

(How) Can Universities Make a Difference in a Changing Society?

From Academic Excellence to Meaningful Social Impact

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Connecting Knowledge and Society:
The Changing Role of Universities

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— TODAY, I'D LIKE TO EXPLORE...

Four questions on universities and their **contribution to society**



01

The changing university

Why academic excellence alone is no longer enough.



02

From excellence to social impact

What it means for universities to contribute meaningfully to society.



03

Engagement in practice

How collaboration with communities can reshape teaching, learning and knowledge.



04

What does this ask of us?

Moving from individual initiatives towards an engaged institutional culture.

**Can universities make a difference —
and what needs to change if we want the answer to be yes?**



Higher Education & Community Engagement

(Some) of the core principles for societal impact - Where do these ideas coming from?

01



Civic Learning Communities

HEIs are not ivory towers, but civic-minded **LEARNING COMMUNITIES** connected to their communities.

02



Active Engagement

HEIs **MUST ENGAGE** with their communities to undertake mutually beneficial and **SOCIALLY RESPONSIBLE** joint activities.

03



Curricular Integration

Profiling HEIs as **CIVIC UNIVERSITIES** by integrating local, regional and societal issues into curricula, involving the community in teaching and research projects.

04



Societal Responsiveness

Universities need to develop an open attitude to **SOCIETY'S NEEDS**, and must include outreach to other stakeholders.

05



Regional Development

HEIs should be engaged in the development of their cities and regions, with well-organised **VOLUNTARY** and **COMMUNITY** work to help student developing social and civic competences.

06



Pedagogical Innovation

HEI promoting pedagogical innovation in **STUDENT - CENTRED LEARNING** that can best satisfy personal aspirations and **SOCIETAL NEEDS**.

07



Reward & Recognition

Outreach beyond the academic community should be **INCENTIVISED AND REWARDED**, including as part of career development.

Where Do These Ideas Coming From?

A POLICY MANDATE...



2007

London Communiqué

The European Higher Education Area (EHEA) – Achieving the Goals.



2015

Opinion of the EESC *Engaged universities shaping Europe*

Recognising the role of engaged universities in addressing societal challenges and strengthening Europe.



2015

Yerevan Communiqué

A renewed commitment to a more inclusive, innovative and resilient European Higher Education Area.



2017

Renewed Agenda for Higher Education

A more inclusive, innovative and interconnected European higher education.



2018

Key Competences for Lifelong Learning

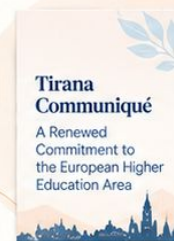
Supporting active citizenship, social inclusion and the development of competences relevant for democratic and sustainable societies.



2020

Rome Ministerial Communiqué *Social Dimension Principles*

Strengthening the social dimension of the EHEA and promoting inclusive higher education systems.



2024

Tirana Communiqué

A renewed commitment to a more inclusive, innovative and societally engaged European Higher Education Area.



2024

CoE Education Strategy 2024-2030

Placing learners at the centre and strengthening democratic, inclusive and sustainable societies.

* relevant European policy framework:
read more in the additional slides



UNIVERSITY PLACE-BOUND AND ANCHOR INSTITUTIONS

with an immense influence
on political, economic and
social processes and changes
in society



UNIVERSITY INSTITUTIONALLY RESPONSIBLE NEIGHBOUR

with public responsibility
for all aspects of community/
society development

UNIVERSITIES ARE EXPECTED TO...

1



Integrate into Community

Deeply embed institutionally
into the local community
structure they are an
active part of.

2



Care & Address Local Issues

Link teaching, learning &
research directly with
community needs and
real-world problems.

3



Knowledge & Resource Exchange

Build collaborative projects
with non-academic actors –
local authorities, public
institutions, businesses,
CSOs.

4



Educate & Contribute to Civic Responsibility

Educate socially responsible,
active citizens and continuously
contribute to civil society
and democracy.

“GAMIFICATION” OF ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE



Who rules?

The world's top universities in 2020



A SHIFT IN THE HE PARADIGM

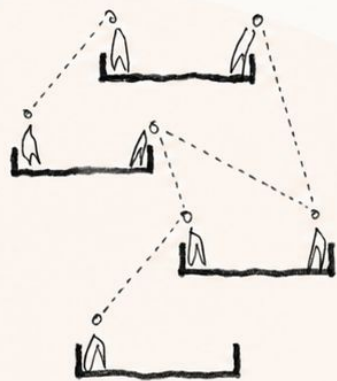
What is going on in HE?

01 INDIVIDUAL COMPETITIVE PARADIGM

VS.

