



Leading and Managing the Civic University

The Role of Universities as Anchor Institutions
for City and Regional Development

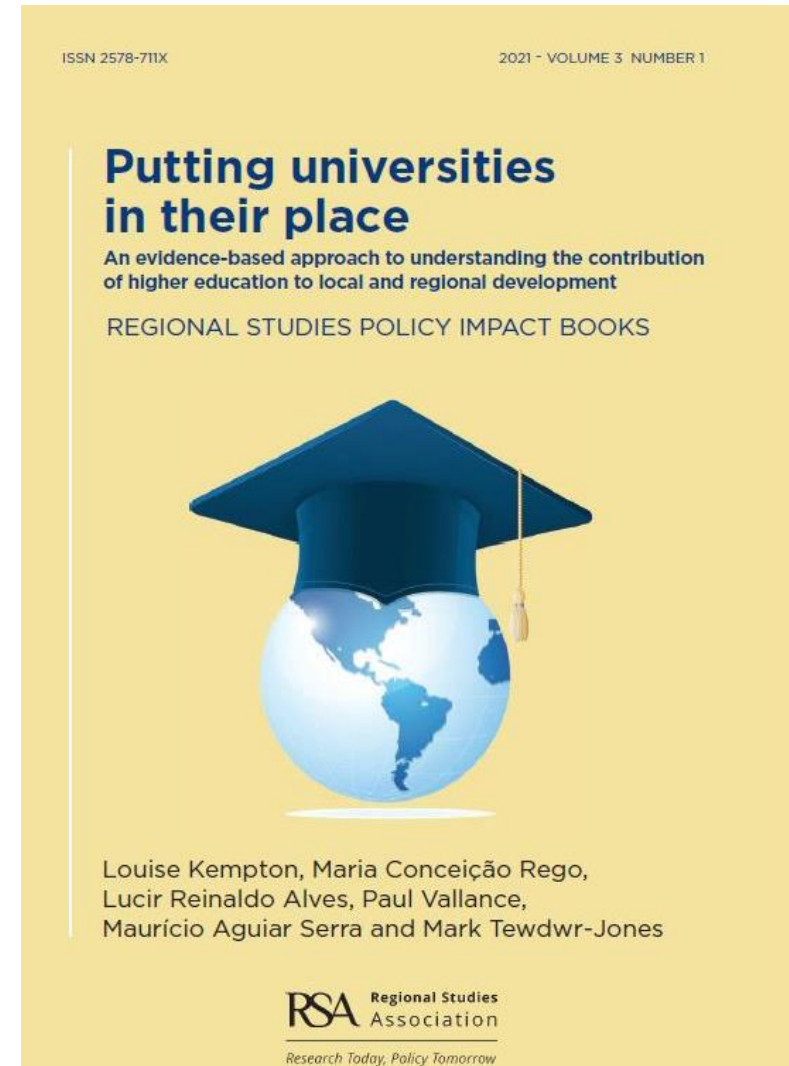
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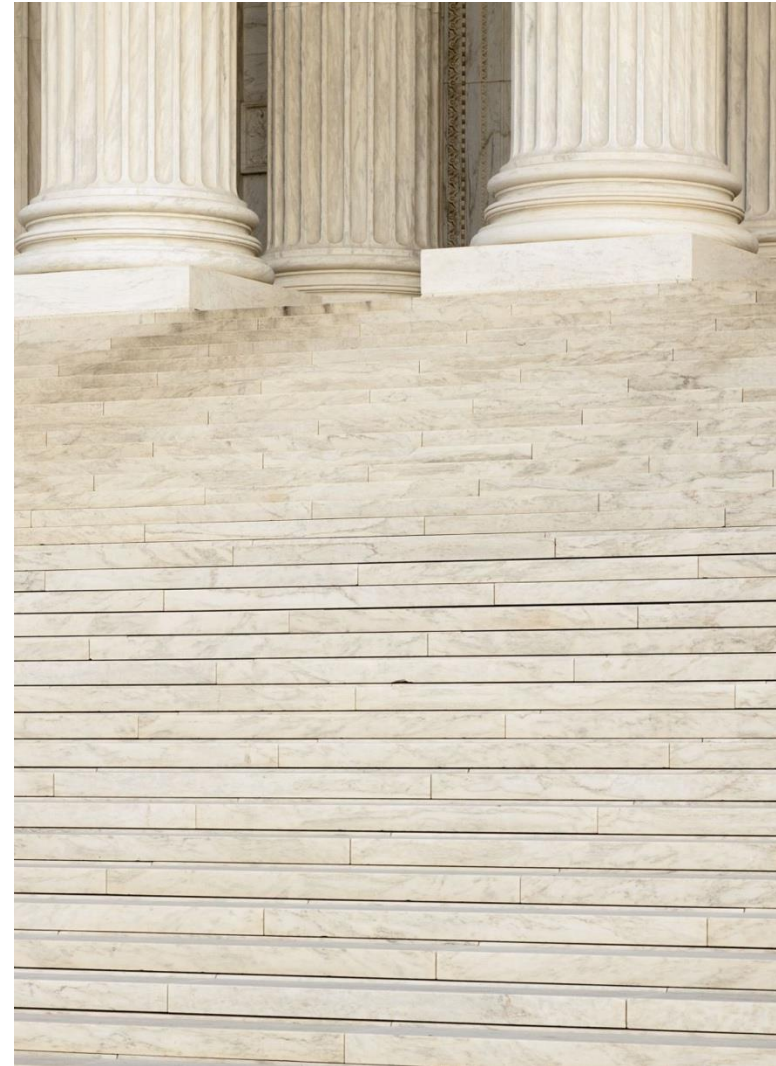
Evidence base

