The cultural role of universities in the community: revisiting the university – community debate

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Abstract. In this paper the interaction between the university and the community is addressed. Whilst previous work has concentrated on the economic roles of universities in the community, insufficient attention has been paid to their cultural roles. Drawing upon fieldwork undertaken in Bristol, United Kingdom, I highlight a number of cultural roles which universities undertake in the community. In particular I outline the historical development of the cultural role of the university through a shift from the high-cultural role of the elite university to a broader cultural role for the contemporary mass university. A new environment for universities, including the declining influence of national struc-tures, the interplay of processes of localisation and globalisation, and the emergence of new regional governance structures in Britain, is reshaping the cultural relationship between the university and the community and is opening up new possibilities for the creation of a closer, and more equal, relation-ship between them. This in turn could open up new possibilities for a greater sense of a shared public culture and address the evolving idea of the university. However, concerns are raised in relation to how these are affected by the introduction of globalisation practices and discourses into the university.

Introduction

In this paper I revisit the debate concerning the relationship between universities and communities. Although this is not a new debate, it has been one of renewed interest in recent years (for example, see Bender, 1988; 1998; DfEE, 1998; Elliott et al, 1996; Goddard, 1997a; 1997b; Goddard et al, 1994; Hall, 1997; National Committee of Inquiry into Higher Education, 1997; Robson et al, 1995; van der Wusten, 1998). However, in the study of the university – community relationship, much attention has focused on the economic impact of universities, through, for example, the exploration of technology transfer or by building econometric impact models. In this paper I will attempt to go beyond such work by analysing the cultural roles of universities.

Within this framework, the paper has a number of objectives. First, I explore briefly the history and nature of the university – community cultural interface, especially in terms of the declining role which universities play in the process of nation-state building. Second, I explore the changing environment within which this interface is currently being developed, especially in terms of the interplay between localisation and globalisation which is creating a new framework for the funding and regulation both of universities and of cultural activity. In light of this new framework, in the third section I map some of the cultural relationships evident between universities and their commu-nities which encompass the traditional high-cultural role of the elite university, and the more diverse cultural roles of the 'mass university'.[1] Fourth, I discuss some of the implications of the evolving cultural relationship between the university and the com-munity, especially in light of a new framework for engagement within which universities can play a more local and regional role and contribute to a greater sense of local public

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[1] The paper stems from research undertaken at the two universities in the city of Bristol in the southwest of England: the 'old' red-brick University of Bristol dating back to the late 19th century; and the University of the West of England (UWE), formerly Bristol Polytechnic and one of Britain's many 'new' post-1992 universities.

culture. Although the paper is restricted to the context of Britain, by highlighting a number of processes which are occurring across national boundaries, hopefully it has a wider resonance.

The university – community cultural interface

Traditionally universities have been regarded as detached from the community. They have been seen as 'in', rather than 'of', a locality (Bender, 1998; Goddard et al, 1994), have largely been linked to international and national academic and research communities, have enjoyed high levels of institutional autonomy by nationally regulated, assessed, and funded systems of higher education, and have met the needs of a nationally oriented labour market and research agenda. In this sense, Bender (1988, page 294) observed: "The university has always claimed the world, not its host city, as its domain. Whatever its local roots, the university historically has striven for learning that at least reaches toward universal significance".

Moreover, over the last century they have played a crucial role in nation-state identity building (Readings, 1996) and, in this context, have played an important role in the development of cultural values and infrastructures at a national level. In particular, from the late 19th century onwards, a nationally organised cultural infrastructure emerged in Britain comprising institutions such as museums, orchestras, theatre companies, and professional associations, which maintained certain cultural hierarchies. "At the apex of this system were the universities, authorised to validate, inculcate, and—within limits—expand the high-culture artistic, musical and literary canons" (DiMaggio, 1991, page 141). Culturally, then, the role of many civic, red-brick universities in Britain's old industrial cities was that of the 'keepers of the canons', who have influence over the definition of 'official' culture by disseminating cultural hierarchies in the fields in which they provide instruction (page 138).

The old universities had a specific cultural role in that they "trained specialists in high culture, established and renewed canons in several art forms, and inculcated in students an awareness and respect for the products of high-culture worlds" (DiMaggio, 1991, page 148). In this sense, one role of the university was to produce an 'art habitus' through which students were equipped with certain competencies and values to decipher works of art (Lash, 1989, page 196).

As part of this national and institution-based cultural infrastructure, the old universities maintained three boundaries: between canonised and commercial culture, between people of 'taste' and the masses, and between the arts specialists and the commercial bureaucrats (DiMaggio, 1991, page 141). This type of 'culture', in an Arnoldian sense 'the best that has been thought and said in the world', is evident in the university curriculum through courses such as Fine Art, Art History, Drama and Music, and facilities such as university museums, concert halls, theatre and art collections. Historically universities have played a role in the dichotomy between two cultural orders:

> "Official culture, preserved in art galleries, museums and university courses, demands cultivated tastes and a formally imparted knowledge. It demands moments of attention that are separated from the run of daily life. Popular culture, meanwhile, mobilizes the tactile, the incidental, the transitory, the expendable, the visceral" (Worpole, quoted in Frow, 1995, page 67).

