Anchored in Place

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Chapter 1

Approaches to the university, place and development

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Introduction

Since 2016, the debate about university transformation in South Africa has been dominated, or reinvigorated, by two separate but related student protest movements. #RhodesMustFall propagated the decolonisation of higher education in South Africa and received some global attention (Cloete 2016). The more widely supported and vigorously contested #FeesMustFall movement demanded free higher education and, although the focus was access and inequality in South Africa, it resonated with issues about university fees and funding in other African countries, Britain, the US and a number of Latin American countries.

The movements for decolonised and free higher education have been underpinned by demands for greater equity and democracy of access, as well as concerns around identity, but they have failed to address the development role of universities in any substantive way (Cloete et al. 2017). While some of the proponents of decolonisation have questioned the value of ‘Western’ science, this criticism has been largely an expression of concerns around the identities and rights of historically disadvantaged groups and no alternative development model has been advanced. Similarly, although the proponents of free higher education occasionally make reference to the quality of tertiary education, their demands are generally limited to seeking an end to tuition fees within the current system, although serious questions have been raised about the inefficiency of the undergraduate system, its relative disconnection from labour market demands, and its weakness in generating the innovation required to develop a knowledge economy (Badsha & Cloete 2011; Cloete et al. 2017). In this regard,
The concerns of the student movements mirror shortcomings in the wider national policy debate on the role of tertiary education.

In public debates and interviews, students generally seem to view universities as places of learning, set apart from the surrounding community, which are supposed to cater to their educational, accommodation, food and even entertainment needs. Accordingly, the decolonised ideal may be similar to that of Rhodes University or the University of Cape Town, but without the white, English-colonial heritage and the fees. However, such a transformed but disconnected model for the South African university fails to acknowledge the larger developmental issues faced by the society at large, as well as by individual higher education institutions. For example, Rhodes University is threatened by Grahamstown (Makana) municipality’s diminishing capacity to provide basic services such as electricity and water (Piliso 2014).

The university and development

Higher education institutions perform four basic functions, which form the foundation for their social contract (or ‘pact’) with society (Gornitzka et al. 2007). These functions, and their contradictions, have been discussed extensively in the academic literature: producing values and social legitimation; selecting the elite; training the labour force; and producing new knowledge (see Castells 2017; Cloete et al. 2015; Trow 1970). The last two functions – training the labour force (the education function) and producing new knowledge (the research function) – are crucial to development.

In the history of higher education, the close relationship and mutual reliance of the two main functions of education and research only emerged towards the end of the eighteenth century in Germany, which saw the development of a new type of university: the ‘research university’ (Watson 2010). The establishment of the new Berlin University in 1806 formed an important turning point because it incorporated both the scientific innovations developed at other German universities as well as a new state vision of the role of the university in society as expressed by Wilhelm von Humboldt (Nybom 2007, quoted in Tapper & Palfreyman 2010).

The popularity of the research-orientated university came from the success of the German universities which, by 1933, had trained and employed twice as many Nobel prize winners as the American and British universities combined (Watson 2010). After the Second World
War, the US university system assumed dominance. The American system may be seen as combining the classic German research university model with the so-called ‘Land-Grant’ model for higher education institutions, which focused on the sciences and their social application. Originally, the role of the Land-Grant universities, which were established from 1862, was to develop and apply knowledge to improve the productivity of US agriculture; to contribute to solving specific problems resulting from rapid urbanisation (Gornitzka & Maassen 2007); and to support the development of specific industries of regional or national importance. The Land-Grant universities were also mandated to provide extension services (especially in the area of agriculture) and greater access to higher education across the country (Douglass 2007).