- Research since 2011 in UK, Ireland, Germany, Spain, Portugal, Italy, Romania, Netherlands, Finland, Sweden, USA, Colombia and Brazil on the role of universities as place-based actors for local and regional development
- Research funding from UK and European agencies; consultancy and other projects with EU, OECD, local and national governments, individual universities
- Findings detailed in 30+ academic papers, books, research reports etc. as well as policy briefs, blogs, podcasts etc.



Context

Recent decades have seen increasing demands from policy makers for (publicly funded) universities to be proactive drivers of innovation and development in the places in which they are located, particularly in less developed or peripheral regions. This has led to a new interest in concepts such as the 'civic university', 'triple/quadruple helix' and 'anchor institution' in understanding the contributions universities might make to local social and economic development.





We know what universities are good *at*, but what are they good *for* when it comes to local social and economic development?

Assigning this prominence to universities in regional innovation is based on three implicit conditions (Lawton Smith, 2007):

Firstly, that universities can **make a significant contribution** to regional innovation;

Secondly, that they are both **willing and able** to mobilise their internal resources to support regional innovation;

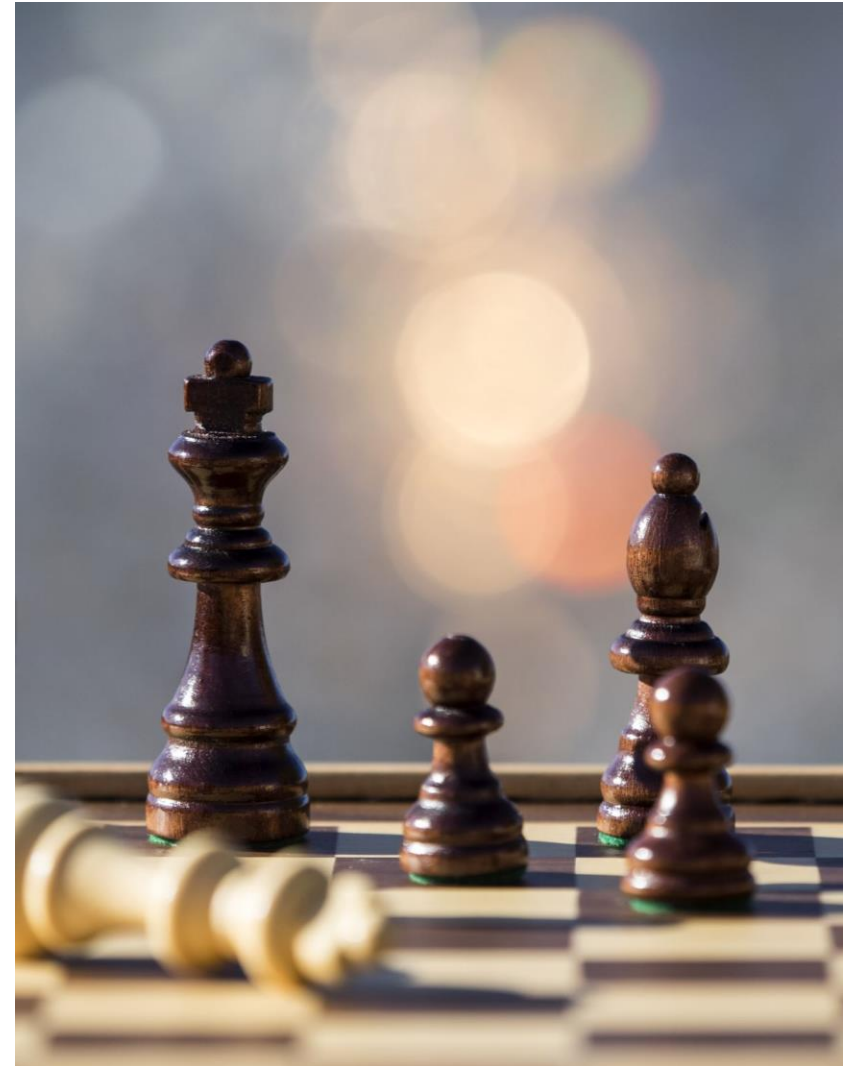
And thirdly, that where barriers exist to universities playing a central role in the regional innovation system that these are contingent rather than structural and **can be overcome** with the right policy mix.

