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**Universities and Society:
Whose Terms of
Engagement?
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# Universities and Society:  Whose Terms of Engagement?

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### Introduction

The idea of a socially engaged university belongs in a long line of moves to assign or appropriate the university for socially preferred purposes. Modernisation, national development and nation-building, 'manpower' and human capital development, democratisation and social transformation, economic growth and competitiveness have been among the imperatives that have underpinned the arguments for the university to transcend its inwardly defined core functions of teaching, learning and service and become more socially embedded.[1]  In the current conjuncture, the call for university engagement is part of the discourse of the 'knowledge society' which has seen higher education assume a new prominence within the requirements of a 'knowledge driven' economy but also subject to a sharper accountability discourse driven by governments, global financial institutions, donors and other social forces.

Universities are deemed to be critical to the knowledge society and economy but they are no longer upheld as the sole institutional location or agency for the production, use and dissemination of knowledge (Gibbons et al:1984). In this paradox of dethronement and restoration, what is the distinctive form of social engagement for the university in a knowledge society? Thinking through this issue requires reconceptualising not only the traditional missions, values and functions of the university but its familiar institutional forms and systemic locations and, most importantly, its relationships with an enlarged number of external constituencies. Universities in starkly different polities and economies are faced with the challenge of producing appropriate content for these reconceptualisations, as terminologies and discourses about engagement cross national, regional and continental boundaries and become globally potent.

University engagement as a 'black box' (Neave, 1998:246) concept is easy to advocate, adopt and celebrate. The view that 'engagement with wider society' should be a core value for universities, that universities should respond to the needs and expectations of

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1 See for example, Kerr (1995) on the land grant movement of the 1860's in the United States as well as war related research at US universities during the second world war, or Coleman(1994) on Japanese universities in

society and engage with multiple communities of interest, has become quite commonplace in developed and developing countries alike and is therefore not seriously contested at the level of value or principle. It is the unpacking of the 'black box' of engagement, both conceptually and empirically in the historical and geographical spaces that universities occupy that exposes the most stubborn and slippery normative and strategic challenges facing the translation of engagement into intelligible and sustainable contextual vocabularies.

In this paper, I argue that, difficult as it is to act on and manage, the only notion of engagement that makes sense in the complex terrains of higher education in different parts of the world is a multidimensional one whose internal tensions and often unpredictable consequences require adroit steering and constant negotiation. Only a notion that tolerates and holds together a series of differently motivated interactions with external societal interests can do justice to the fact that higher education has multiple purposes and ends, not all reducible to narrow corporate understandings of the 'knowledge society'. What is also to be considered in understanding the full measure of engagement are the interests of a range of internal and external stakeholder constituencies in the purposes, processes and 'products' of higher education and their different powers of leverage over them. I plan to interrogate the notion of engagement through juxtaposing higher education purposes and stakeholder interests in order to illuminate the terms of engagement, both in relation to the dominant social forces that are defining and driving engagement today and, more critically, in respect of other non-state and non-corporate social interests that are often absent or only rhetorically present in the engagement debate. I then go on to raise some questions about whether and to what extent a multi-dimensional view of social engagement is

applicable beyond traditional public or non-profit universities to the great variety of institutions, organisations and arrangements that are now designated as higher education.

sustainable for universities in poor countries in the developing world which are acutely constrained in their engagement choices by local socio-economic and political impediments, and by the disadvantaged positioning of their countries and regions within the global 'asymmetries of power' which make them more vulnerable to certain types of 'reformist' discourses pertaining to economic liberalisation.

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the 1880's supporting 'modernisation' through their teaching and research, and the political and human resource requirements in the Soviet model of universities.

I conclude by considering an overall normative frame that could be invoked (which goes beyond the purposes of higher education) to adjudicate contesting claims of different social forces when operating with a pluralistic notion of engagement of higher education. In grappling with the above issues, I seek to hold on to a Habermasian ideal in the midst of numerous struggles within and over the university by asking about the forms or models of engagement that would enable the university to deploy its considerable range of infrastructural and intellectual resources to benefit wider society and yet carve out a space for critical debate and independent reflection on a host of social, political and economic issues that shape and colour our lives locally and globally.

**Engagement-premises, purposes and patrons**

The engagement debate has to contend with the weariness (and scepticism) of many in higher education because of the ongoing intense scrutiny of higher education, both through external inspection and internal introspection. Universities have to negotiate their way across myriad, often contradictory demands - to change radically in many respects and remain stable and consistent in others, to account to many stakeholders with hugely different needs and yet retain a recognisable measure of autonomy and independence, to become more individually competitive at national, regional and international levels while operating in partnership and co-operative mode with other institutions, to compete successfully with vast commercial organisations which are becoming education vendors on an increasingly global scale, to increase access to formerly excluded student constituencies and improve the quality of provision with budgets that have not increased significantly, to retain a coherent identity and recognisable 'brand' while decentralising, outsourcing and 'unbundling', to be a space for critical and reflective thought while responding to the knowledge needs of industry and local communities, to promote social justice and the public good in a global environment where the entrepreneurial pursuit of private goods is the norm. The path of engagement will have to be constructed through these many antinomies of demand for change and continuity.

Inayatullah and Gidley (2001:1) argue that "…. the university stands at the gateway of a range of futures." How true is such a prognosis? For many, the fate of the university at the dawn of a new millenium appears to be already sealed, its future inextricably linked to and shaped by the 'inevitabilities' of globalisation. These inevitabilities include the usual suspects – the hegemony of the market and its package of values and priorities, the weakening of national sovereignities, the global dominance of organisations like the International Monetary

Fund and the World Trade Organisation, the powerful demands on knowledge organisations by the innovation needs of competitive economies, the 'commodification of knowledge'(Schugurensky :1999) and cultural homogenisation through global media and communications technologies. For others, the futures of the university are still unfolding, undoubtedly impacted on by the dynamics of globalisation but open to intelligently chosen interventions which seek to mediate some of the trajectories of globalisation to order to better serve local purposes and needs. This approach to globalisation and its impact on areas of social provision like education does not see globalisation outcomes as inevitable (Mittelman and Othman,2001:7) or following a single pre-ordained path or as a 'unified' (Burbules and Torres, 2002:13), symmetrical, uncontested and context-free phenomenon. The unfolding of globalisation is seen as holding spaces and opportunities for different outcomes, some of them potentially more emancipatory than others for larger numbers of people in developing countries who are currently excluded from many of the much heralded benefits of globalisation.

