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From the Urban University to Universities in Urban Society

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Abstract: The impacts of neoliberalization and the global extension of urbanization processes demand a reappraisal of the urban university for the 21st century. The history of the modern urban university, and current calls for universities to assume proactive roles as economic drivers and civic leaders, disclose problematic tendencies, including: normalizing local/global binaries; focusing on a narrow set of university-city connections; and constructing the university and the city as monolithic rational agents. In response, this paper draws on Lefebvre's theory of urban society to mobilize *mediation*, *centrality*, and *difference* as a mode of critique and strategic orientation for a 'new urban university'.

Keywords: Universities; Urban Theory; Regional Development; Knowledge Production; Relational Space; Urban Education

JEL Classifications: I2, N9

INTRODUCTION

Over the past three decades, public policy has sought to formalize the externally-facing socio-economic ‘third mission’ of academic institutions alongside their teaching and research activities (Nelles & Vorley, 2010). While far from a singular or harmonious process (Pinheiro, Langa & Pausits, 2016), the desire to harness universities’ positive externalities and locally capture their outputs has profoundly reframed the institutional and discursive relationship between higher education institutions (HEIs) and their urban and regional contexts. In part, this reflects the changing demands of an increasingly knowledge-based global economy. City leaders and state agencies have come to view universities as essential, if under-leveraged, actors providing the highly-skilled labor and technological innovations necessary to drive growth and ensure competitiveness (Drucker & Goldstein, 2007). There is growing recognition of, and advocacy for, the mutually-beneficial relationships universities and cities can forge around local and regional development (Goddard, 2009; OECD, 2007; Rodin, 2005). Indeed, a recent spate of flagship projects, including Applied Sciences NYC, the MetroLab Network, Amsterdam Metropolitan Solutions, and the University of Paris-Saclay (among others), have positioned universities as vital catalysts for urban innovation and ‘smart’ policy formation.

Universities may potentially be ‘the generative principle of knowledge-based societies’ as Etzkowitz (2008, p.1) would have it, but imprinting the needs of regional economies and globalizing cities onto their core functions raises deep questions regarding the university’s role as an urban actor and site of urban knowledge production. Neoliberalization inside and outside the academy has presented a disciplinary stick to complement the carrot of urban and economic leadership. On-going debates over public funding for academic research and HEIs (magnified by austerity politics) have compelled universities to embrace commodification and financialization as they seek to demonstrate their societal value, relevance, and impact (Christopherson, Gertler & Gray, 2014; Engelen, Fernandez & Hendriske, 2014). Universities are not irreducible to a single business logic (and exhibit significant variation across their missions, structures, and national

regulatory frameworks) but critics note the societal value placed on particular types of university-produced knowledge is shifting – premised, by enlarge, upon a narrow understanding of ‘useful knowledge’ as that which can be strategically deployed in the economy (Boulton & Lucas, 2008; Perry, 2006).

It’s no coincidence that critical concerns with reclaiming universities’ public mission have risen at the same time as academia’s doors are opened to more entrepreneurial ways of operating. Craig Calhoun – writing in an academic capacity before assuming the post of Director of the London School of Economics – argued that ‘it is a crucial task for critical theory to ask about the institutional organization of knowledge and the public sphere, and an obligation of critical theory to ask reflexively about the institution that underpins it’ (2006, p.10). This paper puts critical urban theory to work to this end in order to analyze the ways in which universities operate as urban actors, institutions, and producers of knowledge. Urban and regional development literatures (notably regional innovation systems and ‘triple helix’ approaches) and applied scholarship on the ‘engaged university’ have tended to theorize universities as instrumental place-based anchors, knowledge hubs, and economic drivers, tied to their immediate situation by what Cox & Mair (1988) termed their ‘local dependency’. Addie, Keil & Olds (2015, p.30), however, assert that ‘universities are more likely to be actors involved over multiple scales; they are global players who are highly influential beyond their immediate locale while exhibiting a significant capacity to affect the social, spatial and symbolic structures of the metropolis’. As universities both respond to, and produce, new territorial and topological urban structures, they are implicated in the global extension of urbanization processes that, alongside the expansion and fragmentation of metropolitan space, defy the reduction of ‘the city’ to an administrative unit or ‘the urban’ to the local scale (Allen & Cochrane, 2007; Amin, 2004; Brenner, 2014; Wachsmuth, 2014). These evolving geographies have significant ramifications for how the urban and regional roles of universities are understood.

