

The Engaged University

Beyond the “Third Mission”:
University—Society Relationships and
Academic Engagement in the Knowledge
Economy

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Anthropology is philosophy with the people in.

- Tim Ingold (1992)

Rise of the “Third Mission”

- Universities increasingly encouraged to become engaged with the “surrounding society”
- European Indicators and Ranking Methodology for University Third Mission (E3M): “generate a comprehensive instrument to identify, measure, and compare Third Mission activities of HEIs from a wide perspective” (E3M 2012)
- Typology: Continuing Education, Technology Transfer & Innovation and Social Engagement (E3M 2012); “economical” and “social” aspects (Krcmarova 2011)
- “Public engagement” indicators part of Research Excellence Framework (UK)

Social path through Pasteur's quadrant

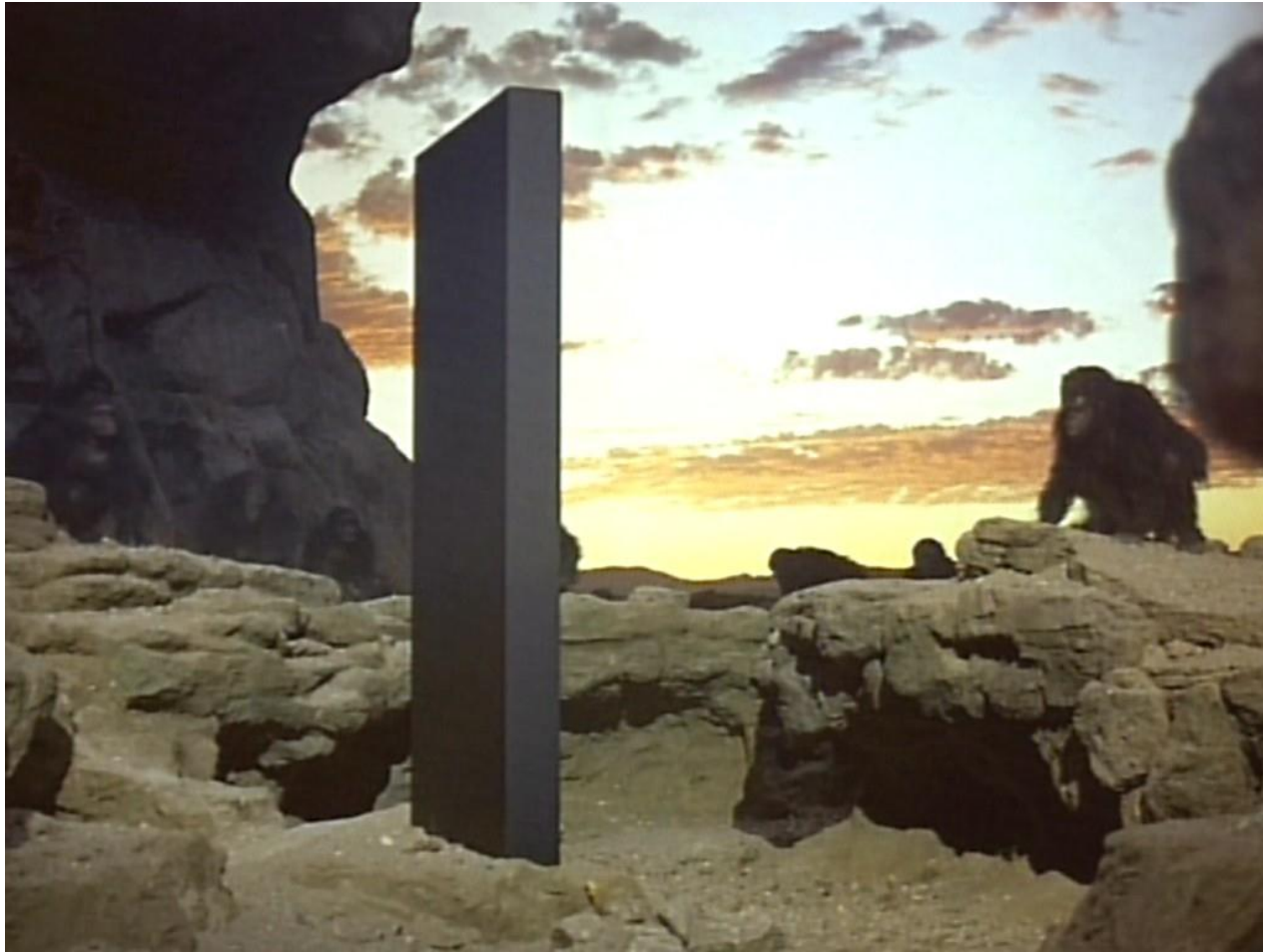


University research is an astonishing force for good in the world, argues Leszek Borysiewicz

Universities the world over have done much in recent decades to dispel the lazy but stubborn notion that our institutions are solely places of esoteric and abstract thought, conducted by unworldly dons, in gowns, over port, in towers made (as surely we would all recognise from our university estates!) of ivory. If ever there were a time that could justifiably contrast universities with “the