If engagement is about negotiating a broad set of choices and directions for the university, it can only be within the context of a view that does not see the futures of the university as already fixed within a levelling globalisation 'teleology', notwithstanding the overt and covert ways in which globalisation imperatives pressurise and homogenise higher education. Policies and strategies intended to give effect to the idea of an engaged university cannot but be located within the economic and political demands of globalisation, especially in its neo-liberal incarnation. But the eventual outcomes of engagement, whatever the intent, will depend on how the imperatives of globalisation intersect with local conjunctures and how these are interpreted and layered onto existing institutional histories. The terms of engagement will be shaped by the strategic use of the opportunities and spaces afforded by the intersections of global and local pressures and will unavoidably include a variety of trade-offs made by the socially engaged university in order to succeed (or survive in some instances) This is an issue of more acute challenge and consequence for crisis-ridden universities in many poor countries.

The initiative of the Association of Commonwealth Universities(ACU) to provoke 'worldwide debate among some five hundred member universities'(Coldstream:2003) on the issue of university engagement is a powerful re-affirmation of the broad social purposes of higher education in a context where narrowly economic purposes are imposing their

dominance. It is a call to universities to take on the accountability imperative proactively and pre-emptively, and move the debate about the future of higher education beyond defences of failing models or critiques of developments in higher education which offer no feasible alternatives. In an argument that fits well into the ethos of self-regulation, it proposes engagement motivated not by a form of Kantian hypothetical imperative but a categorical imperative which is premised on what is rational and right for universities to do and legislated largely by and for universities themselves. In a project that aspires to a global reach, the arguments about the scope of engagement in the consultation document, especially the checklist of 'indicators' for 'assessing progress' in institutional engagement, have the potential to shape and give direction to conceptualisations and practices of engagement in a number of contexts, countries and regions worldwide, even where there are no Commonwealth universities.

The opportunity and danger in this initiative to 'universalise' certain core understandings of engagement lies in the fundamental premises on the basis of which one mobilises around engagement. It is obviously preferable to aim at the institutionalisation of the most conceptually and contextually nuanced versions of engagement and at weakening its worst reductionist forms. In the search for the 'fundamentals' of engagement, the balancing act of institutions in accommodating the pulls and pushes of stakeholders with varying powers of 'persuasion' should be seen as an enduring existential challenge rather than as a settled issue that privileges some possibilities of engagement and closes off others. Conceptualising engagement as an ongoing struggle to accommodate contending normative and strategic demands may help to focus universities on the varying purposes of higher education, and the rationales and drivers of engagement associated with those purposes. It may also make it possible for the ACU framework for engagement to assume the higher moral ground in conceptualising and steering the 'futures' of the university in a more socially nuanced way when viewed against other global developments impacting on higher education. These include, for example, the new World Bank framework for higher education which will directly impact on all countries applying for Bank loans for tertiary education reform, and the World Trade Organisation framework for the General Agreement on Trade in Services which seeks to bring higher education services under the auspices of international trade agreements. These two frameworks also seek to bring higher education into a larger social arena but their underlying values, political premises and economic conditionalities, linked as they

unambiguously are to market efficiencies and freedoms, are threatening to a fuller notion of human and social development.

The approach to engagement of the ACU consultation document is appropriately comprehensive in scope, both in relation to the range of societal stakeholders as well as to the types, levels and objectives of interactions. The formulations open up an ambitious and generous space for the practices of university engagement, one that is potentially enabling and beneficial for the multiple purposes of higher education and for different actors and stakeholders within and outside the university. "Every institution has already developed working connections with policy makers, industry and commerce, local communities and the wider society; none starts with a clean slate. The whole web of these interactions and the setting of university policy to foster them are what we term 'engagement'.(2001) Engagement is a comprehensive term for all aspects of a university's policy and practice. It " implies strenuous, thoughtful, argumentative interaction with the non-university world in at least four spheres: setting universities' aims, purposes and priorities, relating teaching and learning to the wider world; the back-and-forth dialogue between researchers and practitioners; and taking on wider responsibilities as neighbours and citizens."(2001) The document makes it clear that basic and applied knowledge, high level skills for social and economic development and constant responsiveness to societal needs and requests for new programmes and services are now required of universities, irrespective of country context or circumstance. What is also important to note is that engagement is not seen merely as one noble initiative among any number of others. Neither is it a random collection of ad hoc and disparate activities. The ACU position on engagement is a comprehensive and maximalist one, argued for as the very 'raison d'etre' of the university.

On this view, engagement covers a huge canvas of university activities and operations and has many interlocutors and addressees. But not being an end in itself, what academic and societal ends can and should engagement serve? A possible answer lies in the way one disaggregates engagement. This itself can be done in different ways. One can disaggregate engagement through looking at its meanings and implications for university goal-setting in relation to the traditional core functions of teaching, research and service. One can consider engagement according to university location and function in the global or regional or national political economy. One can look at its implications for different institutional types in higher education (public, private, face to face, distance, electronic, etc.) or the different ideological

roles and identities associated with universities as a "site of dissent…a corporation(run as a business),…as a place for academic leadership(teaching and additive knowledge),…as providing the ideological legitimacy of the state,….as a public service(the university that exists for the community)."(Inayatulla and Gidley, 2000:226) One can link engagement to the aims and purposes of higher education, or to the interpretations and expectations of key actors, stakeholders and beneficiaries within and external to higher education. These and, no doubt, other possible routes of disaggregation could all produce useful understandings to illuminate engagement in its many complexities and contradictions.

I want to look at engagement vis a vis the multiple purposes of higher education and associated stakeholder interests in those purposes. The White Paper on Higher Education in South Africa (1997) is a good example of a national policy framework for higher education restructuring that lays out a number of different but related purposes for higher education, in this case linked to the needs of social reconstruction and a better quality of life for all in a post-transition society. These are:

"To meet the learning needs and aspirations of individuals through the development of their intellectual abilities and aptitudes throughout their lives. Higher education equips individuals to make the best use of their talents and of the opportunities offered by society for self-fulfilment. It is thus a key allocator of life chances, an important vehicle for achieving equity in the distribution of opportunity and achievement among South African citizens.

To address the development needs of society and provide the labour market, in a knowledge-driven and knowledge-dependent society, with the ever-changing high-level competencies and expertise necessary for the growth and prosperity of a modern economy. Higher education teaches and trains people to fulfil specialised social functions, enter the learned professions, or pursue vocations in administration, trade, industry, science and technology and the arts.

Contribute to the socialisation of enlightened, responsible and constructively critical citizens. Higher education encourages the development of a reflective capacity and a willingness to review and renew prevailing ideas, policies and practices based on a commitment to the common good.