This particular form of cultural authority largely reflects the national and international priorities of universities and its dissemination of high culture to the community as part of the paternalistic, civilising mission of higher education. This philanthropic role largely enriched the bourgeois public sphere and was not intended to reflect local culture:

"... the university has performed a dual role: one being of assurance and ceremony, a symbol of continuity and influence, with all the ritual of robes and maces on civic occasions; the other being a more active role of disseminating culture—through its museums and special collections ... . Yet neither the ceremonial nor the cultural aspects of local contact were designed to bridge the gap between town and gown ... nor did these functions do much to assuage the prejudices of a citizenry who have continued to see it all as a case of *us* and *them*" (Hardy, 1996, page 12).

Moreover, as the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD, 1982, page 31) commented:

"The notion that the university should participate in the cultural development of the region is relatively recent. Up to now, education systems have mainly helped to promote a dominant national culture at the expense of local or minority sub-cultures ... systems of higher education exert rather a function of national homogenisation than one of local or regional differentiation."

A changing interface

This traditional cultural role of the university was a product of a specific set of historical circumstances related to a nationally framed education and cultural infrastructure. Universities now face a new set of circumstances which is changing their cultural relationship with the community.[2] These circumstances can be understood as a number of push and pull factors which, considered together, are encouraging universities to engage more with their locality or region. However, at the same time, universities are also being exposed to greater levels of globalisation and are increasingly connected to the nonlocal and the translocal. In sum, territoriality is a complex issue for universities.

First, in terms of push factors, recent changes in higher education (HE) policy in the United Kingdom are encouraging universities to engage more with regions. In particular, a number of recent policy documents have set out the case for greater university-regional engagement (for example, Goddard et al, 1994; National Committee of Inquiry into Higher Education, 1997; Robson et al, 1997). There are also new government funding streams for regional engagement such as the Higher Education Regional Development Fund (HERD) and the Higher Education Reach Out to Business and the Community Fund (HERO-BC). Further, the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) will provide universities with a premium within its funding formula which recognises success in recruitment of students from locally disadvantaged backgrounds, and further funds will be provided to encourage links with local schools and Further Education colleges. Such changes, in addition to the increase in stay-at-home students as the financial burden of going to university shifts from the state onto the individual, equate to university populations more closely representing local populations. Staff profiles are also changing within universities, especially within the newer universities, owing to a decline in the number of tenured academics and the rise in contract researchers. In sum, university staff and student populations are no longer drawn from a limited geographical and social group.

Moreover, new layers of government within the United Kingdom are creating opportunities for universities to engage with their localities. Although debates concerning the declining regulatory capacity of the nation-state may be overstated, the region, or locality, is increasingly seen as an important unit for territorial development

[2] In particular it is important to note that half of the universities in Britain only became universities in 1992 and the number of HE students has nearly doubled over the last decade to nearly 2 million.

and governance. This increasing role for regions is reinforced by devolution in the United Kingdom and the establishment of Regional Development Agencies (RDAs) in England. Working relationships are likely to develop between RDAs and universities owing to their mutual remits for technology transfer, skills provision, and regional economic development (Benneworth, 1999, page 15). Such relationships are being forged through representation of several universities on RDA boards, RDA responsibility for HERD Funds, university inputs into regional economic strategies and university – RDA inputs into regional innovation strategies.

In terms of cultural activity, the representation of the Department of Culture, Media and Sport (DCSM) within the RDAs will create new regional structures to deliver cultural programmes. In addition, the invitation for local authorities to pilot coordinated local cultural strategies and the planned increases for cultural funding in England over the next three years create a number of resources which can strengthen the cultural relationship between universities and their communities on a local and regional level. However, the broader contributions which universities make to social and cultural development within regions are not likely to be appreciated fully by new regional bodies such as the RDAs. Yet, in general, there is new reality to territorial governance which is increasingly bringing together universities and other regional actors.

Second, in terms of pull factors, the cultural relationship between the university and the community is being altered by wider processes of social and economic restructuring throughout the West, and shifts in the way in which cultural activity is organised, funded, and consumed. For example, many localities have drawn upon consumption-based rather than production-based growth models to offset decline in the local economy and have focused upon cultural quarters based around local characteristics and skills. There has also been a renewed interest in city-centre living, spearheaded by a new class of service-sector professionals and other groups with a high propensity to consume culture such as students, artists, and cultural intermediaries who have created a new demand for a range of goods and services (Featherstone, 1991; O'Connor and Wynne, 1998; Zukin, 1995). In sum, a whole range of locally based cultural resources and activities have been generated, which open up opportunities for universities to engage more with their localities.

However, the university is also set in a context of the commodification and globalisation of cultural activity, the blurring of cultural hierarchies in society, such as those between high and popular cultures, and the loss of the critical function of culture (Featherstone, 1991; Frow, 1995; Harvey, 1989). Further, DiMaggio (1991, page 142) suggests that the institutional infrastructure which maintained the high culture – popular culture hierarchy has been eroded through three trends: the decline of a locally based elite able to uphold the boundaries of high culture; a more varied consumer demand which is linked mainly to the increase in education attainment; and the rise of a broader base of institutional support and management structures for cultural activities. In an era when entertainment is increasingly directed by global corporate culture rather than a national or local elite it is difficult to talk of national and local cultures. Localities, then, have become places for an expanding range of cultural consumption, production, and experimentation drawn from an increasingly mobile set of actors and activities and a range of places.

