

Eleven Theses on Community Engagement at Universities

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The Social Responsibility of Universities: Community and Civic Engagement - Context and Big Picture

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Introduction

Dignitaries, colleagues, ladies and gentlemen, thank you for the kind invitation to address the 4th International Exhibition and Conference on Higher Education.

With respect to the theme, *The Social Responsibility of Universities*, and the sub-theme, *Community and Civic Engagement: Context and Big Picture*, there will be little dispute that *community engagement* is increasingly an accepted social responsibility and activity of universities. Nonetheless in embracing community engagement at universities critical engagement with a number of issues is unavoidable: the idea of the *university* itself and its core purposes, responsibilities, and functions; notions of *knowledge* and how it is constructed; the rationale for undertaking community engagement, and the expectations of its benefits; the value basis of community engagement (maintenance of the status quo or reforming/transforming the social order); understandings of *engagement* – a one-way process or a two-way flow; how ‘*community*’ is to be defined – is there a single ‘community’ (defined geographically or socially) or a multiplicity of communities that require different kinds of interactions.

It is not possible here to address all these critical issues. Instead I will confine myself to the following issues. First, how are we to conceptualize community engagement and what are the merits and implications of different approaches to community engagement? Second, while learning and teaching and research are indisputably core purposes of universities, is the same status to be accorded to community engagement? Third, in so far as there is a relationship between learning-teaching and research, what, if any, is the relationship between community engagement and learning-teaching and research? Fourth, what are the necessary conditions for the effective undertaking and institutionalization of community engagement, and what are the implications of institutionalizing community engagement for different arenas of the university?

I will engage with these key issues by advancing a number of theses.

Thesis 1

In order to interrogate the status of community engagement in higher education and within universities it is necessary to advance as a provisional first thesis the idea that universities serve two core purposes and play at least five key roles.

The first purpose of a university is to *produce knowledge*, so that we can advance understanding of our natural and social worlds and enrich our accumulated scientific and cultural heritage. This means that universities 'test the inherited knowledge of earlier generations,' they dismantle the mumbo jumbo that masquerades for knowledge, and they 'reinvigorate' knowledge and share findings with others (Boulton and Lucas, 2008:3). Universities undertake research into the most arcane and abstract issues and the 'most theoretical and intractable uncertainties of knowledge;' at the same time they also strive to apply their discoveries for the benefit of humankind (ibid.,:3). They 'operate on both the short and the long horizon': on the one hand, they grapple with urgent and 'contemporary problems' and seek solutions to these; on the other hand, they 'forage' into issues and undertake enquiries 'that may not appear immediately relevant to others, but have the proven potential to yield great future benefit' (ibid.,:3).

The second purpose of universities is to *disseminate knowledge* and to form and cultivate inquiring and critical minds. The goal is to ensure that students can think imaginatively, 'effectively and critically'; that they 'achieve depth in some field of knowledge'; that they can critique and construct alternatives, that they can communicate cogently, orally and in writing, and that they have a 'critical appreciation of the ways in which we gain knowledge and understanding of the universe, of society, and of ourselves' (The Task Force on Higher Education and Society, 2000:84). At the same time, students should have 'a broad knowledge of other cultures and other times'; should be 'able to make decisions based on reference to the wider world and to the historical forces that have shaped it', and should have 'some understanding of and experience in thinking systematically about moral and ethical problems' (ibid.,:84).

The social purposes of universities can be linked to at least five key roles of universities in contemporary society. The first role of universities is to produce knowledgeable, competent and skilled graduates through imaginatively, thoughtfully, and rigorously conceptualised, designed, and implemented teaching and learning programmes. The task is not simply to disseminate knowledge to students but to also induct them into the intricacies of the making of knowledge. The second role is to creatively undertake different kinds of rigorous scholarship – of discovery, integration, application and teaching - which has different purposes (fundamental, applied, strategic, developmental), aims and objects (Boyer, 1990). With knowledge increasingly critical to economic and social development, there is much emphasis on universities becoming powerhouses of knowledge production. The third role of universities is to contribute to forging a critical and democratic citizenship. Vibrant and dynamic societies require graduates who are not just capable professionals, but also thoughtful intellectuals and critical citizens that respect and promote human rights. The fourth role is to actively engage with the pressing economic and social development needs and challenges of societies. The final role of universities is to proactively engage with our societies at the intellectual and, more generally, cultural level. This requires involvement of

universities in reflexive communication - not in the sense of a simple transmission of an established body of knowledge to users in the wider society, but of an argumentative, critical and thoughtful engagement that shapes the very constitution of knowledge (Delanty, 2001:154). Such involvement has as its goals the intellectual and cultural development of citizens, and cultivating an engaged and critical citizenry. Its purpose is human freedom, through continuously extending and deepening economic, political, social and cultural opportunities and rights, so that all may lead rich, productive and rewarding lives.