real world”, it is long past. My University of Cambridge colleague Stefan Collini deploys an enjoyable satire that reveals the “real world” to be a construct invented by “cloistered businessmen in their ivory factories”: they should, he recommends, get out more.

Serving society – my preferred term for what used to be called the real world – is the conscious passion of everyone who works in a modern university. We do it, of course, in uncountably different ways: the institutions that appear in this publication are gloriously diverse and (let us not forget) are not trying to do the same thing in the same way. Still, the drive to serve society is a characteristic we proudly share.

Third Mission



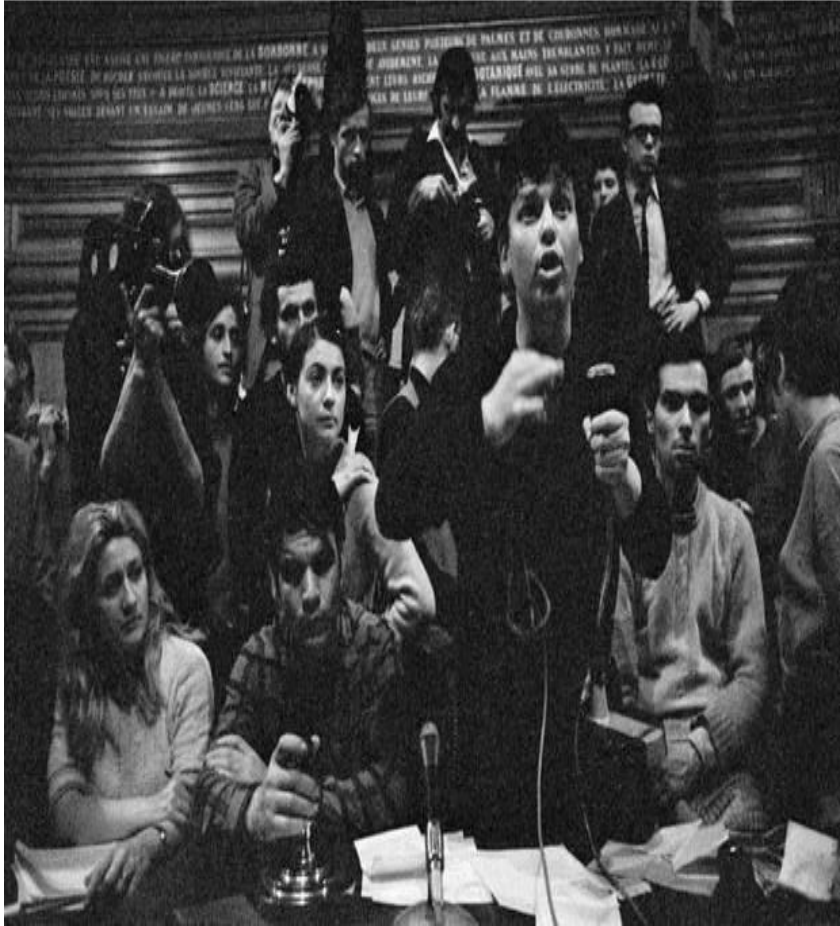
Beyond description (“mapping”)



(...) Never to consent to being completely comfortable with one's own presuppositions. Never to let them fall peacefully asleep, but also never to believe that a new fact will suffice to overturn them; never to imagine that one can change them like arbitrary axioms, remembering that in order to give them the necessary mobility one must have a distant view, but also look at what is nearby and all around oneself. To be very mindful that everything one perceives is evident only against a familiar and little-known horizon, that every certainty is sure only through the support of a ground that is always unexplored.