To contribute to the creation, sharing and evaluation of knowledge. Higher education engages in the pursuit of academic scholarship and intellectual inquiry in all fields of human understanding, through research, learning and teaching."(1997:7-8)

Economic growth and prosperity and labour market needs are identified as necessary purposes for higher education but so are the facilitation of equity and the development of an enlightened and responsible citizenry. Individual aspirations for intellectual development and upward social mobility are flagged but so are the requirements of the 'common good'. The White Paper seeks to embrace the multiplicity and diversity of ends and objectives in higher education, covering the spectrum of what is both valuable and necessary for a higher education system to do and to aspire to, both educationally and socially. As necessary a spectrum as this list covers given South Africa's task of social reconstruction, it immediately exposes the huge challenges in meeting the objectives of the whole ambitious package in a single system or worse still, in single institutions, particularly in a context of limited resources and capacity, and competitive behaviours for market share.

Many higher education policy frameworks as well as institutional mission statements contain similar mixes of purposes, embracing societal needs that range from the hardnosedly economic to the more intangibly social and civic. It is many of the latter which tend to lose out in the engagement debate through being treated as 'good to have' ends that are aspirational and sometimes even achievable (perhaps serendipitously) but which are not quite on the same plane as pragmatic 'necessary to have' outcomes. The latter often carry associated incentives and disincentives that concentrate the engaging intent better than the former could. Benefits to industry or 'the economy' are increasingly expected as direct outcomes to be delivered by universities while benefits to other non-corporate stakeholders continue to be viewed as indirect possibilities, trickling eventually down unspecified societal pathways to address the more abstract purposes of higher education.

Making the notion of engagement more explicitly practical requires greater attention to strategies, 'indicators' and proxies for evaluating activities and interactions in relation to the more abstract purposes of higher education. If not, the content of engagement will remain largely shaped by what is easier to evaluate and quantify, driven by powerful stakeholders (including governments and the corporate sector) who strongly prioritise knowledge and skills for economic growth and competitiveness rather than by civil society constituencies whose priorities may require knowledges and skills that could facilitate greater levels of

democratic consolidation, social cohesion, social justice and other such values and objectives encapsulated in the broad purposes of higher education

The range of purposes in higher education point to different spheres of societal existence that are sometimes in alignment but very often in contention with one another. The nature of the 'knowledge society' desired by innovation-hungry multi-national corporations or tolerated by insecure governments may not include the kinds of knowledge needed by critical citizens who may want to engage with the negative impacts of the global dispensation of power and privilege or with local and regional policy choices and behaviours. However, even as a jostling unruly package of tasks, the purposes of higher education point to different but equally important dimensions of social need and aspiration and the measure of the high expectations of higher education in addressing those needs and fulfilling those aspirations.

The contending nature of the multiple purposes of higher education is nowhere more evident than when one seeks to relate the purposes of higher education to the range of stakeholders interested in how a university conceptualises and acts on engagement, stakeholders with sometimes overlapping, sometimes quite sharply exclusive interests and needs. The ACU document points to many of the key stakeholders -government, industry and commerce, health and education leaders, administrators, planners and student representatives, the professions, employers, local communities, taxpayers and voters. Responding satisfactorily to the expectations of this range of stakeholders (who even within their own categories will not reflect homogenous positions on their expectations) is a tall order for universities as for any other social institution. Two points need to be made in this regard. First, the engagement debate cannot be silent about internal role-players like academics and researchers. To view them primarily as the 'delivery agents' of the engaged university removes the fundamental stake that they have in the engaged university. They are not stakeholders in the way in which industry or local communities are but they are critical to how sophisticatedly engagement is interpreted and how willingly it is implemented. They certainly have a stake in the nature and consequences (both intended and unintended) of the reconciliation of academic values with external social demands, in how the multiple purposes of higher education are to be held together in teaching and research, and in how to reconcile conflicting priorities and maintain academic integrity. In the paradigm of a university as a communicative and interactive space for and with multiple stakeholders (Delanty:2001) one has to ensure that their role is not confined to being only the technically expert interpreters of

the needs of other stakeholders. Their own particular stakeholder identity in the process of defining and negotiating the parameters of engagement must be factored into the stakeholder equation. This does not exclude the possibility that many of them will comfortably ally their academic and personal interests with those of powerful paying external stakeholders. On the other hand, some of their interests will surely also include a broad defence of academic ideals or emancipatory social goals within the fray of engagement. Whatever the interests of such internal actors might be, they should not be underplayed or excluded in the continuous negotiations over the nature and terms of engagement

The second point in regard to contending stakeholder interests has to do with the involvement and role of external non-state and non-market stakeholders. What leverage, capacity and knowledge do they have to direct the university's attention and resources to their needs, and to shape the university's response accordingly? Guy Neave reminds us that the word 'stakeholder' encompasses actors with different powers in relation to what is at stake. "As Napoleon the Pig observed in Orwell's satire Animal Farm, so with stakeholders and partners-some are indeed more equal than others."(Neave,1998:247) Barnett also points to the more compelling leveraging power of corporate stakeholders over others in shaping the content of engagement: "Engagement can take many forms, but some will be promoted more vigorously than others. The big battalions will favour the more performative versions of engagement: the university will be persuaded to structure itself in favour of activities likely to have exchange value in the knowledge economy…."(Barnett, 2003:138) In the battle to shape the terms of engagement, there is hardly likely to be a 'level playing field' in stakeholder power and influence.

In a context of acute pressure on universities to develop additional sources of income, to cultivate industry partnerships and find sustainable markets for their knowledge 'products', universities can be easily persuaded that their primary engagement interlocutors (and beneficiaries) should be from the corporate world. There are undeniably benefits from that interaction for other stakeholders as well. Higher education and industry collaboration could lead internally to curriculum innovation and renewal, and to new research directions and sources of funding. Externally, it could provide possibilities for local or regional development or increased employment opportunities in niche areas. But what are the possibilities that civil society stakeholders or small local communities will be considered as critical partners in university engagement, especially where they have little or no purchasing power over

knowledge products or expertise, or have knowledge needs that, if addressed, may generate tension for the university with corporate engagement partners? The principle of cross-subsidisation offers an obvious way of supporting activities relating to societal stakeholders who are unable to be paying 'customers' but only if the university recognises its responsibility to take account of the needs of non-corporate stakeholders in its circle of engagement. The problem becomes more complicated when other interested parties want access to the knowledge 'products' commissioned from the university by corporate stakeholders. What is the responsibility of university researchers and administrators if an environmental impact study commissioned by a petroleum company reveals massive threats of environmental degradation and dangers to the health of poor communities living in the vicinity? How does a university juggle its engagement responsibility to industry partners and to community development in such a situation, aware of the possibility that dominant market interests are likely to trump those of all others if left unmediated?

