

Call for Chapter Proposals

Universities and Regional Development: A Critical Assessment of Tensions and Contradictions¹

Book Editors:

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Background and Contribution

Today, more than ever, universities all over the world are expected to play an instrumental role in the broad process of socio-economic development at either the local, national, and/or supranational levels (Hölttä 2000; Charles 2003; European Commission 2003). Social scientists have traditionally paid attention to the direct (economic) impacts of university activities at the local level (Florax 1992; Goldstein 1990; Beck et al. 1995; Feldman 1994), but such studies have received wide criticism due to their methodological pitfalls (Brown and Heaney 1997; Siegfried et al. 2007). Starting in the 1980s some scholars have shed light on the emergence of new organisational forms (regional colleges/universities) specifically designed for local/regional engagement (Dahllöf and Selander 1994; Kyvik 1983; Barrows 2001). More recent (comparative) inquiries have focused on the response of higher education (HE) systems to regional needs, in the context of a global, knowledge based economy (OECD 1999, 2007). There have also been attempts to look at the regional engagement of universities from a wide variety of conceptual perspectives (c.f. Harding et al. 2007; OECD 2008/special issue; Arbo and Benneworth 2007), for example, with respect to the role of the HE sector in fostering local innovation and global competitiveness (Lester and Sotarauta 2007; Gunasekara 2006).

Less attention has been paid to the inherent complexity associated with the university as a distinct organisational entity/institution (Musselin 2007; Olsen 2007) and, consequently, the sets of tensions and contradictions directly linked to universities' regional mandates. Such tensions are present at a wide variety of levels; (a) macro-tensions (normative ideas and policies); (b) meso-tensions (field level dynamics, nationally and regionally); and, (c) micro-tensions (within particular units seeking to engage). At a broader level, universities are faced with a set of key dilemmas substantiated around the role of HE in society/economy. These include, but are not limited to, finding an adequate balance between: (i) responsiveness and autonomy; (ii) local vs. global postures/aspirations; (iii) change and continuity; (iv) the need to secure resources without being seduced or abandoned; etc. More importantly, past accounts of universities' initiatives geared towards the region have failed to critically address the complexity of such task. The true of the matter is that, all over the world, universities are faced with enormous external pressures to accommodate new functions/missions,

¹ The volume is a part of Routledge's book series entitled ['International Studies in Higher Education'](#).

and that these are often at odds (clash directly) with their historically-rooted and deeply institutionalised core functions of teaching and research.

This book aims at filling such knowledge gap. Its main *foci* lies on a selected range of empirical cases and theoretical/conceptual perspectives with the ultimate goal of critically accessing (explore and explain) the various tensions and contradictions inherent to universities' regional development mission. Hence, the research problem driving this inquiry is as follows:

- *How can the complexity associated with the role of universities in regional development be accessed, in light of existing conceptual and/or disciplinary perspectives?*

The book is structured around *three* main sections. An introductory section (by the joint editors) providing a strong foundation for the individual (case) discussions that follow. A core section composed of the individual case contributions (6-8 chapters). And a concluding section that attempts to draw together the key themes addressed throughout the book as well as provide the basic building blocks leading to a more comprehensive, multi-perspective theory of universities and regional development.

Case Contributions (Individual Chapters)

The co-editors therefore submit a call for proposals for chapter contributions (individually or jointly) which will address some of the core issues covered above. The analysis should provide an in-depth focus on a particular set of tensions (macro, meso, or micro level) or, alternatively, on the interplay between various levels. It is imperative that the author(s) provide a critical analysis of their core arguments and main empirical findings from a particular conceptual/theoretical perspective (e.g. actor/network theory, institutional theory, resource-dependency, innovation systems, etc.). Chapter contributors are expected to submit a short abstract highlighting: the main focus of analysis (incl. research problem), the geographic scope of the inquiry, the methods used, the dominant conceptual/theoretical/disciplinary perspective adopted, and (if possible) study conclusions and implications. A tentative chapter outline (main sections) should also be included, together with a short biography indicating institutional affiliation, major research interests and latest contributions. The proposals should be sent electronically (doc/pdf format) no later than **May 1st, 2010** to Romulo Pinheiro at: r.t.pinheiro@uv.uio.no

List of References:

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