Critical scholars have paid attention to the role of universities as urban developers within a neoliberalized spatial economy and in doing so, have introduced a sensitivity to questions of scale and social diversity (Bose, 2015; Burtscher, Harding, Scott & Lakse, 2007; Cochrane & Williams, 2013; Gaffikin & Perry 2009; Ross 2012; Schafran, 2015). Lipman (2011) goes as far as tying the future of urban education policy to ‘the right to the city’. Yet despite the incisive nature of these critiques, critical scholarship and policy-making have rarely engaged in substantive dialogue. Willingly or not, urban and regional theorists (those with relevant expertise on community planning, urban renewal etc. and those reimagining cities and regions in novel ways) have been largely absent from debates over the future mission, structure, and governance of the urban university itself. How might alternative ways of understanding cities and regions progressively inform the theorization and practice of universities as actors in, and contexts for, global urbanization?

This paper re-theorizes the urban university by shifting our epistemological lens to that of ‘universities in urban society’. Conceptually, the argument draws from relational theories of urban space to transcend one-sided, territorialized notions of the urban university linked to the socio-economic fortunes of their proximate metropolitan settings. It also serves as a riposte to Audretsch’s (2014) move from analyzing ‘entrepreneurial universities’ to ‘universities for the entrepreneurial society’, which ostensibly normalizes universities as agents of what Keil (2009) calls ‘roll-with-it neoliberalization’. Instead, a dialectical reading of the urban is mobilized to critique universities’ social and spatial agendas and inform the strategic orientation of future institutional practice. The paper begins by examining the emergence of the modern ‘urban university’ to demonstrate how HEIs have attempted to place the city at the core of their missions and highlight the discursive and policy legacies that inform contemporary debates. This history illustrates that change is possible, but reveals deep barriers to restructuring that must be accounted for when attempting to leverage universities located *in* urban areas to act *for* them. The paper then moves to critique renewed academic and policy calls to mobilize universities as anchor institutions,

urban economic drivers, and civic leaders. The major limitations of these frameworks are identified, and space is opened for a new discourse and mode of urban praxis to emerge. The remainder of the paper builds on Lefebvre's (2003) conceptions of 'urban society' to re-imagine the urban role of universities. The concepts of *mediation*, *centrality*, and *difference* are introduced to frame a mode of critique, strategic orientation, and foundation for tactical interventions to guide the principles and political imperative of a 'new urban university'. The argument is grounded in an analysis of urban universities in North America and Europe. As recent post-colonial urbanism attests (Lawhon, Silver, Ernstson & Pierce, 2016), alternative theories of, and possible futures for, urban higher education may emerge when theorizing 'from the margins'. This paper therefore encourages scholars working in and on non-Anglo-American universities to engage the ideas presented here from differing conceptual, geographic, and educational perspectives.

TRACING THE MODERN URBAN UNIVERSITY

The idea of the urban university is not new. Cities and universities have a long and intertwined (if often far from collegial) history (Bender, 1988). Linkages between the two were distinctly recalibrated in the wake of industrial urbanization. The Civic University Movement in Britain spurred the creation of two waves of 'redbrick universities' intending to meet the needs of the country's rapidly industrializing urban centers. Their curriculums (which introduced disciplines including engineering and modern languages) disclosed a vital concern with applied research that benefited the societies in which they were embedded. Technical universities established in Germany's emergent industrial metropolises reflected a comparable trend that favored practical knowledge over the heady pursuits and sequestered reflection of the ivy tower (Hall, 1997). The United States presented an alternative narrative as the founding of Land Grant universities in 19th century exhibited a strong tendency to tie university-based research to the needs of a largely agricultural society. Interest in practical knowledge persisted, but the American spatial imaginary of the university remained largely bound to the anti-urban valorization of the rural campus; despite

the urban roots of prestigious institutions like Yale, Johns Hopkins, and the University of Chicago (Bender, 1988).

Establishing clear research agendas, however, would lead many maturing modern universities to reconfigure their institutional missions towards the universalism of scientific enquiry through the late-19th century (Rodrigues, 2011). The modern university consequently tended to exhibit a 'denial of place' that promoted both a physical and institutional separation of universities and their local context (Bender, 1988, p.8). Even in cases where a university's location directly facilitated radical disciplinary investigations of urbanizing society, HEIs faced increasing disassociations as entities located in, but not of, their cities (Brockliss, 2000). As universities became bound to the state and national R&D programs in the Cold War era, the image of the 'scientist in the garden' crystallized the imaginary of the modern university as closeted space in which universal knowledge was generated (O'Mara, 2005, p.60-75). Suburban and rural modern campuses, along with the anti-urban aspatial imaginary of the academy proliferated globally following the Second World War.