To discharge its responsibility as a 'discursive community' and provide a communicative space for stakeholder interaction, the university could facilitate a dialogue between different stakeholders whose claims to knowledge and its ownership conflict with each other. In fact, the provision of this kind of discursive forum has been identified by Delanty as the distinctive feature of the university in a knowledge society. Hitching its star instrumentally neither to the state, nor to the market nor to internal academic interests, the university functions in a way that "mediates, or interconnects, several discourses in society."(Delanty, 2001:vii) For Delanty, a defining part of the university's transformative mission and role lies in its functioning as a Habermasian public sphere in order to "expand reflexively the discursive capacity of society and by doing so to enhance citizenship in the knowledge society."(2001:vii) In operating in this way, the university enhances both the democratisation of knowledge as well as the participatory capacity of citizens to deal with global cultural and technological forces. From the point of view of differentially empowered stakeholders in the engagement debate, a 'communicative understanding of the university' presumes that the university has a responsibility to "'become the clearing house for all the voices that would otherwise be silent or muted beyond recognition"(Delanty citing Fuller, 2001:156). To the many interpretations of university engagement with and for citizens and communities must be added this dimension of enabling civil society discourses and their associated interests to assert their claims and concerns in a context where other more powerfully driven discourses are seeking to shape the meanings of the knowledge society.

Functioning as a discursive space for stakeholder claims will not always spare university participants from entering the debate as affected and interested parties since the dispute is also about conflicting claims on the university itself. This is especially true in a situation where the corporate partner is a reluctant participant and not forthcoming enough in terms of its own social responsibilities. The university will be confronted with having to reconcile norms and strategies which have been driven apart by engagement dilemmas, and make tough political, economic and moral choices in order to ensure that the values contained in the purposes of higher education, the ideals contained in the university mission, and social goals pertaining to democracy and justice are not compromised fatally in the cut and thrust of engagement. This could occasionally require the university to be more interventionist in translating its broader social responsibility into choices that contribute to the weakening of the asymmetrical power relations between different stakeholders in the engagement arena, thus mediating their negative consequences as much as is possible.

I would like to make one last point about 'citizens' as stakeholders in and partners of the engaged university. The ACU consultation document highlights the important role of citizens in shaping the nature and scope of university engagement, seeking to extend the traditional way of thinking about 'community service' as one of the core functions of universities. Community service usually includes the provision of continuing and adult education opportunities, making available university resources and expertise for the support and development of local communities, and in some instances 'service learning' arrangements for credit- bearing student participation in projects agreed to with communities. The consultation document argues for a view of engagement that moves citizen involvement much more centrally into the operations of the university, right from the point of setting university purposes and priorities to exposing research results to 'public debate' beyond peer and expert review. The centrality of citizen involvement in higher education clearly makes for a more socially aware and socially connected university. It also brings in train all the complex problems of the appropriate structural and process arrangements for such involvement in university planning, stemming from the differential powers, limits and responsibilities of the role players in the interactions of university constituencies and citizens.(Muller and Subotzky, 2001:163-182)

In all of this, there is the problem that 'citizen' may too easily be thought of in terms that do not go beyond the immediacy of local communities. Substantial university

involvement in local community development needs would already be an enormous gain in the trajectory of university engagement but this does not exhaust the possibilities of engagement with citizens and communities. The parameters of engagement must include wider conceptualisations of social groups -viewed locally, nationally, regionally and globally- and take on board issues that have to do with, for example, the requirements of distributive justice, the causes and consequences of asymmetrical power relations between strong and weak economies, and new forms of marginalisation and impoverishment fostered by globalisation. All of these impact on the meaning and possibilities of citizenship and community development at very local levels and need to be addressed in order to give full effect to the ACU view that the essence of engagement is 'taking the world with full seriousness' (2001:38)

Although it is clear that context and circumstance will shape the particular histories of engagement, I would like to end this section by taking stock of certain critical starting points and core premises that could enable engagement to fulfil its potential to transform universities on the basis of a greater social connectivity that is intended to maximise the conditions for human development in a knowledge society:

The engagement debate is not foreclosed by the power and impact of globalisation on higher education. Some of the space to manoeuvre may be narrowed down, even more so in the margins of the global political economy but, as has been pointed by many globalisation theorists, other spaces open up for transformatory action. Certain types of normative and strategic choices can and should be exercised in order to maximise progressive outcomes from different forms of engagement. The realisation of any particular set of possibilities depends on the purposes and terms of the engagement between higher education and society, on the power of the actors who shape or influence those terms, and on the interplay between institutional policies and politics on the one hand and national or regional political and economic circumstances on the other.

The parameters and possibilities of engagement can be more concretely understood when related to the purposes and ends of higher education. These purposes are manifold, embracing different kinds of societal needs ranging from economic growth and human resource development to strengthening democracy and the values of social justice. The strategies for engagement must be genuinely open to as many of these pathways as are urgent and necessary in particular social contexts.

To be maximally useful and least distorted, engagement should be understood as pluralistic and multidimensional. The different dimensions of engagement may sit very tensely with each other and may not often be reconcilable in a smooth and complacent view of engagement. The way of being for the university is a constant struggle to balance different forms of engagement rather than a settled view of engagement driven by or effectively serving only the most powerful stakeholders. A complex view of engagement can also function as a yardstick by which to critique and correct one-sided or reductionist views of engagement.

The engaged university has to ensure that the full range of stakeholders is included in its societal interactions, not only those who are the most economically powerful and clamorous. For universities, the interactions with corporate stakeholders as a definitive component of engagement is clearly necessary and unavoidable in the current conjuncture, and carries as many exciting possibilities for university transformation as worrying ones. But the participation of non-corporate stakeholders has to be an equally definitive dimension of engagement in order to bring in the full range of societal interests on which to engage. A Rawlsian argument about whether and how engagement serves the interests of the worst-off in society may be useful to invoke in establishing the range of stakeholders and beneficiaries of university engagement.

In reaching out to citizens, engagement cannot be reduced to community development in ways that do not bring into the picture the global issues pertaining to the asymmetrical distribution of power and privilege. The cosmopolitan and internationalist role of higher education requires that the gaze of engagement is global as much as local, combining moral and intellectual concerns about the nature of the global society that is emerging and its differential impact on local communities in the different countries where Commonwealth universities are located.