In South Africa under apartheid, universities were never imagined simply as spatially and developmentally disconnected instruments of teaching and higher learning, nor as traditional, research-intensive universities. They were rather imagined, to an extent, as place-based agents of change and development. The Bantustan universities established in the former homelands in the 1970s were inserted into remote places in the country’s rural landscape to drive a perverse system of national, racialised, separate development. In the areas of South Africa that were reserved for the white population and where the more traditional English-speaking universities had modelled themselves on their British peers, apartheid state planners imagined that the main Afrikaans universities and technical colleges would combine their roles as institutions of higher learning with a more directly developmental function. For example, at the country’s most prestigious Afrikaans-language higher education institution, Stellenbosch University, the state promoted a strongly engaged role, both in building skills for the Afrikaner-led bureaucracy and social services and in fostering local economic development engagement in the wine industry and agriculture (to which the university has remained closely connected in the Western Cape). Meanwhile, the University of Pretoria evolved in a manner similar to that of a US Land-Grant institution, controlling extensive land which was used for agricultural research and experimentation. Higher education institutions also intervened directly in addressing urbanisation issues through involvement with the ‘poor white’ problem in the 1930s. Over time, the Afrikaans-speaking universities developed departments of social work and applied sociology that aimed to deal directly with the pathologies of white urbanisation by policing poverty and marginal whiteness
to correct social deviance. The institutions were given a special role in ensuring that poor whites developed domestic and social lives befitting their supposed racial status. They had to be seen to display respectable (ordentlike) standards of whiteness. The promotion of such standards was to be approached in a scientific manner. Afrikaans-speaking universities became involved in corrective regimes of racial modernism. Hygiene was studied and promoted. Domestic science and social psychology disciplines were deployed accordingly. In the 1970s and 1980s, similar expectations were projected onto the new Bantustan or homeland universities, which were perceived primarily as instruments for achieving racially and culturally appropriate forms of socio-economic development. These bodies were perceived as ethnic institutions with specific place-based responsibilities.

Meanwhile, the English-speaking universities resisted functional definitions of their roles under apartheid, although they too contributed to the development model of the time. For example, the discipline of social anthropology documented African culture, customs and law in ways that contributed to the indirect-rule and tribal-authority systems that underpinned the establishment of the homelands. Generally, however, these institutions sought to distance themselves from participating directly with the state and opposed overt engagement in studies promoting ‘development’, which was conceived as little more than a means to entrench apartheid. At this time, these bodies asserted an affinity with elite British universities as autonomous places of learning and research, fearing involvement with the state and insisting on their academic freedom. By standing against apartheid, they positioned themselves as universities promoting academic merit, separate from and superior to the ‘applied universities’ of the Afrikaners and Africans.

After the introduction of democracy in 1994, the British university rather than the Afrikaner, Land-Grant hybrid institution was favoured as a model for the higher education system, partly as a result of the self-image of English-speaking South African universities that had been promoted under (and against) apartheid, and partly because many African National Congress (ANC) exiles who returned to South Africa and entered government had themselves been schooled at traditional British institutions. Accordingly, the new government led by the ANC did not seek to promote the idea of regional universities with place-based research agendas and developmental roles and responsibilities within the two-tier system that it established, which merely distinguished between ‘traditional’ and ‘comprehensive’
institutions. Instead, the National Research Foundation and national science councils were charged with aligning the work of higher education institutions with national developmental priorities; guiding them on redressing skills imbalances that had been skewed along racial lines; and implementing incentives for the production of research to address national development problems.

The role of universities as city-builders and agents for regional development has been largely overlooked since 1994, despite the ANC’s ambitions to establish a developmental state. One of the central weaknesses of the post-apartheid state’s approach to higher education was its reluctance to create new universities, especially new African universities in large cities. The current crisis in higher education is to a large extent due to the massification of a system on a too narrow and colonial base to accommodate and absorb the needs and aspirations of a new generation of students, especially those from historically disadvantaged backgrounds.