Universities are not immune to this spread of global corporate culture, and as a result their role as a patron of national culture and upholder of national identity is being eroded. In this context, Smith and Webster (1997) have discussed the emergence of the postmodern university in which the grand narrative of the university, centred on the production of a unified cultural idea is losing validity. The university's ability to reproduce social and cultural hierarchies and maintain the high-culture system, then, is

contested (DiMaggio, 1991, page 148). In this sense, "the mass education system, which, rather than being tied to the reproduction of an elite, now has the more diffuse function of the differential formation of cultural capital" (Frow, 1995, page 86).

In this less nationally regulated system, the university finds itself in competition with other, increasingly market-based, generators of cultural authority. In response to such competition, many universities are seeking niches within which to generate new forms of cultural authority, client groups, and funding sources. This can be seen through the emergence of interdisciplinary areas of study such as cultural studies and activities such as multimedia, fashion, design, animation, and digital and sound recording. Such moves represent an attempt from universities to invest in new fields of cultural production whilst retaining a stake in traditional cultural activity (Bourdieu, 1988; 1993). The territorial monopoly of universities is also being eroded by generic carrier technologies such as the Internet, the emergence of the 'virtual university', and the globalisation of HE provision. Many universities are responding to this disembedding process by reasserting their distinctiveness as place-based institutions set in particular cultural contexts.

However, what can be discerned from these factors overall is that they are placing universities under increasing pressure to demonstrate the relevance of their autonomous teaching and research activities to local economic, social, and cultural objectives. This wider territorial dynamic was observed by Bender (1998, page 24):

"The modern academic disciplines were born in alliance with the rising nation state, not the city ... for its first century the modern university and nation have been more closely tied than the university and the city. Today, however, there is a question of whether the nation is secure enough to host either science or scholarship ... . Might the metropolis supersede the nation as the sustaining milieu for the modern university and its disciplines in its second century?"

Some comments on the cultural role of universities
In light of these territorial dynamics, in the following sections I will outline in detail some of the prevailing cultural relationship between the university and the community. Although it is clear that universities have a major cultural, as well as teaching and research, role in the community, few attempts have been made to specify these in detail. As Robson et al (1995, page 3) commented: "the HEI impact is a broad one, covering not only the measurable elements of financial and employment generation, but also the wider cultural and social aspects of local and regional life". Further, van der Wusten (1998, page 5) observed that:

"Culturally, universities provide their cities with captive audiences, critical comment and sometimes performers in the world of the arts. To what extent aesthetic doctrines and cultural fashions originate in university milieux is a moot point, but universities certainly play a role in nurturing such orientations and this shows in the cultural life of their surrounding cities."

However, when the cultural roles of the university are discussed, there are a number of caveats. First, the range of cultural impacts from universities varies greatly and represents different combinations of enduring traditional roles and newer roles. Further, whereas many cultural impacts, such as the number of arts graduates or attendance levels at cultural performances, are measurable, other cultural impacts such as wider processes of cultural innovation and broadening attitudes are difficult to quantify. Finally, the nature of university – community relationships are highly specific to each locality and are determined by factors such as institutional history, faculty and student mix, and physical location. Of particular influence in Britain are

the differences between 'old', pre-1992 universities and 'new', post-1992 universities (former polytechnics).

The context of the research: Bristol
Culturally the context for this research is distinctive. Bristol has a long history as a city dating back to its role as a prosperous merchant-trading port in the 16th century, which distances it from the more recent industrial, and deindustrial, legacy of most other British cities. More recently, the city has prospered because of its favourable location on the M4 motorway and the growth of 'sun rise' industries such as aerospace, electronics and telecommunications, and financial services (Boddy et al, 1986). As well as a large stock of high-cultural facilities, most notably the Theatre Royal which is the oldest continuously working theatre in Britain, Bristol has also developed a reputation for popular culture, especially in terms of the distinctive 'Bristol sound' pioneered by bands such as Massive Attack and artists such as Tricky, Portishead, and Roni Size.

In terms of the two universities in the city, each has its distinctive characteristics: the older University of Bristol is located on a historic and leafy campus in the prosperous Clifton area adjacent to the city centre, whereas the newer University of the West of England (UWE) is largely a greenfield and multisited institution. Both universities, but especially the University of Bristol which had the second highest number of 4 and 5 rated (out of a total of five) departments in Britain in the government's last Research Assessment Exercise, have built up strong academic reputations within the British HE system.

The high quality of life, cultural amenity, quality educational provision, and economic prosperity in Bristol have induced high levels of in-migration into the city. In particular, with the highest number of applicants per place within the British university system, the University of Bristol is the most sought-after location in Britain by university students (*Financial Times*, 1998) and the concentration of high value-added service activity, especially in financial services, has created a large private-sector professional community in the city. Both these groups, characterised by either large disposable incomes and/or high levels of free time, are responsible for generating a large demand for cultural goods and services and sustaining a broad range of cultural activities.