**Engagement for universities or for all higher education providers?**

My argument about engagement is, firstly, that its scope and reach is better understood when seen against the requirements of the multiple purposes of higher education and their associated societal goods, and secondly, that one of its primary challenge lies in accommodating the full range of stakeholder interests in the purposes of higher education. Can such a view of engagement be applied to the variety of institutions and arrangements

commonly designated as higher education or does it make most sense in relation to universities alone? Many of these new forms of higher education do not include what are often understood to be defining elements of higher education, for example, a spread of qualifications across a range of faculties and subjects, some relationship between teaching and research, the provision of senior postgraduate qualifications especially at doctoral level, some activities of community service, etc. The question about the applicability of engagement begs a prior one as to whether the different purposes of higher education can be achieved within single institutions, even universities, given the current climate of demand and constraint facing most of them. This problem is particularly acute for institutions that may be the only universities in small poor countries. Mario et al point to the tough challenge facing Eduardo Mondlane University in Mozambique in trying to reconcile its "role as the country's only full-blown university with demands for immediate market relevance" having to compete with single purpose for-profit institutions while also driven by 'ideals of service and community development'. (2001:63)

Under the pressures of massification, the skills needs of the knowledge economy, developments in information and communications technologies, and the thrust towards the view of education as a market, one of the most striking developments in higher education has been the proliferation of organisational forms and modalities for higher education provision. Public and private universities and colleges, corporate universities for in-house workforce education and training, for-profit and non-profit institutions, face- to -face, distance, electronic and mixed mode provision, universities that combine research, teaching and service, institutions that do no or little research and those that offer only career oriented programmes in one or a few fields (for example, business management and information technology) all lay claim to being 'higher education' institutions. This development is hailed as proof of the innovative and exciting directions in which higher education is moving beyond the missions, identities and modalities of the traditional university. Sometimes, within the celebratory accounts of new developments in higher education, there are brief, often unelaborated, cautions about the need for values in education that are required for living in democratic societies amid the seductions of technological connectivity, virtuality and competition- driven market responsiveness in higher education.(Salmi, 2000:3) These cautions are a good opening to reflect on the broader societal responsibilities of the new institutional types in higher education.

A hundred flowers are already blooming in terms of institutional typology but there is also the dizzying phenomenon of increasing 'virtuality' in higher education, understood not only in terms of campus eliminating electronic provision but also the trend towards the 'unbundling' of a number of higher education activities and functions, usually held together within a single institution. The scope of such unbundling covers not only to the separation of the often associated functions of teaching and research but even functions within teaching and administration, for example, programme design and delivery, assessment, and certification, or 'registration, payment and student recordkeeping' offered as separate packages by different service providers.(Newman,2000:3) Efficiency and cost become the prime criteria for evaluating a range of unbundled functions. In such a context of 'unbundling', it is not clear who, if anyone, will be answerable for the issue of societal engagement. The issue of engagement may very well falter on the scattering of functions implied in the trend towards unbundling as well as towards "coalitions, partnerships and networks". Scott points out that, as traditionally constituted institutions and systems decline, the problem may "not come from new kinds of 'university' but from no kinds of 'university'. (1999:9)

The issue of engagement responsibility also raises its head in relation to higher education institutions offering qualifications across national borders. Do transnational providers have any responsibilities for interacting with citizens in local community development issues in the different countries and regions where they now operate? Recent debates and initiatives(UNESCO:2002) about the possibilities of international regulation of transnational providers of higher education have focused on the issue of codes of conduct for such providers. Their concerns have primarily and rightly been addressed to whether the quality of provision of what is offered abroad is equivalent to the quality of provision in the country of origin of the provider, whether the curriculum seeks to be reasonably context sensitive and whether the appropriate formalities of local regulation have been observed. The requirements of societal engagement on transnational providers within the growing phenomenon of 'borderless' education remains an issue to be addressed in broader discussions about globalisation and higher education. Its resolution is likely to be related to the debate about whether, in the light of the demands of a 'global knowledge society', it makes sense to think of higher education as a 'global public good'. If the answer is affirmative, it would require all forms of higher education, not only universities, to be accountable for promoting such a global public good within the context of their own

particular missions, rather than operating within the dichotomy to which van Damme (2002) draws attention-that public universities serve public and private good purposes but that for-profit private higher education institutions serve only private interests.

One approach to the engagement conundrum lies in following the argument of those who seek to distinguish sharply between the university and other forms of higher education provision, many of which offer career-oriented programmes responsive largely to the training needs of the private sector. Altbach has argued that such for-profit institutions or arrangements should not be designated as universities or offer academic degrees since they do not engage in research or community service, offer specialised competency training only in certain market-related fields, and indicate no interest in or responsibility for public good issues. (2001:2) On this definitional re-ordering of higher education institutions, the obligations of engagement could be made to apply only to universities. If one wanted to render this positively, one could argue that the vocational and commercial missions of the other provider types, especially for-profit providers, automatically contribute to economic (therefore social) development and require no further indicators of societal engagement. On a negative reading, one could suppose that those provider types, especially in their lower level training role, lack the tradition, the gravitas, the capacity or the inclination to contribute to broader social goals through research or academic expertise or public good commitments. Attractive as this view might be for those disturbed by the appropriation of the university 'brand' (Scott, 1999:8), it presumes too tidy a world where traditional universities will remain on their side of the definitional fence or that non-traditional providers will cede the ground that they have already occupied in the university domain.

Exemption from the social engagement imperative for more privatised forms of higher education removes any pressure on them to give considered attention to the forms and parameters of the societal obligations that relate to their educational functions or even their commercial missions. Perhaps the least unsatisfactory and most open-ended starting point in such a complex and evolving issue is to think of different, perhaps lesser and greater forms of engagement for different types of higher education providers rather than a total exemption for any single type. Institutions constituted as universities have a clear obligation to foster engagement on a number of societal fronts, stemming from their wide missions and their multifaceted activities, many of which are supported by public funds. But so do other institutions, including for-profit ones, which are located within communities of need and

which prepare large numbers and diverse categories of students for passage into the economy, society and community. The development of criteria and indicators for these different institutional forms of engagement and some form of monitoring could become an interesting debate within the jurisdiction of quality assurance and accreditation, especially if one wants to ensure that teaching and learning, research and community service are all reconstructed through the prism of engagement. This would give quality assurance a more explicit role in university transformation but only on the proviso that quality assurance became much more socially reflective and less bureaucratically self-referential.

