

Engaged Universities and Student Housing in London

Roland Shanks

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Abstract

The “third mission” of Universities includes the positive social and cultural impacts which they have on local and regional communities. As such it is closely connected to the US concept of the “engaged university”. The model of the “engaged university” is deeply embedded within the culture of the US Higher Education sector but, within the UK, it is relatively new. This research seeks to examine what tangible benefits UK Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) could gain by moving towards the “engaged” model. It does this primarily by a comparative case study method; examining relations between local authorities and HEIs through the prism of planning applications for student housing in London. Universities in London have a need to develop new purpose built student housing but find difficulties in achieving planning permission to do so. This research seeks to examine whether the level of engagement that a University has with its local community impacts on planning decisions and perceptions of students. It does this by assessing two London HEIs within the framework of the “engaged university” model and through a survey of local authority planning officers. It also examines whether relationships between HEIs and local authorities are affected by differing local, regional and global agendas. It concludes that there are significant indications that Universities would benefit by moving towards the “engaged model” both within the narrow context of planning applications for student housing and more widely within the context of the communitarian ideals of the “Big Society”.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

For over a thousand years Universities have both educated and through their research attempted to create a better understanding of the world. For much of that time the University was deliberately removed from the rest of society. Scholars retreated from the world and society in order to contemplate it from a distance. The days of the ivory tower are, of course, now long gone. In the modern world publicly funded Universities must demonstrate through their teaching and research their value to society. Nationally, research activities and the training of students to join a profession, especially within today's knowledge economy, have important economic and social consequences. However, increasingly Universities are being asked to fulfil a "third mission". This "third mission" is a nebulous concept but is essentially about the broader interaction between Universities and the rest of society. The "third mission" includes the positive social and cultural impacts which Universities can have on their local and regional communities. As such, it is intimately connected to the regeneration of our towns and cities. It also has considerable relevance to the communitarian values espoused within the Tory Party's conception of the "Big Society". The role of social institutions, and in particular educational institutions, in creating a new sense of community based on respect and morality are key tenets in this philosophy; which believes that both the big state and the unfettered market have crowded out the self reliance of communities on their own organisations.

Until the advent, in the late 20th century, of company or for-profit universities, all university Institutions grew in some way from the communities that originally sponsored them (Watson D 2008). Universities are, therefore, primarily social institutions. However, most Universities within the UK are also considered to fall within the public sector and, as with all public sector bodies, they appear vulnerable to the Conservatives attempt to realign the balance between public and private sectors. Public funding for Higher Education has been problematic over the last two decades. Between 1989 and 1999, there were reductions in funding per student in excess of 30% (Kaiser et al, 2004). These cuts were not reversed in the last decade but public spending per student remained stable. Indeed overall funding for the sector increased, allowing for a large rise in student numbers. Higher Education student numbers in the UK rose from 1, 720,094 in 1995 to 2, 465,185 in 2008 (HESA, 2010). However, this growth has not been without its problems. Although overall funding increased many Universities have struggled to cope with accommodating increased numbers of students within their existing estates. A recent report from HEFCE outlined the poor quality of much of the student housing and lecture rooms being provided. In more than 90% of HEIs, at least 10% of buildings were judged below the "sound and operationally safe" category (The Guardian 2010a).

Faced with such a difficult funding background Universities have diversified their funding streams. Current direct government grant funding for research and teaching comprises just 57% of overall income across the sector (PA Consulting, 2009). Additional income is generated from services to business, from University estates and increasingly from overseas student fees. With the latest recession Universities are facing new cuts both in terms of actual student numbers and in terms of

funding per student. The Russell Group recently issued a dire warning about the potential consequences of these cuts “It has taken more than 800 years to create one of the world's greatest education systems and it looks like it will take just six months to bring it to its knees”(The Russell Group 2010). The previous recession and subsequent crisis in University funding led to the Dearing report and the introduction of student top up fees. It appears inevitable that a new report from Lord Browne will recommend a further increase in financial contributions by students towards the cost of their degrees, and a move towards what many believe to be the US market led model of Higher Education.

Within this context it is not difficult to see how “third stream” activities, not directly linked to income generation, can become marginalised. However, although both national Government and many Vice Chancellors may look towards the US model as a way to solve the funding crisis, it is interesting that relatively little focus is paid to the US model of the “engaged university”. This model is especially prevalent amongst the state and land-grant universities. These public universities were established in the latter half of the nineteenth century by regional states with land granted to them by the federal government. Their primary aim was to serve the local state by focusing on the vocational teaching of engineering and agriculture. Over time many of these Universities have evolved into institutions with a global reputation for excellence in both teaching and research. These are the so called “public ivies”. Although these Universities were initially aimed at serving the local population there is now considerable national competition between state universities for the recruitment of students. Unlike the UK, where there has been an increasing tendency for students to study at local institutions and live at home, the cultural expectation in the US is that students will leave home to study. This is seen as being integral to the overall student learning experience (Gaffikin F, 2010).

Within this competitive national market for students many Universities promote themselves on the basis of the extent to which they are “engaged”. According to the Kellogg report the engaged institution aims to “produce civic-minded graduates who are as well prepared to take up the complex problems of our society as they are to succeed in their careers.” (Kellogg, 1999: 13) It is perhaps not surprising that this socially committed ethos is popular with students. From the Peace Corps through to the students who volunteered in their thousands to help rebuild New Orleans after Hurricane Katrina, there is ample evidence of strong idealism and a commitment to social justice amongst many US graduate students.

Within those Universities that are most “engaged”, work with local communities by both students and staff is both strongly recognised and, crucially, rewarded. For example at the University of Illinois all academic staff applying for promotion or tenure must provide evidence of public engagement; defined as “the application for the public good of the knowledge and expertise of a faculty or staff member to issues of societal importance”(University of Illinois 2009: 30). In addition to an institutional focus on “engagement”, federal funding also encourages University-Community

partnerships. For example, The Office of University Partnerships provides funding from the Department for Housing and Urban Development (OUP 2010). This funding is for US universities to engage in regeneration initiatives but is only available on the basis of Universities attracting match funding from local states or other regional partners. This ensures that state authorities are able to integrate their regeneration work with that of their local Higher Education Institution.

In addition to state funding, public US universities attract considerable endowment revenue from their alumni. Although the private universities are most adept at attracting endowments, it is likely that this is a consequence of the relative wealth and privileged backgrounds of their alumni. Indeed some would suggest that endowments to private universities are not entirely altruistic. The offspring of those responsible for large endowments often find it suspiciously easy to gain access to prestigious institutions despite having low levels of academic achievement (The Guardian 2010b). Within public universities, however, it is likely that this dynamic is diluted and that endowment funding is more clearly linked to philanthropic motivations. In these circumstances, the “engaged model”, may act as a competitive advantage in attracting funding.

Within the UK, the majority of UK Universities do not attract substantial endowment funding. The money spent per student is also considerably less than that in the US (Universities UK 2009). Furthermore, there are no structural funds to assist in local authority and university partnerships. Nevertheless, despite these disadvantages UK universities do play a considerable role in regeneration work. Widening participation in Higher Education beyond the traditional middle class cohort, research projects, knowledge transfer initiatives and student volunteering all play a vital role in community engagement and economic development. However, HEIs rarely appear to play the role of “engaged universities” as envisaged by current debate in the US. Individual departments, students and academics within the Institution engage; but the Institutions themselves rarely engage as “the Institution”. This difference can be seen both in the low participation rates of Universities in Local Strategic Partnerships and the manner in which Universities are characterised in the regeneration literature as “anchor institutions”. An anchor institution is one whose “scale, local rootedness and community links are such that (it is) acknowledged to play a key role in local development and economic growth” (The Work Foundation 2009). This formulation assigns a role to the University but it is essentially a passive one. An anchor provides stability but the analogy does not imply the dynamism needed for effective leadership.

Although this reflects the reality for the majority of Universities, a lack of direct engagement with local authority led regeneration is not uniform across the sector. Many of the post 1992 Universities were originally funded from local authority budgets and, therefore, in common with the land-grant universities had a strong local connection. In addition, as with the land-grant universities, they were initially conceived of as purely providing vocational teaching, with access to research funds only being granted once they achieved University status in 1992. It does not seem to be a coincidence

that those Universities best represented on Local Strategic Partnerships tend to be the post 1992 Universities.

The question for all Universities is whether public engagement matters for their strategic growth within the current funding climate. Is it an optional extra or integral to their identity? Is it just good public relations or something more substantial? Crucially, does the lack of engagement as “the Institution” actually cause harm to the University? What advantages could UK Universities receive from moving to the model of the US engaged University? Before progressing to these general questions, and to the specific research question of this dissertation, it is first necessary to examine a number of inter-related concepts. For example, how do we measure the extent of engagement by a University? What does it mean, within the academic literature, to be “engaged”? Secondly, are there differences between the UK and US in the way in which students are viewed within regeneration literature and how might this be connected to community engagement by the Institution?