The concept of the modern 'urban university' would ultimately find its roots in the United States during the 1960s in the face two major trends. First, rising student enrollments driven by the 1944 Servicemen's Readjustment Act (the GI Bill of Rights) and the baby boom increased the pressure of universities to restructure their curriculum (providing practical training for the postwar workplace) and expand their facilities. Second, universities in urban centers were confronted with the racial tensions and rising socio-economic inequalities of the 'urban crisis'. Urban decline, deindustrialization, and social unrest spurred growing interest in interdisciplinary programs that viewed the city as a pressing object of analysis and strategic area of engagement. The urban university was to be both an active actor in the city and a site of urban knowledge production. J. Martin Klotsche, a former chancellor of the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, argued novel approaches to contemporaneous urban issues were necessary 'for the insights of the humanist and philosopher, the social scientist, the scientist and engineer, and the artist can all be employed to

help our cities fulfill the promise of urban living' (1966, p.29). In 1966, President Johnson backed calls to adapt the ethos of Land Grant universities to urban institutions via legislation incorporated in his Model Cities Program (Haar, 2011, p.51). Over the next two years, urban 'riots' would break out in Baltimore, Chicago, Detroit, Milwaukee, and Washington D.C.

Universities embedded in the violently shifting urban fabric of America's cities needed to respond to these dramatic societal transformations. For Leonard Goodall, then vice-chancellor of the University of Illinois at Chicago Circle (an Urban Grant university founded in 1965), the solution lay in establishing the city as the mission of the 'urban university':

...the institution that is striving to be an urban university rather than just a university built in a city should seek to: (1) maintain the high quality of teaching, research, and public service that has long been expected of universities; (2) place more emphasis than has usually been the case in the past on the public service and community involvement aspect of the university; and (3) develop ways to take advantage of the urban location to enrich the educational and research programs of the university while at the same time being of use to the community (Goodall, 1970, p.48).

Goodall called for universities to establish clear objectives to orient themselves towards engaged urban higher education. This moved beyond introducing new pedagogical practices. Creating an urban university necessitated restructuring institutional mechanisms to reward applied research, community involvement, and undergraduate teaching. Student activism inspired by the Civil Rights Movement played an important role in pressuring universities to be more responsive to their surrounding communities. Foundational work at (what would become) the Pratt Center for Community Development from the 1960s proved instrumental; both as an institutional model and in assisting local communities to oppose urban renewal in New York City (Venkataraman, 2010). Other American campuses embraced the potential of service-learning to realize transformation for community participants, urban environments, and university researchers themselves.

This wave of community-engaged urban research, however, marked the highpoint for the 1960s vision of the ‘urban university’ in the United States. As Angotti, Doble & Horrigan (2011) detail, community-involved scholarship raised fundamental challenges for those seeking to operationalize the urban university in practice. Faculty members, despite their passion, were not trained in such new interdisciplinary and outward-facing approaches. They struggled to align their strategic interests and tactics with those of their community partners while developing new pedagogies on the fly. The rhythms of the academic calendar did not neatly mesh with the everyday struggles of urban inhabitants. Researchers and students engaged in action research often found themselves opposed to university administrators on questions of urban development and campus expansion (Nash, 1973). This became deeply problematic as the failure to recognize community-based scholarship in tenure and promotion files emerged as a major barrier to restructuring the practice of urban higher education (Angotti et al., 2011, 8). Federal monies supporting urban policy research centers dried up during the 1970s, leading such institutes to fold or be incorporated into other faculties. The Reagan Administration terminated the Urban Grant university program in 1981 as the ‘urban agenda’ receded from the American political spotlight (Fitzgerald, Bruns, Sonka, Furco & Swanson, 2012).

URBAN UNIVERSITY REDUX: POLICY, THEORY, LACUNA

Universities and cities have once again reached an intersection where their interests strategically (if only partially) align. While the tradition of engaged urbanism and service learning has persisted on a pedagogical and institutional level (Alfaro d’Alençon et al., 2015; Johnson & Bell, 1995), the relationship between the city and the university has mutated in an era of neoliberalization and global urbanization. Alongside the rise of the ‘knowledge economy’, cutbacks in public funding since the 1980s have served to heighten pressure on HEIs to produce skilled labor and relevant outputs that demonstrated their social impact – increasingly at a global scale (Deiaco, Hughes & McKelvey, 2012). Processes of massification have fueled the expansion (in number and size) of

universities in most countries (e.g. the wave of 'post-1992' British universities) while economic and political restructuring has reconfigured the socio-spatial relationships HEIs are embedded in (Frank & Meyer, 2007; Harrison, Smith & Kinton, 2016).