**Engagement: Contexts and Conjunctures**

To what extent is it possible to develop a common conception of the fundamentals of engagement that will have the same resonance for the large number of universities operating in different parts of the world, in countries with different forms of insertion into regional and global economic and political blocs? Given the relativising impact of history, geography and economic conjuncture and without much more research on actual contextual realities, it may be really difficult to make non-trivial observations about university engagement that make sense across contexts and continents without significant qualifications of all kinds. Most higher education institutions are having to engage with the demands of radical change and increased responsiveness in their own societies, operating in contexts where local demands are made more acute by the pressures of a globalising economy. What, for example, could be the content of engagement for universities in sub-Saharan Africa in countries whose populations, viewed on a global scale, are the most impoverished and endangered in relation to the basic necessities of human survival and dignity? The enormous scale of human struggle with poverty, disease, drought, famine, civil war, political authoritarianism and decades of debilitating structural adjustment programmes provides obvious ground for social engagement by universities which represent resources of infrastructure, knowledge, information, expertise, agency and activism, no matter how meagre or impoverished they themselves might be. But what are the real possibilities to develop and sustain appropriate policies and practices for engagement that do not become captive to exclusively entrepreneurial rationales and drivers in situations of extreme funding and resource constraint?

The current debate about engagement, especially as it might apply to African universities, has had powerful predecessors. Debates about universities and their social

responsibilities had already been waged in many African countries in the post-independence period of the sixties. Political leaders, communities, donors, intellectuals, academics and students were all enthused by the idea of the 'developmental 'university as part of the development armoury of the new nation-state. The terms of engagement were quite explicit-Nyerere's well known formulation is blunt about the fact that universities were instruments for national development: "The University in a developing society must put the emphasis of its work on subjects of immediate moment to the nation in which it exists, and it must be committed to the people of that nation and their humanistic goals. We in poor societies can only justify expenditure on a University-of any type-if it promotes real development of our people…. The role of a University in a developing nation is to contribute; to give ideas, manpower, and service for the furtherance of human equality, human dignity and human development. " (cited in Colemann, 1994:335) Apart from the political unit of reference (the nation state) and despite the difference in context and period, the ACU document expresses similar sentiments about what society expects of universities:  "The world depends increasingly on universities for knowledge, prosperity, health and policy-thinking. Universities are thus required to become engines of development for people, institutions and democracy in general".   (2001:i). In order to develop an appropriate understanding of university engagement within the requirements of the 'knowledge society', it is necessary to interrogate the continuities and discontinuities between the current 'developmentalist' notion of the university as it might apply in sub-Saharan Africa and the conceptualisations and practices of the earlier post-independence period.


Previous debates in other developing country contexts about the societal responsibilities of universities have contained similar sentiments to the African expectations of universities.  A review published in the mid-seventies of selected higher education institutions and their impact on national development in Asia and Latin America and Africa makes for familiar reading. "In the developing countries, the focus of development is determined by the rural character of the societies, their relative underdevelopment, and the necessity of grappling with such rudimentary needs as food and nutrition, public health, low per capita incomes, unemployment or underemployment, weak spots in the educational system, the preservation of cultural values, and the movement towards equity and social or ethnic equality. The real issue is what higher education can do and what it is doing about

these fundamental needs. " (Thompson et al, 1976: 6). Also emphasised is the necessity for higher education to support nation-building, build national leadership and foster cultural cohesion as well as cultural tolerance.

In an analysis that is still pertinent, the Latin American report sets out the parameters for engagement in identifying five 'major capacities' for social improvement against which the contribution of higher education could be judged: " (1) the capacity to comprehend, define, and give priorities to society's needs and aspirations; (2) the capacity to comprehend and define the problems that arise in the process of meeting these social needs and aspirations; (3) the capacity to formulate various alternatives for solving problems; (4) the capacity to apply appropriate technology to alternative solutions;(5) the capacity to select and apply the various mechanisms, strategies, and policies to solve these problems."(Thompson et al, 1976;191). In the regional reports from all three continents, the approach is similar- higher education "in the service of development can help increase the capacity of nations to produce more … material goods …  but it must also reinforce concern for justice, morality, and human dignity."(Thompson et al, 1976:167) The scope of impact related expectation includes an increased measure of economic goods but equally strongly emphasizes the importance of social, political and ethical goods in the social engagement of universities. These broader social goods are no less critical today for university engagement. The challenges of poverty and unemployment, of social exclusion, of access to human rights and many other necessities highlighted in the earlier period of development discourse continue and persist but in a way that is now complicated by the framing power of new global discourses of accountability whose particular understandings of knowledge and competence may be too limiting for a comprehensive view of human and social development as envisaged in both earlier and current debates.

From the experience of the past of both positive and negative impacts of requiring universities to become instruments and agents of national development, there are many cautionary lessons for the contemporary debates on engagement as the raison d'etre of universities Taking into account some of the key lessons of history with regard to social engagement, how can universities in sub-Saharan Africa make sense of the current imperatives of accountability and societal responsiveness in a context that is paradoxically similar in respect of wretched life conditions and meagre opportunities for vast numbers of the population, and yet different in relation to the discourse of the knowledge economy in a

globalising world, the weakened role of the nation state and the power of the market in shaping social development? What possibilities of normative and strategic choice for engagement are there for universities that have themselves been devastated by funding neglect due to sharp reductions in state and donor support, 'exploding enrolments' which put a strain on physical infrastructure like classrooms and residences, teaching capacity and quality of provision, overcrowded libraries with dated holdings and general deterioration of working conditions and demoralisation of staff all round? (Sawyerr, 2002:23-24)

Developing and implementing a pluralistic view of engagement requires some fundamental enabling conditionalities. Critical among these are a state that has some capacity and commitment to provide and regulate in relation to higher education. Even where state funding support levels are drastically reduced and where private sector and user fees form increasing proportions of new sources of university revenue, the state's responsibility for critical infrastructural and core costs at least, is abdicated at great peril. (Sawyerr, 2002:59) The absence, paucity and unreliability of public funds makes the university more vulnerable to market and donor-driven imperatives and less able to set and follow a coherent and multi-dimensional engagement agenda for effective education, research productivity and societal outreach. Some element of sustainable state funding (which is itself not too crudely tied to rate of return expectations) could allow for agenda-setting and interpreting engagement in a ways that are responsive to the huge social, political and economic needs of poor communities and societies. Conditionalities for university reform linked to funding provided by donors and international lending organisations also need to be flexible enough to allow for university choices that give effect to a pluralistic view of engagement.