The university – community high-cultural interface
A number of examples can be drawn from Bristol to illuminate the high-cultural role of universities. The University of Bristol, representing the 'old' university sector, has a paternalistic and traditional cultural role in the city, and its establishment is heavily associated with wealthy benefactors, most notably the Wills family, who were also responsible for funding a large part of Bristol's prewar high-cultural infrastructure.

The high-cultural role of the University of Bristol is evident through two areas of the academic curriculum: Music and Drama. The Department of Music is located in the Victoria Rooms, a bequest to the University from the Wills family which, dating from the 19th century, is a listed building and a major music and conference venue in the city. The Department is eager to place itself at the heart of the city's musical community which is promoted through the idea of a 'Music Federation' linking the University to other venues in Bristol. Its role as a major provider of high culture is evident through a series of free lunchtime concerts and a commercially run concert series in which performances are undertaken by University-based choirs and orchestras and other professional bodies such as the Bristol Opera Company, Bristol Amateur Operatic Society, and the Brunel Ensemble, many of which rely heavily upon graduates and staff.

Second, the Department of Drama, and its theatre space the Wickham Theatre, has a unique role in the performing arts community in Bristol compared with other theatres of a similar size by offering experimental productions and presenting performance work within an educational environment. Work is presented by current students and visiting theatre companies. The Department also houses the 'Theatre Collection', an internationally recognised research centre and gallery which includes the Women's Theatre Collection, the only archive in the world dedicated to preserving women's contribution to theatre.

UWE, as a 'new' university without a traditional university legacy, still contributes to the high-cultural infrastructure of the city through the Centre for Performing Arts (CPA) which was established to meet the demand for producing and consuming the performing arts at the University owing to its lack of curriculum-based high-cultural activity. Activities at the CPA focus on a number of orchestras, choirs, musical productions, smaller quartets, quintets, and ensembles, a series of free lunchtime concerts, workshops, and a theatre club. Audience research from CPA suggests that campus performances largely attract UWE staff and students with performances in the city having a higher nonuniversity audience.

Although such activity embeds the two universities in the community's official or high-cultural calendar, it does not necessarily reflect local cultural skills or activities but rather the research and leisure interests of staff and students. However, such activity can act as a conduit through which a range of cultural activities and ideas are channelled into the local community. Further, although such activity generates mainly small audiences from the universities rather than the local community, the research suggested that these audiences also sustained activity at other venues in the city, especially in often marginal or experimental areas such as devised theatre and art-house film.

The cultural roles of the mass university
In parallel to these high-cultural roles, the mass HE system which has emerged in Britain undertakes a wide range of cultural roles compared with its elitist 19th century predecessor. A number of these roles are outlined below.

The development of the cultural industries
Universities often contribute to the development of certain sectors within the local and regional economy. In Bristol the Faculty of Art, Media and Design at UWE provides resources for the cultural sectors of the economy, and in particular the local media and animation sectors. Bristol has particular strengths in these sectors and has developed a role as a regional media capital; it is the location of the region's TV franchises, the Watershed Media Centre, the first of its kind in Britain, and is home to a range of firms specialising in preproduction and postproduction, cable, radio, multimedia, and design.

The main link between the Faculty of Art, Media and Design at UWE and this media community is the 'Media Centre' which operates as an academic and commercial entity, and through *MEDIAworks*, the Centre's training unit, which is the largest media training resource in the region. *MEDIAworks* undertakes courses for the local media and broadcasting sector, media training and advice for local SMEs and the European Media Industry, and training for community-based projects in deprived inner-city areas. The Media Centre also houses Channel West, an organisation founded and located at the Faculty which acts as a representative body and information clearing house for the film and television community in Bristol. The Media Centre is also the home of Bristol's student radio station, *Fresh FM*, which was developed jointly by UWE and the University of Bristol with support from local media operators and nightclubs.

The Media Centre's links with Bristol's animation sector are also strong. Bristol has developed an international reputation in animation through firms such as Aardman Animation (creators of Wallace and Gromit), A for Animation, and Bolex Brothers. The Media Centre collaboratively runs the 'The Bristol Animation Course' which specifically trains students for Bristol's animation sector. Many small animation companies have been established by graduates from this course and Aardman Animation runs work placements for students.

UWE, then, functions as a resource for the media and animation sectors in Bristol and the Media Centre is heavily involved in developing the city's media and design infrastructure, especially in terms of training provision. Such links create a virtuous cycle of growth between UWE, the Faculty, the media and cultural sectors, and the graduates from UWE who are retained by the city's media firms. As one course leader commented: "Doing media courses at UWE will get them a job in the industry, after all that's why they come here". These high levels of graduate retention is enhanced by Bristol's cultural reputation which in turn expands consumer demand for media goods and services. However, there is also a tension with such a close relationship. As one course leader stressed:

"It is important to strike a balance between intellectual and more personal creative work at UWE and the vocational training needs of the local media and design industries. The University can best act as a resource for the local creative community by generating ideas rather than skills as this can inject dynamism, growth and long termism into the local cultural industries which are practically still cottage industries in the city."

