

Contributions of Universities to Community Learning and Development

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I. Introduction

Every city is proud to be called a university hub. Bearing this name is an important premise for economic, social and cultural development, as well as for competitiveness. The university, as a producer of knowledge, a guarantor of higher education, of an open, tolerant, dynamic atmosphere, as a producer of human and social capital, increases the attractiveness of the city⁴ as a collaborative (inter)national, dynamic, cosmopolitan space.

Through its mission and identity, clearly articulated by the father of the modern university, Al. Von Humboldt, the university offers a higher academic education (based on the academic freedom it enjoys), conceived as a holistic combination between research and teaching, which integrates art and science, to enable students to act as autonomous, critical, responsible citizens with a higher education and a broad cultural horizon. This desire is congruent with that of establishing a learning community, the university being a crucial actor in this construct through its ability to generate advanced knowledge and learning, being a landmark of innovation and catalyst of a community's competency resources.

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⁴ Cui Liu, "The tensions of the university-city relations in the knowledge society", *Education and Urban Society* (2017): 1-24.

A learning community (more specifically, a learning city), according to the conception of UNESCO⁵ is the community that “mobilizes its resources to ensure: promoting inclusive learning, from basic to tertiary education; revitalizing learning in families and in the community; facilitating learning for and at work; extensive use of information and communication technologies; strengthening quality and excellence in learning; facilitating a culture of lifelong learning. By doing so, it will create and strengthen the empowerment of individuals, social cohesion, economic and cultural prosperity, ensuring sustainable development”. This is the vision for education outlined besides UNESCO, by Grau⁶ and Osborne, Kearns, Yang⁷, looking forward to 2030, as universities and communities are acting synergistically towards ensuring a quality education for all, an education for sustainable development, balancing local and global development.

How do universities contribute, how do they influence local, regional, but also national development today, or, on a broader perimeter, especially in view of facilitating learning at community level as a whole? What are the forms of university collaboration with the community? Can we talk about strategic collaborations, systematically conceptualized and achieved?

We will try to reflect on these aspects, illustrating possible forms of this collaboration in the case of the West University of Timisoara (Romania).

II. The University in and for the Community

Universities, as educational, research and cultural institutions, are identity benchmarks of the communities in which they are born. The university building, the university square, the university campus are symbols of the respective city. Each university town includes in its strategic development plan references to cooperate with the university, or to

⁵ UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning (UIL). “Learning Cities and the SDGs: A guide to action.” Accessed October 5, 2019. <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/ptf0000260442>.

⁶ *Higher education in the World 6. Towards a Socially Responsible University: Balancing the Global with the Local*, ed. Francesc Xavier Grau et al. (Girona: Global University Network for Innovation GUNI, 2017).

⁷ Michael Osborne, Peter Kearns, Jing Yang, “Learning cities: Developing inclusive, prosperous and sustainable urban communities”, *International Review of Education* 59:4 (2013): 409-423.

support the activity of the university, or to be supported by it. Every local government knows that a strong university is a guarantor of competitiveness, of attracting investors and city development. By offering land for the construction of the university campus, the local administration is aware of this strategic investment, whether this land is in the middle of the city, or, due to scarcity of space, it is offered to the expanding university, as land in different locations or even in peripheral areas of the city. The suburb in which the university campus is located will be a major contributor to the strategic development of the city, through the student population it attracts, through its attractiveness as a whole⁸. This is the source of the constant concern of cities to attract strong universities, offering facilities for campuses. Strong cities with mediocre universities are hard to imagine. In turn, powerful universities, concerned with strategic organizational development, expansion of know-how and attracting students, develop different organizational management models, offering franchises, distance education solutions, opening branches etc., especially in cities with potential.

Beyond the symbolism of spatiality, the universities, through their mission, contribute three-dimensionally to the development of the community: by ensuring a higher education and training of competent citizens; by developing knowledge and innovation, transferring and exploiting the results of research carried out in the university; by contributing to social cohesion, to cultural identity.

Most of the Romanian state universities reinforce their contribution to the development of the community, as they define their mission in the University Charta. Although the strategic vision and financing documents of higher education include distinct references to the relationship between the university and the local, regional community⁹ (or even the national and international one), 20% of the basic funding allocated to universities referring to this aspect, in most cases, we do not

⁸ Liu, "The tensions of the university-city relations", 1-35; Richard Florida, Charlotta Mellander, Peter J. Rentfrow, "The Happiness of Cities", *Regional Studies* 47:4 (2013): 613-627.