Today, given the importance of universities in economic and social development, there are unrealistic expectations of universities. Universities, however, cannot transform society. They can only, under appropriate conditions, contribute to social transformation; these conditions include academic freedom, academic self-rule around scholarly issues, institutional autonomy, a commitment 'to the spirit of truth' and adequate infrastructure and finances (Graham, 2005:163). There are also increasing pressures on universities to be responsive in a manner that is 'thinned' down to purely market and economic responsiveness, and potentially reduces them to serving purely utilitarian ends and becoming primarily instruments of the economy, the labour market and skills production (Singh, 2001). However, the responsiveness of universities cannot only be *economic* in character, 'located within the demands of economic productivity and seek to advance only 'individual, organisational or national economic competitiveness' (ibid., 2001); it has to be of a wider *social* character.

The social purposes and diverse roles of universities can result in them playing contradictory roles - they could, simultaneously, reproduce, maintain and conserve, as well as undermine, erode and transform social relations, institutions, policies and practices. One reason for this, as Manuel Castells writes, is that universities do not stand outside of society; they are subject to 'the conflicts and contradictions of society and therefore they will tend to express - and even to amplify - the ideological struggles present in all societies' (Castells, 2001: 212). Moreover, 'universities are social systems and historically produced institutions (and) all their functions take place simultaneously within the same structure'. The challenge is 'to create institutions solid enough and dynamic enough to stand the tensions that will necessarily trigger the simultaneous performance of somewhat contradictory functions' (ibid.,: 212).

Thesis 2

We must make a distinction between the *social responsiveness* of a university to its political, economic and social contexts and *community engagement*.

Being alive to historical and contemporary conditions, whether local, national or global, and being *socially responsive* does not mean that a university is necessarily actively or institutionally involved in community engagement. That is to say, being sensitive to economic and social conditions and challenges is a *necessary* condition for community engagement, but is not a *sufficient* condition. While a university may undergo transformations in various respects, such transformations may not encompass an *institutional commitment* to community engagement or the ways in which community engagement is *practiced*.

Thesis 3

I have suggested that that an increasingly accepted social responsibility and activity of universities is *community engagement*. What status, however, are we to accord to community engagement? Is community engagement to be *formulated* as a third and fundamental *purpose* of higher education alongside learning and teaching and the cultivation of graduates and research and the production of knowledge? Or is community engagement to be defined as simply one further key role of a university?

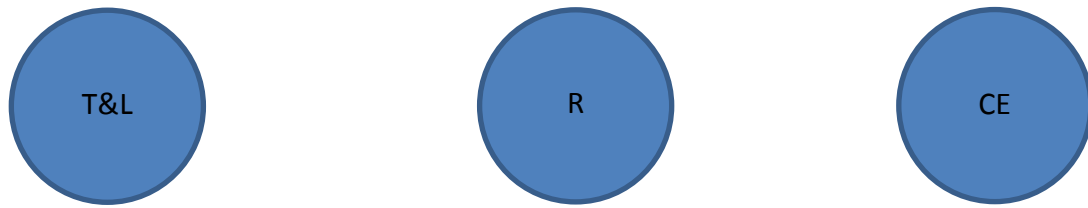
Today there are many conceptions and models of the 'university'; indeed, the 'name "university" now applies to institutions with widely different functions and characters' (Graham, 2005:157). We are likely to be happy to confer the status of 'university' to a higher education institution that undertakes only undergraduate teaching and the scholarship of learning, as well as to an institution that confines itself exclusively to postgraduate teaching and research. It is, however, difficult to conceive of as a 'university' an institution whose sole purpose is community engagement. In any event, as will be noted, our conception of community engagement has developed significantly from its early beginnings, and we now conceive of it as being predicated on teaching and learning and research and also existing in a particular relationship with teaching and learning and research.