Chapter 2

The Engaged University and Students in the Community

Measuring Engagement

The role of Universities within society must be understood on a number of levels. There are global, local, national and regional dimensions of the “third mission” and the interplay between these differing dimensions has considerable relevance to Universities' engagement with local communities. For the “engaged university”, the local dimension is paramount. Some academics have argued that a “rush for global status and presence may marginalize the university’s civic relationship with its local hinterland” (Deems 2001). However, others argue that it is possible to synthesise global, national and local concerns into a “glonacal” (global, national and local) approach (Marginson & Rhoades, 2002).

Exercising “stewardship of place” does not mean limiting the institution’s worldview; rather, it means pursuing that worldview in a way that has meaning to the institution’s neighbours, who can be its most consistent and reliable advocates (AASCU 2002: 9).

Within the framework of this dissertation I have divided “engagement” into three main activities. These are widening participation in Higher Education, economic engagement with the business sector and local community engagement activities. This last activity includes volunteering by staff and students and providing community access to University resources, such as sports fields, museums and art galleries. More significantly, it includes scientific and social research conducted for the benefit of local communities. As with many attempts at categorisation, the reality is that there is rarely a Chinese wall between aspects of engagement. In the UK The National Co-Ordinating Centre for Public Engagement lists seven dimensions of engagement but then states that “The dimensions are complementary and not discrete categories” (NCCPE 2009: 3). Nevertheless, by applying the principle that for an engaged university the local is paramount and judging each category of engagement on this basis, we have a framework that should provide some clarity

Widening participation in Higher Education beyond the traditional middle class cohort has a distinctly local dimension. Those Universities located in areas of high deprivation that recruit from within their local community are demonstrating, in practice, their relevance to that community. A commitment to widening participation can also ensure that the student cohort broadly resembles the social composition of the community in which it is located, thus potentially reducing traditional town-gown conflicts. Widening participation is not referred to widely within US academic literature on the engaged university. However, this could be for two reasons. Firstly, within the US the share of the labour force educated to tertiary level is significantly higher at 40 per cent compared to 32 per cent in the UK (OECD, 2009:39). Widening participation could, therefore, be perceived as being less of a pressing problem. Secondly, the cultural expectation within the US is that even students from lower income backgrounds will leave home to study at a Higher Education Institution (Gaffikin 2010). Within the UK, and especially within London, the pattern is different. The majority of students from

lower income backgrounds will study at a local institution and live at home. This ensures that widening participation within the UK has a far more distinct local flavour.

Economic engagement with the business sector, by contrast, does not necessarily have a local dimension. Whilst knowledge transfer activities have an economic impact, crucial to analysing these activities within the model of the “engaged university” is the question: who benefits? Is knowledge transfer to the benefit of local residents or do the benefits go elsewhere? For close to twenty years there has been an emphasis within government policy on Universities acting in an entrepreneurial manner, conducting research sponsored by the business sector. As many critics have pointed out (Monbiot, 2000), it is large corporations that are the most able to pay. This has two important effects. Firstly, it makes it less likely that the immediate local community will benefit. Secondly, it has the effect of skewing research agendas and, in some instances, stifling innovation. As one important study found, five times as much research money is devoted to the oil and gas industry as to renewable energy (Muttitt and Grimshaw, 2000).

Influential “red Tories” such as Philip Blond have stressed that their vision of economic regeneration is hostile to the large corporations who currently sponsor much University research. They point to the corrosive role that corporations, such as supermarket chains, play within local communities; stifling local businesses and driving down wages. According to Blond, to revitalise local communities Conservatives must:

Develop a full-blooded “new localism” which works to empower communities and builds new, vibrant local economies that can uphold the party’s civic vision.... The final piece of the puzzle is for Conservatives to break with big business.... We must end a model in which competition is reduced to a cartel of vast corporations maximising profits by discouraging competitors and minimising wages (Blond 2009).

If Universities are to subscribe to this vision, which would appear sensible within the current political context, then there needs to be a realignment of how “knowledge transfer” is going to work. How are Universities going to ensure that there is a local dimension to their knowledge transfer activities to the business sector? I will come back to this question within the case studies and in my conclusions.

The final strand of the “third mission” comes under the broad heading of community engagement activities. Of these activities, those that have most meaning for the “engaged university” are focussed locally. Of course the identification of community with locality is not necessarily accurate “Simply sharing an artificial space is not enough to foster a sense of sharedness-of-community amongst those residents living within its borders” (Dargan, 2004: 18). This can be especially true within multi-cultural cities such as London. Nevertheless, community engagement, in order for it to be meaningful, has to include elements which are specifically place-related.

Local community engagement encompasses a broad range of activities. There are, of course, student and staff volunteering activities which are supported by the Institution. However, a strand of community engagement given great prominence in the academic literature is that of “engaged research” conducted both with and for local communities. To explain what this can entail, it is worth briefly examining the concept and history of “science shops”. In the 1970s, the science shop movement began in the Netherlands. It aimed to provide community access to the academic expertise of institutions and was “formed by coalitions of progressive staff members together with activists in student movements” (Leydersdorff et al 2005). Amongst other activities, it has helped communities analyse environmental problems, proving links between local industries and health problems suffered by adjacent residents. The principle of the “science shop” is that the research being conducted by the University is directed by the needs of a local community. The idea of a “shop” is that it is both easily accessible and there is an equal exchange between University and Community. The Community receives the benefit of the academic expertise of the students whilst the students learn how to apply their skills in the “real” world.

Leydersdorff outlines four different developmental stages of the science shop movement across Europe. The third wave, during the 1990s, was based on an awareness that effective community engagement required a particular set of professional skills that were not necessarily available to the existing science shops. An increased understanding of the need to build social capital and address issues of social exclusion meant that the “third wave” was mainly driven by social scientists and became progressively inter-disciplinary in approach. In this the science shop movement in Europe and discourses concerning the “engaged university” in the US began to converge; creating a unified vision of the principles and aims of “engaged research”. In their study on the Engaged University from 2008, Gaffikin and his co-authors outline the following defining principles of this concept:

1. it involves **partnership** between academy and civic agency;
2. it is **inter-disciplinary**, reflecting the reality that problems are multi-dimensional;
3. it has **high impact**, both in terms of its public policy and development transferability for cities everywhere, and of its extension of both knowledge boundaries and the linked aspects, such as good quality university teaching (Gaffikin et al, 2008a: 7).

Both widening participation and community focused research are related to the universities primary functions, to teach and research. However, the manner in which those functions are carried out is what distinguishes an engaged university. The engaged University is a holistic concept and one that requires a cultural commitment by the Institution to the principles of local partnership.

Institutional outreach to the community and city is complemented by civic in-reach to the academy. A protocol between the two enshrines commitment to a long-term strategic partnership, involving not only the minority of staff already attached to such work, but rather *the very core* of the university (Gaffikin et al, 2008a: 7).

The concept of the engaged university has begun to be taken up by many Universities in the UK but it remains less advanced than in the US. Within the US, the Carnegie Foundation publishes a list of 76 Universities and Colleges which satisfy their criteria for being an engaged University. The list is self selecting in that Universities apply and there is no ranking of the degree to which the Institution is engaged. However, despite its limitations, it does provide a unifying benchmark. There is no such similar measure in the UK and, as a result, many Universities do not feel the need to show anything more than a cursory commitment to engagement. Does this matter, both for them and their students?

Students in the community

Some academics have noted that there appears to be a considerable difference in public perceptions of Universities within the UK and US.

In the USA they are more loved and respected than may be deserved; in Australia and the UK they stimulate more opprobrium than is objectively fair (Watson).

This difference in perceptions appears to extend to the role that students play within local communities. Within the UK, as early as 2000, Rugg and others noted that students had an inflationary effect on private sector rents and that this was pricing families out of accommodation in areas popular with students (Rugg et al, 2000). More recently Darren Smith and others have coined the expression “studentification” to describe the perceived negative social impacts which large concentrations of students, living in privately rented accommodation, can have on local communities. According to Darren Smith overconcentrations of students are associated with “noise, nuisance, car parking, crime, litter (and) change of local retail and leisure services”(Smith D, 2008).

In the US, by contrast, theorists such as Richard Florida emphasise both the economic and social benefits of attracting a large student presence into a community. In his influential book “The Rise of the Creative Class” (2002), he argues that “human creativity has replaced natural resources and physical capital as the predominant driver of economic growth.” Universities and, in particular, research Universities are key to this. Florida outlines what he considers to be the “three T’s of economic development: technology, talent, and tolerance” (Florida, 2006). The role of Universities in attracting talent to areas and developing technology are self evident. However, the social role of Universities in fostering tolerance and diversity within local communities is less discussed. In Florida’s view this is of prime importance. According to his research, communities with larger shares of college students were more tolerant. This tolerance, according to his theory, is likely to attract and retain those involved in the creative economy; thus ensuring a competitive economic advantage over areas with a more monolithic culture.

Both Florida and Smith refer in their writing to the concept of “social capital” but from differing perspectives. The concept of social capital was popular with the last Government and has heavily

influenced academic debates regarding regeneration within communities. The Tory Party's assertion of the need to promote the “Big Society” is likely to ensure its continuing popularity within policy debates, albeit with a greater emphasis on the importance of family ties and the teaching of morality in schools. The concept of social capital has a profound influence on debates regarding the role that students and Universities play within communities.