Culture clash

“Local public agencies ... often find the authority structure of universities opaque and diffuse; this is a barrier to collaboration.

While the relative autonomy of faculty from the university administration is a virtue, and the tendency of academics to view the hierarchy of their discipline as more important than the hierarchy of university leadership is inevitable, it still leaves the problem for universities of how – as institutions – to mobilise to meet shared challenges and pursue overarching objectives.”

<http://www.matthewtaylorsblog.com/>



And

“...**collaboration is often elusive**. One reason for this may be that, although the pursuit of excellence in research is desirable for society as a whole, it may widen the gap between the production of knowledge and the needs of local [organisations].”

Kwadwo Atta-Owusu, Rune Dahl Fitjar, Andrés Rodríguez-Pose “What drives university-industry collaboration? Research excellence or firm collaboration strategy?”, *Technological Forecasting and Social Change*, Volume 173, 2021

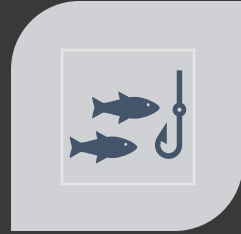


The civic/anchor university paradox...

- Rich places (economically, institutionally) have little dependence on universities for innovation, skills, human capital, research etc. These things magnetise to them anyway (New York, London, Paris, Milan?)
- Less prosperous places have lower institutional and human capital, so their universities or, more often, *university*, is a critical anchor for generation of human and knowledge capital, plus is an important actor in the local economy in terms of (non-academic) employment, procurement etc.
- But these universities are often fragile and vulnerable themselves (Goddard et al., 2014)
- This can actually lead to greater divisions and disparities, two-tier or 'hour glass' cities



Which raises
some very
serious
questions:



ARE WE LETTING THE
SUCCESSFUL
UNIVERSITIES IN
THRIVING PLACES
“OFF THE HOOK”
WHEN IT COMES TO
REGIONAL
DEVELOPMENT?



AND PLACING TOO
MUCH EXPECTATIONS
ON UNIVERSITIES IN
WEAKER PLACES,
WHO MAY
THEMSELVES BE
STRUGGLING



AND BY DOING THIS
REINFORCE (OR EVEN
WIDEN) THE
DISPARITIES
BETWEEN
INSTITUTIONAL AND
PLACE SUCCESS?



SHOULD WE JUST LET
UNIVERSITIES
CONCENTRATE ON
BEING THE BEST
UNIVERSITIES THEY
CAN BE?

Models of university engagement

(concepts, mechanisms, limitations)

The role of universities in local development

A **central role in supporting the local economy** by providing **knowledge and skills** (Coenen, 2007) was in many cases the *raison d'être* of the foundation of higher education institutions in the 19th and 20th centuries.

The role of universities in territorial innovation systems has emerged as a topic of increasing discussion and debate over the past 25-30 years (Uyarra, 2010; Trippl et al., 2015). Universities are seen as **drivers of innovation-led regional policies** (Chatterton and Goddard, 2000)

This has led to **increasing expectations** on universities to be proactively engaged in **supporting their local area** (Cochrane and Williams, 2013) beyond the passive direct and indirect effects of their presence (Power and Malmberg, 2008).