When British servicemen returned from the war in 1945, the higher education system was dramatically expanded with new ‘red brick’ universities set up in secondary cities to absorb the growing demand for college education. A culture clash developed, similar to that which surrounded #FeesMustFall, between the old elite institutions and the kind of academics and graduates they produced, and the demands of the new system which catered primarily for products of the lower middle class and working class (see Bank 2018). By the 1960s, there were twice as many universities in Britain as there had been a decade earlier which meant that the qualities of the best institutions was maintained, while the new universities were able to absorb the majority of the new entrants into the system. This resulted in fundamental changes in the curriculum, especially in the social sciences, which now embraced the analysis of mass culture and the working class movement, and in the progressive politics in higher education in the 1960s. This did not happen in South Africa, where new waves of students were given access to a system which was poorly prepared, both culturally and institutionally, to absorb them. This created a political pressure cooker which exploded in 2014, especially in formerly elite institutions such as the University of Cape Town and Rhodes University that have struggled to deal with the new expectations of change. Maintaining academic standards while opening access thus not only created tension within universities, but kept higher education institutions narrowly focused on their teaching and learning functions. This is perhaps one reason why a more outwardly looking orientation has been so elusive within the higher education sector.
In recognition of this short-coming, the Department of Higher Education and Training instructed universities in the early 2000s to take the issue of ‘community engagement’ more seriously, but provided little clarity or funding, or incentives for institutions who embraced this mandate. As a result of the challenges universities were already dealing with, extending their missions too far beyond the university gates seemed unreasonable, especially without dedicated financial support. The ‘community engagement’ agenda was, therefore, largely driven by individual academics who were already reaching out before the community engagement directives were issued. Moreover, and in the context of the research that was commissioned to address development, it is also important to note that the challenges identified by the national councils were by and large generic, national ones – such as poverty or inequality. The remit for the investigations of such broad social pathologies rarely entailed forging direct, applied outcomes, or reflecting on the actual developmental impacts in different regions and places of the big research projects that were commissioned (Van Schalkwyk 2015).

Meanwhile, those opposing the ruling party’s higher education policies in the opposition Democratic Alliance have complained that the subsidies offered to reduce fees for poorer students are depleting an already over-stretched higher education budget and undermining the traditional university model. The party has suggested that this might be resolved by establishing a more differentiated system, ensuring the survival of the elite, traditional, historically white universities, while downgrading the other universities to teaching-only institutions. At the same time, protesting students have shown that they are mainly interested in gaining access to the benefits of an elite traditional university education to guarantee themselves entry to the middle class.

Against a background in which little has been done to directly connect universities to South African national and sub-national development since 1994, this book seeks to promote the idea of universities as agents of place-based growth and socio-cultural change. In thinking about place as the starting point for a greater developmental role for universities, this book recommends that higher education policy-makers and stakeholders focus on the neighbourhoods within which universities are located, and investigate how these may be uplifted through closer relationships between universities and local partners. Beyond South Africa the benefits of such a developmental model have been increasingly recognised as the limitations of the traditional role adopted by many universities have been identified.
In a recent review of the traditional university model in Asia, America and Europe, *An Avalanche is Coming: Higher education and the revolution ahead*, Barber et al. (2013) argued that a mismatch between the models for delivering higher education and actual requirements has led to a global crisis. They argued that high levels of unemployment, especially among the youth and university graduates, indicated that universities were not connecting effectively with their wider societies and economies. The authors also noted that the university ranking systems had assumed increasing importance as indicators of success, entrenching traditional models for delivering higher education. Most universities try to climb these rankings to attract more research funding and students with higher marks. As an increasing number of universities have chased improved rankings, the traditional (research) university format has become increasingly dominant at the expense of other models that may be more appropriate to the world’s diverse knowledge requirements and development needs. In order to reposition the university in society, Barber et al. (ibid.: 25, emphasis added) outlined a new role for these institutions in city and regional development:

There are two essential outputs of a classic university: research and degrees (though it should be pointed out that it is perfectly plausible to do one without the other). Though common perception is that universities are institutions of learning (which hence award degrees) first, and research institutions after – in reality the converse is true. Increasingly, teaching in a university is seen as a necessary, laborious task to generate revenues for research. … We can add a third university output which has become increasingly important in recent decades: the role of universities in enhancing the economic prospects of a city or region.

It is this latter issue which has now become a central focus of policy and planning in many parts of the world outside Africa. In Europe, the European Union has declared that universities have a vital role in the socio-economic development of their regions and should play a more proactive role in this regard. A report by the European Union articulates this role as follows (European Union Report 2011: 5):

… universities have the potential to play a pivotal role in the social and economic development of their regions. They are a critical ‘asset’ of the region: even more so for less favoured regions where
the private sector may be weak or relatively small, with low levels of research and development activity. Successful mobilisation of the resources of the university can have a disproportionately positive effect on the regional economies and achievement of comprehensive regional strategies.