In Robert Putnam's seminal work “Bowling Alone” (2000) he offers the following definition:

(It) refers to connections among individuals – social networks and the norms of reciprocity and trustworthiness that arise from them.

Putnam in the US (2000) and Hall (1999) in the UK conceptualised social capital into two main categories; bridging and bonding capital. Putnam defines “‘bridging social capital’ as bonds of connectedness that are formed across diverse social groups, whereas ‘bonding social capital’ cements only homogeneous groups” (Beugelsdijk et al, 2003). Although social capital is in theory not connected to a geographical area; in practice when “operationalised for policy or research purposes it tends to take on a strong sense of local space” (Forest et al, 2001). Length of residence within an area is a key indicator in many surveys for the strength of bonding social capital. This could be attributed to a sense that temporary residents within an area can erode its stock of “bonding” social capital. The theory of “studentification” also refers to the erosion of bonding social capital caused by concentrations of students living within the HMO sector. If bonding social capital is considered to be a valued resource for local communities then a large presence of students within that community, as temporary residents, will logically be considered harmful.

However, although bonding social capital is generally considered to be a civic virtue, there are those who would contest this. In many cases groups also define themselves by what makes them different from other groups. Bonding capital “can be about discrimination and exclusion and about a majority imposing its will or value system on a minority” (Forest et al, 2001). Indeed recent theorists, in both the US and Europe, have asserted that when looking at the theory within the context of regional growth, high levels of bonding social capital actually corresponded to lower income and employment growth. By contrast high levels of bridging social capital corresponded with far more positive incomes (Knudsen et al, 2007; Beugelsdijk et al, 2003). Florida asserts that a large presence of students within a community promotes tolerance. Tolerance is a natural precursor to bridging capital. Therefore, it could be argued that students, far from having a detrimental impact on local communities can be a force for good.

The Engaged University can also play a key role in developing bridging social capital. Within contested cities such as Belfast, the Universities have played a considerable role in attempting to reconcile hostile communities and stress their commonality of interests. The Universities, in these areas, are one of the prime sources of bridging capital:

Moreover, academy can support also the urban networking that underpins effective social capital, and, particularly in the case of contested societies, it can provide a safe dialogic space for difficult discourses between protagonists (Gaffikin et al 2008a).

London, of course, is not currently a divided city in the manner of Belfast. The closest that we have come to this is with the rise of far right groups such as the BNP. These gained some success during the late 1980s in Tower Hamlets and more latterly in Romford. Whilst they were marginalised at the last General Election, the scale of the cuts proposed by the new government are very likely to exacerbate tensions between communities and provide fertile ground for a resurgence in their fortunes. If this were to happen, Universities and, in particular those with large populations of overseas students, would not be immune. In 2009, serious racist attacks on Muslim students by local youths in Islington provided a worrying foretaste of what could be to come (The Guardian, 2009). The role of engaged Universities as key creators of bridging social capital does, therefore, contain an element of enlightened self interest (Weber et.al., 2005). Fear of crime and community decline need to be addressed if Universities are to continue to be able to recruit the most talented students and staff from around the world.

Chapter 3

The research question and methodology

Earlier I asked the question, “does the lack of engagement as “the Institution” actually cause harm to the University?” Related to this are a variety of subsidiary questions. For example, does a lack of engagement allow students to be cast as “outsiders” rather than as a benefit to the local community? Does the engaged model of the University resonate with the communitarian principles of the “Big Society”? If it does, could Universities, by showing their commitment to the model, ensure that their impact on society is valued and rewarded by both central and local tiers of Government?

These are all big questions and it would be foolish to attempt to answer them all within one dissertation. The approach that I have taken is to take one aspect of how local communities and Universities interact and to examine how this interaction is influenced by the nature of the University. My chosen field of research is on applications for student housing developments within London. The reason for this choice is that it appears to be one area in which a lack of engagement could already be causing Universities long term problems. Universities need appropriate housing for their students and to deliver this they need cooperative local planning authorities. However, many Higher Education Estates Directors express frustration with local authority controlled planning processes

Higher education institutions generally find themselves treated like private sector developers in the planning process.... In the worst cases they have Section 106 obligations imposed upon them, when, as part of the public sector, it would be more appropriate for HEI's to receive benefit from others....Many institutions have property assets across several local authorities and they find inconsistencies of policy and approach between them. This is particularly noticeable in London in terms of the approach to student residential accommodation, where different boroughs have different views, some sensibly viewing it as part of the overall housing need; others not (AUDE 2006).

It is possible that a contributory factor to this perceived obstructiveness is a lack of engagement by HEIs with local authority priorities leading to what Gaffikin has termed a “dialogue of the deaf between ‘the remote ivory tower’ and ‘the ever demanding ever complaining community’ (Gaffikin et al, 2008a).The key question that I wish to answer through my research, therefore, is:

Would a move towards adopting the “engaged University” model, have a beneficial impact on applications for purpose built student housing?

To address this question I have chosen two Universities in London as a comparative case study; the University of East London and University College London. I have attempted to measure the extent to

which each conforms to the model of the “engaged university”. In doing this I have looked at the three key indicators of engagement outlined earlier; widening participation, economic engagement with the local business sector and community engagement. The case study is then compared with a survey of senior local authority planning officers in five key London boroughs. I originally surveyed a further five local authorities which provided some interesting results. However, it was not possible to explore these results adequately within the framework of this dissertation. The final choice of the five London boroughs was, therefore, based on two criteria. The first criterion was to look at where the majority of recent student housing developments have been built. The three London Boroughs of Tower Hamlets, Islington and Southwark have seen 68% of all new student housing, measured by bed-spaces, built within Central London within the last five years (Camden 2009a: 24). On this basis, they have to be included in any study on student housing in London. The second criterion was to choose the specific local authorities in which UEL and UCL are located. These are Camden and Newham.

The results of the survey were then assessed to see whether there is a correlation between attitudes of planning officers towards student housing and the extent to which the University engages locally, as assessed in the case studies. In making this assessment I have also needed to explain the specific context of planning decisions in London and the potential conflict between the regional regeneration aims of the Mayor and the more local focus of individual boroughs. For example, Islington, Southwark and Tower Hamlets are net importers of students to their boroughs, in that there are more students who choose to live within these boroughs than study at Institutions located there. If student housing is considered to be a burden to local communities but Universities are considered a benefit to the regional economy, then there is a potential for conflict between local and regional priorities.

Research into both UCL and UEL was primarily conducted by interviews with key members of staff and by desktop research. The survey of local authority planning officers was carried out through an online survey. Initially I intended to circulate the survey questionnaire by email through the Association of London Borough Planning Officers. Early enquiries indicated that student housing was a topic under a lot of discussion amongst this forum and I, therefore, expected to receive a reasonable response. Unfortunately, this proved not to be the case. As a result, I called different planning policy departments to persuade senior officers to complete the survey. This had the advantage that I was able to ensure that it was completed by the most appropriate officers. Within one local authority, Southwark, I chose three officers with slightly different roles in order to see whether there were discrepancies within local authorities.

The survey questions were designed to assess underlying attitudes and assumptions made by local authority planning officers regarding issues of student housing. In many instances local authority planning officers when approached on student housing issues, wanted to refer me to planning documents. However, not only is it difficult to adequately compare planning policy documents across different local authorities, these documents are also open to interpretation by individual

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planning officers and committees. For these reasons questions were designed to explore the attitudes which shape policy and planning decisions, rather than examining actual policy documents themselves. Having said that, it is not possible to discuss student housing in London without placing it within its planning and economic context. This is what the following chapter aims to do.

Chapter 4

Planning Context

With regard to finance, HEIs are limited in their ability to expand their institutional housing due to borrowing limits imposed by the Higher Education Funding Council (HEFCE). HEFCE stipulates that repayments on loans for capital projects cannot exceed 4% of a university's total income (HEFCE 2006). To give an idea of how stringent this requirement is you only have to compare it with the residential property market. How many homeowners would there be if their mortgage payments could not exceed 4% of their income? Private developers do not, of course, suffer from the same constraints and, as a result, most of the purpose built student housing in London within the last three years, has been built by them. Within the current economic climate this is very unlikely to change.

It is fair to say that many Universities are ambivalent about this development. Whilst Universities are unanimous in stating that they need more purpose built student housing, most are reluctant to endorse the model that has most recently been favoured by private developers. Most new developments have been built independently of HEIs and sold on direct lets to students, usually targeting the overseas student market. This has been in order to ensure that private developers can achieve the maximum rental yield on the property. Interestingly this pattern has been repeated in other cities around the world that have seen large increases in their overseas student population. A recent report from Melbourne in Australia documented both the growth in purpose built student housing by the private sector and concerns about the costs, space standards and unintentional segregation of overseas students, within these developments, away from the main student body (Fincher et al, 2009). These concerns are echoed by many University accommodation officers in London.