A regulatory role for the state is also critical in order to implement an engagement agenda that is wide-ranging and beneficial to different stakeholders and participants in higher education. Even where state funding support levels are low, the responsibility for some oversight in relation to issues of access and equity for students, and the quality of education and training should vest primarily in the state, especially in contexts where universities have embarked on various forms of internal semi-privatisation of university functions in order to generate badly needed operational income, or where there is a rise in the number of private providers. The absence of such oversight allows for the possibility that equity of access is undermined by a user-fees approach, that the quality of provision is compromised by rapid enrolment growth, poor staff capacity and outdated library and other facilities, and that

transformation goals in education and in society are made more difficult by the prioritisation of market values. The state could play an important role, for example, in ensuring that transnational for-profit providers of higher education operate within acceptable quality and access requirements, and have some measure of articulation with local state- supported institutions.

The presence of institutional leadership driven by a complex view of engagement that takes account of local, regional and global factors is also critical for any discussion of the engaged university. Visionary and skilled leadership is needed, ideally at different levels of the university's operations to balance the entrepreneurial side of the university with social and intellectual imperatives, and to balance the academic priorities of the university with the huge developmental demands made on the university. In a context where state support or capacity is minimal or absent, the value of wise and capable institutional leadership becomes even greater.

For many universities, the above enabling confluence of external and internal factors is not likely to materialise, creating a Hydra-headed challenge for those who have already embarked on university reform in countries that have undergone processes of political and economic liberalisation since the 1990's. The attempts at university regeneration and reform in countries like Uganda, Tanzania, Mozambique, Ghana and Kenya have been captured in a series of case studies(Foundation Partnership:2002-2003) whose fuller analysis could yield more information on the explicit and implicit forms of societal engagement embedded in the revitalisation measures undertaken at those universities. The authors provide accounts of remarkable initiatives to resuscitate and reform a number of universities, many of which had flourished with generous state and popular support in the pre 1970's period and then undergone severe crisis and destabilisation through funding slumps, increased enrolments, political interference and academic depletion. Almost all the authors identify ongoing pressure on university finances, lack of planning and management capacity, academic staff in need of retooling, threats to quality from rapid student enrolments, the deterioration of the learning and living environments in relation to libraries, laboratories and residences, poor development of information and communications technologies, the decline in the research ethos, the inability of public universities to compete with private providers, and the threats to equity and social justice as a result of admissions and appointments driven by market

considerations, as some of the recurring challenges facing African universities as they embark on internal reform.

For many of these universities, the most radical first step in such a disabling context might very well be a set of initiatives for the building of basic institutional capacity and stability, in this way establishing a platform to conduct and facilitate more effectively the traditional functions of teaching, learning and research. The negative impact on academic quality of years of financial constraint, unregulated expansion, and hasty and unprepared programme responsiveness has been identified as a key problem in many of the case studies. Addressing this challenge would already be huge step forward in relation to the primary responsibility of the university to produce knowledgeable, employable and socially aware graduates. This will in any case bring in train internal struggles over policy control and direction as well as resources.  However, the processes of curriculum reform, of seeking new student constituencies, of developing a new research agenda for the university, and of identifying new sources of funding would all require the university to go down an engagement trajectory that could enrich and enlarge the revitalisation process that is underway in many countries.

The need for more reliable research data and rigorous interrogations of reform and revitalisation initiatives at universities in many sub-Saharan African countries has already been identified in recent analyses of African higher education.(Sawyerr, 2002; Sall et al, 2002) Such research and analysis will clearly provide a finer grained sense of contextual specificities which is necessary for fleshing out the nature, limits and possibilities of engagement for universities and other higher education institutions on the continent. In anticipation of more contextualised understandings of the possible trajectories of engagement, some preliminary observations can be made in relation to the engagement debate:

What will be the impact of the 'knowledge society' discourse on engagement initiatives in universities in sub-Saharan countries?  The worrying implications for higher education of the global frameworks and arrangements developed by the World Bank and the WTO assume greater resonance for universities in poor countries which  will be unable to mediate the conditionalities of global lending organisations or international trade agreements as they impact on national policy. The influence of such frameworks in directing the content of engagement along narrow one-dimensional conceptualisations of the knowledge society

could be disastrous. An unreconstructed concept of the knowledge society could become a poisoned chalice for universities seeking to understand the comprehensive requirements of societal engagement in what constitutes arguably the most marginalised and impoverished sections of the global population. Any discussion on the parameters of an emancipatory form of engagement for universities in poor countries will, therefore, have to be premised on an interrogation of what the knowledge society means in real terms for those societies and whether the notion of the knowledge society in its current incarnations is sufficiently enabling for key dimensions of human development to be advanced. Academics and intellectuals, as well as institutional and national policymakers, whose options and choices will be directly impacted on by the forms and content of particular conceptualisations of the knowledge society, should play a key role in setting the terms of this interrogation.

Since one is not starting the university engagement debate in a vacuum or on a clean slate, how can one usefully link the current debate about engagement with earlier conceptions and experiences –on what can one build and what should provide cautionary lessons for the future? Sall et al point out that even in the decades of crisis and degradation, universities in sub-Saharan Africa were relevant to their societies in a number of different ways. Public universities were "key sites for debate, critique and mobilization on behalf of political change."(2002:2) They were also instrumental in satisfying a continuing social demand for higher education as enrolments snowballed in the eighties and nineties in spite of the grim counterfactual reality of diminishing employability, especially in the public service. Both these dimensions hold huge possibilities for university engagement in the current situation. Manuh et al point to the necessity for universities to 'chronicle and analyse' reform initiatives in Ghana and their implications for and impact on individual and institutional life, including the effect of structural adjustment programmes and economic liberalisation on universities themselves. Providing independent evaluations of the efficacy of poverty reduction strategies chosen by government is seen as a critical task that could be undertaken by universities in a more systematic and institutionalised fashion. This in turn could enable university constituencies like researchers, unions and students to "be proactive in using research and information on public policy measures to support advocacy that could raise the profile of universities as beacons of knowledge, linked to action." (2003:114) Clearly, issues of political atmosphere, policy research capacity and institutional willingness to link university reform more explicitly with social and political reform will all play a role in the extent to which universities will or can play the kind of socially engaged role advocated above.