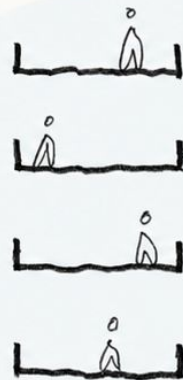
02 SOCIAL COLLABORATIVE PARADIGM

current and desirable HE paradigm
(Escrigas, C., 2008)



ARCHITECTURE OF CONCERN

UNIVERSITY
ACADEMIC
CORE
PILLARS



ARCHITECTURE OF FACT

“GAME CHANGER”

The move toward community engagement is in part driven by the recognition that **inclusion of diverse** and both academic and non-academic perspectives in multidisciplinary teams is **essential to addressing complex societal problems.**

— Lasker, Weiss & Miller, 2001

COMMUNITY-ENGAGEMENT IN HE

HOW UNIVERSITIES/HEIs ADDRESS SOCIETAL NEEDS IN PARTNERSHIP
WITH THEIR EXTERNAL / NON-ACADEMIC COMMUNITIES?

Core Concept Definition

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

is a concept that encompasses how universities work with external partners / non-academic actors to address pressing societal needs, both in their **immediate local environments** and in the broader **regional, national and global context**.

University civic engagement implies engagement in those spheres of communities in which we do not buy or sell, but talk with our neighbours about benefits for our community.

(Barber, 1996)

UNBOXING THE KEY CONCEPTS...



ENGAGEMENT

Mutually Beneficial Process

A process whereby universities undertake **joint activities** with external communities in a way that is **mutually beneficial**, even if each side benefits in a different way.

In Practice

Undertaken by university staff or students - teaching, research, joint projects, initiatives, university governance and management.



COMMUNITY

Broad Definition

Defined broadly as communities of place, identity or interest, including government, business, civil society, and general population.

Geographic Scope

Not limited to local community - spans local, regional, national, and international dimensions.