⁹ Ministerul Educației Naționale. "Strategia Națională pentru Învățământ Terțiar, 2015-2020. [National Strategy for Tertiary Education, 2015-2020], [www.edu.ro/sites/default/files/8%99iere/Minister/2016/strategii/Strategie_inv_tertiar_2015_2020\(1\).pdf](http://www.edu.ro/sites/default/files/8%99iere/Minister/2016/strategii/Strategie_inv_tertiar_2015_2020(1).pdf) (accessed October 17, 2019); UEFISCDI, CNFIS. "Starea finanțării învățământului superior și măsurile de optimizare ce se impun (The current state of the higher education financing system and the optimization challenges)." (2013), http://www.cnfis.ro/wp-content/uploads/2013/02/Raport_Public_CNFIS-2015.pdf (accessed Nov. 27, 2019).

find such distinct chapters in the strategic documents of institutional development of the state universities in Romania, for the period 2016-2020.

The lack of such references does not mean that universities do not carry out such activities, but that it is not a coherently articulated vision, with clear objectives and targets, strategic, multiannual approaches. Such a disparate approach leads to a fragmented impact of such actions, often below expectations or lesser than the efforts made¹⁰. This is why we will, first, continue to make considerations about the actions of the university in and for the community, for mutual gain, detailing the three action levels (educational, research, social). Secondly, we will illustrate possible courses of action, exemplifying and analyzing the case of our university.

III. The action of the university in the community - why, how?

Applying the “quadruple helix” model for systemic analysis of the university’s interaction with the community, a model that highlights the interconnected forces between government-industry-universities-civil society for the creation of knowledge and innovation¹¹, we will highlight, in more detail, the different forms on which the university-community interaction can have them, especially in reaching the goal of the learning community. In line with the findings of Borkowska and Osborne (2018), underlying the socially inclusive research, knowledge production and innovation helix, we will mainly focus in the analysis on the universities’ rationale for engaging in partnerships with and for the community for socially-driven aims and outcomes. The contribution of academia as a pillar of the quadruple helix (mainly with regard to research, development, education, incubators, etc.), complemented by the contribution of the government (with respect to financing, policy formulation, advisory services etc.), of industry (entrepreneurial venturing, product and service development), and of the civil society

¹⁰ James R. Cook, Maury Nation, “Community engagement: Universities’ roles in building communities and strengthening democracy”, *Community Development* 47:5 (2016): 718-731; Elaine W. Leigh, “An Exploration of ‘Hyper-Local’ Community-University Engagement in the Development of Smart Cities”, *Equity & Excellence in Education* 50:4 (2017): 421-433.

¹¹ Leigh, “An Exploration of ‘Hyper-Local’ Community”, 421-433; Katarzyna Borkowska, Michael Osborne “Locating the fourth helix: Rethinking the role of civil society in developing smart learning cities”, *International Review of Education* 64 (2018): 355–372.

(collaborative platforms, carrying individual and structural perspectives¹², it will be mainly analyzed and illustrated in the case study presented following the three axes of action of universities: didactic – education, research, civic-social actor.

The areas of action follow the same classic dimensions that define the mission of the universities¹³:

A. The didactic area, related to the educational offer

Universities contribute to the initial, but especially ongoing formation of community members. Through a diversified offer of specializations at the bachelor's, master's or doctoral level, through postgraduate courses, cycles of public conferences, platforms for focused dissemination of knowledge, universities seek to train competent citizens, to update their knowledge and both general and specialized cultural skills. The facilitation of reflection forums for different groups of citizens in the community in order to identify their educational needs, expectations and desirable educational services, in plenary manifestation as a learning community, the offer of any other non-formal learning opportunities open to the whole community are other examples of educational manifestation of universities in the community.

In the virtual community, universities are the most active promoters of online education and learning, distance learning, blended learning, open online courses, in an attempt to attract (international) students, to offer flexible means of education and learning. Universities also act as lifelong learning institutions, while being active promoters of open educational resources, both (co)creating them (e.g. tutorials, videos and other learning resources posted by teachers or students, often in view of promoting expertise or educational offers), as well as encouraging their

¹² Jinhyo Joseph Yun, Zheng Liu, "Micro- and Macro-Dynamics of Open Innovation with a Quadruple-Helix Model", *Sustainability* 11:12 (2019): 1-17.