While how we conceive of community engagement - as a core *purpose* of a university, or as an important *role* of a university (that has great value and enriches the core purposes of a university) has some salience, I do not wish to be detained by this issue. Instead, I wish to contend that the value and quality of the community engagement undertaken by a university strongly depends on the quality of a university's teaching and learning and research. That is to say, ultimately, any meaningful community engagement and respectful and beneficial partnerships with communities requires a university to be characterised by high quality research and teaching and learning. What basis, otherwise, can there be for mutually respectful and beneficial partnerships as opposed to disdainful relationships with communities? Communities surely deserve only the best of the knowledge, expertise, and skills that universities can offer.

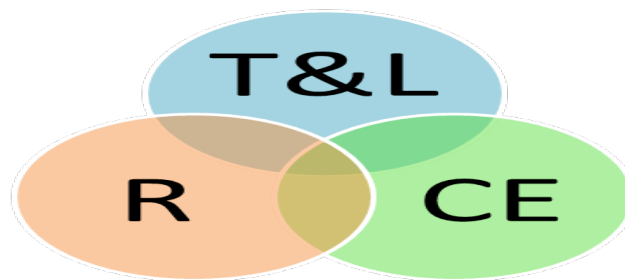
Thesis 4

At different moments in the historical development of higher education and universities, in differing ways and to differing degrees, community engagement has encompassed civic duty, community outreach in the forms of community work and community development and, more recently, what has become termed 'service-learning'. It is also necessary to distinguish between community engagement undertaken as a volunteer activity by individual students and scholars, and community engagement as a matter of conscious institutional policy or practice, with the latter being a relatively more recent development.

Community engagement tends to be approached in two different ways. In some cases, teaching and learning, research and community engagement are conceived of as essentially distinct activities, and are pursued as separate and independent activities with no or little connection between them.



In other cases, teaching and learning, research and community engagement are conceptualised as related and connected activities, with the connections being viewed in two different ways. One way is to see teaching and learning, research and community engagement as *intersecting* activities. The imagery of three circles is useful here. Within the community engagement circle are located community outreach programmes and academic and support staff and student volunteerism. Where the individual circles of teaching and learning, research and community engagement intersect, they give rise to service learning, perhaps the *most pertinent and developed form* of community engagement in higher education and within a university.



A second way is to see CE is to see community engagement as *cutting across* the activities of teaching and learning and research, and having implications for all the teaching and learning and research activities of the university.



Service-learning represents learning, enquiry and discovery on the part of students and academics through mutually beneficial and respectful engagement with specific communities around mutually defined issues. Whereas civic duty and community outreach through student and staff volunteerism have traditionally been activities distinct from teaching-learning and research, service-learning has sought to be embedded in and to build on the core knowledge production and dissemination purposes of the university. Instead of being a separate and disconnected activity from the University's core activities, community engagement in the form of *service-learning* has become a 'curricular innovation' infused in the teaching and learning and research activities of the university (Stanton, 2008:2).

Bringle and Hatcher define service-learning as 'a *credit-bearing* educational experience in which students participate in an organized service activity that meets identified community needs and reflect on the service activity in such a way as to gain further understanding of course content, broader appreciation of the discipline and an enhanced sense of civic responsibility' (1995: 112, cited in Stanton, 2008:3; emphasis added). Stanton argues that 'service-learning joins two complex concepts: community action – the “service” – and efforts to learn from that action and connect what is learnt to existing knowledge – the “learning”' (ibid.) Service-learning is also a 'means for connecting universities and communities with development needs;'...a 'means for higher education staff and students to partner with communities to address development aims and goals,'...for 'engaging academic staff and students in addressing these needs through academic contexts, and for building democratic commitments and competences in all concerned' (2008:2-3).

In similar vein, Lazarus writes that

Service-learning modules or courses engage students in activities where *both the community and student* are primary beneficiaries and where the primary goals are to provide a *service* to the community and, equally, to enhance student *learning* through rendering this service. Reciprocity is therefore a central characteristic of service-learning. The primary focus of programmes in this category is on integrating community service with scholarly activity such as student learning, teaching, and research. This form of community engagement is underpinned by the assumption that service is enriched through scholarly activity and that scholarly activity, particularly student learning, is enriched through service to the community (CHE, 2006:11).

The idea of learning through community engagement has important implications for curriculum, pedagogy and assessment, and for knowledge production with respect to the purposes, aims and objects of research.¹ In as much as specific disciplines or fields may shape the form and content of community engagement, community engagement may in turn affect the form and content of teaching and learning and research in disciplines or fields.