In relation to the issue of social demand, universities that seek to locate their reform and revitalisation initiatives within the frame of social engagement will not be able to avoid the challenges of demand, access and equity. Almost all the case studies have pointed to the trend towards market driven admissions in higher education and the access problems posed by this trend for particular categories of students (women, poor students from outside the main cities, etc). Given the low levels of participation in higher education, and limited opportunities for higher education study in the face of enormous demand, universities will exacerbate 'imbalances of socio-economic class, gender and regional origin in the student population' (Mario et al, 2001:61) unless they themselves are able to insert mediating mechanisms to open up access, for example, 'affirmative action' for under-represented student constituencies (including the disabled), loan and scholarship programmes (Musisi and Muwanga, 2001:36-37), 'external degree centres and distance learning initiatives' to reach students in more remote parts of the country (Manuh et al,2003:122).

## Conclusion

I have argued for a messily multi-dimensional notion of university engagement. It is a notion that invites a variety of rationales and content, and requires visionary management of contradictions, benefits and dangers through a wily mix of dialogue, incentives and stipulations. It requires frequent translation from an easy conceptual plane into the thornier realm of sensible policies and flexible strategies in order to reshape many aspects of institutional culture. If managed well, governance and leadership styles, decision-making structures and processes, the equity and diversity profile of staff and students, staff expertise, and curriculum and research innovation may all see transformative changes that help to move the university forward in its own development. But what are the larger politics that inform the requirements of university engagement?

Looking at engagement through the prism of the different purposes of higher education and their associated stakeholder interests made it possible to introduce one layer of norms by which to judge how engagement should be conceptualised, managed and held together. It may be necessary to go beyond this layer (which speaks largely to what happens within higher education) to a larger normative frame that pertains to the role of different kinds of social institutions, including universities, in advancing human development. Without such an external frame, the university could interpret the pluralism of engagement as a series of efficiency- driven compromises to ensure that it does not lose it financial benefits whenever conflicts of interests have to be resolved. A post-modern understanding of pluralism will not sufficiently enable the university to consider that some societal interests are more rationally and morally compelling than others and some engagement choices more emancipatory than others. Within the discourse of the 'knowledge economy', the growing power of corporate interests in the work of the university will create many dilemmas for universities that still want to maintain some 'public good ' commitments in and through their work. What happens in the engagement arena when the interests, claims and pressures of different societal groups cannot be managed or reconciled, and also cannot continue to be endlessly juxtaposed in a communicative roundabout? (Barnett:2003) Such situations may require the university to take a position for the sake of its own institutional integrity in holding on to a larger conception of societal values and ideals that affect the lives of large numbers of people. By what yardstick can a judgement be made either by the university itself or by other interested parties that it is discharging its responsibilities as a major social

institution committed to enhancing the many substantive requirements of a democratic and caring society?

I want to invoke Sen's analysis of the relationship between institutions and freedom in order to address some of the meta-political issues surrounding the question of university engagement. The yardstick that emerges from this analysis is the extent to which institutions enable and advance human freedoms. "Individuals live and operate in a world of institutions. Our opportunities and prospects depend on what institutions exist and how they function. Not only do institutions contribute to our freedoms, their roles can be sensibly evaluated in the light of their contribution to our freedom. To see development as freedom provides a perspective in which institutional assessment can systematically occur."(Sen,1994:142) The question for the engagement debate concerns the larger contribution of the engaged university to 'development' understood in Sen's sense as "a process of expanding the real freedoms that people enjoy" (1994:3) Such an expansion is influenced by 'mutually reinforcing connections' between "economic opportunities, political liberties, social powers, and the enabling conditions of good health, basic education, and the encouragement and cultivation of initiatives."(1994:5) The yardstick for university engagement emerging from this conception may not be as philosophically abstract as it looks. It is, in fact, already embedded in the engagement responsibilities of the university towards some of the addressees identified in the ACU document, for example, students and citizens. On this perspective, it should be possible to ask, for instance, whether the university is making it possible for students to acquire the full range of knowledges, skills and understandings required by them to enable them to maximise their freedoms as job-seekers but also as individual human personalities, as confident citizens of their countries, as empowered members of their communities, and as informed 'global citizens' entering debates beyond their national borders? How have the infrastructural resources of the university, its research findings, its expertise structure impacted on the quality of life of citizens and communities, judged not only against an 'aggregated' benchmark of economic growth but against concrete 'social indicators' relating to progress of individuals and communities against the debilitating conditions of "poverty.unemployment inequality".(Coleman citing Seers, 1994:341)? How has the university sought to connect the needs of students and citizens/communities in order to maximise benefits to both and enable them to enjoy different kinds of freedom relating to social and political empowerment as much as providing opportunities for economic development?

The normative frame of expectation from universities provided by the above perspective makes it possible to both enlarge as well as sharpen the 'indicators' for judging engagement progress. It also provides an external reference point by which to orient the policies, strategies and practices of engagement, especially where powerful stakeholders can tip the scale when irreconcilable conflicts of interests occur. Such a normative frame clearly contains assumptions about the responsibilities of major social institutions to enhance democratic participation as much as to foster economic development, and about the obligations of the university to the realisation of the' public good', especially in relation to equity and social justice.

But is there a real role beyond rhetoric for such a normative frame to shape the direction and content of engagement in the busy operational life of the university? The strategies and practices of engagement may only tangentially relate to the values and ends contained in the normative commitments of a higher education institution.  As university leaders and administrators know well, the strategic life of the university is vulnerable to the logics of powerful and demanding external stakeholders whose normative frames of reference may differ in key respects from those of key role-players of the university or other less powerful external stakeholders.  In reality, the university is likely to be driven by conjunctural pressures and demands like competition for students, declining state and donor funds and the search for "third stream" contract income through research, consultancy and other services, the pressure to account to government authorities for the use of public funds, the pressure to maintain reputational competitive edge, and an endless round of such drivers.

The requirements of the knowledge society are ostensibly what underlies the renewed attention to the university as a socially engaged institution. But if engagement is to be not only comprehensive but transformative as well, both in its internal institutional reconfigurations and in its external societal impact, it must encompass and advance values and goals that relate to the many dimensions of human development. For this to happen, the terms of the 'knowledge society' will themselves have to be emancipated from the monopolistic demands of the market, and reconceptualised to include political, social and ethical considerations that are currently absent or only weakly gestured to.  Within such an enlarged view of the knowledge society, the continuous alignment of the strategic life of the university within normative frames of reference that cover different kinds of social goods can

become more institutionalised since the 'indicators' of the engaged university in a knowledge society will require it. Otherwise, the language and practices of engagement will privilege some dominant interests over others in ways that are bound to impoverish the engagement project as a whole.

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