The draft London Plan has the potential to radically alter this pattern. The Plan is broadly supportive of building more purpose built student housing, both to relieve pressure on the HMO rented sector and more generally to support the “attractiveness and potential growth” of the Higher Education sector. There are two very significant proposals in the Plan with regard to student housing. The first is that planning permission will no longer be granted unless the developer has already secured an agreement with a specific HEI. In other words, developers will no longer be able to build speculatively for the direct let market. Where they wish to do so, they will be “subject to the requirements of affordable housing policy” (Mayor of London 2009:75). At present all purpose built student housing is exempt from the requirement to provide a proportion of affordable housing as part of the development. Some Universities are concerned about any mention of affordable housing requirements in relation to student housing. Although the policy is clearly intended to be a “carrot and stick” approach to persuade developers to work closer with HEIs and to deliver more student housing, many HEIs are deeply suspicious of how local authorities will attempt to interpret the plan.

They are concerned that the stick of affordable housing requirements will remain but that the carrot of increased control over developments and the building of more student housing will disappear. This suspicion appears to be symptomatic of the fractious relationship between local authorities and Universities in London.

The second proposal is for a student housing forum for boroughs, higher and further educational establishments and developers to work together to address student housing issues and monitor demand. Despite concerns regarding affordable housing requirements, it is clear that the intention of both policies is to give HEIs greater influence over the housing being built for their students. However, in order to take advantage of this opportunity, it will be necessary for them to engage constructively with local planning authorities.

Chapter 5

Comparative Case Study

Introduction to the Institutions

UCL and UEL are contrasting institutions. The University of East London (UEL) is an institution based within the London borough of Newham and is a post 1992 University. In terms of the current ranking of Universities by teaching and research excellence, UEL performs relatively modestly. It is, however, rapidly improving. Their ranking in the 2008 RAE (Research Assessment Exercise) was 62, a leap of 12 places from their position in 2001 (The Guardian 2008). They also have a very good record on widening participation and are fully engaged with local authority regeneration initiatives. For example, the University of East London is one of seven members on the Public Service Board (effectively the managing executive) on the Newham Local Strategic Partnership.

UCL is a multidisciplinary University widely recognised as being one of the top Universities in the world for teaching and research. Mainly based within Camden, it markets itself as being London's Global University. Its record on widening participation is not impressive but it is one of six "Beacons of Public Engagement" across the UK. According to the National Co-ordinating centre for Public Engagement (NCCPE) "beacons are university-based collaborative centres that are working to support, recognise, reward and build capacity for public engagement" (NCCPE 2010). Despite their status as being a "Beacon of Public Engagement", UCL has no representation on any Local Strategic Partnership. The Director of Residences at UCL estimates that they have a current unmet demand for places in Halls of Residence of 2000. Whilst they are unlikely to fully meet this demand they are, according to their submission to the London Plan, aiming for an additional 1000 bed-spaces by 2016. The Director of Estates for University of East London estimates that they need a further 500 bed spaces in order to satisfy current demand for halls accommodation.

Since gaining University status UEL has seen its student numbers grow dramatically. Within the last eight years alone there has been an increase from 12,000 to 23,000. Much of this growth has been accommodated on their new Docklands campus in Newham. The Docklands campus was officially opened in 2000 and was short-listed for Building of the Year in 2001. It was the first new university campus to be built in London for over fifty years. In 2007 a campus Student Village was added to the site, providing 800 bed-spaces in five new iconic Halls of Residence facing the Thames. As noted by the GLA study on student housing, this development appears to have proved to be an exception to the general lack of enthusiasm exhibited by local authorities about student accommodation (BPP Regeneration, 2007).

Founded in 1826, UCL aimed to widen access to Higher Education at a time when the benefits of a university education in England were restricted to men who were members of the Church of England. The University aimed to cater for the growing middle class, Catholics, Non-conformists and

Jews, all of whom were excluded from the traditional Universities of Cambridge and Oxford. In 1878 it also became the first British University to admit women on equal terms with men.

Originally, according to the UCL website, the “established interests of Oxbridge and the Church prevented the University of London receiving a royal charter” (UCL 2010a) and the Institution was mocked in the Tory press as the “The Cockney College’. There are some who would find echoes between this patrician disdain for the new University and recent comments by the Vice Chancellor of Oxford, the former Tory Minister Chris Patten, about the value of research conducted by post 1992 Universities (The Sunday Times 2010).

UCL today is ranked fourth in the world's top ten universities by the Times Higher Education-QS World University Rankings. In the 2008 Research Assessment Exercise (RAE) UCL was rated the best research university in London, and third in the UK overall (UCL 2008a). It is a similar size to UEL with 22,000 students, although it has a very different student profile. In contrast to UEL, only 17.7% of its student intake comes from working class backgrounds (The Sunday Times 2009). It also has a significantly higher intake of overseas students; more than a third of all students as opposed to less than a tenth at UEL.

Widening Participation

The University of East London has an excellent record of recruiting students from working class backgrounds with over 50% of its intake coming from non traditional backgrounds (The Sunday Times 2009). Many of these students are recruited from East London and this, in itself, creates a strong bond with the local community. Carole Snee, who on her retirement in 2008 was awarded an OBE for services to urban regeneration, was instrumental in both the development of the campus and the ethos of the new University “Breaking the cycle of low aspiration and under-achievement is what has motivated me throughout my time at UEL. I am immensely proud of the opportunities we have created for east Londoners”(UEL 2009a).

If widening participation statistics and the institution’s commitment to lifelong learning are taken as key measures of engagement, then the University of East London performs well. In order to further this commitment, UEL recently opened a new centre in Stratford in partnership with Birkbeck College. This shared academic space was made possible with funding from both HEFCE and London Thames Gateway Development Corporation. The intention of this centre is to utilise the knowledge and skills of Birkbeck in providing evening classes, and thereby provide new pathways and accessibility into Higher Education for those from within the local community.

UCL in its widening participation strategy report highlights the difficulties for what it calls “selecting” rather than “recruiting” Universities. UCL and the other Russell group Universities believe that there is a conflict between the maintenance of academic standards and widening participation. Private schools and state schools located in affluent neighbourhoods produce far more students with high

grades at A level, when compared to students from less privileged backgrounds. In UCL's view, significantly lowering entrance requirements, based on the background of a student, could compromise the academic performance of the institution. The social composition of their student intake, they believe, is indicative of a wider problem within secondary education for which they are not responsible. However, this dynamic and the location of the College within London are recognised by HESA (Higher Education Statistics Agency) within their benchmarking methodology for widening participation targets. UCL are not expected to recruit as many students from non traditional backgrounds as an Institution such as UEL. They are though still expected to reach some modest targets. Unfortunately, unlike UEL which outperforms their own far more ambitious targets, UCL has failed to reach theirs.

The widening participation strategies of Universities usually include extensive liaison with local secondary schools and further education Colleges. Indeed even the processes involved in attempting to widen participation, including schools liaison, summer schools and other events, can assist in providing social cohesion. UCL, in particular, has built up a well regarded "Partnership for Excellence" with City and Islington Sixth Form College. In their widening participation report from 2007, they state that "scope exists for the Partnership to exert a powerful influence on debates about the shape and content of the 14-19 curriculum and progression to higher education"(UCL 2007: 5). It appears that this interest in teaching within secondary schools has evolved considerably since the report was published. In September 2011, a new Academy school, sponsored by UCL, will open its doors to its first intake of students. Academy schools are controversial. Those in favour argue that they provide parents and teachers with greater control over their schools. Those opposed raise concerns about their lack of accountability once removed from local authority control and the possibility that many will introduce covert selection procedures. I will not rehearse the various debates here, but will look at this specific example within the context of UCL's engagement with the community.

The Academy school represents a significant outreach venture into the community for UCL. It specifically states that it will not select, and will support students of all backgrounds and all abilities. The ethos of the Academy will be 'education for global citizenship' and students will be encouraged to undertake voluntary work in the local Camden community. These are all laudable aims. Indeed, education for citizenship, global or otherwise, is a key tenet of the communitarian ideals espoused by the "red Tories". Nevertheless, there remain significant concerns as to the extent to which this enterprise contributes to or indeed hinders social cohesion. The Academy itself will take over the buildings of an already existing special needs school based in Swiss Cottage. By comparison with other areas of Camden, this is a relatively prosperous area and one which is already well served by two other secondary schools. The Academy states that it will not select on the basis of ability or background but, if the school is oversubscribed, then those that live closest to it will receive priority. In this regard, the schools' location becomes significant and makes it less likely that students from disadvantaged backgrounds will benefit. It is also notable that the school will receive support from within UCL's existing widening participation programme and this could have the effect of diluting

work which is more directly targeted on those from disadvantaged backgrounds (UCL Academy 2010).