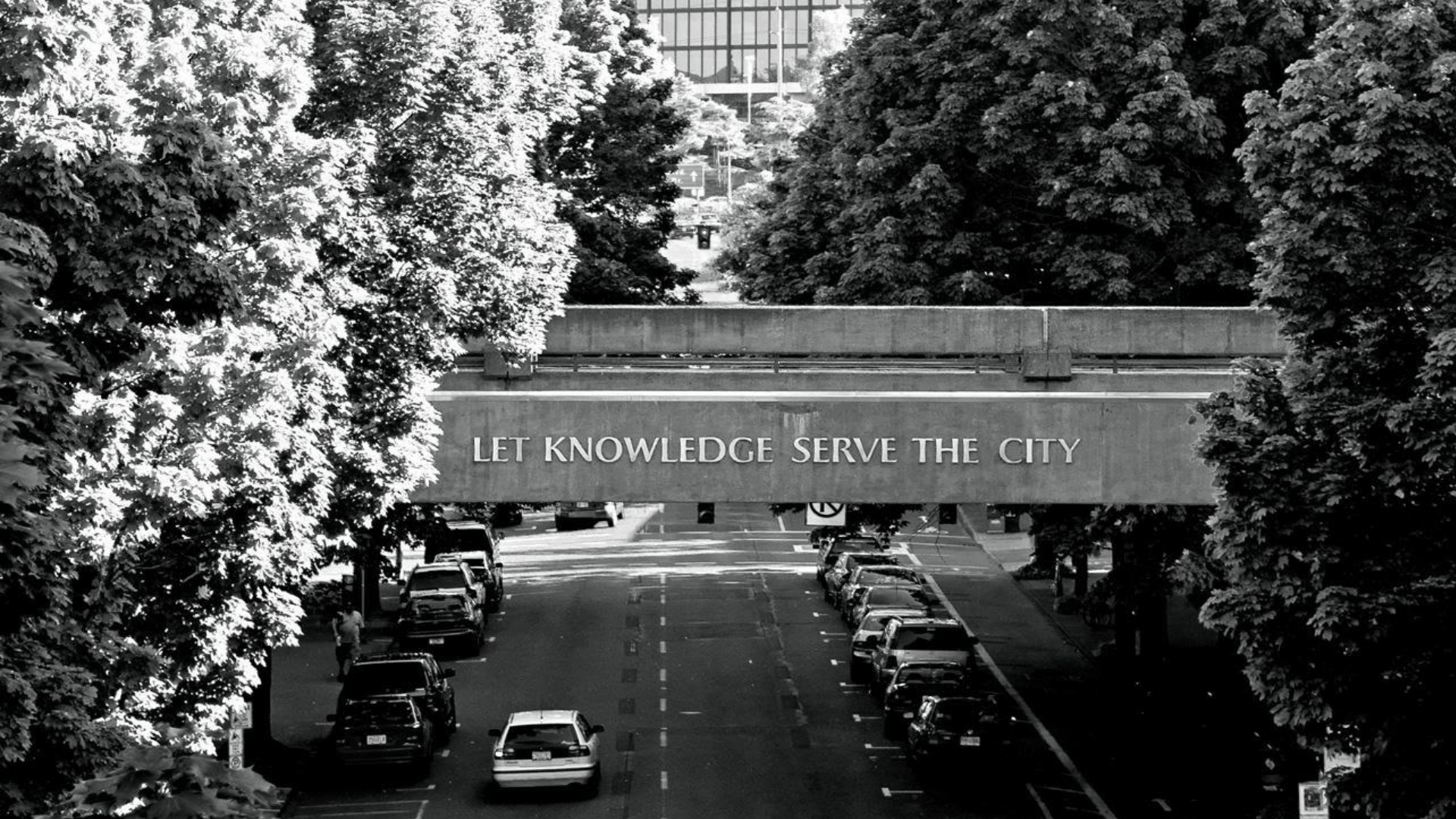


SOCIETAL NEEDS

Holistic Factors

Encompassing all factors that directly influence quality of life in society:

- Political factors
- Economic factors
- Cultural & Social factors
- Technological factors
- Environmental factors



LET KNOWLEDGE SERVE THE CITY

COMMUNITY-ENGAGEMENT IN HE - VALUE “DRIVERS”



**CONTEXT -
SPECIFIC**



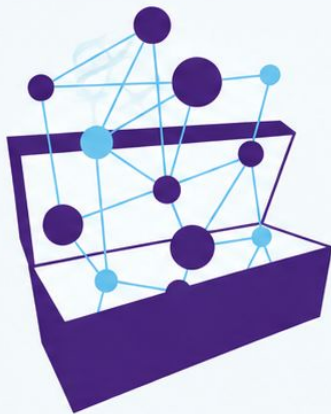
AUTHENTIC



MULTIFACETED



EMBEDDED



TEFCE Toolbox

**An Institutional Self-Reflection Framework
for Community Engagement in Higher Education**

*Thomas Farnell, Paul Benneworth, Bojana Ćulum Ilić,
Marco Seeber, Ninoslav Šćukanec Schmidt*

COMMUNITY-ENGAGEMENT IN HE - VALUE “DRIVERS”



CONTEXT SPECIFIC

Engagement depends on the institution, its socioeconomic and historical context, and its external communities.

There is no one-size-fits-all model.



AUTHENTIC

Moves from:

- **transactional** to **transformational**
- **exploitative** to **inclusive**
- **dissemination** to **co-creation**

producing mutual benefits for academic and community goals, fostering deep understanding and cooperation.



EMBEDDED

Moves from the periphery into the university's core mission:

- **Across Departments** - across a wide range of academic disciplines
- **Structural Support** - clear management policies & governance structures
- **Long-Term Viability** - financially and institutionally sustainable over time



MULTIFACETED

Reaches beyond highly structured partners to NGOs, schools, citizens and under-resourced groups, addressing diverse needs and grand challenges.

CE IN HE
VALUE
“DRIVERS”

“VIEW FROM THE ABOVE”



