Nor can it simply be dated from proposals to establish the Office for Fair Access (OFFA) in a White Paper, 'Widening Participation in Higher Education', in 2003 either. See instead, for example, Williams et al. (1997) for an analysis of earlier diverse forms of access, and Burke (2012), who argues how and why contemporary forms of widening participation can be conceptualised differently. However, it was each of the earlier policy milestones, between 2001 and 2011, that framed *dominant* widening participation policies, practices and strategies *within* Universities. Similarly, guidance issued by the Director for Fair Access and Participation, on behalf of the Office for Students, under section 29 of the Higher Education and Research Act 2017 (HERA), continues to juxtapose a 'double shuffle' (Hall, 2005) of the benefits of higher education for individual students and a 'cohesive and just society', with the needs of a 'productive economy' (Office for Students, 2018: 1). By contrast, Burke argues that widening participation needs to address the implications of inequality, exclusion and mis-recognition within higher education, as part of a social justice project (2012: 177). As Hazelkorn acknowledges, in her review of contemporary debates about the roles of a university and theorising civic engagement, in chapter 3 of the book, this position situates widening participation as central to an agenda of social justice within higher education.

However, it is those dominant framings of widening participation, within national programmes and guidance, that are largely reflected within this book. These are limited to institutional mission, institutional policies (where a widening participation strategy is *separated* from student engagement;
learning, teaching and assessment; and research) and community engagement
activities - in which widening participation is part of outreach and partnerships situated *outside* of an institution. Possible inter-relationships between theorising and mapping connections between civic engagement, widening participation and the curriculum, *within* the university, are outlined but under-developed. It is only in chapter 9, in a case study of the Dublin Institute of Technology, that Bernard and Bates propose the first of a 'five level approach' in developing a 'deeply engaged university' by combining teaching, research *and* widening participation.

In conclusion, Scott rightly argues the book is a celebration of the possibilities of civic and community engagement, the responsibilities of contemporary universities and their potential as a bridge into communities. However, an extended notion of what widening participation could be has a marginal place within this book. For example, whilst reference is made to the work of Watson (2007) and Watson et al. (2011), a reading of 'The Civic University' could be combined with re-reading David Watson's work to deepen this debate and enrich the connections, not separations, between teaching, research, engagement and widening participation. Different forms of interaction between communities and the university, that Watson outlined (2007), are not limited to an overlap between teaching and engagement. They also include inter-relationships between teaching and research and research and different forms of engagement. Perhaps this standpoint is timely, given the two questions at the heart of this work are 'Why the civic university?' and 'What is higher education for?'. Instead, the book left me with another recurring question: 'What are the *extended* possibilities for access and widening participation, why does this matter and who does it matter for?'

References

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