If we compare the UCL Academy and the UEL/Birkbeck collaboration in Stratford within the framework of the “Engaged University” then it appears that the latter is a more successful example of the principles of equal engagement and partnership. The key to an engaged university is equality between the institution and the community. The UEL/Birkbeck collaboration is an Institutional partnership but has, at its core, the aim of widening participation in Higher Education. As part of its mission to recruit students into Higher Education, many of its programmes specifically attempt to relate to students' lived experiences in order to synthesise experiential and formal learning. This can especially be seen in the work of the Raphael Samuel History Centre, which documents the history of East London. By contrast the dynamic within the UCL Academy appears very different. UCL as the sponsoring institution will be the major stakeholder and will determine the agenda of the Academy. This dynamic is perhaps most characteristic of what has been termed, the “service” model of an institution, where there is a paternalistic approach to offering the wider society use of the Institution’s resources “but where the power, status and discretion rest exclusively with the institution” (Gaffikin et al 2008b).

Economic engagement with the business sector

The original concept of a new University in Docklands was not aimed at serving the local residential community. Both the LDDC and the Local Authority initially wanted to talk to either the London School of Economics (LSE) or London Business School (LBS) about relocating to the Docklands site. Their thinking appeared to centre on the prestige which these institutions could bring to the area and the synergies which could be created with the corporate business sector (Snee C 2010). However, whilst both institutions are undeniably prestigious, with excellent records for both teaching and research, neither have an impressive record on recruiting students from disadvantaged backgrounds, nor are their economic and business expertise naturally tailored towards the needs of small and medium sized businesses located within the borough. Newham in 2007 was listed as being the 3rd most deprived borough in London and the sixth within the UK (Newham 2007). It is difficult to see what role either the LSE or the LBS could play in addressing this stark reality.

Not surprisingly, neither the LSE nor the LBS wished to move away from their current locations in Holborn and Regents Park. Consequently the LDDC and Newham were persuaded to change their strategy towards developing a Higher Education Institution that would serve and be relevant to the local residential community. According to Carole Snee, the role of HEIs in regeneration was very poorly understood at the time. For example, initially the local authority did not appear to fully grasp the aims of the University and wished to impose a section 106 agreement on the development of the Docklands campus. UEL were able to successfully argue against this and point out that, as a public body committed to the regeneration of the area, they themselves ought to be the recipients of

section 106 money. The local authority agreed and UEL received £750,000 from a section 106 agreement with a private developer in Beckton (Snee).

UEL's relevance to the economic needs of the local community can be seen in their Knowledge Dock Business Centre located on the Docklands Campus. This was originally called the Thames Gateway Technology Centre and was established in 1998 with the assistance of an £8 million grant from the Single Regeneration Challenge Fund (LDDC 1995). Since then it has received funding from other regeneration budgets including the ERDF (European Regional Development Fund).

We connect students to business opportunities, enable entrepreneurs to make the right connections to start their business, SMEs to the specific expertise to grow their business, and we connect industry to the academic knowledge of the university

The Knowledge Dock has a large portfolio of established programmes, the latest of which is the Petchey Centre for Entrepreneurship. In an interesting departure from usual funding patterns, this centre was part-funded by philanthropist Jack Petchey. It combines enterprise development with teaching, research and community outreach work. According to a report from 2007, Newham ranks 4th amongst local authorities in the UK on measures designed to assess the strength of enterprise culture (Local Futures Group 2007). This project, therefore, appears to provide a good fit with this healthy local culture. Although the Centre is an example of knowledge transfer activity within the field of economics and business, it is clear that the emphasis on cultivating local entrepreneurs has as much to do with creating local social impacts as on benefiting the wider economy. As such it is in keeping with the ethos of the “engaged University”.

UCL has its main campus in the Bloomsbury district of Camden. Bloomsbury is a fairly wealthy area, although there are pockets of deprivation within it. However, to the North and East of the College are areas with significant levels of deprivation, most notably in St Pancras and Somers Town ward. Camden overall is listed as being the 13th most deprived borough in London, out of a total of 33 (DCLG 2007). Research carried out into the economic and innovation impact of HEIs' lists UCL as the fifth best performing HEI in the country when measured by Gross Value Added per full time employee (Huggins et al 2008). Overall, due to its size, it is listed as the second best performing institution in the country, after the University of Cambridge. To what extent are these impacts felt locally?

Within Camden, “entrepreneurial activity amongst young people (18-24) is just 5.1%, but 71% see enterprise as a good career opportunity” (Camden Council 2009b: 20). Entrepreneurialism is often strongest amongst those from less privileged backgrounds. A study from the USA found that 58.7% of entrepreneurs originated from either working class or lower middle class backgrounds (Agarwal et al 2009). If the UK's economic fortunes are going to recover, many would argue that this will rest on developing a new breed of entrepreneurs who may not have had the benefit of a University education. As we have seen at UEL, with the Petchey Centre for Entrepreneurship, Universities can

play a role in unlocking this potential through outreach work into local communities. Does UCL play a comparable role?

Camden's Economic Development Framework strategy states the following:

There is major potential for the public sector to link to the HE sector in the borough in a number of areas, including; innovation and enterprise development, inward investment, community development, and culturally (Camden Council 2009b: 47)

There are two interesting aspects of this statement. Firstly, in this formulation the HE sector is considered to be separate from the public sector. Secondly the use of the word “potential” indicates that, as late as May 2009, the local authority perception was that the HE sector was not adequately linked to their economic regeneration strategy. In the last year, it appears that there has been a welcome shift towards greater partnership working. UCL is now the lead partner in a project, part funded by the Council, called Innovation Central London. This organisation provides small grants to new business start ups.

UCL also has a partnership with the London Business School called “London Entrepreneurs’ Challenge”. This partnership is a workshop programme “that aims to show participants the process of starting a business by helping them do it for themselves” (London Entrepreneurs’ Challenge 2010). Unfortunately the Challenge is only open to London Business School and UCL graduates. There is though an ERDF funded Higher Education London Outreach Programme (HELO), again run in partnership with London Business School, which aims

to link London-based SME's with UCL and London Business School staff and students to meet business needs and overcome the problems that limit their growth (UCL 2010b).

However, in comparing local economic engagement between UCL and UEL it is necessary to place this within the wider context of the Institution. One way in which this can be done is to assess the extent of regeneration funding that each has been able to access for support given to local SMEs. The reason for choosing this as a measure is that regeneration funding is usually only available on the basis of being able to provide evidence of localised social as well as economic benefits. It is not a perfect measure as there may be activities that each University is carrying out which do not attract funding. Nevertheless, when compared with the overall income of the Institution and specifically income generated from commercial research contracts, it is possible to draw some general lessons with regard to the Institution’s economic focus on its urban hinterland. In comparing regeneration funding, I have specifically excluded funds which would only be available to UEL, due to their location within the Thames Gateway Regeneration area.

Comparison between regeneration funding received for engagement with SMEs and corporate research income

	Higher Education Economic Challenge Investment Fund (2009)	ERDF and public sector match funding (2008-2012).	Charitable and Local Authority	Totals for economic regeneration funding	Commercial research contracts	TOTAL INCOME OF INSTITUTION (2009)
UCL	£500,000 – no institutional partners	£1,739, 156 (2 projects)	£100,000 (Camden Council)	£2,239,156	£41,082,000	£713,700,000
UEL	£1,426,110-10 partners	£2,533, 588 (5 projects)	£500,000 (Jack Petchey Foundation - charitable)	£4,459,698	£1,011,000	£149,492,000

(HEFCE 2010a, HEFCE 2010b, LDA 2010, UCL 2010c, UCL 2009, UEL 2009b, Jack Petchey Foundation 2010)

As can be seen from the table above, especially when measured against the relative financial strengths of the organisations, UEL outperforms UCL on the local dimension of economic engagement. UCL clearly plays an extraordinarily valuable role within the regional economy. It is the largest employer within Camden and many of its graduates will stay in London after graduation providing a valuable boost to the economy. It has also proved itself to be extraordinarily adept at attracting commercial research funding. In 2006-7 over £40 million of their income came from commercial research contracts. Much of this research, though, is funded by global corporations with little or no connection to either the regional or local economy. In 2009, 97% of Camden's businesses employed 5 people or fewer (Camden Council 2009b: 6). UCL has begun the process of engaging with this layer of the business sector and should be congratulated on this. However, they still have a long way to go before they can begin to claim a similar level of engagement to that of UEL.

Community Engagement

As previously noted UEL plays a key role in its Local Strategic Partnership and has cultivated a close relationship with its local authority. There are, of course, many commentators who would stress that local authorities do not always adequately represent the interests of all sections of their constituency and there are many instances of regeneration projects, carried out by local authorities, which have been bitterly contested by local communities. Despite these reservations, it remains necessary to recognise that, unlike Universities, local authorities are democratically accountable. They are also responsible for coordinating the physical, economic and social regeneration of communities. It does not seem sustainable, therefore, for an engaged University not to have a formal strategic relationship with its local authority. UEL was once reliant on its local authority for funding and although this ensured that there was an existing relationship, staff within UEL have described how it was important to renegotiate the relationship in order to ensure a more equal

partnership. This relied on both partners respecting each others roles, thereby creating the space for frank discussions (Lock J 2010).