As knowledge capital agglomerates in key urban places, policy-makers have sought to codify universities and cities as co-dependent custodians of regional economic development (Pugh, Hamilton, Jack & Gibbons, 2016). In the United States, HEIs have been called on to work on behalf of their cities, since:

Colleges and universities depend on their surroundings to serve their overall purpose. They require a degree of vitality in their host cities to attract faculty and students and to provide environments conducive to teaching and learning. Simultaneously, cities depend on universities to bring vitality, not to mention a competent workforce and intellectual stimulation (Maurasse, 2007, p.9).

In the United Kingdom, a RSA City Growth Commission report on the role of universities as growth engines asserted:

Universities can achieve excellence in research and teaching through coordinating... core activities with opportunities oriented to metro growth priorities. Just as excellence in teaching and research are understood as being mutually reinforcing, rather than competing priorities, so teaching and research and the metro economy support one another (2014, p.11).

And tellingly, a landmark OECD report argued universities ought to play a greater role in regional development as countries turn their economies towards knowledge-intensive products and services. To wit;

HEIs must do more than simply educate and research – they must engage with others in their regions, provide opportunities for lifelong learning and contribute to the development of knowledge-intensive jobs which will enable graduates to find local employment and remain in their communities (2007, p.11).

Universities have responded by embracing new entrepreneurial roles, from serving as ‘knowledge factories’ focused on spillovers and bi-directional sharing with firms, through ‘entrepreneurial universities’ commercializing technology outputs, to ‘engaged universities’ that actively seek to shape territorial development and civic agendas (Uyarra, 2010). Cities, for their part, have come to view universities as prerequisites for local and global competitiveness and are encouraged to leverage universities as ‘anchor institutions’ capable of sustaining economic growth and the cultural vitality of place (Maurrasse, 2007; Tewdwr-Jones, Goddard & Cowie, 2015). Kleiman, Getsinger, Pindus & Poethig (2015) advocate cities, universities, and the philanthropic sector pursue a collaborative ‘grand bargain’ that selectively identifies shared interests and co-creates goals along extended timeframes. Similarly, the European Commission’s Smart Specialization platform attempts to mobilize universities’ capacities – in collaboration with local government and industry – to contribute to regional economic and social development around key industrial enablers.

Universities are well positioned to assume proactive roles in their urban and regional contexts. Yet there is nothing inherently progressive about the university as an urban actor. As universities adopt powerful positions as local developers and economic drivers they can be self-serving members of growth regimes as much as altruistic agents pursuing urban improvements and facilitating public participation in the urban process (Bose, 2015; Ross, 2012). Not only has the economic impact of universities tended to be overstated (Siegfried, Sanderson & McHenry 2007) but strong tensions exist between universities’ civic goals and the imperative towards commodification and private sector funding, particularly since the knowledge economy largely rests on the assumed publicness of knowledge benefits arising from university collaboration (Srinivas, Kosonen, Viljamaa & Nummi, 2008). Counter to the inclusive rhetoric, anchor institutions continue to utilize top-down governance structures that have the capacity to perpetuate geographical and racially-based inequalities (Adams, 2014; Lipman, 2011). Despite the potential of emergent policy synergies, the steps of the anchor institution dance remain unclear.

Beyond (but sometimes integrating) these policy frameworks, global urbanism has also prompted scholarly interest in recalibrating the urban university for the 21st century metropolis. Bender (1998) was an early observer arguing that the multiculturalism of an increasingly pluralized world both opened, and necessitated, new bonds to be forged between urban universities and their globally-interconnected cities. The rising significance of the global cities network, he suggested, warranted reorienting the academy from national to metropolitan culture. The American urban university could then be realigned – with direct parallels to the early modern era – by reaching outside the campus walls to partner in new instances of knowledge production:

The qualities of the emerging global culture have a considerable resemblance to the eighteenth-century cosmopolitan republic of letters, an ideal and mode of practice inherited by the modern university. Today's cosmopolitanism, however, extends more deeply into the social body. The pluralized culture of the university resembles the complex life of contemporary immigrant neighborhoods, where residents live in local urban neighborhoods and diasporic networks... The challenge for us as contemporary metropolitans (and cosmopolitans) is to locate ourselves – both in time and in relation to the places of local knowledge – in such a global perspective (1998, p.27).