Various models aimed at understanding this role:

- Triple Helix (Etzkowitz and Leydesdorff, 1997)
- Regional innovation system (Cooke et al., 1997)
- Entrepreneurial university (Clark, 1999)
- Developmental University (Gunasekara, 2006)
- Engaged University (Watson et al., 2011)
- Civic university (Goddard et al., 2016)



'Traditional' university

Key Concepts

Ivory tower

Mechanisms

Under and post-graduate teaching
Curiosity-driven research

Limitations

No direct involvement in regional
development – spatially blind approach to
teaching and research

Knowledge led (3h, RIS, Entrepreneurial)

Key Concepts

Triple helix

Third mission

Knowledge spillovers

Mechanisms

Intellectual property, licensing and patents

Commercialisation and spin outs

Knowledge transfer partnerships

Incubators and science parks

Limitations

Underlying assumption of homogeneity of universities

(Can) lack an explicit regional focus

Based on a US model of drivers and incentives for commercialisation of research which has limited exportability to places with different higher education and innovation policy systems

Neglects the cultural and social aspects of regional development, and the role of civil society

Ignores the role of internal institutional systems and processes in hindering engagement

Partner Led (engaged, developmental, civic)

Key Concepts

Engagement with society as a whole
Engaged teaching and research
Quadruple helix
Local anchoring role

Mechanisms

Collaboration and co-production
Cross and multi-disciplinary working
Life-long learning
Living laboratories

Limitations

Does not give sufficient attention to the realities and potential constraints of local structures which can hinder effective co-production and collaboration

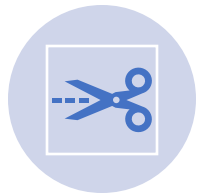
Does not take sufficient account of the impact of national and international policy on driving universities' ability or willingness to be 'engaged'

Based on normative, idealised models (e.g. quadruple helix, civic university) which lack an explicit regional focus

Over reliance on case studies to demonstrate success – lack of robust empirical evidence

Drivers, barriers and tensions for
engagement

Drivers of engagement



Post-2008 austerity, funding cuts, need for (public) universities to justify public investment and/or student fee income



Funding opportunities for collaborative, non-academic programmes (e.g. European Strategic Investment Funds)



Existential challenges – climate crisis, ageing, conflict, pandemics etc. – need cross-system and cross-disciplinary working to tackle them



Citizen demands – “we have a university in our place but what does it do for us”?



Students and staff want to make a difference to the place they live and work in



External policy environment – emphasis on addressing place-based disparities

Barriers

Fundamental

- University research and teaching specialisms do not reflect the regional economy
- Lack of links between university research and the needs of the local economy or society
- Lack of empirical evidence of 'real world' success, or models of engagement based on few, non-replicable case studies
- Tension for universities between achieving global excellence and engaging locally
- Genuine engagement requires a long term (decades) process of development

Internal (institutional)

- Engagement is often driven by short term funding opportunities
- Spatially blind reward system for research excellence
- Engagement is often dependent on individual motivations rather than managed as an institution wide endeavour
- Institutional history and characteristics may mitigate meaningful regional engagement
- Internal recognition and reward systems are not designed to incentivise regional working

External (environmental)

- Regional industrial make-up
- Weak demand for and capacity to absorb knowledge
- Institutional thinness
- Higher education policy often nationally focussed, spatially blind
- Poor understanding of the diversity and heterogeneity of universities by policy makers

(Some) Tensioned issues



A case study from Newcastle (UK)

England



68,000,000

North East England



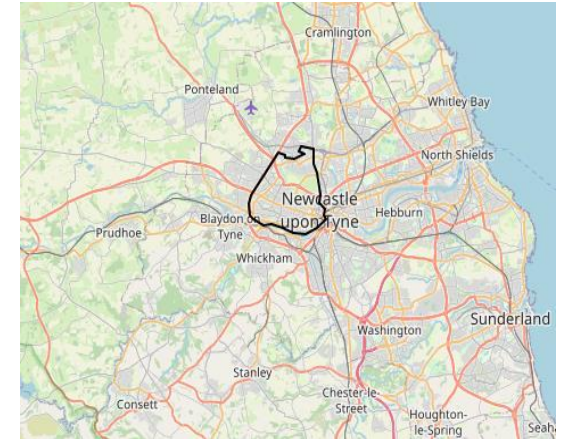
2,000,000

Newcastle upon Tyne



300,000

Newcastle upon Tyne Central



110,000



4,000 jobs and a £960m boost - but is the Newcastle Helix a 'bleak, charmless desert'?



The huge regeneration of the old S...
"making people's lives miserable"

facebook.com/NewcastleChronicle

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 4, 2020 *The Chronicle* 5

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On the Pitt Street side of the Helix, one resident said that the gigantic construction project "has been nothing but a pain for more than 10 years".

They added: "It used to be nice and peaceful around here but now it is awful. It was better when it used to be the brewery. I worked there, my family worked there. At least that felt like it was for local people."

Coun Ged Bell, Newcastle City Council cabinet member for employment and culture, defended the Helix as "the most ambitious and significant transformation this city has seen for generations".

He added: "It really is at the cutting edge of innovation, bringing world class buildings and facilities into Newcastle to facilitate world-leading research across some of the biggest challenges we are facing including ageing, climate change and sustainability."