Thesis 5

In so far as there are three possible approaches to community engagement, (separate, intersecting and cutting across), rather than prescribe what is the ideal approach in the abstract there should perhaps be room for different approaches as appropriate to the different and diverse roles that may be allocated to universities in any national system of higher education, in accordance with the specific mission of a university, its values and institutional and developmental context. It is possible that a university may begin with a particular approach and over time gravitate to another approach as congruent with its changing philosophy, context and circumstances. In this regard it has been argued that community engagement is a historically specific and a 'an irreducibly contextual activity, depending variously on the mission and strengths of the university, the state of regional development of the area in which it is sited, and the ingenuity of the academics concerned, not to mention the diversity of views and interests of the local “communities”' (Muller, 2010:69). Moreover, 'highly contextual spaces like “community engagement” are weakly

bounded sites of practice' and 'hard to pin down within a single frame without distorting their historically adaptive character' (ibid.,:69).

Thesis 6

The Talloires Declaration 'on the Civic Roles and Social Responsibilities of Higher Education' states that universities 'carry a unique obligation to listen, understand and contribute to social transformation and development. Higher education must extend itself for the good of society... and 'the university has a responsibility to participate actively in the democratic process and to empower those who are less privileged'.² Elsewhere, with respect to an environmentally sustainable future, the Talloires network argues that key 'environmental changes are caused by inequitable and unsustainable production and consumption patterns that aggravate poverty in many regions of the world.'³ If these statements allude to the function of higher education and universities to advance the public good and public goods, they also usefully raise the ethical and social value basis of community engagement.

The benefits of globalization, especially in the aftermath of the 2008 global recession, remain uneven and the 'the reality remains that for millions of people the promise of human rights and the vision of a just and caring world remains an illusion. Intolerance, war and impunity; starvation and greed; power and powerlessness all combine in a conspiracy of the powerful against the weak that invariably deepens the faultlines that exist in the world and within nations' (Kollapen, 2003:26). The abiding global challenge continues to be the achievement of economic growth with social equity, within a democratic framework and with environmental sustainability.

It is argued that *higher education* must be 'the cultivation of humanity' and must advance the public good, and that universities are 'tasked with the arduous formation of a critical, creative and compassionate' graduates, intellectuals and citizens that 'never forget their own insignificance; never get used to the unspeakable violence and vulgar disparity of life around them; never simplify what is complicated or complicate what is simple', and that advances the common public good (Nussbaum,1997; O' Connell, 2006; Roy, 2001).

In terms of these value commitments, community engagement can facilitate the pursuit of specific institutional values and commitments and translate these into concrete deeds and action. Through community engagement, universities can help give expression to the great promise of higher education to be 'a process of expanding the real freedoms that people enjoy' and can 'embrace the ethics of social accountability and an expansive humanism' by being 'guided by the developmentalist and democratizing demands of global "public good"' (Sen, 1999:3; Zeleza, 2005:54-55; 51). Community engagement provides the opportunity to harness the knowledge, expertise and skills of academic and support staff and students and puts these to work through considered, robust, deliberative and mutually respectful, beneficial and reciprocal relationships with defined constituencies, institutions, organisations, groups and individuals.⁴ On the one hand, universities seek to help build the institutional capabilities of specific institutions and organisations and the capacities of particular defined constituencies and individuals. On the other hand, they concomitantly seek to facilitate the development of students and staff as individuals and citizens, and

institutional development, through a process of discovery, listening, understanding and contributing.⁵

As necessary and invaluable as academic disciplines and formal study are, there is a limit to how much one can learn, develop, and discover through books, lectures and essays. Community development projects provide an opportunity for acquiring more knowledge, further enhancing understanding of the world, and extending skills and competencies. A student volunteer at Rhodes University has commented that 'volunteering has taught me about myself and my relationship to people and the world around me in ways that no text book on philosophy or economics ever could'. Such involvement has the potential to constitute a marvellous schooling in ethics, discipline and organisation building and development, and to also enhance teaching and learning, curriculum and pedagogy.