The University of Bristol also engages with the local cultural industries. The Department of Music is keen to present itself in a wide musical role, by adopting new musical technologies. This is evident through the Department's commercially run 'Composition and Recording Studio' which offers multimedia audio-production for the region's media sector, and specialist courses in musical composition techniques for film and television. Further, the Department of Drama is involved in more innovative and technologically based forms of culture through a Masters course in Film and Television which has specialisms in 16mm film-making and multimedia. This course benefits from the Department's close relations with the Watershed Media Centre, which holds an annual screening of work produced by Drama students.

As well as maintaining their historic high-cultural role, then, universities are engaging with new, often local, cultural partners and areas of cultural activity. These shifts signify the need to seek new client bases and funding sources, adapt to a changing set of client demands, and maintain the authority and relevance of the university in light of competition from other cultural producers and knowledge creators (Bender, 1998; Gibbons et al, 1994). This role is often exemplified by the 'new' universities owing to their more self-conscious and systematic interaction with the local community.

The art community and community art
The Faculty of Art, Media and Design at UWE also engage with the city's art community. In particular, 'Fine Art in Context' is a practical fine-art course which addresses questions of site, context, and audience in which students and staff develop an interest in the relationship between their experience as an artist and the city. The activities of many of the students engage them with some of the city's economically poorer communities and such engagement can help to ameliorate the perceived elitist and irrelevant role of the University in Bristol. In particular, students engage with the city through 'Public Project Group Work' at local schools and undertake their own

'Residence-Based Work' in the city. The diversity of residencies cannot be expressed here, but to give a flavour they included site-specific work in derelict housing, the development of websites for people in sheltered accommodation, and art installations in local shops.

Staff from Fine Art in Context are also highly involved with the city's art community. In particular, they work closely with a community arts charity, schools, day and youth centres, and are involved in the management structures of some of the city's main cultural venues. Students are further involved in the city through the negotiation of art installations in playing fields, parks, and office foyers, the installation of 'rogue art' on derelict or marginal sites, employment at some of the city's art galleries, and through art education at local community centres and schools.

Universities and cultural management
Universities are also a resource in the cultural community in their role as commentators and practitioners. The paucity of historical links between academics and cultural managers in Bristol has encouraged a number of staff to increase their involvement in the cultural 'management' of the city. Such activity includes official representation on some of the city's cultural management groups, cultural venues, art spaces and arts coordinating and lobby groups, local consultancy work, and advice and commentary with the local media.

In particular, UWE houses the Local Economic Research Unit (LERU) which has undertaken research into tourism management in the region. There is also a significant amount of high-level staff representation on city and regionwide steering groups and cultural bodies such as Bristol 2000 and The Harbourside Project and a number of historic relationships exist between the Universities and key cultural venues in the city, such as the Cathedral and Bristol's Theatre Royal. Further, staff and students from UWE have been involved in 'The Open City Project' which is an on-going collaborative artists initiative with the intention of making art more accessible to the public through temporary art installations in the city. Work has also been undertaken at the two Universities which offers analysis and critique of the culture strategy in the city (Bassett, 1993; 1996; Griffiths, 1995).

Students' unions and the popular culture infrastructure
A growing interface between the university and the community is the students' union which, although it exists mainly to provide welfare services specifically for students, is also often a significant cultural provider in the community and offers a range of cultural events such as theatre, comedy, live music, nightclubs, and late-night drinking to wider audiences. Many students' unions are undergoing restructuring and are being transformed into professional entertainment providers in an effort to increase the level of service provision to students and to maintain a stake in the growing student city-centre entertainment market in light of local competition for this lucrative audience. As the editor of Bristol's cultural guide, 'The Venue', commented:

> "Students' unions have reorganised themselves and adapted to changing market conditions and also changing aspirations of what students actually want from a night out. Their tastes are becoming much more sophisticated. You've gotta bear in mind that there has been a shift in recent years in the way entertainments officers are organised. They are paid professional gig promoters and I think the level of competence has increased dramatically in recent years."

The two students' unions in Bristol are significant institutions within the popular cultural infrastructure of the city, especially in areas such as live music, nightclubbing, and drinking. This is evident in a number of ways. First, the Anson Rooms at the University of Bristol Students' Union (UBSU) is one of the main venues for live music

in the city and the southwest region and was ranked as the fifth best university venue in the country for live music (Footman, 1996). The Anson Rooms was recently the joint host of Britain's annual *Sound City* event in 1995 which is considered to be the national laboratory for popular live music. However, there are major problems with the Anson Rooms. It has a capacity of less than 1000, whereas most bands on their national tours choose venues of around 2500. As a result, other neighbouring cities with larger venues such as Birmingham, Newport, and Cardiff are chosen above Bristol. That many well-known bands still play at the Anson Rooms on their national tours despite its limited capacity is indicative of the fact that they recognise that Bristol is a city in which there is a large demand for live music; a fact which is reinforced by the presence of 34 000 HE students in the city.

Second, the University of the West of England Students' Union (UWESU) has played a pioneering role within the provision of DJ-based dance events by students' unions. In particular, Sutra, a monthly nightclub with a capacity of 1500, contributes to the city's national and international reputation for dance and music culture. As the UWESU entertainment manager commented:

"We were one of the first universities to put on dance nights and to get DJs to recognise that university gigs are cool to go to and they've not in holes in the ground. We did an awful lot for the reputation of students' unions and there's loads of university dance events now. Our entertainments department has a reputation of knowing what is going on. We brought in big name DJs by word of mouth and we could get anyone we wanted."