Despite the recognition of a new reticulated global topology here (albeit one missing the urban-regional spaces between neighborhood and global scales), the desire to return to some idealized model of city-university relations has proven a markedly persistent leitmotif in scholarly approaches to the 21st century urban university. Haar (2011, p.xxx) sees the transformations within global city economies and morphologies – notably the strategic reclamation of downtown space by universities in American cities – catalyzing the need to ‘reconceive the campus not as a discrete community set apart from others but as an urbanity capable of engaging both new forms of cities and city living brought about in physical and virtual space’. Her prescription though, as with Bender, looks back to the zeitgeist of a previous institutional era in calling ‘for a return to the model of campus-community interdependency present in the earliest stages of American collegiate

growth, when institutional development was prompted by local community need' (2011, p.xxx). Goddard (2009) and his collaborators have engaged in a comparable mission by looking to 'reinvent' the 19th century British civic university for a globalized economy and society. Their policy-oriented approach elevates the significance of overarching societal 'Grand Challenges' as a means to strategically direct universities towards the public good; encouraging the new civic university to 'operate on a global scale but use its location to form its identity' (Goddard, Kempton & Vallance, 2013, p.44). Concerted attention is placed on integrating the social and economic dimensions of university innovation, but in a manner that remains instrumentally tied to issues of regional development.

There are pertinent lessons to be gleaned from these academic and policy paradigms of urban-university engagement, and their normative appeal is reflected in the 'fast policy' mobility of anchor institution thinking. Birch, Perry & Taylor (2013, p.9) suggest broadened notions of 'the city' and 'the urban' are beginning to infiltrate the conversation via appeals to extended regionalized spatial imaginaries. However, extant frameworks for the urban university fail to adequately account for the evolving university-city relationship in an era of global urbanization: largely as they still operate with localized territorial conceptions of the city. As Magnusson (2011) might have it, they continue to 'see like a state' rather than 'seeing like a city', with its inherent multiplicity and diversity. Urban policy agendas looking to leverage universities' positive externalities have gained significant and impactful purchase in cities like Newcastle (Tewdwr-Jones et al., 2015) and Newark, NJ (Rutgers University-Newark, 2014) whose universities have established civic commitments. However, it is less clear how this thinking resonates with institutions whose strategic orientation is aligned beyond the local scale, notably universities pursuing global aspirations in the face of rising international competition (Marginson, 2004). Differences within and between universities and their urban environments present further challenges for HEIs to adjust engagement strategies and broader ways of operating. Academic and urban leaders in cities with one or two universities can open dialogues aimed at stimulating

citywide collaborations towards unified ends, but such conversations are rendered highly complex in larger, globally-integrated metropolises where provosts and presidents must compete for attention in a crowded governance arena. Little consideration has been given to how anchor institutions operate in differing national contexts, or might inform city-university partnerships in the Global South (for an exception, see Patel, Greyling & Parnell, 2015).

Building on recent debates in urban theory and critical engagements with the neoliberal university, there are three central issues characteristic of current attempts to retool the urban university that need to be addressed:

- 1) Interest in *urban-university engagement has overwhelming focused on static territorial understandings of the city* and the neighborhoods in which urban universities are located. Town-gown relationships are defined by geographic proximity (e.g. around campus expansion, studentification). Contra Birch et al. (2013), ‘the urban’ continues to be equated with the local scale and sits uneasily with global (and other) social-spatial imaginaries. Local/global binaries are normalized and reproduced as the urban university is understood through its relations with its immediate geographic context. Yet cities are shaped by evolving trans-national, distanced interactions that undercut notions of the local and the global as binary opposites (Allen & Cochrane, 2007). Crisis-induced urban restructuring and governance rescaling have resulted in a diffuse patchwork of urban constellations articulated from the micro-neighborhood to the mega-region. Each scale, site, and community opens different points of engagement and different urban politics.
- 2) There is *a tendency to myopically focus on growth-oriented drivers and outcomes*. Universities have emerged as vital drivers of an increasingly urbanized knowledge economy. The perceived role for many universities located in metropolitan areas now centers on the promotion of knowledge transfer and the creation of mechanisms that can capture outputs for local and regional economic development. The cultural capital of higher education is reframed through its place-making function. More attention needs to be paid to alternative urban social relations

and spatial imaginaries (i.e., surrounding environmental sustainability or systemic urban inequality).

- 3) Much academic and grey *literature treats both 'the city' and 'the university' as rational, monolithic, and capable actors* whose spatial relations continue to be viewed instrumentally, separated from the contingencies of place and divorced from broader urbanization processes. Explicit acknowledgement is occasionally given to the complexity of the university and city as social and institutional spaces. Bender (1988, p.290-1) advocates approaching both as 'incompletely bounded fields of contestation comprising various traditions, interests, and ideals'. Goddard et al. (2013) point to the multifaceted structure of the university presenting obstacles for external actors wishing to engage with HEIs. Yet the tendency to target policy recommendations at provosts and mayors privileges top-down restructuring and directs resources at aligning strategic interests between upper-level leadership. Such managerial frameworks struggle to accommodate engagement and interpersonal relations forged by faculty, students, and institutes on a day-to-day basis (Kroll, Dombusch & Schnabl, 2016) and overlook the contradictions, power relations, and opportunities present across highly-variegated urban structures (Addie et al., 2015).