Community engagement can be a bridge to the acquisition on the part of students, staff and the university as a whole of more knowledge and greater awareness and understanding of social realities, and the development on the part of staff and students of new knowledge, competencies and skills. It represents a necessary and welcome engagement on the part of different domains of the university and different sections of the university community with the social ills, problems, and challenges of cities, towns, villages and diverse social groups. It exemplifies the commitment of a university to the idea of universities promoting critical and democratic citizenship, fostering an ethos of ethical and socially committed and voluntary engagement on the part of staff and students. Through community engagement staff and students can become active agents for social change, contributing to widening educational and social opportunities and improvements in the quality of life of individuals and communities, to local economic and social development, and advancing the public good. It enables scholars, students and universities to take on practically the responsibility of re-thinking and re-making our world and our societies on the basis of other principles and logics than the ones that have dominated in recent decades: putting human development, people's needs, social justice and human rights at the centre of all our actions. The great Bengali poet and Nobel laureate Rabindranath Tagore writes that 'We may become powerful by knowledge, but we attain fullness by sympathy'; community engagement provides the opportunity to build empathy with the socially disadvantaged and marginalised among staff and students.

It has been contested that community engagement must advance solely public goods. It is suggested that community engagement should 'not exclude private benefits, both for the university and for groups that engage with the university,' because 'it is never clear cut that those private benefits will remain private or whether it is part of a chain that could eventually lead to public goods. To link community engagement exclusively to public goods could have the negative potential of painting universities into a corner as development agencies delivering services for the community, who are then implicitly conceived of as poor and in need.' (Slamat, 2010:106).

Of course, even if social justice may be the key purpose of community engagement it is not inconceivable that community engagement can serve anti-democratic and anti-social justice agendas and ends. This may arise especially when linkages with the 'communities' of government and industry rather than those with progressive civil society and socially

disadvantaged and marginalised social groups are prioritized, and where the primary rationales are economic growth and productivity.

Thesis 7

There are many virtuous claims made for community engagement and service-learning; indeed, I have made a number of claims myself. We must, however, continuously and critically interrogate the claims that are made. We must also acknowledge that community engagement gives rise to numerous and diverse challenges, none of which should be underestimated. These include:

1. Forging institutional consensus on whether the core purposes, roles and responsibilities, of universities include community engagement.
2. The conceptual challenge of defining 'community engagement,' and institutionally elaborating and developing an associated praxis, including the meaning of community engagement in specific disciplines and fields. It has been correctly suggested that 'this conceptual work is not about setting narrow, tight, exclusionary definitions of what community engagement is, thus establishing an orthodoxy in relation to this issue. Rather, it is about setting some broad parameters for community engagement; it is about trying to establish a relationship between community engagement and the other two core functions; it is, very importantly, about signalling the place of community engagement in the social development agenda; and it is about indicating some of the possible models for community engagement' (Singh, 2007; cited in Hall, 2010:6).
3. The conceptual challenge also extends to the meaning of 'service learning'. It has been argued that
there is a troubling ambiguity concerning even basic principles and goals in the service-learning literature. Is service learning a pedagogical strategy for better comprehension of course content? A philosophical stance committed to the betterment of the local or global community? An institutionalised mechanism fostering students' growth and selfawareness concerning issues of diversity, volunteerism, and civic responsibility? Or, as some critics note, a voyeuristic exploitation of the cultural other that masquerades as academically sanctioned servant leadership? ... what sustained community impact is achieved? Who benefits from the enactment (and publicity) of such processes? What actual learning is documented as a result of such a process? ...service learning has promoted much good will among those doing the actual service learning, but there is considerably less evidence that service learning has provided much benefit for the recipients (Butin, 2003, p.1678; cited in Hall, 2010:31).
4. The value-basis of community engagement - whether interaction with communities is in order to *maintain* the status quo, or *erode* the current social order and contribute to *reforming* or *transforming* the social structure and social relations.
5. The development of curriculum, pedagogy and assessment and research methodologies related to community engagement and service-learning, and the recognition that there are profound epistemological and ontological issues involved.
6. Integrating community engagement, and specifically service learning, into academic programme development and academic planning and institutional planning. It has been suggested that while community engagement lends itself to 'most of the professions, like law, medicine, teacher education and social work... it will always be harder to envisage

how students in the more academic courses of study, such as history and chemistry, might serve the same function, except in a teaching capacity...The point here is that it is not easy to imagine a general requirement for “service” to be of the same applicability across the range of the disciplines (Muller, 2010: 75). It can also be that students may have ‘a *weak benefit* to the community because the “knowledge dosage” they could deliver was weak. This does not mean that the knowledge areas weren’t strong...but that the purveyors, as 2nd and 3rd year students, were not in control of their knowledge base....In other words, “service learning” as a form of community engagement always has to struggle with the fact that students are neophytes, not adepts...(ibid., 75).