"The chimney mentioned in some of



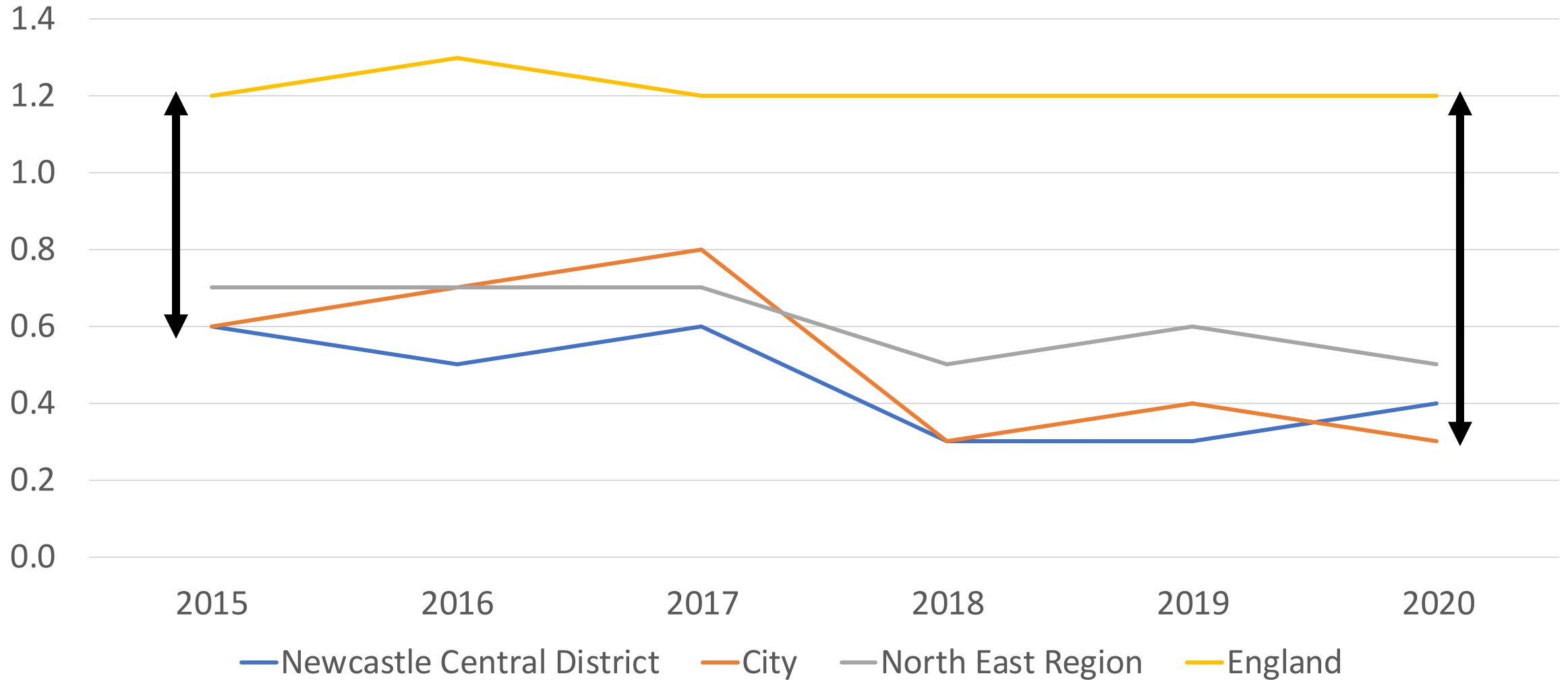
Helix 'bleak', residents

BACK CITY DEVELOPMENT



News

% employment in scientific research and development & other professional, scientific and technical activities