This argument has been made widely and is prominent in debates about the role and function of universities in the global North and Asia. In 2009, Manuel Castells, the world-renowned Spanish sociologist, noted at a lecture he gave at the University of the Western Cape in South Africa (Castells 2017: 57):

If we take seriously the notion that we live in a global knowledge economy and in a society based on processing information – as universities primarily are – then the quality, effectiveness and relevance of the university system will be directly related to the ability of people, society and institutions to develop. In the context of a technological revolution and of a revolution in communication, the university becomes a central actor of scientific and technological change, but also of other dimensions: of the capacity to train a labour force adequate to the new conditions of production and management. Universities also become the critical source of the equalisation of chances and democratisation of society by making possible equal opportunities for people. This is not only a contribution to economic growth, it is a contribution to social equality or, at least, lesser inequality.

A 2017 report (BiGGAR Economics 2017) shows that the direct economic impact on the European economy of just the 23 members of the League of European Research Universities was about USD 117 billion and 1.3 million jobs. This is equivalent to 2.7% of the total gross value-added of the European economy and 2.2% of all European jobs. This links to another dimension of the contribution of universities to development which emerged during the late 1990s: their local or place-based impacts on development. In the discussion below, some of the literature associated with the place-based impact of universities at the neighbourhood, city and regional levels is reviewed. The focus in this literature and place-based policy interventions has mainly been on the capacity of universities to act as agents of development at the level of their urban neighbourhoods, which is the main focus of the essays in this volume. However, the role of universities in regional development is also considered.
CHAPTER 1 Approaches to the university, place and development

Approaches to university engagement and place-making

The South African New Growth Path Framework of 2011 envisages a reshaping of cities, together with the building of linkages across rural and urban landscapes, to address past patterns of fragmentation and separation. The growth plan also places great emphasis on developing an innovation-led service and knowledge economy that targets students and young professionals as the engine of future growth in cities. However, it does not really connect that agenda to a place-based set of development strategies. It continues to see higher education within a national framework of skills development redress. By contrast, industrial growth and development is understood in a much more place-specific context. The South African National Development Plan 2030, which was drafted in 2012, speaks of the general need to drive growth in new industrial sectors and manufacturing, decreasing the dependence on primary products, while at the same time creating incentives for new industrial hubs to emerge through place-based planning. The main instrument for this in the National Development Plan, and in spatial planning in general since the introduction of democracy in 1994, has been the idea of special industrial development zones which have been established in places such as Port Elizabeth and East London, where the state felt that place-based incentives could spark industrial economic growth (cf. Harrison et al. 2007). While the state has operated with an understanding of the place-based opportunities for industrial growth, there has been little comparable discussion or analysis of the innovation-led, knowledge-intensive sector within which universities are located. There has been, for example, no discussion of how the establishment of city-campus knowledge development zones located in and around existing or new university sites could foster employment opportunities and growth in the non-industrial sector.

By contrast, universities have become integral to much place-based economic planning in many parts of Asia, Europe and America. Over the past two decades, universities in Europe and America, in particular, have increasingly explored a ‘third mission’ beyond research and teaching which has revolved around how higher education institutions can engage their surrounding communities more effectively. A key part of this approach has been the idea that some universities were ‘mired’ in places such as declining inner cities and needed to become more socially engaged to improve the socio-economic prospects of their neighbourhoods and inner cities. More recently, a new vision of universities as place-makers has emerged, considering how they
can move beyond simply responding to ‘pathologies of place’ and can rather help to transform places socially and economically through local and regional partnerships. In both Europe and America, attention has increasingly centred on the role that individual place-based institutions, or clusters of local institutions, can play in remaking their neighbourhoods, towns or cities, although some policy-makers still look to a more regional or national role for place-making.

In the international development literature, there has been a growing recognition that universities have had an important role to play in urban and regional development for some time. The view that universities are somehow mired in places from which they cannot escape has increasingly given way to the idea of universities as agents for the transformation of place (cf. Perry 2011). As industrial job losses affected large urban manufacturing centres in the rust belts of Britain and the US from the 1960s, many inner-city precincts entered a downward spiral of poverty, crime and urban decay. In Britain, the creation of the metropolitan university model was partly in response to this inner-city decline. The aim of the new institutions was to help impoverished inner-city communities recover by combining opportunities for academic study with community outreach and engagement. In the US, the state attempted to strengthen the role of inner-city community colleges to slow down ghettoisation and inner-city decay. In both countries, universities were seen as enabling poor communities to rebuild capacity. Similarly, in South Africa, all universities were mandated to assist their surrounding communities after 2000.