¹³ Cook, Nation, "Community engagement"; Kim Brown, Kerry Shephard, David Warren, Gala Hesson, Jean Fleming, "Using phenomenography to build an understanding of how university people conceptualise their community-engaged activities", *Higher Education Research & Development* (2016): 1-15; *Community Engagement in Higher Education: Policy Reforms and Practice*, ed. W. James Jacob et al. (Rotterdam: 2015 Sense Publishers); Nicholas Buys, Samantha Bursnall, "Establishing university-community partnerships: Processes and benefits", *Journal of Higher Education Policy and Management* 29:1 (2007): 73-86.

use. Of course, the actions of the universities for educational purpose also have the aim of promoting the educational offer: they seek to attract more students, both in the initial and in-service training. In addition, by establishing partnerships for didactic activities, the practical training of the students, the transfer of knowledge is ensured.

Universities, faced with a shrinking student population, in order to also improve access to tertiary education, are increasingly expanding and diversifying their educational and complementary offer, of academic and career counselling, for providing access to socially vulnerable groups, but also elites, of non-formal extracurricular activities, to facilitate the transition to higher education, respectively to the labor market.

In a broader register, we could say that the university is the “soft” infrastructure of the community, which produces, offers, archives, capitalizes and distributes knowledge.

B. The Research – development – innovation area

Through various action research, applied research or even fundamental research, conducted in partnership with institutions and organizations in the community, universities seek to contribute to the economic and social development of communities. Several approaches coexist: a) carrying out the transfer and capitalizing on the research results for the benefit of companies and other categories of beneficiaries; b) the exchange of knowledge, such partnerships being informative for a better mutual understanding and involvement tailored to solving problems; c) co-creation of knowledge, through collaborative research, action research; d) research-development-innovation (RDI) directed toward commercial purposes, often managed and logistically supported by companies. Most research funds, whether generated by spin-offs or other dedicated structures, or just research partnerships, encourage the establishment of such partnerships with institutions as diverse as possible, so that research conducted in higher education institutions may have as wide a socio-economic impact as possible. Whether we are talking about advanced research, on a large scale, funded by European, national or international projects, of H2020 type, or we are talking about ameliorative research, funded to solve problems at local, regional or national level, an increasingly common eligibility criterion put forward is institutional diversity as a profile of the partners, precisely to facilitate mutual understanding, responsible involvement of those who apply the

results of research, informed facilitation of technological and knowledge transfer. The more and more articulated trends of open science, citizen's science are meant to bridge the knowledge creation and transfer, to make sure responsible research and innovation is fostered in all research efforts and elaborations carried out in university and its research units.

How these types of research are implemented and carried out definitely varies, considering the establishment of structures or integrated research institutions, the accomplishment of interdisciplinary doctoral degrees, dedicated contracts of (RDI), networks or multi-actor consortia, knowledge-hubs, spin-offs, technology transfer units, projects and contracts, etc.¹⁴. Universities can be involved not only in data collection, archiving and preservation, their endorsed interpretation, but they can also be the pole of expertise that will facilitate foresight research aimed at formulating visions on agreed and shared urban development¹⁵. In the quest to acquire as many resources as possible through research activities, universities are actively preoccupied and involved, whether they are advanced research universities¹⁶, or universities deeply anchored locally¹⁷. However, most of the research conducted and the research contracts concluded, even in large research consortia, orientates more and more towards extended partnerships with the business environment, relying on their co-founding and contribution, to produce know-how and dedicated technology transfer.

C. The Social, Civic area, of sustainable development

The role of the university as a critical and community awareness body, as a contributor to the formation of the civic spirit, to the formation of involved, responsible citizens, defenders of the values and spirituality of the community is manifested in multiple ways. Activities such as

¹⁴ Alan Bourke, "Universities, civil society and the global agenda of community-engaged research", *Globalisation, Societies and Education* 11:4 (2013): 498-519.

¹⁵ Matthias Barth, Daniel J. Lang, Philip Luthardt, Ulli Vilsmaier "Mapping a sustainable future: Community learning in dialogue at the sciences-society interface", *International Review of Education* 63 (2017):811-828; Iwan Davies, "The Impact of a Research-led Entrepreneurial University on a Regional Economy: Swansea University's Science and Innovation Campus", in *Entrepreneurial Learning City Regions*, ed J. James et al. (Dordrecht: Springer, 2018), 191-210.

¹⁶ Davies, "The Impact of a Research-led Entrepreneurial University".