TOWARDS A 'NEW URBAN UNIVERSITY'

If the shock of the 1960s 'urban crisis' prompted a radical reimagining of the urban university, the contradictions of an aggressive neoliberal higher education regime and the extension of urbanization processes at a global scale demand a comparable reappraisal of the 21st century urban university. Universities are now regionalizing and globalizing in ways that express a distinct loyalty to place (civic identity formation, investment in technopoles), open networks with other universities and external partners (applied science campuses, research consortia), and add new modes of internationalization and outreach (international branches, student mobility, MOOCs). These spatialities manifest in myriad ways. They may be territorially and politically linked to the

city but do not neatly align with cities' strategic interests or remain bound by the geography of administrative units. This is not to downplay the place-based relations universities negotiate. Local student and labor markets and the vast capital sunk into the built environment mean they remain locally-dependent institutions while the city continues to act as a significant administrative entity for policy-makers and governance agencies (Cochrane & Williams, 2013). However, the multiscalar networks, relational processes, and variegated experiences of global urbanization – which HEIs are embedded within – mean urban universities must be understood as more than localized institutions serving their adjacent communities, or partners in the governance of regional clusters, innovation networks, or economies.

The remainder of this paper proposes shifting from an epistemology of 'the city' to one of 'urban society' as an entry point to theorize a 'new urban university' (drawing on recent Lefebvrian urban scholarship, e.g. Brenner, 2014; Stanek, 2008; Wachsmuth, 2014). This is not to assert a singular institutional model, but rather promote an understanding of the urban university as both place and process that internalizes – and therefore must negotiate – many of the contradictions of urbanized social relations. Lefebvre's theory of urban society is characterized through three key aspects: *mediation* at the level of social reality; *centrality* in terms of social form; and *difference* in the realm of everyday life (Schmid, 2014). Lefebvre (2003, p.79-81) conceptualized the urban as a mediatory level (not scale) between the *global* – the level of general, abstract yet essential relations that are projected onto both built and unbuilt elements of the urban fabric in socio-political, mental, and strategic terms – and the *private* level of inhabiting, which frames the diverse practices, values, and modalities of everyday life. Urban space functions as a context and mechanism through which abstract 'representations of space' are concretely expressed, lived, and experienced, and the city emerges as a social resource that productively brings disparate elements of society together (Schmid, 2014, p.72). The city is defined through this centralizing imperative, but it is produced through dialectical moments of centrality/inclusion *and* dispersion/exclusion. In other words, the city centralizes in geographic and social terms to '[imply] the availability of manifold

possibilities and access to social resources' (Schmid, 2012, p.57) but it does not do so equally or evenly. Centrality itself is predicated on the existence and accommodation of difference whereby '*different* things occur one after another and do not exist separately but according to their differences' (Lefebvre, 2003, p.117). The possibility of claiming such difference – the capacity to define histories, spaces, and the 'manifold dramas of everyday life' (Schmid, 2014, p.72) – elevates social centrality to the realm of the political; a claim now articulated at a 'planetary' scale (Brenner, 2014). The tensions, inequities, and possibilities engendered by the morphological, social, and relational explosion of urban space must therefore inform the strategic orientation and social practice of universities 'in urban society'.

Although their content can only be known through empirical investigation, mediation, centrality, and difference can be mobilized as a radical foundation for: (1) *a mode of critique* to assess urban universities' knowledge production, spatial strategies, and institutional structures; (2) *strategic principles* to imbue the urban university with clear social and political imperatives; and (3) *concrete tactics* to underpin a 'new urban university' as a mode of practice. Articulations and outcomes will vary in differing geo-historic contexts. These characteristics are therefore not, of themselves, the objectives of a new urban university. Instead, they pertinently disclose key problematics internalized with the dialectics of, respectively, abstraction-social practice; centrality-peripherality; and institutionalization-difference as they are concretized in contemporary urban regions and their universities.