Newham Council now regularly commissions reports on regeneration strategies from UEL's London East Research Institute ensuring that they benefit from an academic input into their policies. They also work closely together on their Olympics strategy. Although UEL research has raised concerns regarding the potential for the Olympics to create a lasting positive legacy for local communities (Smith M 2008); these concerns are being raised as an active partner to the process rather than as a critical bystander. There has been a notable shift in UEL policy towards reinventing themselves as a sports university, with an eye to taking advantage of the Olympic facilities after 2012. The site, which borders onto their Stratford Campus, could also provide the University with valuable teaching facilities. Another possible use which has been discussed is the provision of student housing although, perhaps predictably, Hackney council has raised concerns about the problems associated with student housing only being occupied for nine months of the year (Lock). Nevertheless, it is clear that whatever uses are made of the site after the Olympics, UEL have through their patient partnership work with the local authority, placed themselves in a position to benefit.

The Olympics will require a lot of volunteers in order to make it work. It is likely that many of these will come from either UCL or UEL. Both Universities heavily promote volunteering opportunities to their students. This is a key element of community engagement, as understood within the context of the engaged university. It is also, of course, a key element of the "Big Society". In a study on student volunteering there were some interesting dynamics noted. Firstly, those Universities that reported the highest levels of volunteering tended to be at opposing ends of the spectrum. Students were more likely to volunteer at either the highest ranking (ranked by entry tariff points) or lowest ranking Universities (Holdsworth C, 2007). It is not surprising, therefore, that UEL and UCL are both successful in encouraging their students to volunteer. UCL commissioned research in 2002 which suggested that the impact of volunteering by UCL students was equivalent to £250k of investment in the local community. Since then UCL estimates that their student volunteering activities have expanded four-fold (Worton M, 2009).

In addition to high levels of student and staff volunteering UCL is considered to be a Beacon of Engagement. UCL Staff and students can apply to the Beacons Project for funding for activities that engage with the public. Much of the guidance on the types of projects that they are looking for stresses that their conception of engagement is about partnership, participation and empowerment, rather than simply providing the public with passive access to the knowledge and expertise of the University. In this respect the ambitions of the Project appear to be in accord with the formulation that engagement "allows for the community's 'in-reach' into the institution, whereby it can help transform the nature of academy"(Perry D, 2000). Not all of those projects that have been funded reach this standard of engagement but one that does, would be the Just Space collaboration. This project concerns the consultation process for The Draft London Plan.

The mechanism of consultation and the language used in planning documents are not readily accessible to those not involved professionally within the field. This project involved fifteen postgraduate students assisting community and voluntary organisations in London to understand what was being proposed and to develop critiques of and alternatives to, the Draft. Their website indicates that they have had considerable success in facilitating representation of a range of views which may not have been heard otherwise (UCL JustSpace, 2010). Many of the participants also indicated, in their feedback, that a key benefit to them was the opportunity to meet other community groups. This allowed them to both exchange knowledge on campaign strategies and to explore the potential for joint action on specific issues. This project, therefore, also generated a significant amount of “bridging capital”.

Another project, which did not receive Beacon funding, but which amply illustrates the principles of “engaged research” was a project carried out by the Department of Geomatic Engineering at UCL into noise pollution on the Pepys Estate in Lewisham (LSX, 2010). Local residents approached London Sustainability Exchange regarding noise pollution emanating from a local scrapyard near the centre of the estate. The scrapyard was in close proximity to a Primary and Nursery School and was causing considerable distress to local residents. UCL loaned four “Resident Ambassadors” sound meters and trained them how to use them. Using the results UCL then created a visual sound map of the area. These results enabled residents to illustrate to the council and the Environment Agency the scale of the problem and the necessity to take action. As a research project, this had all three of the elements identified by Gaffikin and his co-authors as typifying “engaged research”. It involved **partnership** between academy and civic agency, was both **inter-disciplinary** and had **high impact** (Gaffikin et al 2008a).

The extent to which a University is engaged does not, though, rely on the contribution of individual departments and academics but on how the Institution engages as “the Institution”. UCL has an income of between four and five times the amount of UEL, despite having a similar number of students. It is inevitable that with these levels of resources, and with funding from the Beacons project, they will be able to demonstrate examples of good community engagement practice by individual academics, students and departments. For a University to be engaged though, it needs to show an institutional commitment to its local community. Engagement must be a part of the ethos and culture of the Institution and not just of individual departments

A method used by some academics to examine Institutional commitment to engagement is to assess publicly available strategic plans for the emphasis which is placed on discourses relevant to community engagement. Of course, “the content of such strategies can contain the posturing of promotional rhetoric, unmerited claims and post-hoc rationalisation” (McEldowney et al 2009). Nevertheless, the extent to which community engagement is referred to in strategy documents and

mission statements, at least illustrates the level to which institutions feel the need to acknowledge this as an aim to which they need to aspire.

When examining UCL's Corporate Plan (UCL 2006) it is striking just how little the local community is mentioned when compared to discourses relating to globalisation and internationalism. A brief textual analysis of the Strategic Planning Document shows that words relating to globalisation occur roughly ten times more frequently than those relating to the immediate local area. Although, there is a section which is headed "Local Community and London Regional Developments", within this section five of the six bullet points refer exclusively to the London Region rather than more narrowly to the immediate local area. The final bullet point links the "local and wider London community" together. Similar biases can be found within both their Mission statement and Research strategy documents (UCL 2008b).

By contrast, both UEL's current mission statement and nine strategic objectives have a clear local focus. One of the eight bullet points in their vision statement is as follows:

Use our national and international reputation to support social and economic regeneration in our communities in east London, the Thames Gateway and in the broader South East (UEL 2010).

This aim seems to be a succinct summary of the "glonacal" approach of the "engaged university". Whilst their eight bullet point mission statement mentions their economic role in regeneration and business development twice, on both occasions this statement is twinned with the requirement to "provide **social** as well as financial benefits". A further point states that they "Encourage our students and graduates to share their success, and promote the success of others". This formulation appears strikingly similar to the statement in the Kellogg report that a key aim of the engaged university is to "produce civic-minded graduates who are as well prepared to take up the complex problems of our society as they are to succeed in their careers" (Kellogg). On the basis of both their mission statement and strategic objectives it appears clear that UEL remains committed to the ethos of being an "engaged university".

On the basis of the case studies, it would appear that UCL's global mission is not as effectively integrated with the local dimension of engagement, as that of UEL. If the Tory Party is serious about creating a "new localism", it may be in the interests of UCL to reconsider their approach. It is clear that they have an abundance of talented individual departments and academics who can help steer the Institution towards greater local engagement. However, what is needed is recognition at senior management level that this needs to be effectively incorporated into their mission strategy. In the meantime, how does this affect the perception of both Universities and their students by local authority planning officers?

Chapter 6

Survey Results

The survey was divided into two main sections. The first was designed to establish general attitudes towards the role that students play within communities. Four questions were chosen which consisted of a statement with which respondents were asked to state how strongly they agreed or disagreed. The first statement was: *A large presence of students living within an area (8-12% of population at a ward level not living within their parental home) can create tensions with the local population due to incompatible lifestyles.* This statement was designed to assess the strength of views about “studentification”. The choice of 8-12% was influenced by the Rugg Review which found that, despite the pervasiveness of “studentification” as a concept within discussions about student housing, just 59 council wards (0.7%) out of 8,000 had more than 10% of houses run by students (Rugg et al, 2008). The second statement was *A large presence of students within an area (8-12% of population at a ward level not living within their parental home) fosters a greater tolerance of difference and diversity, and this can be of long term benefit to local communities.* This statement was designed to extrapolate whether local authorities considered students to be an asset to communities in the manner formulated by Richard Florida. The third statement was *Local authorities need to prioritise the needs of their long term residents as against those of students who, by their nature, tend to be temporary.* Acceptance of this proposition implies a hierarchy of legitimate access to public resources based on length of residency and has considerable relevance to the role of students within communities. The final question was designed to see whether Universities global and national agendas were compromising their relationship with local authorities. The results are shown in Table 1 opposite.

The second section of the survey was designed to assess the role that Universities play within local communities in terms of the economic and social impacts that they have and the value placed on these by local authorities. I first asked local authority planning officers which specific engagement activities they were aware of (see Table 2 on page 32). I then asked them to rank, in order of importance, the value they placed on these and other impacts that Universities have on communities (see Table 3 on page 32). These impacts included both the direct economic benefits which any large organisation may have (for example, being a large local employer and the spending of the institution, staff and students within an area) and also those functions more specific to a University (for example, knowledge transfer to local businesses and education of the local population). The final question was for local authorities to assess the performance of their local HEI and ask whether an improvement in key measures of performance affecting the local community would have a beneficial impact on planning applications (se Table 5 page 33).