¹⁷ Buys, Bursnall, "Establishing university-community partnerships".

involving students and teachers in volunteering activities, carrying out analyses of the social-political situation, moderating debate forums, getting involved in developing community development strategies, engaging in civic, educational and social justice campaigns, co-organizing (learning) festivals, exhibitions, competitions etc. are just some of the ways in which universities get involved in the life of the city. Whether they are activities dedicated to all members of the community, or they are activities aimed at supporting certain socially vulnerable groups, the universities act manifold for promoting active and participatory citizenship, education for democratic citizenship. It is the dimension in which the universities show the greatest creativity, initiative, diversity in action. From involvement in strengthening democracy¹⁸, for open, dialogical, transparent communication, to achieving social inclusion, education for all and everyone¹⁹, or to implementing community development visions, the register is a very varied and comprehensive one. Contribution to social welfare, for increasing the quality of life (including access to various educational offers), for asserting identity and cultural capital and creativity manifests itself, from sharing good practices and carrying out comparative research, to consulting for diversified services²⁰, or to the manipulation, interpretation and dedicated use of big-data²¹. Whether it is a conceptual and structured contribution to the entrepreneurial development of the community²², in view of becoming a green community, or smart, or any type chosen, the university can contribute actively, thoughtfully, moderating and facilitating such

¹⁸ Cook, Nation, "Community engagement".

¹⁹ Roberta Piazza, "Creating Learning Opportunities for the Cities: Community Engagement and Third Mission in the University of Catania", in *Entrepreneurial Learning City Regions*, ed. Judith James et al. (Dordrecht: Springer, 2018), 225-247; Diana Dias, Diana Soares, "Civic learning outcomes: a step towards an inclusive higher education", in *International Journal of Inclusive Education* (2018): 1-15; Siobhan O'Sullivan, Séamus Ó Tuama, Lorna Kenny, "Universities as key responders to education inequality", *Global Discourse* 7:4 (2017): 527-538.

²⁰ Florida, Mellander, Rentfrow, "The Happiness of Cities"; Grau, "Higher education in the World".

²¹ Leigh, "An Exploration of Hyper-Local"; Shimshon, Gideon, and Iseard Saskia (ed.), *Trend Report 2016-2017 – People first in a digital age* (Leiden University, Centre for Innovation, 2017), <https://www.centre4innovation.org/media/uploads/uploads/trend-report-dps-web-version.pdf> (accessed October 7, 2019).

²² Norman Longworth. "Attributes of an Entrepreneurial Learning City Region," in *Entrepreneurial Learning City Regions* (Cham: Springer, 2018), 3-24.

developments, contributing to capacity development through dedicated trainings. Whether it facilitates the development of social capital, as an active member, initiator and moderator of the different networks²³, or promotes, lobbies for the community in different contexts, socio-cultural spaces, the university is an actor and a credible ambassador.

On the other hand, communities can be directly involved in restructuring, expanding, merging universities, through the facilities they offer, through the policies they promote, or the networks they adhere to.

In shaping the relationship between the university and the community, the university has to strike a balance between a series of problematic, often contradictory issues:

- Should it carry out fundamental research, in which the joy of knowledge, the exploration of new territories and curiosity are unrestrained, or to conduct research with social impact, establishing closer links with those outside the academic environment, who put into practice the results of the research?
- In seeking to supplement the increasingly limited resources, should it make efforts to attract as many students as possible or to direct research, partnerships and projects based on available funds, etc., as “here and now” solutions, or to focus on more complex developments and research which will ensure a more attractive positioning in international university rankings?
- As public institutions financed from the national budget, in what optimal way can they balance their effort and involvement toward local, national development, contributing with research, studies, diagnoses, position documents, etc., for national and local development, versus making a priority-oriented effort to increase international visibility and attractiveness. The Glocal model developed by many universities²⁴, which recognizes the intersection between global, national, regional and local agencies, seems to be a hybrid solution for addressing this antinomy, for the benefit of the university and the community, both in terms of growth, visibility, as well as the development of know-how, transferable and adaptable

²³ Barth et al., “Mapping a sustainable future: Community learning in dialogue at the science–society interface.”

²⁴ John Brennan, Allan Cochrane “Universities: in, of, and beyond their cities”, *Oxford Review of Education* 45:2 (2019): 188-203.

locally. In order to solve some problems in the community, for an accurate understanding of some social realities “hands on”, to what extent do members of the academic staff get involved in hybrid research, as activists themselves²⁵?

Universities do not get involved in the community only motivated by public debt, equity and social justice, but also for attracting resources, for increasing attractiveness and visibility, acting in a multidimensional way.