Benefits/opportunities for
university-city engagement

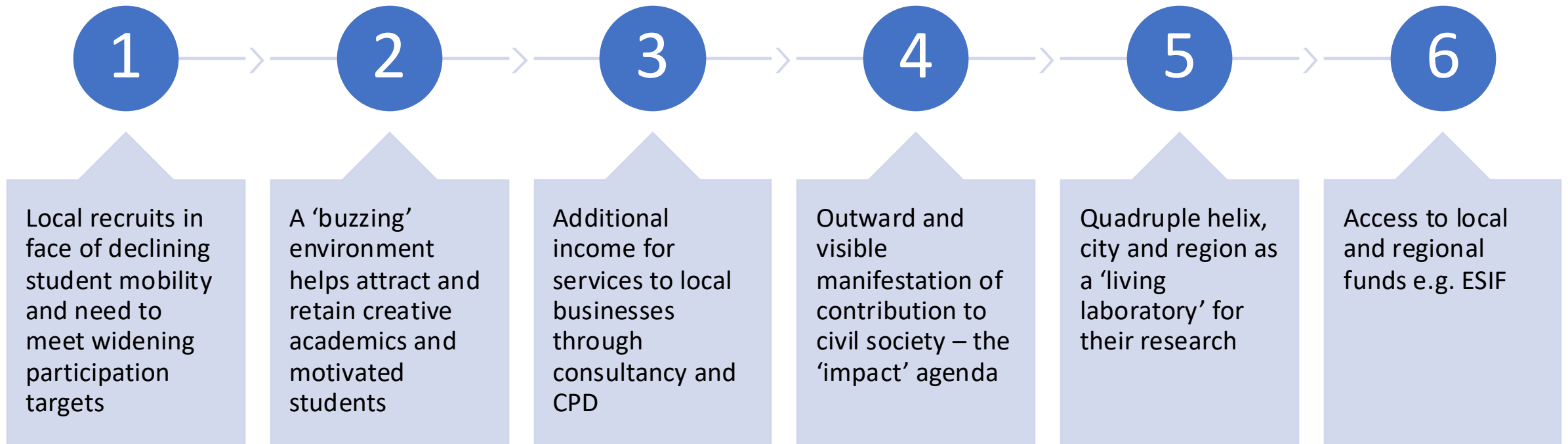
What universities can offer their cities and regions (1/2)

- Contributing to a rigorous assessment of the region's knowledge assets, capabilities and competencies, including those embedded in the university's own departments as well as local businesses.
- Bringing global awareness and partnerships across regional borders into the frame through evidenced based identification of competitive advantage around which regional strategies and resources can be concentrated.
- They can provide specialist research expertise and links to national and international networks of knowledge.
- Through their teaching programmes (including CPD and lifelong learning as well as under and post graduate courses) universities can enhance the human capital in the region

What can universities 'offer' their region? (2/2)

- Universities can contribute to capacity building on the demand side through new business formation, student enterprise, and graduate placements as well as encouraging staff to actively engage with local businesses.
- Universities as key anchor institutions can play an important role in building the social relations which underpin the regional innovation system for the formulation and indeed, implementation of innovation strategies.
- In meeting major societal challenges that have both global and local dimensions, universities can contribute to local knowledge creation and its translation into innovative products and public and private services.

What cities and regions can offer universities



In Summary

- There is a case for universities to play a more pivotal role in city and regional innovation, development and growth, and in a much more broadly defined role than just generators of technological research and other 'upstream' activities
- The diversity of a university's research base in conjunction with the opportunity arising from public funding to explore risky forms of research should be seen as the distinctive value of universities in regional innovation systems
- Working together with the public sector, business and other social partners could provide exciting opportunities for universities to broaden their role locally
- However policy makers nationally and locally as well as universities themselves should appreciate just how challenging this task will be and work together to address these challenges

Putting it into practice

Strategic questions

What do we do?

Should the focus be on specific problems or broad challenge?

Do we focus on what we are good at (supply led) or what people need (demand driven)?

Who determines our contribution – us or others?

Who does it?

Do we define the problems or allow others to?

Civic university or civic academics?

How do we do it?

Individual initiatives or collective endeavours?

Standalone special purpose vehicles or embedded in everything we do?

Bottom up or top down?

Where do we do it?

Local or global?

When do we do it?

Short term, reactive or long term, strategic?

Continuity versus change



Key operational questions

Can engagement be **embedded** in research and teaching rather than being seen as a standalone activity?

Who should get involved? Who decides what needs to happen?

How to get involved? Is there even the institutional space?

What is the right institutional set up? Who is responsible for **leading and co-ordinating** this process?

How can local engagement be rewarded and incentivised internally?
How might **internal systems** and processes support/mitigate?

What is the role of **senior leadership** in driving institutional involvement? Can it happen without their endorsement?

How should **impact** be defined and measured?