The Role that students and Universities play within Local Communities

(1 indicates strong agreement and 6 strong disagreement)

TABLE 1	A large presence of students living within an area 8-12% of population at a ward level not living within their parental home can create tensions with the local population due to incompatible lifestyles-	A large presence of students within an area 8-12% of population at a ward level not living within their parental home fosters a greater tolerance of difference and diversity and this can be of long term benefit to local communities	Local authorities need to prioritise the needs of their long term residents as against those of students who by their nature tend to be temporary-	Local authorities and Higher Education Institutions do not communicate well and a part of this problem is due to different agendas- Higher Education Institutions tend to focus on national and global policy agendas whereas Local Authorities have a predominantly local focus
Camden	3	4	3	1
Newham	3	3	4	4
Islington	2	3	2	3
Tower Hamlets	2	5	2	4
Southwark (Regeneration)	3	4	3	2
Southwark (Housing)	3	3	3	3
Southwark (Planning)	3	4	3	2

What community engagement activities carried out by local Higher Education Institutions are you aware of?

TABLE 2	Providing the local community with access to University facilities meeting rooms art exhibitions sporting facilities etc	Co-produced research with local communities addressing social problems	Students working with the public as part of their course e.g. applying research skills in a community context	Advisory processes-providing advice to members of the public	Student and staff volunteering organised through the University	Working with teachers/schools
Camden	0	0	0	0	0	0
Newham	0	0	1	0	1	0
Islington	1	0	0	1	1	0
Tower Hamlets	0	0	0	0	0	0
Southwark (Regeneration)	0	0	1	0	1	1
Southwark (Housing)	0	0	0	0	0	0
Southwark (Planning)	0	0	0	0	0	0

Which activities by Universities are most valued by local authorities? (1 is most important and 5 is the least)

TABLE 3	Knowledge transfer to local businesses	Education of local population	Spending of students and faculty within the area *	Large local employer	Community engagement activities
Camden	2	1	n/a	4	3
Newham	1	2	4	3	5
Islington	2	4	n/a	1	3
Tower Hamlets	1	2	4	3	5
Southwark (Regeneration)	4	1	3	5	2
Southwark (Housing)	5	1	3	2	4
Southwark (Planning)	3	4	2	1	5

*Question added after responses from Camden and Islington already received

TABLE 5	Knowledge transfer to local businesses	Education of local population	Community engagement activities	-If a planning application for student housing is either being made by a University directly or in partnership with a private developer would an improvement in these activities positively effect the planning application for example with regard to section 106 agreements?
Camden	Not sure/Insufficient information	Not sure/Insufficient information	Not sure/Insufficient information	I do think that community engagement might mean student housing proposals were viewed more positively and applications more likely to be successful. However I don't think this would alter S106 contributions"
Newham	Needs to be improved	Needs to be improved	Needs to be improved	Yes
Islington	Satisfied	Should be improved	Should be improved	No
Tower Hamlets	Needs to be improved	Needs to be improved	Needs to be improved	No
Southwark (Regeneration)	Needs to be improved	Needs to be improved	Should be improved	Yes
Southwark (Housing)	Needs to be improved	Needs to be improved	Needs to be improved	No
Southwark (Planning)	Not sure/Insufficient information	Not sure/Insufficient information	Not sure/Insufficient information	No

Analysis of Results

Within the results it appears that the planning officer from Newham had a marginally more positive view of the role of students within communities than the planning officer from Camden. Both agreed that there was a potential for conflict between local communities and student residents. However, the planning officer from Newham also agreed that students could play a positive role in fostering a sense of tolerance and diversity within communities. The planning officer from Camden remarked that "students form as much as 25% of the population in some wards". This is probably

accurate for a few wards in the immediate vicinity of UCL. However, to an outside observer the large student presence does not appear to significantly blight these areas.

The most significant question in this part of the survey was the final one which asked whether the needs of students should be subordinated to those of longer term residents. On this question the planning officer from Newham disagreed whilst the planning officer from Camden agreed. In this the planning officer from Camden was joined by all the other planning officers within the key central London boroughs surveyed. Both Islington and Tower Hamlets registered the strongest agreement with this statement. These two boroughs have recently seen large increases in purpose built student housing built by private sector developers. Between 2004-2009, 41% of all new purpose built student housing built in Central London, measured by bed-spaces, was delivered in Tower Hamlets whilst 19% was delivered in Islington (Camden 2009a: 24). On most estimates, both these boroughs are net importers of students, in that there are far more students resident within these boroughs than are registered to study at Institutions within them. There appears to be a strong correlation between “negative” attitudes towards students by planning officers and the extent of recent student housing developments, especially when these boroughs are “importing” student boroughs. For example, Southwark is likely to be another “importing” borough but since they saw just 8% of all new purpose built developments between 2004-2009, their attitudes are less forceful than those of Tower of Hamlets.

When planning officers in Camden and Newham were asked whether the global and national ambitions of Universities hindered their ability to communicate with local authorities, there was a sharp divergence of opinion. The respondent from Camden strongly agreed with the statement whereas the planning officer from Newham disagreed. Of all the statements in the survey, this was the only one which elicited strong agreement from a planning officer. It would appear to provide confirmation of our findings in the case studies that UCL's global mission is not adequately integrated with their local responsibilities. The results from the “importing” boroughs were far less clear and would need more research to explain fully.

The second section of the survey concentrated on the role that Universities play within local communities. Across all local authorities there was very low awareness of the community engagement activities listed in Table 2. Not surprisingly, this meant that, on average, these activities were the least valued of all local impacts. The Camden planning officer was not aware of any of the activities listed, whereas the respondent from Newham had some knowledge. Interestingly, although the Camden planning officer was not aware of any community engagement activities, he did rate these as being more important than the status of the University as a large local employer. Both were agreed that the most important impacts that a University has on its surrounding area were either education of the local population or knowledge transfer to local businesses. Once again the responses from the “importing” boroughs were more difficult to read. However, the response from Tower Hamlets was identical to that of Newham. Since both boroughs share a very similar economic and social background, this is perhaps not surprising. Within Southwark there appeared to

be divergences of opinion depending on the specific role that respondents played within the planning process.

On the final series of questions, the responses from Camden appeared to demonstrate both a profound level of disengagement between local authority and Higher Education sectors and some cautious reasons for optimism. The Camden respondent did not feel that they had enough information to comment on how well local HEIs were performing on any of the measures of engagement chosen. However, he did state that improved

community engagement might mean student housing proposals were viewed more positively and applications more likely to be successful.

The respondent from Newham felt that on all measures their local Higher Education Institution was not performing as well as they should. Whilst this is disappointing it, at least, demonstrates a higher level of engagement than within Camden. The planning officer from Newham also, crucially, agreed that greater engagement would have a positive impact on planning applications. Of the “importing” boroughs, only the respondent from Southwark involved in the regeneration of Elephant and Castle agreed with this proposition.

The most significant results are those that can be compared with our case studies. On this basis it appears that there are cautious reasons to believe that Universities would receive tangible benefits by improving their engagement with local communities and, in particular, with their elected representatives. With this in mind, what is the way forward?

Chapter 6

Conclusions and Recommendations

This dissertation was written in order to make a contribution to the debate around the London Plan and student housing. The implications of the “engaged university” and its potential interaction with the “Big Society” go beyond this, and there is a need for further research into this topic.

Nevertheless, the question that this dissertation sought to address was a relatively simple one:

Would a move towards adopting the “engaged University” model, have a beneficial impact on applications for purpose built student housing? In the research that I carried out the answer was, broadly speaking, yes. However, the research also showed that, despite the demonstrable need for more purpose built student housing, many local authorities in London were very resistant to enabling this within their own boroughs. It appears that both the actual and potential role of HEIs, in contributing to the economic and social well being of the local communities in which they are located, is not adequately recognised by local authorities. Universities need to address this and the need to deliver more purpose built student housing provides a powerful incentive to do so. The London Plan has opened the door to greater engagement, it is now up to Universities and local authorities to step through it

“Great cities need great Universities AND great universities need great cities (Zimpher 2007)”.

Universities can play a key role in the economic, social and cultural lives of the communities to which they belong. Local authorities need to recognise this and use their influence to ensure that they get the best out of their local HEI. Both partners need to recognise that their aims are complementary and not in conflict. For example, Local Authorities are quite rightly concerned about the lack of affordable housing in London. As large, labour intensive organisations HEIs share this concern. The global and national competitiveness of London HEIs is compromised by the costs of living in the capital.

Universities, therefore, are not arguing that student housing should take precedence over affordable housing. However, students need to live somewhere and, at the moment, the majority live in HMOs within the private sector. Within London students are a small percentage of the overall population that rent privately. Nevertheless, by providing them with affordable purpose built housing, this will relieve some pressure on the HMO rented sector and presumably reduce rents. Purpose built student housing is not the cuckoo in the nest of affordable housing. Instead it could help make private sector renting more affordable for both young professionals, including recent graduates, and families. Purpose built student housing could, indeed, dovetail with the Mayor of London's plans to encourage Institutional investment in the private rented sector. On the continent in some countries, such as Germany, the difference between private sector rents and social housing rents is close to insignificant and this is due, in part, to an extremely healthy private rented sector supported by institutional investment (Kirchner J 2007).