Mediation

Through its multiple institutional spaces, the university acts as site of knowledge production, but it also conditions the structural capacities of actors inside and outside of the university by directing (global) urban knowledge flows, imbuing them with content, and tying them to material social practice. Mediation, as a mode of critique, problematizes the type of knowledge valued within the university and how it is rendered legible for urban inhabitants and university stakeholders. This is

not a question of scale, but of bridging conceptual levels of generality. The valorization of narrowly defined ‘useful knowledge’ overlooks the fact that not all knowledge resides in the academy, nor is the university necessarily a privileged site of expertise: especially surrounding urban issues (Madden, 2015). Alternative knowledges need to be integrated through urban teaching, research, and engagement to, as Lipman (2011, p.164) contends, ‘[clarify] the interconnectedness of urban issues and the need for systemic solutions’.

As a form of practice, mediation compels the opening of cloistered physical and mental spaces through the responsible and reflexive production, collation, and dissemination of urban knowledge. Universities in this sense, following Magnusson (2011, p.4), must ‘see like a city’ by recognizing and engaging a world characterized by multiplicity, diverse knowledges, and a decentered web of politics, practice, and impact. Attention must be given to preparing students, faculty, and urbanists (more broadly) to engage across interdisciplinary and cross-sectoral lines: identifying boundary spaces and training boundary-spanning actors to facilitate conversations between communities and universities at institutional and individual levels (Weerts & Sandman, 2010). Place-based service learning remains important, but it is necessary to promote research-based teaching incorporating multiple spatial perspectives – and levels of analysis – into urban practice (Alfaro d’Alençon et al., 2015). Institutional mechanisms connecting research, teaching, and engagement across the university help coordinate university activities while presenting clear ‘front porches’ to external actors to access academic expertise (Nelles & Vorley, 2010). But, more pressingly, such mechanisms also need to facilitate and reward practices including, for example, pro bono legal and planning consultancy for marginalized communities, executive education-style training for community organizers, and faculty interventions in urban planning systems (Schafran, 2015). A retooled urban university should not just facilitate a more just urbanization process. It should internalize the mediatory role between abstraction and social practice of the urban itself by forging strategies that relate and interconnect the abstract and concrete and the structural and experiential as they come together for different groups in urban space and across urban society.

Centrality

Universities have contributed to the centralizing dynamics of their urban milieu in a twofold manner: first, by acting as a center in themselves (bringing together capital, labor, products, activities, and situations while also invoking their own differential access and exclusions) and second, by interpolating centralities elsewhere through their actions and the urban knowledges they produce. Contemporary universities are now reacting to, and actively generating, new post-metropolitan urban forms, modes of urbanism, and centralities beyond the traditional campus and the urban core (Addie et al., 2015). They remain vital actors in their immediate situation, but condition new understandings of urban space. However, the urban university, ‘as *semicloistered heterogeneity* in the midst of uncloistered heterogeneity’ (Bender, 1988, p.290), cannot be fully subsumed into the city. Their distinct modes of centrality dialectically invoke their own exclusions, often in ways that provoke ‘town/gown’ antagonisms or perpetuate elitist social structures.

The dialectic of centrality-peripherality interpolates a form of critique that exposes where in urban space university activities and engagement happen. In doing so, it problematizes how institutional structures and strategies include partners and communities near and far, and who and what is excluded when universities pursue diverse modes of outreach. Placing centrality as a core aspect of a new urban university promotes opening access across social space by recognizing and producing a polycentric politics of higher education and urban knowledge. As gentrification and other processes of revanchist urbanization continue to displace precarious communities from positions of centrality, not all marginalized urban inhabitants are easy for academics to access, engage, and help empower. Issues of strategic alignment experienced by the pioneers of community-engaged research persist and are in many ways exacerbated by the lack of institutional thickness of activist and social groups in peripheral urban spaces (Benneworth, 2013; Pendras & Dierwechter, 2012). Consequently, it is increasingly necessary to identify ways of engaging and empowering those expelled from positions of centrality in the city, rather than internalizing the

imperatives of entrepreneurialism towards regional economic development. Mobilizing the concept of urban centrality engenders an exploration of adaptive sites for university engagement across urban space (from branch campuses to pop-up workshops and virtual forums) and via the restructuring of pedagogical practices to accommodate part-time and non-traditional students.

Difference

Finally, a new urban university must negotiate the central contradiction between the university being a ‘monumental institution’ that oppresses and colonizes the space organized around it (Lefebvre, 2003, p.21) and an emancipatory setting and stake of social struggle whose ability to accommodate difference enables socially-just, democratic knowledge production and dissemination. As a mode of critique, this involves confronting the internal tensions between universities’ flexible units (researchers, students, institutes) and top-down managerialism fostered by inflexible institutional structures, and questioning how the university is accessed by those excluded from extant power structures. As a mode of practice, it necessitates accommodating bottom-up decision-making and opening outward-facing spaces to increase diversity across class, gender, ethnicity, and racial divides internally (student, staff, and faculty populations) and with regards to external relations.