In conclusion:

Signature _____

Date _____

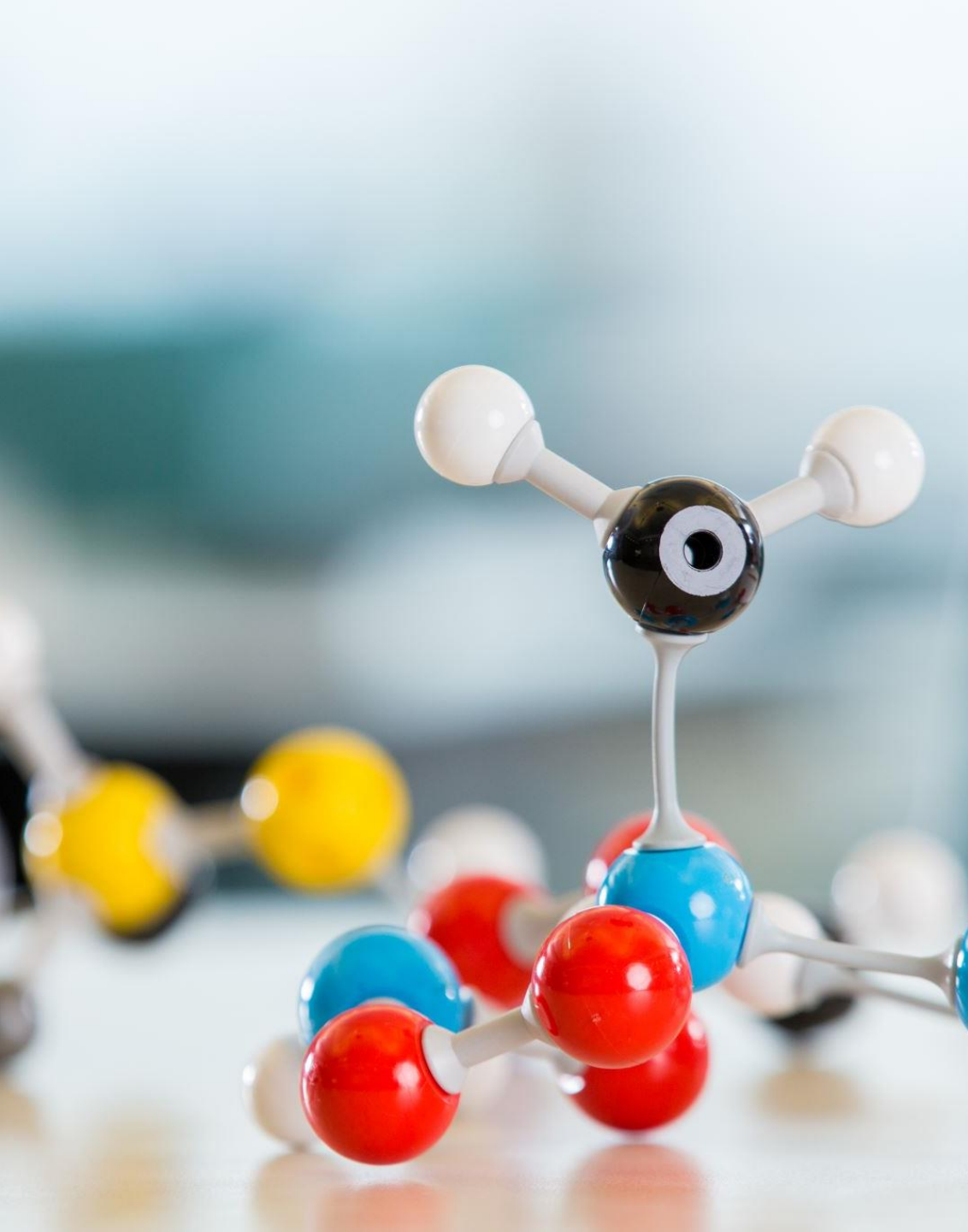




1

The potential contribution of universities to regional innovation should not be over-estimated -

Evidence suggests (Brown 2016) that the impacts attributed to universities in regional innovation systems (which underpin many policies) may be greatly exaggerated. There is little evidence to suggest that universities are drivers of regional innovation beyond a few high profile, non-replicable case studies of success.