Michel Foucault, "For an Ethics of Discomfort"

Only teaching and research?



So...what's new?

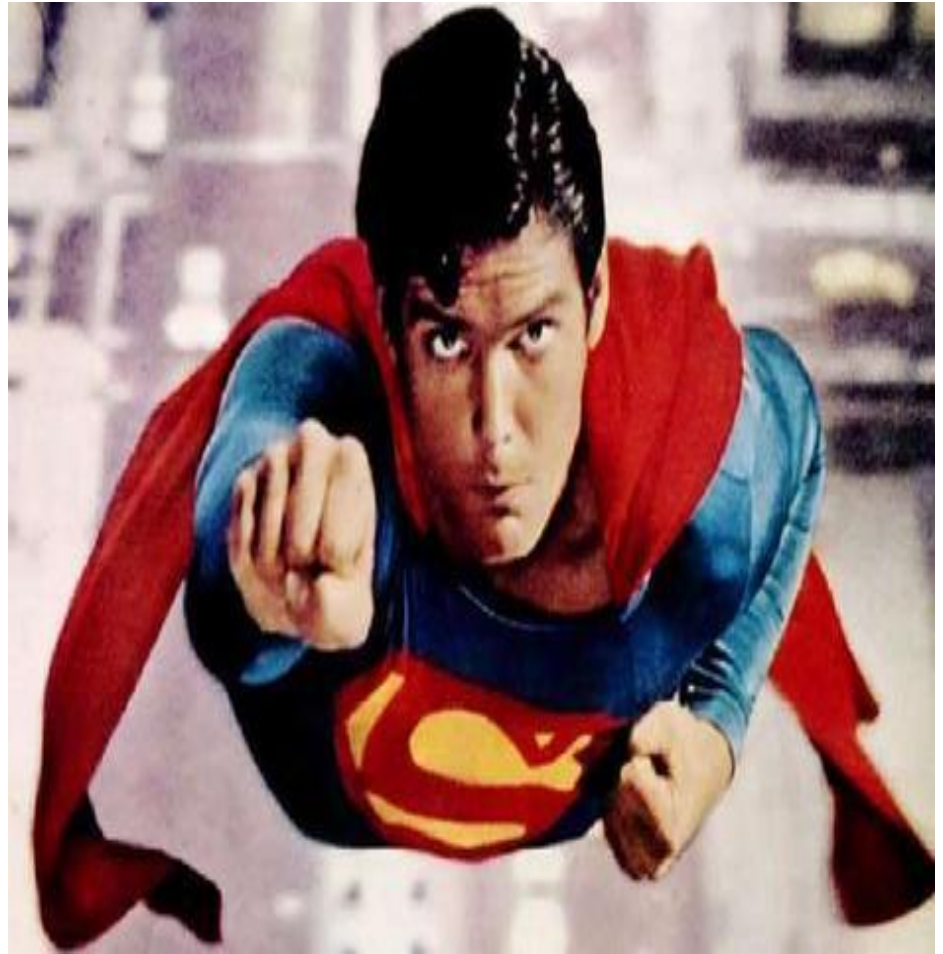
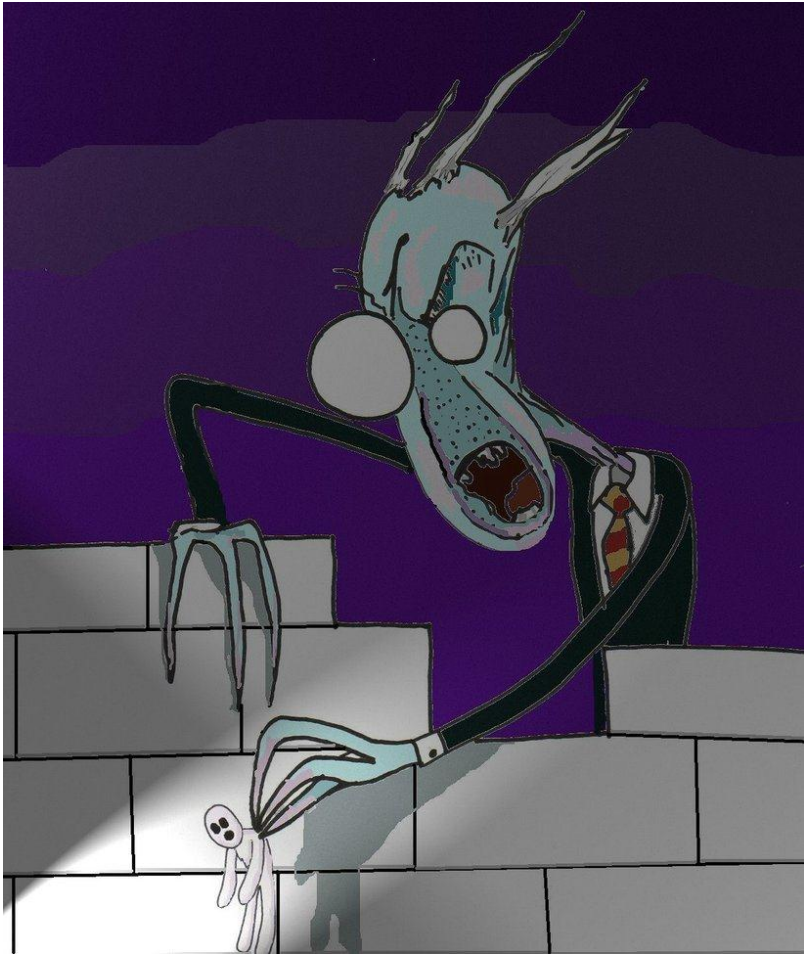
- New configurations of social relevance and public engagement
- Institutional (CPE) and discursive (“beyond the Ivory Tower”) shifts
- Links: global transformation of conditions of knowledge production
- But...**how do *people* (= academics) respond to, interact with, and shape these developments?**
- What **ideas/notions** of “**being**” an academic are **produced/reproduced** through practices of public engagement?
- How do these practices reproduce or define the boundaries between the “university” and the “society”?
- Bourdieu: critique de raison scolastique – inability to perceive the boundaries and determinants of one’s own position