Some of the biggest names on the international DJ circuit played at Sutra including Paul Oakenfold, Carl Cox, Danny Rampling, and Dave Clarke. During its peak, Sutra at UWESU was one of the central components of the city's dance and club infrastructure.

Third, UWESU owns a small city-centre nightclub, The Tube Club, which is an example of the way in which students' unions are recognising the need to invest in city-centre entertainment venues in order to retain a hold on the lucrative drink, dance, and music culture markets amongst the under-30s. The recent £2.5 million nightclub development by the students' union at the University of Coventry is one of the best examples of such investment.

The two students unions in Bristol, then, offer a complementary entertainment package—with UWESU specialising in DJ-based and club-based events, and UBSU specialising in live bands (Footman, 1996)—which is enhanced by the close working relationship between the two entertainment managers. As the editor of Venue commented:

"UWE are real pioneers at putting on real high-quality dance productions and they've got the best DJs, the best sound. The University of Bristol is primarily geared towards high profile live rock gigs. Both do their own different thing but the two complement each other."

The role of the student population

There is very little research which examines how the activities of students outside the official university calendar contribute to cultural vitality in cities (Chatterton, 1999; Hollands, 1995). This is remarkable considering the fact that students currently make up large populations in many British cities and have a significant direct cultural impact in their role as consumers of city-centre cultural goods, services, and entertainment. For example, in 1994/95, the 34 000 students in Bristol represented 9% of the total population (HESA, 1995) and, collectively, spent over £170 million annually in the city, one quarter of which was expenditure on 'entertainment', and £17 million on alcohol and tobacco alone (estimated from Callender and Kempson, 1996).

However, within this population, a significant lifestyle divide is emerging between traditional (largely white, middleclass to upper-class, nonlocal, British-domiciled adolescents) and nontraditional students (previous minorities and those studying on new modes of attendance) within the British HE sector (Chatterton, 1999). The cultural impacts of the latter are more diffuse than the former owing to their dual roles as student – parent or student – worker and other financial and time constraints. Further, specific subgroups within the student community, such as overseas, religious or ethnic minority students, participate less in what is perceived as the mainstream student identity and lifestyle pursuits, diluting their impact further.

In contrast, traditional students retain a direct and vivid cultural role in the community. Such students are heavily concentrated in the 'old' universities in Britain's large cities and have a particular identity as adolescents with large disposable incomes and free time which enables them to be significant consumers of city-centre-based goods, services, and entertainment, especially those connected with clothes, drink, drug, and music cultures. Traditional in-migrant students also bring with them external interests and resources into the city which provides a broadening of cultural ideas and attitudes in the city.

Bristol has a particularly high concentration of traditional students. For example, the University of Bristol has the highest concentration of Eton graduates in the United Kingdom and two fifths of students come from independent schools (Targett, 1998) and 90% of undergraduates were under 21 on entry (HESA, 1995). This large cohort of traditional students displays highly segregated use of the city. Research has shown that most leisure time amongst traditional students is spent within the confines of an entertainment infrastructure comprised of student-only or student-oriented venues in the city centre (Chatterton, 1999). The contribution which traditional students make to cultural vitality, then, is highly concentrated in certain areas of the city and certain areas of activity such as nightclubbing and drinking.

Students with a course-based interest in the arts and culture, such as Drama, Music, Fine Art, and Media Studies, have a broader cultural impact in the city in their role as arts producers and practitioners. In particular, they create a demand in areas of small-scale and specialist cultural activity such as the performing arts and art-house cinema, where small levels of participation can sustain such activity. Traditional students are also a source of vitality in the small-scale and underground DJ-based party and nightclub scene which are undervalorised as cultural forms in cities (Thornton, 1995). In particular, student parties and performances at pubs and nightclubs are often used as an experimental space for creativity. As the entertainment officer at UWESU commented:

"You'd be amazed at what the student DJs do. They spend all their money on records and they make records too. There are also some very good student promoters knocking about going to venues. There are so many students doing marketing degrees now that there's a lot of students doing warm up nights or they will go to a wine bar and say, 'I'll charge a quid and put some DJs on and promote it as hard as I can'. It's done in a much more professional manner now."

However, students also have a negative cultural effect in cities in terms of creating temporary and seasonal entertainment and residential ghettos and lowering the quality of private rented accommodation. Further, a worrying feature at many old and red-brick universities in Britain is that, as the cost of HE is passed from the state to the individual in Britain, the more wealthy, and hence mobile, adolescent, middle-class to upper-class students have the ability to migrate to Britain's large urban universities and inhabit segregated spaces which are far removed from the indigenous youth in the inner-city areas of these cities.

Integrating the cultural community

Overall, staff, students, and graduates of the two universities, totalling well over 50 000 in the city, help to sharpen, define, and integrate the creative community in Bristol through formal links such as training provision, work placements, and seeking employment in the cultural sectors and through informal links such as extracurricular activities, socialising at certain venues, and adding to the level of art practitioners and consumers. There are numerous examples of such activity from the Departments of Drama and Music at the University of Bristol whose graduates are involved in the cultural community as, for instance, music and theatre directors, conductors, art therapists, journalists, arts board representatives, and cultural venue managers. The Departments of Music and Drama also provide an additional focus for the cultural community by holding free public art lectures, exhibitions, and performances.