MULTI-LAYERED, DYNAMIC
AND BI-DIRECTIONAL
INTERACTIONS



SOCIETY AS AN ACTOR WITH GREAT
AGENCY IN NATIONAL INNOVATION
SYSTEM

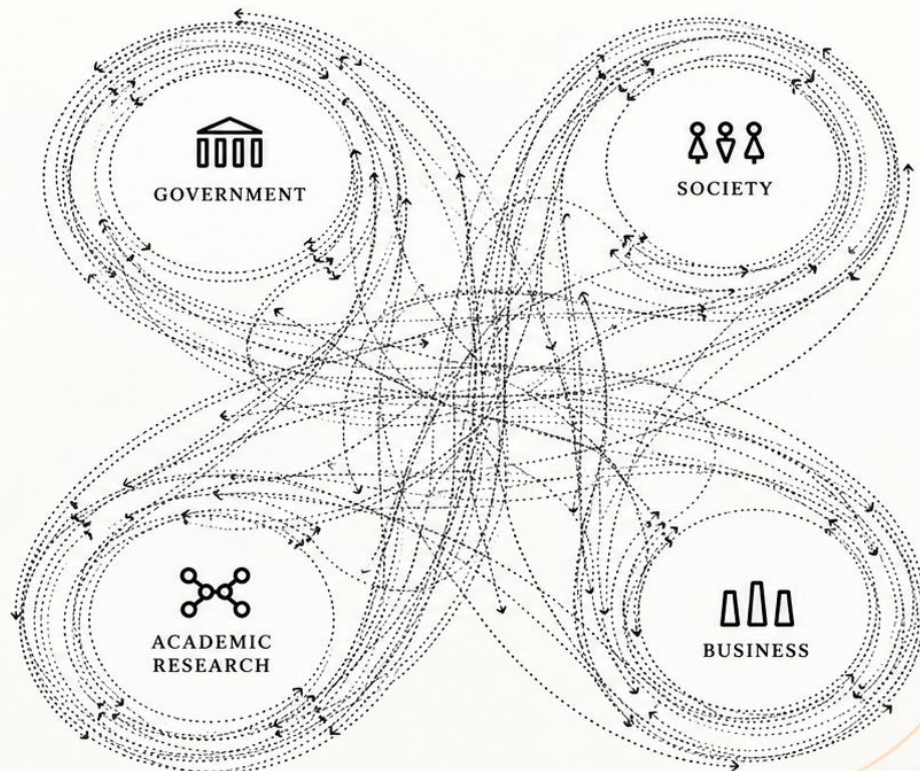


THE IMPORTANCE OF ACTIVELY
INTEGRATING THE PUBLIC INTO
INNOVATION PROJECTS



THE MOTIVES AND GOALS SOCIETAL
ACTORS HAVE FOR PARTICIPATING IN
QUADRUPLE HELIX INNOVATION
PROCESSES

The Quadruple Helix Model adapted by Fraunhofer (2016), originally developed by Carayannis and Campbell (2009)
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THE CONTEXT AND THE IMPORTANCE OF CE

*While society has problems,
university has departments...*



UNIVERSITY

TODAY - 300 mil
students worldwide

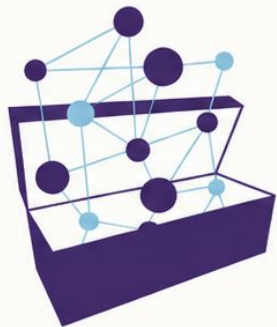


COMMUNITY

2030 - 415 mil students worldwide

ACADEMICS & RESEARCHERS & STUDENTS

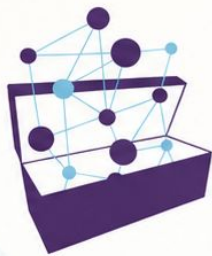
READINESS TO CHANGE & COLLABORATE IN CO-CREATING
SOCIALLY RESPONSIBLE EDUCATIONAL ENVIRONMENT



TEFCE Toolbox

**An Institutional Self-Reflection
Framework for Community
Engagement in Higher
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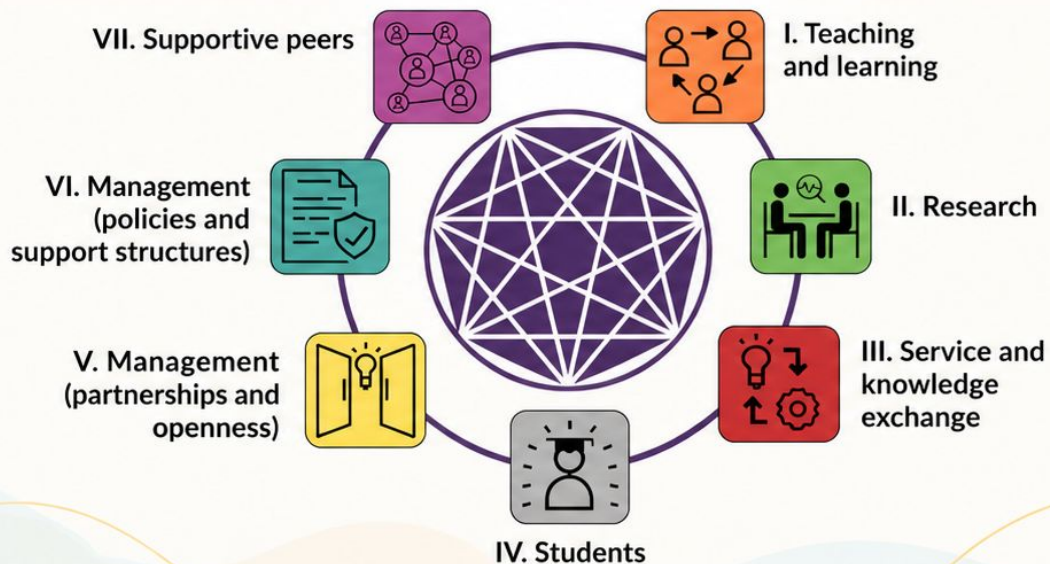


TEFCE Toolbox

An Institutional Self-Reflection
Framework for Community
Engagement in Higher
Education



THE TEFCE TOOLBOX IS ORGANISED AROUND 7
DIMENSIONS OF COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT:



UNIVERSITY - COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT: QUO VADIS?



One day Alice came to a fork in the road and saw a Cheshire cat in a tree. "Which road do I take?" She asked. "Where do you want to go?" was his response. "I don't know," Alice responded. "Then said the cat, "it doesn't matter."





Thank you!

მადლობა!