In short, the forms of university-community collaboration are multiple, too widely varied to be listed, due to space considerations. Each of these collaborations is adapted contextually, depending on the objectives pursued, resources and the expertise available. The given overview is an indicative one, meant to inspire conceptualizations and dedicated actions, as universities go on carrying out more dedicated actions along this line. A useful illustration is provided below.

IV. The West University of Timișoara – a case study

In the report published by the World Bank (September 2018), respectively in Volume 2 of the Monitor for Education and Training 2019 of the European Commission, Romania occupies one of the last places with reference to the composite indicators that define human capital, one of them being reduced access to tertiary studies, for the first time in decline in the last five years. In the national context of the declining student population, the West University of Timișoara (WUT) manages to register a constant increase in the number of students, respectively in university rankings.

The WUT is the largest university in the West of Romania, in the number of students. A classic university, operating in the fourth largest university center of the country together with the Polytechnic University,

²⁵ Cave, Jenny, Lynda Johnston, Carey-Ann Morrison, and Yvonne Underhill-Sem, “Community-university collaborations: creating hybrid research and collective identities.” *Kotuitui: New Zealand Journal of Social Sciences Online* 7:1 (2012): 37-50.; Rozalia Ligus, “Symbolic Closing of Local Community and Reflexivity,” in *Researching and Transforming Adult Learning and Communities: The Local/ Global Context* (Brill Sense, 2016), 39-51; Brown, ”Using phenomenography”; Dias, Soares, ”Civic learning outcomes”; O’Sullivan et al., “Universities as key responders to education inequality”; Piazza, “Creating Learning Opportunities for the Cities”

the University of Medicine and Pharmacy “Victor Babes”, the University of Agricultural Sciences and Veterinary Medicine of Banat.

On analyzing the different strategic documents, we meet concrete, consistent concerns for multidimensional collaboration with the community in the slogan of the university “We build careers, we shape characters”, in the rector’s managerial plan for 2016-2020, in the annual reports of the rector and their practical application, in the management policy.

Consequently, a dedicated pro-rectorate was established for this purpose in 2016, to strengthen the collaborations not only with the business environment, but also with the community. We find this concern not only in the formal documents but also in concrete measures of organizational management. Teachers and students are rewarded, for example, for the activities they carry out together with/for the community. The WUT attracts 25% of high school graduates from the region, despite the existence of about 10 higher education institutions in the western part of the country. Students in the region find it appealing to come to Timișoara, hoping to find a job, given that unemployment is very low. But many graduates go to study abroad, especially the best ones, and a dedicated strategy is needed to attract (good) students.

At the level of citizen engagement, the WUT has not only been fully involved, multi-annually, in supporting the project Timisoara, European Capital of Culture 2021 (by offering trainings for cultural managers, organizing debates, cultural events, etc.), but it also has dedicated actions, constant, for various groups of citizens (e.g. conferences of seniors, summer academies for young people, performers or vulnerable, activities specific for migrants, etc.). It is also actively involved in urban regeneration and in supporting the definition of the way people live and build their experiences (e.g. conferences and projects “Urban talks”, “Upgrade my city”, providing expertise for becoming a learning city, keeping up the quality of life barometer, setting up dedicated structures for social research and diagnosis, participation in the realization of local and regional strategies, etc.), or in the creation of a dynamic business environment (e.g. running a dedicated training program for entrepreneurs, supporting start-ups for students). It is involved in the urban architecture, in the cultural or sports life of the community, through its specialized faculties. It is a board of criticism and awareness, organizing debates with politicians, researchers, experts, ambassadors

(e.g. the conferences “Ambassadors at the WUT”, “About Romania of tomorrow, in the centenary year”, “WUT conferences”, conferences/courses/exhibitions/debates/the projects dedicated to the 30 year anniversary of the anti-communist revolution of December 1989, started in Timișoara). It is one of the largest providers of volunteers in the community, but also a promoter of innovation. It is an active promoter of Timisoara, Banat, Romania at international level. It grants honorary titles to the personalities who have outstanding contributions to the development of the city or region.

It carries research and development financed by different companies, setting up spin-offs and dedicated structures which make this collaboration more flexible, such as the university foundation. It carries historiographic, ethnographic, diagnostic, participatory, foresight research. The WUT has taken an active role in multidisciplinary research and the use of big data, as a project of identity and institutional development, adopting the mission of “hyper-local”²⁶ collaborator and marker of community development. It is an active member of the various inter-university collaborative networks of involvement in sustainable development, for lobbying and influencing public policies (e.g. “EUniverCities”, the Universitaria Consortium), for shared and co-created know-how.