Metropolitan universities in Britain and community colleges in America articulated a role for universities as socially engaged with local, poorer neighbourhoods, rather than merely serving the interests of national elites and the middle classes. In the US, the Land-Grant universities of the nineteenth century may be viewed as representing a response to the idea that higher education was becoming privatised and only accessible to wealthy, upper middle-class Americans. The Land-Grant system aimed to extend access to higher education to every corner of the country and to enable those with ability to study close to home at a low cost. The system also explicitly set out to modernise and transform the American countryside through the application of science, innovation and technology. In this regard, the metropolitan universities, as they were conceived in the 1980s, were not really meant to regenerate hollowed-out, depressed city centres, but rather to provide these precincts with social and educational services and
resources to help them to recover from poverty and adapt to social change. The metropolitan universities were meant to be responsive to, but not necessarily transformative of, place. This was partly because the conceptualisation of universities and place-based development had become functionally disconnected.

In recent years, the conceptualisation of the role and function of inner-city universities has changed significantly. In Britain in the 1990s, a new vision of these institutions as place-makers emerged as regional development became a priority under the Labour government of Prime Minister Tony Blair. From around 1997, universities were seen as potential drivers of a new knowledge economy in struggling regions, such as the Midlands and industrial north. The goal was now to link higher education institutions together across regions and cities by integrating their missions with those of private and public stakeholders in order to foster innovation. New institutional structures were created to facilitate partnerships among government, industrial and university partners. John Goddard and his colleagues at Newcastle University embraced the new approach in the north-east of the country, advocating a new ‘civic university’ model that allowed the university to lead place-based development. The underlying premises of this work were articulated in a number of position papers for the European Union (Goddard & Vallance 2011).

Some success was achieved in efforts to realign universities to have a greater impact on local development, but problems with the model also emerged. For example, many firms and universities reaped greater benefits by engaging with partners and peers globally rather than regionally. It was also found that the most intense competition between institutions was often regional, which impeded the potential for their cooperation. Many universities felt their reputations – which are used to attract students and resources – would be compromised or diluted through regional collaboration with adversaries. Competition among universities – as has also been the case in East London in the Eastern Cape in South Africa – can act as a major barrier to place-based development. But perhaps even more of an issue at British institutions has been the perception that enforced partnerships and redefined roles and responsibilities represent an assault on academic freedom and critical thinking. Many academics have opposed what they view as a new managerialism within modern British universities. Bill Readings (1996) was one of the first to suggest that the additional pressures on academics to adopt broader public engagement mandates were bound to leave universities ‘in ruins’ as they became ‘captured’
by other agendas, especially private interests. Outspoken critics, for example Frank Furedi (2004), have argued that privatisation and other external pressures have extinguished robust debate and academic rigour at many universities, leading to what Furedi calls their ‘infantilisation’ and impotence as progressive institutions of social change.

Notwithstanding such concerns, the new public engagement agenda has continued to gain support from governments in the global North, although the geographical scale has shifted from the region to the city since the global financial crisis of 2008. Policy-makers have increasingly argued that universities are more effective agents of change within their primary geographic locations – for example, their host cities. In Britain, the idea of ‘science cities’ has been promoted. Charles et al. (2014) argued that the scalar shift from region to city represented an attempt to overcome difficulties, such as a lack of cooperation, that had been experienced by regional bodies and coordinating institutions in earlier policy frameworks. Using the Greater Manchester and Newcastle metropolitan areas as case studies, they showed how local universities had become part of a new city-region policy articulation, but still concluded that ‘under post-crisis austerity, changing funding mechanisms and more pressures to compete, universities find it difficult to meet expectations’, and also that ‘institutions find themselves in a far more competitive environment with less incentive to collaborate’ (ibid.: 18). They suggested that insufficient attention had been given to the tight financial constraints within which many universities operate and how difficult it can be for institutions with little third-stream income to deviate from their primary teaching and learning mandates. Their evidence supports the view that stronger, better funded research institutions are usually better placed to have a substantial impact on place-making than weak institutions (ibid.).