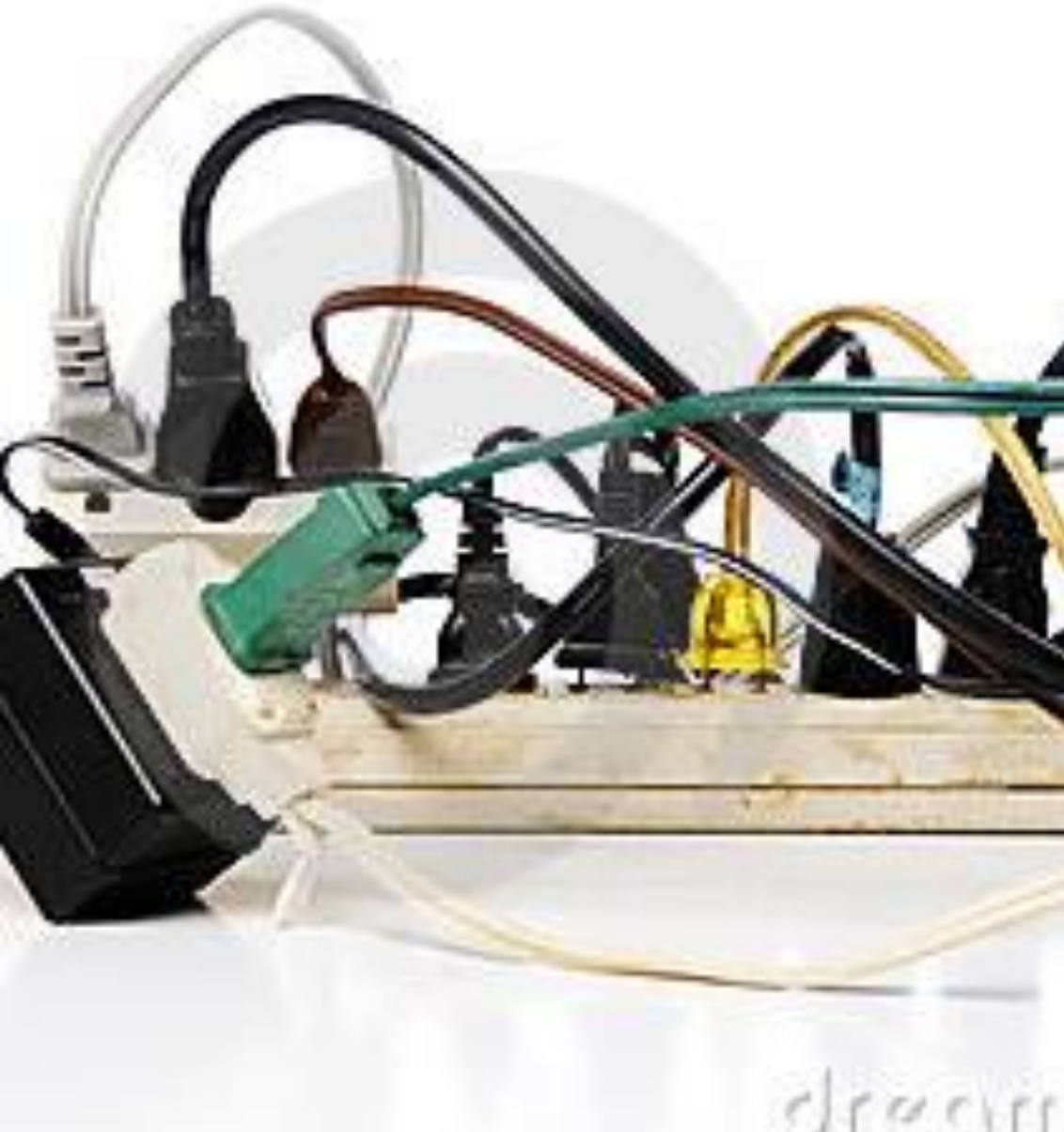


2

There should be a broader understanding of innovation and the different roles universities can play -

The focus of innovation policy has, to a large extent, been on supporting the initiatives that stimulate scientific research excellence measured by indicators such as patents with no or limited requirements for these to have local/regional application (Caniëls and Bosch, 2011). This has led to a narrow focus on technology transfer activities despite limited evidence that these make a significant impact on the regional innovation system.

3



Unrealistic expectations might lead to poor outcomes for all, especially in peripheral places - The increasing emphasis on universities being placed front and centre in contributing to their economic and social milieu runs the risk of universities becoming 'overloaded' with new missions (Enders and Boer, 2009). Our research (Goddard et al., 2014) showed that in peripheral, institutionally thin places there is the further challenge of an overdependence on universities as regional actors which may lead to them becoming weaker as they spread their resources ever more thinly in trying to fill the gaps in the local system, and are distracted from a focus on their core teaching and research missions.



4

More nuanced, bespoke policy making is required - Policy makers need to avoid policy 'fads' that are often grounded in weak evidence or based on inimitable, exceptional success stories from other places. While the orthodoxy in policy design for higher education and science and technology has up to now been largely spatially blind, the evidence shows that all regions are different and the distinctiveness of place matters greatly in ensuring effective policy development. Developing a deep understanding of the specificities of the regional system and its institutional character is critical.

5

A better understanding how universities operate is required

- As well as being highly heterogeneous, universities as institutions behave very differently to other public and private sector organisations. High levels of individual autonomy amongst academics is one of the areas of most distinct difference between universities and their partners in other sectors. Without understanding how universities work and organise themselves policy makers will struggle to find the levers to motivate them to engage in ways that can positively impact on regional innovation.



Grazie a tutti!

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