An affordable private rented sector, with rents dampened by students moving out of the market, would, unlike social housing, allow tenants the freedom to move from their properties to find work or when their circumstances change. The days of the housing benefit trap and under-occupied social housing could be ended. Of course, purpose built student housing cannot pretend to deliver all this on its own, but it could be a very small part of the solution. Local authorities also need to look at the nature of student housing developments. These are built to far greater densities than affordable housing or existing housing stock in the private sector. This means that a relatively small plot of land can free up very large numbers of flats and houses for use by the local community.

Many of these arguments have been made before by private sector developers in their planning applications, but with variable success. With the potential changes to the London Plan it may now be possible for Universities to take up these arguments but also to stress the positive economic and social roles that they play within local communities. Rather than dealing with a private sector developer aiming for a profit, the local authorities will be dealing with a social enterprise within the public sector. This could have some cultural importance. However, it is still likely that there will need to be a lot of work done before local authorities see student housing as an asset to a community.

The key to finding solutions for student housing is effective long term dialogue and partnership. This requires respect and recognition of the roles of both partners. HEIs in London do have a significant global role. For example, research carried out by London HEIs into climate change is hugely important for the future of all of us. However, the insistence of their global significance by some research Universities can, at times, appear as a form of boasting and imply, by comparison, that the local concerns of the boroughs are parochial. The engaged university does not need to sacrifice its global ambitions in order to focus on the local communities within which it is located. The old environmental adage "think globally, act locally" can also apply to the engaged university. For example many Universities in London have well regarded urban studies departments but their research is usually directed towards the attention of both national policy makers and the global academic community. Within the new political climate there are now new opportunities. The "red Tories" believe that the overcentralised state has stifled the ability of local policy makers to make effective decisions. They now wish to promote a "new localism", even to the extent of dispensing with many Regional Development Agencies. This means that there is now a new audience for academics that is local rather than national or global. They can now bring their experience and knowledge of what has and hasn't worked across the world, to the attention of local policy makers. UEL's research for Newham council into the effect of the Olympics in different cities across the globe is a useful example of what can be achieved.

If there is a need for HEIs to refocus on local communities and their elected representatives there is also a need for local authorities to recognise what dynamics affect how Universities operate. Universities are social enterprises and need to generate income in order to complete their social

mission. This means that they are affected by financial incentives. For example some local authorities may contrast the success of HEIs in London in recruiting overseas students with the relatively modest advances in widening participation, but this must be seen within the context of the differing financial rewards for each activity. In 2004-05, overseas students contributed over £1.5 billion in tuition fees to HEIs (Vickers et al 2005). By contrast the total funding for “widening participation” for 2009-10 was just over £410 million (HEFCE, 2009). If money spent by Universities on widening participation, from within their own fees income, is deducted from this total then net funding came to a total of just £66 million. What is surprising within this context is not how little progress overall there has been, but how much. Across, the UK the proportion of young people from deprived areas entering higher education has risen since the mid-1990s by 47% (HEFCE 2010c:5). This indicates that although HEIs are affected by commercial considerations, it is not what primarily motivates them.

It is not just HEIs and local authorities who need to work better together. There is also a need for better partnerships between HEIs themselves. Many are fiercely independent and will start almost any conversation with policy makers by stressing the uniqueness of their particular Institution. It is, of course, true that there are big differences between Institutions and that each have both their strengths and weaknesses. What appears equally clear is that partnerships between different Institutions can draw on the strengths of each to the benefit of both. Once again the key to this is respect. The Vice Chancellor at UCL recently argued that places at “pile it high, sell it cheap” Universities should be cut in order to protect Britain's “world class” research institutions (The Guardian 2010c). This was not helpful. I would argue that those institutions that have good records on engagement with local authorities and with local communities can help the “world class” institutions achieve their own aims of recruiting the best talent from around the world. How could this happen?

The need for student housing is greatest amongst the Universities that do not generally recruit locally, such as UCL. Most students from lower income groups tend to live at home and study, rather than move into Halls of Residence. However, if engagement is considered to be a factor in facilitating planning permission for student housing and widening participation a key measure of this, then those that are most able to deliver student housing will be those Universities, such as UEL, who have the least need for it. This raises an intriguing possibility of cooperation between differing types of HEIs to deliver student housing. To take one small example, the establishment of a science shop partnership between UCL and UEL in Newham would draw on the community engagement strengths of UEL and the research strengths of UCL. Investment by UCL in this project could be considered as part of a section 106 agreement for student housing. Institutions, students and the local community would stand to benefit.

If we look at the specific context of London, it is necessary to recognise that there is a fourth dimension to consider beyond the local, national and global. This is the regional dimension. The

economic regional impact of HEIs in London is greater than within any other region in the UK (Huggins et al). However, the survey results showed that those local authorities most reluctant to accept student housing were those that saw net influxes of students resident within their borough, when compared to “their” students studying at “their” HEIs. In other words, the benefits to the region of the Higher Education sector may be being compromised by a local reluctance to take on the “burden” of student housing without seeing direct positive local impacts.

Universities could address this by reconsidering the nature of their housing developments. Student housing developments could be seen as being the hub for a Universities' engagement with the local community, rather than an isolated outpost. They could incorporate such things as “science shops” or “a higher education shop” as part of the Institution's widening participation programme. In addition, for art and design students, workshop space could be incorporated into the design and these facilities could be shared with a local Further Education College. There are many imaginative solutions which could be found. By comparison, the standard model of student housing being built by private developers, in isolation from the Universities, is distinctly uninspiring.

There is, of course, a difficulty in all this. The average travelling time to College for students living within the HMO rented sector is 25 minutes (ULHS 2010). Many HEIs will similarly want to build student housing developments at up to 25 minutes travelling time to their Institution, usually in areas which already have large populations of students living in the HMO sector. This covers a very wide area across many different local authority boundaries. If engagement is key to delivering student housing then Universities, especially those based in Central London, need to develop relationships with a wide variety of different boroughs. However, it may not be possible for each HEI to develop these on their own. The level of resources required to engage effectively would exhaust many Universities and, probably, the local authorities as well.

The forum on student housing being provided by the Mayor will be a useful step forward. However, in order for it to work effectively Universities need to make it easy for local authorities. They need to speak with more of a unified voice and to bring positive ideas to the table. The “dialogue of the deaf” must be broken down. There is already a regional body for HEIs in London called London Higher. However, whilst it works well within its resources, it is a relatively small organisation with a limited remit and it rarely deals with student housing issues. There is, therefore, a need for a new regional organisation dealing with student housing that encourages partnerships between HEIs. This organisation could draw on the strengths of urban studies departments by commissioning research into how student housing could be incorporated into local engagement. An example of how this could work in practice is the Great Cities Institute within the University of Chicago. Academics from across many disciplines are seconded to the Institute and their wages paid for by their departments. The prestige of the Institute ensures that there is considerable competition amongst academics to be selected (Gaffikin 2010).

There is another idea which can be borrowed from the USA and which would help break down barriers between local authorities and HEIs. This is the encouragement of University and Community partnerships funded by central government. Whilst there is European and national funding available for local economic engagement and widening participation, there is no equivalent funding for engagement by Universities with community groups. In the US, by contrast, the department of Housing and Urban Development aims to provide \$25 million of funding for a University Community Fund, "Funding would be allocated by competition to universities that show innovative community development strategies that respond to local needs and build on past experience" (HUD 2010). This funding is in addition to \$23 million of funding for the Office of University Partnerships. There is even a proposed bill entitled "The Urban University Renaissance Act of the 21st Century" (COSU) which seeks over \$700 million of funding for similar Community and University partnership programmes.

Within the current funding climate it may appear ambitious to argue for any form of additional funding. However, the "red Tories" conception of the "new localism" cannot happen on its own. Their view is that the state and market have crowded out social institutions to the detriment of communities. Universities are a part of civil society rather than the state and as such should play a key role in creating the "Big Society". Both UCL and UEL have an explicit commitment to education for citizenship and encourage widespread volunteering amongst their students; both of which are key tenets of the philosophy of communitarianism. Universities appear, therefore, to be uniquely well prepared to deliver the ideals of the "Big Society". They just need a little practical encouragement. As we have seen with widening participation, a small amount of money can have a disproportionately large effect on the behaviour of the majority of Universities. If funding was connected to the adoption of a universally recognised measure for good community engagement, such as that used by the Carnegie Foundation in the US, it is possible that a significant cultural change could begin to be effected within the Higher Education sector. This change could transform the dialogue of the deaf between local authorities and HEIs into a constructive conversation, to the benefit of both local communities and their elected representatives. It may also lead to UK Universities being regarded with the same affection and respect as that currently accorded to their counterparts in the US. Finally, we might even, just possibly, get some appropriate student housing built.

(word count 15, 041).

Chapter 7

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Appendix of widely used abbreviations

HEFCE	Higher Education Funding Council of England
HEI	Higher Education Institution
HESA	Higher Education Statistics Agency
HMO	House in Multiple Occupation
LSE	London School of Economics
LBS	London Business School
RAE	Research Assessment Exercise
SME	Small or Medium Enterprise
UEL	University of East London
UCL	University College London