In Asia and the Middle East, universities have also recently been a primary focus of city-level economic development strategies. In parts of the Middle East, the idea of the university city has become popular. The focus here is less on the integration of the university into the city than on the development of new world-class universities as relatively separate but connected parts of the wider city. The Dubai International Academic City is one example of this model. In China, where eight million university students graduate annually, there are concerns about the extent to which the traditional university model guarantees graduate employability in the labour market (Stapleton 2017). Regional urban centres in secondary cities in China are experimenting with connecting the higher education, private and
government sectors to stimulate economic growth. Following the radical massification of higher education in China in the late 1990s, more than 60 new ‘university towns’ were built in the country’s urban agglomerations by 2006. Previous studies have considered university towns primarily as an example of Chinese local entrepreneurialism. The role of universities in the development and transformation of place has not been discussed at all. The study by Ruopilla and Zhao (2017) emerges from a contrasting viewpoint, to show that even in the Chinese state-led context, universities are proactive, internally motivated institutions, accomplishing their developmental goals as actors negotiating with other stakeholders.

In the US, the conceptualisation of universities as agents of place-based transformation has been largely focused at the precinct or neighbourhood level since 2000. University-aligned precincts such as Silicon Valley, which is associated with Stanford University, or the new Boston Innovation District, which is associated with the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, have transformed and emerged as shining examples of the potential of the place-based agency of universities in promoting urban development (cf. McWilliams 2015). Based on these and other cases, including the former rust belt, steel city of Pittsburgh, urban geographer Richard Florida predicted the rise of a new creative class in university–city precincts that would positively transform urban America in the twenty-first century. He suggested that mayors and business leaders needed to focus on working closely with university chancellors and academics to transform the quality of inner-city neighbourhoods and, by extension, entire cities and regions. He predicted that if these players could combine forces and bring talent, technology and tolerance to bear, transformed cities would be created based on new economic forms (Florida 2002, 2017).

Florida’s predictions appear to have come true in Barcelona, Boston and San Francisco, where revitalised inner-city precincts have attracted talent and capital and led to the creation of new jobs. The question that remained however was: would the creative class model work across the board, including in lagging, bankrupt cities such as Detroit, Cleveland or St Louis, where capital had fled, and talent was leaving and staying away? Many argued that the Silicon Valley-style technology-driven urban regeneration model had little capacity for broad-based urban transformation because it was elitist and exclusionary. Scholars such as David Harvey (2005) declared city-campus precincts to be part of a ‘spatial fix’ promoted under rent-seeking neoliberal capitalism in which surplus capital was parked in
urban real estate ventures, creating gentrification. In 2017, Richard Florida acknowledged that rapid creative-class formation in a few American cities was creating what he described as a ‘new urban crisis’, in which certain neighbourhoods (where the creative class lived) had become inordinately rich, isolated and disconnected from the rest of the city. This ‘winner-takes-all geography’ allowed ‘superstar cities’, for example New York and San Francisco, to leave the rest far behind as they moved from strength to strength and, like a tornado, sucked in all the available talent from a wide geographic region. Florida concluded that the creative class had become entrenched in certain urban enclaves instead of spearheading a relatively even spread of technology-led economic progress across urban America that would disperse economic benefits more democratically, as he had initially predicted in 2002.

Critical theory, decolonisation and the place-based agenda

But the kinds of negative outcomes described by Florida are not inevitable and the potential for perverse spatial and economic effects in city campus neighbourhoods should be weighed against the benefits that engagement in the new knowledge economy can bring. Small cities such as East London or Buffalo City in the Eastern Cape will never compete with New York or Barcelona, or even Cape Town or Johannesburg, in the field of technology (or higher education specialisation). However, this does not mean that they cannot utilise their higher education sectors more effectively to create new opportunities and services that can supplement existing economic sectors and development strategies. Indeed, despite the arguments of Harvey (2005) and Florida’s (2017) warnings, there is plenty of evidence from Europe, Asia and America to suggest that dynamic campus-city partnerships and connections at the local level can transform growth and create substantial opportunities in lagging former industrial cities. In the US, leading universities including the University of Pennsylvania, Yale and the University of Chicago have all embarked on successful place-based urban regeneration strategies and projects in lagging cities. These universities, which initially acted out of self-interest to stop their campus neighbourhoods from further decline, ended up transforming Philadelphia, New Haven and Chicago, respectively, for the better. One recent complaint in the former industrial city of New Haven in Connecticut is that Yale University has become too powerful in the city and that ordinary citizens need to once again realign ‘town
and gown’ (Baldwin 2017). In cities such as Detroit, with historically weak universities and limited financial support from alumni, such an imbalance is less likely to occur.