The enumeration can surely continue, including repeated and most consistent activities. Even though the WUT aims to be an advanced research university, it is making considerable efforts to contribute to the development of the community. However, consistent improvements need to be made on the components of the post-graduate offer (for updating skills or improvement), distance education, supporting the know-how of (high-)school teachers and actions for quality education, self-assessment for balanced action in all components of the collaborative matrix of the university with the community.

V. Conclusions and discussion

The collaboration of the universities with the communities, the mutual contribution to their multidimensional development, the potential that the universities have in this endeavor are manifold, widely exploitable, as illustrated in the previous paragraphs.

²⁶ Leigh, “An Exploration of ‘Hyper-Local.’”

The university can act as approved and dedicated coordinator or partner in various collaborative networks, by offering consultancy for urban development, or acting as a knowledge-hub, as an independent and approved board for identifying local development needs, monitoring this development, as an expert partner or independent and objective knowledge producer for the management of big data, or in any other role requested by the community. It is an important provider of increase in human and social capital, by training, improving, re(specializing) the citizens of the city, disseminating science for all, increasing aspirations, offering opportunities for personal and professional development, active citizenship, respectively for reducing social inequalities²⁷. The listed examples of contributions of the academia to the development of the community, of each of the other three main pillars of the helix (government, industry, civic and cultural society), of the possible cooperation with each of pillars of the helix were far from being exhaustive for the potentiality the universities to contribute to the community development. The range of different specific practices of university in the city (place-specific practices), as a positive pole of urban and community development – if it would be to add the fifth pillar of the helix, the environmental one²⁸, is very diverse, and we have tried to analyze and illustrate them in a compressed, three-dimensional way the present work.

By analogy, comparing the city/community that learns with a whole in which all the parts are connected, like the human body, we can assimilate: the hands and feet with the industry and the business environment, the heart with the identity, the soul with the culture, the university with the brain and so on. They all have to work together. The brain never drives but coordinates and reflects²⁹.

However, the university's collaboration with the community is far from implementation at the maximum potential, as multiple steps can be taken to make this collaboration more efficient. Thus, more structured

²⁷ Brennan Cochrane, "Universities: in, of, and beyond their cities.;" Jean-Paul D. Addie, "From the urban university to universities in urban society." *Regional Studies* 51:7 (2017): 1089-1099; Cook, Nation, "Community engagement".

²⁸ Elias G. Carayannis and Ruslan Rakhmatullin, "The quadruple/quintuple innovation helixes and smart specialisation strategies for sustainable and inclusive growth in Europe and beyond," *Journal of the Knowledge Economy* 5:2 (2014): 212-239.

²⁹ Longworth, "Attributes of an Entrepreneurial Learning City Region."

dialogues between local/regional governance and universities, with funded multiannual collaboration agreements, need to be achieved.

How universities get involved in community development depends on the social-economic structure of the community, respectively on the type of university. We analyse differently the involvement of the university in a large, dynamic city, in which several higher education institutions coexist, as is the case of the WUT, as opposed to universities in small cities with poor economic development, with local universities having a major role as a vector of growth, regeneration or transformation³⁰.

Regardless of the type of community in which it operates, the university acts with awareness of its image and reputation. Being one of the main employers of the community, a producer of knowledge and innovation, one of the main owners of land and landmark buildings of the community, the universities have to dutifully use their spaces and resources to generate major changes in the community. As we have seen, the WUT understands to actively play its part, having recently started building a multifunctional cultural centre, Multiplex, in its spaces in the city centre, together with local and county authorities. Through such large-scale partnerships, for larger or smaller projects, the WUT helps to increase the city's competitiveness, its promotion within and beyond the borders of the country. The WUT, as an elite university, has this potential. The examples given of the practices developed at the WUT are meant to be examples of good practices that inspire other universities to take action.

Of course, universities must reconsider their approaches, efforts and resources in order to fully bring their expertise to the development of communities, to manifest themselves as vibrant learning communities, and their duty, as public institutions, as pioneer and emblematic institutions of communities is to act more systematically, with stronger determination on sustainable community development³¹

³⁰ Brennan, Cochrane, "Universities: in, of, and beyond their cities"; Michael Osborne "Locating the fourth helix".

³¹ UNESCO, "Learning cities and the SDGs".

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