Many students also take their creative skills into the community on an informal and individual basis. For example, several students from the 'Fashion/Textile Design' course at UWE's Faculty of Art, Media and Design undertake fashion and design work concerned with street and club wear which integrates them, either formally through part-time employment or informally through socialising, in the city's pub, club, and retail sector. Further, many graduates from this course have established small workshops and retail outlets which specialise in small-batch street and club wear and sell to many of the small-scale outlets in the fashionable west-end retail sector of the city.

One important way in which universities impact upon the cultural life of the city is through the virtuous cycle of demand which is created at certain privileged sites within the cultural infrastructure of the city. More specifically, mixed-use cultural venues (blending arts-based bookshops, gallery spaces, cafes, cinemas, and workshops) act as sites of social centrality for the city's cultural community where the work of the university can be extended into the wider city through extracurricular socialising by staff and students. In the context of Bristol, The Watershed Media Centre acts as a focal point for staff and students involved in media, design, and drama activity at the two Universities and the Arnolfini Centre for Contemporary Art fulfils a similar role for those involved in art. These venues also tailor activity to the needs of certain courses by holding workshops, lectures or by screening certain films and exhibitions by artists. The University populations, and in particular those with a course-related interest in culture, then, have a significant impact in the community in terms of generating an added demand for specific cultural goods, services, and performances at these places. In turn, such activity contributes to an expanding cultural demand in the city which can be accessed by wider audiences. It also sustains activity in other associated areas such as cafes, restaurants, and clothes and record shops.

In this sense, universities contribute to the growing level of demand from a burgeoning cultural consuming class in British cities. The contribution which the growing student population in Britain makes in terms of increasing city-centre cultural demand cannot be underestimated. As Lash (1989, page 252) commented:

"There has developed in the past decade or two a mass audience for previously specialised cultural forms. Part of this results from the explosion of the student population, which is now a 'morphological' factor in the social field."

One course leader from UWE highlighted this trend:

"Staff and students from the Faculty [Art, Media and Design] are engaged with the community on two levels; they are involved in production with design firms and other groups in the city and on a more social level they also actively create the cultural life of the city by demanding culture to consume at certain venues."

Discussion: the evolving university – community cultural relationship

The cultural roles of universities

What this paper has highlighted is that the university sector in Britain is intertwined with the community in a number of different ways which are not restricted to the dissemination of a national and high culture. As well as possessing a range of historic cultural facilities such as theatres, galleries, museums, and concert halls, universities also own and manage newer facilities such as musical rehearsal spaces, students' union facilities, cinemas, pubs, nightclubs, media laboratories, and film and recording studios. Moreover, in contrast to its elitist predecessor, the mass university is likely to generate the largest and most frequent audiences in popular culture such as live-gigs or night-clubbing, especially considering the demand for music, dance, drug, and drinking cultures amongst the large young, middle-class student cohort. Considered together, these various cultural roles are a considerable source of cultural innovation and create spin-offs and further demand in related retail and leisure sectors, especially in areas of youth cultural consumption such as music and clothing.

In sum, universities have a role to play in the cultural development of the community and the wider region: they are seedbeds for new talent; they are one of the few remaining places where artistic experimentation and integrity is financially viable, especially in an era of local authority art-budget cuts; and their staff and student populations play a crucial role in sustaining the viability of many local cultural events and facilities. "In short, Universities provide an additional focus for the cultural and professional life of the nation outside of the London/Oxford/Cambridge triangle" (Goddard et al, 1994, page 49).

Although it is difficult to draw generalisations from this limited discussion, two simultaneous models of university – community relationship, each with their own spatialities, can be tentatively discerned which to a certain extent highlight the differences between the older and newer universities. In the first 'traditional' model, the university undertakes a historical role of consecrating cultural orders and practices largely associated with a national cultural elite and a process of national identity building with few activities which reflect local and regional cultural activity. A second 'mass' model has recently supplemented the first as the university becomes involved in new types of cultural activity to reflect the changing nature of its staff, students, paymasters, and client base. The spatial focus of this second model is local – regional as well as international – national. Clearly, these two models exist side by side in most universities, and taken together they point to the complex spatialities which characterise the cultural role of the university.

However, it must be noted that many cultural sectors in provincial cities outside national capitals remain cottage industries. This severely limits the amount of employment generation and partnership-based activity emerging from university interaction with the cultural community compared with other areas of interface such as engineering, biotechnology, and continuing professional development.

A framework for engagement

Many of these cultural roles within the university can be considered as part of the growing 'third role' of the university, outside of mainstream teaching and research, which highlights the increasing local embeddedness of universities and their role as responsible local, as well as national and international, actors. However, in spite of the breadth and diversity of relationships between the university and the community highlighted in this paper, there is little evidence of strategic and 'joined-up' thinking in terms of managing all the areas of cultural activity between the two universities and the local community. In this sense, the relationship is still characterised by the historically

dominant and paternalistic role of the university (Elliott et al, 1996). A framework for engagement needs to move beyond simply regarding the university as a source of knowledge and expertise which can be conferred onto the community. There needs to be a mutual and partnership basis for engagement in which universities are involved in the cocreation, co-ownership, and co-use of research knowledge with the partners who cohabit its learning region (Duke, 1998).