Academic agency: theoretical debates

- (A) Higher education research/sociology of academic work (Shore & McLauchlan 2012, Musselin 2007, Readings 1996): emphasis on *structure* (people are products of their environments – presupposes malleable position predominantly reactive to external “constraints”)
- (B) Sociology of intellectuals/new sociology of knowledge (Baert 2012, Baert and Shipman 2010, Gramsci): emphasis on *agency* (intellectuals as “heroes” – presupposes fixed and relatively durable position in social structure, shaping identity/agency)

Academic agency?



Theoretical assumptions

- ⇒ Agency is shaped by the *subjective* interpretation of *objective* conditions (external constraints) (Sayer 2010; Danermark et al. 2001)
- ⇒ Margaret Archer (2003): “internal conversation”
- ⇒ *Intentionality* and human agency
- ⇒ Factors: context (academic/broader social and political environment); own position (objective/subjective); positionality; gender, age, discipline
- ⇒ Academic agency is a *practice of power*; it mediates the boundaries between “university” and “society” and thus also shapes the concepts of both

Fieldwork

- Two contexts: UK and New Zealand
- “Neoliberal forerunners”, but different institutional configurations
- Centres/peripheries
- *Who* is the society? (= relationship to social structure)
- Universities: Bristol vs. UWE?
Auckland vs. an institution oriented towards “local knowledge”?

Challenges and questions

- Beyond the structure/agency dichotomy – where?
- Sample/comparison/scaling
- Overdetermination of data through interpretative framework (*post hoc ergo propter hoc*)
- Sensitive boundary emic/etic

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