7. The conception of ‘community’ - that is, is there a single community, often treated as homogenous and reduced to historically disadvantaged and marginalised social groups and areas, or is there a multiplicity of communities – local, regional, national, global and comprising different social groups – which may involve different kinds of interaction and require different kinds of engagement. As has been pointed out, it is a vexed question as to what communities are, who they are and where they are’; and ‘community can, and does, mean anything from a university’s own staff and students and a *community of practice* to civic organisations, schools, townships, citizens at large and “the people” in general’ (Lange, 2008; cited in Hall, 2010:22; Hall, 2010:2).
8. Whether responsibility for community engagement is to be infused into and located entirely within academic departments, or needs to be also located within a separate central entity within the university, and what should be the relationships.
9. The effective monitoring, review and quality assurance of community engagement and service learning, including a code of ethical conduct.
10. Given that there are institutional recognition and reward structures for research and teaching and learning, what would be the criteria for outstanding performance in community engagement, how would these be determined, and what might such recognition and reward be. Here, the importance of a rigorous definition of community engagement is obvious.⁶
11. Ensuring that there are scholars and practitioners with the necessary knowledge, expertise and skills to guide and support the institutional development of community engagement, including building the capabilities of academics.
12. Various logistical issues related to the implementation of community engagement, including the safety and security of students, academics and communities.
13. Providing the necessary finances for developing, extending and sustaining high-quality community engagement.

Thesis 8

Community engagement is not necessarily widely or well-understood, and not all university academics and students are enamoured with community engagement. There are sometimes fears (in some cases legitimate) of the implications of community engagement for the values and core purposes of a university. Community engagement is seen as an unnecessary endeavour and expense, which diverts resources away from teaching and learning and research. Especially in contexts of limited finances and myriad imperatives, priorities and needs, the introduction or expansion of community engagement, or the re-theorization of community engagement as service-learning with significant implications for teaching and learning, can result in community engagement becoming a highly emotive and contested

issue. Consequently, dirigiste, if enlightened and socially committed, leadership, with respect to the introduction, extension and re-theorization of community engagement as service learning is unwise. There is no alternative to continuous engagement and persuasion around the importance and academic and related benefits of community engagement.

Today, it is fashionable to consider a university to be a business corporation, when in essence a university is fundamentally *different* from a business corporation. Whereas a business tends to be a hierarchy, a university is a holyarchy. This means that the different component parts and specifically the academic units possess substantial autonomy, as befitting academic freedom and academic self-rule in an overall framework of cooperative governance and public accountability. It is critical to build among diverse actors (individual and institutional) through open and deliberative conversations the valuing of community engagement as an *institutional* activity; and to then formulate explicit and clear goals related to community engagement, consider the implications for staffing, infrastructure and finances, and to develop clear and explicit indicators of success.

The conversations are bound to and should engage assumptions on the meaning of a university; should debate how knowledge is produced and learning occurs, and should interrogate modes of thought that can impede the development of new ways of producing knowledge and expertise, and for engaging with socio-economic developmental challenges. Of course, one does not always enter such conversations entirely as novices or on a *tabula rasa*. It is also invaluable to draw on the insights and experiences of other universities, or specific academic departments and specialists in such conversations.

Thesis 9

In the context of inadequate financial resources, university leadership continuously confronts profound social and political dilemmas and has to make difficult and unenviable choices related to various issues: the size and shape of the university; the social composition of students; staff equity; recruiting and retaining talented staff, mobilising new sources of funding without compromising institutional autonomy and academic freedom, ensuring financial sustainability, and so on.

Community engagement involves choices, and the critical issues are how are we to 'formulate the available choices', how are we 'to argue over them', and through what just mechanisms will there be the 'opportunity to choose' and to make decisions (Wright Mills, 1959: 174). No university can undertake all its social purposes and its roles in their entirety. The key issues for a university include what priority it seeks to give to community engagement, what balance it seeks between teaching-learning, knowledge production and community engagement and how it wishes to connect them. Choices also have to be made with respect to relations with different kinds of communities (mining, manufacturing, agriculture, commerce, government, non-governmental organisations, social movements), which operate in different spaces (global, national, provincial, regional, local), and have different requirements (research, teaching, service).