This paper has highlighted that most universities are either being pushed towards greater local engagement by the changing nature of staff and student populations and the changing administrative and funding regimes of universities or being pulled towards it by the localisation and/or regionalisation of territorial governance and the organisation and funding of cultural activity. These various drivers represent opportunities for universities to engage more fully with the cultural management, vibrancy, and stewardship of their communities. In particular, in light of a reduction in state finances for HE, local actors have a commitment to support facilities within the university which are of direct benefit to them.

However, a framework for engagement also needs to balance the national and international ambitions of universities. The cultural role of the university, then, is not just to develop local cultural capacities, skills, and infrastructure in the community, although this is important, but to create mechanisms through which the rich variety of resources and activities occuring at many different geographical scales from the global to the local within the university can be accessed and contribute to the formation of a local public sphere. Bender (1998, page 27) comments on the rich potential contained within universities:

> "The pluralized culture of the university resembles the complex life of contemporary immigrant neighbourhoods, where residents live in local urban neighbourhoods and diasporic networks. Teachers and students in a university ... must constantly bring together in fruitful ways ... the local and the translocal ... . No other institution has such rich connections at once to a local intellectual, political and social milieu and to a global network of ideas, structures, and powers."

Yet globalisation is a double-edged sword for the university and the community. It is increasingly apparent that globalisation practices such as managerialism, accountability, entrepreneurialism, and privatisation are being borrowed from business and being mainstreamed into the day-to-day running of universities (Currie and Newson, 1999). Moreover, universities are adopting the technobureaucratic model of the transnational corporation, in which the unifying idea is the nonreferential term of 'excellence' rather than the ideological notion of 'culture' (Readings, 1996). In this context of neoliberal values of the global marketplace, the critical and analytical functions which universities undertake in the community may be subject to erosion—a university entrenched in the global marketplace and the interests of global corporations has increasingly less to contribute to a sustainable local economy and community and a vibrant local public culture.

Universities and local public culture
Although universities contain different cultural values and types of activities, these differences are not only a source of tension, but also a resource for the community. Taken together, they can contribute to a shared public culture which offers what Bender (1998, page 26) called 'dialogue and difference'. Ideally local public culture is forged, defined, and enacted by as many groups and individuals as possible and is dominated by no single actor. If urban and social renewal lies with 'creativity in diversity' (Amin and Graham, 1997, page 422), then universities, through their cultural roles, have large

institutional capacities to contribute to the functioning of a local public culture. In particular, universities:

> "... may provide the best space available in contemporary cities for the enactment of a public culture ... . Metropolitan universities enable the work of the contemporary public sphere; they offer the possibility of creating a dialogue across the difference that largely defines metropolitan life in our time ... the metropolitan university becomes a rare, incomplete, but essential site for democratic debate and deliberation" (Bender, 1998, page 25).

Zukin (1995, pages 259–260) stressed the importance of such spaces:

> "Public spaces are the primary site of public culture; they are a window into the city's soul ... public spaces are important because they are places where strangers mingle freely. But they are also important because they continually negotiate the boundaries of human society ... public spaces enable us to conceptualise and represent the city."

If the various drivers towards the localisation and regionalisation of universities outlined in this paper are consolidated, then new resources for strengthening a local public culture may emerge:

> "By reorienting academic culture from the nation to the metropolis, and from national cultures to the metropolitan cultures in which they are deeply implicated, one might thereby acquire important new resources for the making of a pluralised public culture" (Bender, 1998, page 27).

However, there are a number of current factors at play, especially amongst Britain's older universities, which impede the contributions which universities, through their cultural roles, can make to this local public culture. These include the lingering perceptions of universities as detached and elitist institutions; their dispersed institutional form and lack of 'front door'; paucity of resources to engage with the locality; poor marketing of the resources which are open to the local population; and the lack of attention to addressing issues of exclusion, access, and the radical mixing of identities and experiences. Moreover, the adoption of globalisation discourses and practices by universities may be the most significant impediment to the flourishing of 'dialogue and difference' and the development of a strong public culture based upon local capacities and identities.

The boundary between the university and community, then, needs redressing. As Bender (1998, page 22) comments: "metropolitan academics ought not work so hard at keeping the city at bay: it is a source of energy, of wonderful complex intellectual problems, and of non-academic intellectuals who have much to offer". In sum: "the city offers as many lessons for the university as the university does for the city" (Bender, 1998, page 23).

In this paper I have shown the manifold and diverse set of cultural relationships which exist between universities and communities. However, more research is needed to create a deeper understanding of the roles which universities should adopt in the community and their role in creating a local public culture. In particular, the university must be prepared to comanage rather than dominate the local public sphere and must be aware of who it excludes as well as includes whilst carrying out its activities. Through this discussion, questions relating to the complex nature of territoriality within universities have also been raised. In light of the interplay between the processes of localisation, regionalisation, and globalisation, and the enduring structures of national identity and policy frameworks, how the various roles of the university in the community will be managed and whether they can contribute to an open and inclusive public culture is still contested terrain.

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