There is scope here to constructively leverage emergent entrepreneurial practices within neoliberal university to alternative ends. The European Commission’s (2013) guide for entrepreneurial educators declares:

Entrepreneurial teachers have a passion for teaching. They are inspirational, open-minded and confident, flexible and responsible – but also, from time to time, rule-breakers. They listen well, can harness and sell ideas and can work student- and action-oriented. They are team players and have a good network. They seek to close the gap between education and economy and include external experts in their teaching; focusing on real-life experiences.

They always refer to the economic aspect of a topic; and business-related subjects play an

important role in their classes – across the disciplines. They follow a flexible and adaptable study plan and prefer interdisciplinary, project-based learning; using training material rather than textbooks. They put emphasis on group processes and interactions; and understand the classroom sometimes as a ‘clash room’, giving room for diversity – a diversity of opinions, answers and solutions and the reflection about the learning process (2013, p.9).

Taking such neoliberal ‘innovations’ and infusing them with a new democratic and socially-informed (opposed to business-oriented) politics can direct emancipatory urban higher education by broadening strategies of engagement, promoting adaptability across student populations, and facilitating diversity and difference. Bring community leaders into the classroom as external experts. Focus on the real-life experiences of urban inhabitants and relate these to the multifaceted social and political aspects of a topic. View the university and the city as heterogeneous and internally-contradictory spaces. Such institutional and pedagogical shifts, however, must learn from the lessons of the modern urban university. A key challenge, for example, is recognizing and rewarding urban engagement as non-traditional scholarship in order to incentivize academics to explore innovative interactions with marginalized city dwellers (near and far) in ways that remain fundamentally scholarly (Fitzgerald et al., 2012, p.13). This requires institutional and cultural restructuring. Recalibrating the spaces and rhythms of the university in more porous ways (e.g. flexible teaching modules, mobile classrooms, online learning) opens institutional space to urban difference: extending access for non-traditional students and varied urban actors, and mediating the reflexive production of urban knowledge via the generations of new social centralities.

CONCLUSION

This paper has proposed a theoretical shift from the urban university to ‘universities in urban society’. In order to realize the progressive potential and transformative capacity of urban universities, it is necessary to move away from narrow economic and development agendas, one-

sided territorial understandings of the city, and instrumental views of the university. The urban is a contradictory and contested process full of heterogeneous voices and interests. So is the university. Stanek observes that:

For Lefebvre, what happened on the campus was an experience of all the contradictions of 1960s French society: between the authorities and ‘the youth’... between those privileged living in the city center and those deprived of the ‘right to the city’; between the state and its citizens; between the older and the younger generations; between the institutions set up to steer the modernization of postwar society and those originating in past modes of production (2008, p.190).

Recognizing how these contradictions are rearticulated today has important implications for understanding where the university stands in relation to broader process of urbanization, and establishes a framework that not only opens the university to increased diversification, but facilitates the active institutional (re)learning of the urban itself at a global scale.

The concepts of mediation, centrality, and difference offer scope to refocus the strategic orientation and political objectives of a new urban university. Yet there can be no singular model of the urban university for institutions of individual actors. The relationship between the city and university (as heterogeneous entities), and potential ‘best practices’ cannot be solely abstracted from key exemplars in the Global North, nor apart from the particularities of their wider social, spatial, and political relations (see Lawhon et al., 2016). Approaches, spatial strategies, and modes of engagement will vary decidedly and are likely to unfurl in chaotic and unpredictable ways. It is also vital to note that, as a site of mediation, a new urban university can never be fully urban: conceptually it cannot subsume all relations (global and private) within a ‘planetary’ urban telos. Practically, it cannot be opened to everyone on equal terms (access can differ from enrolment in degree programs to the dissemination of research; external relations are aligned to alternative and occasionally incompatible timeframes and agendas). Not all actors within a university are involved in urban activities. Universities themselves are embedded within a landscape of non-urban

institutions and networks from national policy-makers and state legislatures to private donors and funding agencies. However, the urban imperative – attuned to questions of mediation, centrality and difference – can be elevated within institutions in a comparable way to Audretsch’s (2014) prioritization of university entrepreneurialism to balance the tendential drive toward economic or regional instrumentalism. This new urban university is therefore both place and process. Shifting our focus to ‘universities in urban society’ can guide a continuous, rigorous institutional critique of existing practice (following Calhoun, 2006) and, importantly, reorient tactics and strategies for those working in actually existing universities to progressively transform the power relations underpinning the production of urban space and urban knowledge.

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