

## ***Submission to Symposium***

*'Temporality and Diversity: What role for pluralistic and engaged research practices in the future university?'*

### ***Title of Submission***

*'Transmission or Transformation? Lessons from between the University and Communities of Practice'*

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It has been widely accepted that knowledge is a driver of productivity. At the same time, collaborative working with partners outside of one of the central sites of knowledge production – the university – is messy and non-linear; it has complex feedback loops and interactions; multi-actor and multi-level dimensions and the dynamics of place and space matter. In other words, the institutional basis that enables varying degrees of 'epistemic permeability' (May with Perry 2011) to operate for the purposes of knowledge production in a university is questioned and uneasy parallels are open to critical investigation (May and Perry 2013).

Within the environment in which the university operates, there has been an increasing emphasis upon a role in economic growth and development. This leads to a particular outcome-driven idea of knowledge in terms of being a defined object that is transmitted in a linear manner, as opposed to a process of interaction between parties where knowledge's meet to inform practices. With a reinforced impact agenda (Bastow et al 2014) and attention to the roles of universities in collaborating with industry to achieve local and regional economic impact (May and Perry 2006), this tension is exacerbated.

Equally, the need for universities to reach for new sources of finance via new partnerships to improve their research, teaching and third mission indicators and thus to benefit from such alliances in terms of reputation, distinction and material resource, provided a fertile environment for new alliances between local partners in different urban contexts. As a result academics became subject to increasing pressures to form partnerships and collaborations, demonstrate impact, engage in evaluations and placements and join committees and expert panels. The relationship between the researcher and wider social interests can be redefined through such processes which both confirm and undermine notions of professional and lay expertise by juxtaposing different cultures of knowledge production and reception (Knorr Cetina 1999; Turner, 2003). What is at stake is the extent to which 'academic' knowledge is commissioned, deployed, valued and utilised.

Against this background, the purpose of this paper is to make a contribution to an understanding of the effects of these changes. We do this through experiences of conducting research over the last five years that is explicitly designed to work with communities - often against narrow conceptions of economic advantage that are dominant among politicians and policy officials. Our examination considers our first-hand experiences of seeking to develop collaborative knowledge through exploring the interplay between struggles to govern knowledge and the production of knowledge needed to govern (Stehr 2004). In so doing, we seek to illuminate the conditions that both enable and constrain the production and reception of a critical knowledge that is aimed at transformation, not transmission.

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