Community engagement as a relatively new activity finds itself competing with other pressing priorities and issues for institutional and scholarly recognition, staff, infrastructure

and funding. The dilemmas that exist with respect to community engagement have to be creatively addressed and policies and strategies have to be crafted that can satisfy multiple imperatives, can *balance* competing goals, and can enable the pursuit of equally desirable goals. Trade-off's may be necessary, and they should be made deliberately, consciously and transparently with respect to their implications for vision and goals. The trade-offs and choices that are made should also be communicated in ways that build understanding and secure support from different constituencies.

Thesis 10

Commitment and passion are essential for community engagement but so too are theorisation and dispassionate reflection, as befitting a university. It is vitally important to adequately *theorize* community engagement – both what it *is*, and what it *is not* if universities are to have an adequate community engagement *practice*. As has often been noted, if theory without practice is sterile, practice without adequate theory is blind, and can be highly flawed and have dangerous consequences.

One important task of community engagement is to develop a scholarly knowledge-base through rigorous scholarship; another task is to ensure that community engagement becomes an arena of scholarly and professional development through university education and training. These are formidable challenges. As Campus Compact has noted

research on engagement differs fundamentally from engaged research. Rather than a community-engaged approach to research, it is scholarly inquiry with a specific content focus: diverse forms of civic life, democratic citizenship, and community engagement....A major impediment to elevating research on engagement within the research university context is that faculty who research civic and community engagement have difficulty validating their work in their respective fields and institutions. These are obstacles not unknown to scholars in other new, interdisciplinary fields, but they are formidable ... For research on engagement to be taken seriously at research universities, scholars must have strong peerreviewed publication outlets for their scholarship.” (Campus Compact, 2007; cited in Hall, 2010:41).

Thesis 11

My final thesis is that community engagement has to inspire academics and students, and be effectively communicated, managed, and implemented. The best laid plans are only as good as their implementation, and far too often there are great shortcomings and weaknesses in the *planning* of implementation let alone in implementation itself.

Institutional changes – as may be occasioned with the introduction or further development of community engagement – are a demanding undertaking, whose complexity and enormity is not always fully understood at the beginning. They requires sober, careful, detailed and realistic planning, that give attention to strategies, structures and instruments, available financial resources, sources of expert staff, time frames, and so on.

Universities are fragile institutions. Too much ill-considered and frenetic change without continuities can make a university dysfunctional. Equally, no change can make a university moribund. The challenge for community engagement is to map a deliberate, bold and resolute, yet sober path with continuities and discontinuities as appropriate to given and changing conditions.

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¹ 'To demonstrate curricular engagement', Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching request universities, 'to describe teaching, learning, and scholarly activities that engage faculty, students, and the community in mutually beneficial and respectful collaboration, address community-identified needs, deepen students' civic and academic learning, enhance the well-being of the community, and enrich the scholarship of the institution'. Driscoll, A. *Carnegie's Community-Engagement Classification: Intentions and Insights*; page 40; <http://www.carnegiefoundation.org/sites/default/files/elibrary/Driscoll.pdf>; accessed 31 March 2013

² <http://talloiresnetwork.tufts.edu/what-is-the-talloires-network/talloires-declaration/>, accessed 1 April 2013.

³ <http://www.ulsf.org/pdf/TD.pdf>, accessed 1 April 2013

⁴ For one university, 'scholarly activities categorized as "community engaged" must not only meet the scholarly standards of particular disciplines but also involve groups or organizations outside the university as partners, stakeholders and beneficiaries. Community partners collaborate with engaged scholars by helping define the goals, scope and methods of a particular research or creative project.' <http://www.loyno.edu/servicelearning/community-engagement-and-faculty-advancement>, accessed 30 March 2013

⁵ In terms of the Carnegie classification, "community engagement" is defined as 'the collaboration between institutions of higher education and their larger communities (local, regional/state, national, global) for the mutually beneficial exchange of knowledge and resources in a context of partnership and reciprocity.' Driscoll, A. (2008) *Carnegie's Community-Engagement Classification: Intentions and Insights*; page 39; <http://www.carnegiefoundation.org/sites/default/files/elibrary/Driscoll.pdf>; accessed 31 March 2013

⁶ At my own institution, Rhodes University, community engagement is taken into account in the promotion of scholars, and there is a Vice-Chancellor's award for community engagement, which is made at one of our graduation ceremonies so that there is institutional and public acknowledgement.