The evidence also shows that inclusive development can often be undermined when speculative real estate capital follows the creative class into university–city precincts to drive up property prices beyond locally affordable levels, creating gentrification and pushing students and former residents out. However, this is not an inevitable outcome of creativity and innovation, nor is it necessarily in the interests of those who are creating the new opportunities. It is rather the outcome of poor public management and regulation in these areas. Gentrification might be in the interest of wealthy university faculty members and the owners of upwardly mobile technology companies around the higher education institution, but it is not in the interest of students, nor in the interest of struggling graduates and would-be entrepreneurs. The perverse economic, spatial and social outcomes of creative-class formation in American cities are partly the result of their urban policy frameworks rather than an inevitable outcome of economic growth. With effective public policies, the benefits of inner-city urban growth are not so easily lost or distorted. The evidence suggests that dynamic university–city relations in ordinary cities serve as powerful mechanisms for creating new jobs and economic activity, if they are managed responsibly and combined with other development strategies, including re-industrialisation or tourism development.

The evidence from the US also suggests that public sector entities, for example hospitals and government departments, can play a vital role as ‘anchors’, often providing seed money and leveraging their resources to promote development in cases where the private sector is initially reluctant to invest. It has been shown that partnerships between public and private sector concerns can foster dynamic growth and reap relatively great socio-economic benefits in the declining inner-city neighbourhoods of legacy, namely industrial urban centres. In order to avoid the production of greater inequality and exclusion, it is important to view universities as aspects of, rather than separate from, urban development. So instead of starting with the university, which then enters the neighbourhood through various acts of enlightened self-interest, and then moving towards a more balanced social contract with partners in the city, such as with the methodologies of many anchor strategies, some critical urbanists suggest that the place should precede the university. In his work on the new urban university, Jean-Paul Addie (2017) proposes a critical urban perspective for
understanding the role of universities in cities. He suggests starting with an understanding of the contradictions, inequalities and challenges of urban development to which universities should then respond in a holistic manner. Drawing on the work of the French sociologist Henri Lefebvre, Addie highlights three key roles for the university in urban society: mediation, centrality and difference. In his view, the university should, first, internalise its role as a mediator between abstract theory and social practise. It should accordingly forge strategies that connect the abstract to the concrete, and the structural to the experiential, bearing in mind the complex nature of the city and its diverse citizenry. He suggests that the new urban university should also engage the contradiction between being itself a ‘monumental institution’ in the city which is inscribed with certain class and social interests, and the social struggles for emancipation in the wider urban setting which often challenge the historical role of local higher education institutions as agents of class interest. Finally, Addie argues that the university must critically engage with concepts of spatial and intellectual centrality – including its own – by opening itself to the locations and experiences of marginal urban communities. He further contends that critical urbanists should struggle against their own marginality in the debate about urban transformation by being more proactive and engaged in the practical outcomes of university development efforts on the ground.

Addie’s framework serves as a useful corrective to more instrumental perspectives on the developmental role of the university in the context of neoliberal capitalism. The new urban university should be playing a central role in imagining and facilitating urban and regional development outcomes, which are more inclusive than those offered by the model of the erstwhile colonial, research-intensive traditional university, as well as those promised by the university as a merely entrepreneurial agent. However, it is also important to acknowledge the historical specificities of different cities and what universities may actually be able to achieve in meeting their development challenges. Urban society will continue for the foreseeable future to be stratified by class, knowledge and the ability of citizens to participate. While Addie stresses a normative framework for the reconstruction of the role of the urban university, Neil Brenner and other critical urbanists promote the importance of detailed historical analysis that exposes the forms of power, exclusion, injustice and inequality underpinning capitalist urban social formations and the ‘creative destruction’ of post-Fordist capitalism that has led to rust-belt cities (Bank 2018; Brenner 2009: 199).
In thinking about the current crisis in higher education in South Africa, one key issue that has not received adequate attention in the international literature is the role of neighbourhoods in perpetuating unequal access to education in divided societies, which have long histories of racially driven and place-based educational planning. For example, in South Africa, poor students in the run-down, former Ciskei town of Alice, or in a decaying city centre, have relatively little access to the kinds of neighbourhood resources and services enjoyed by students from relatively wealthy families attending the University of Cape Town and living in the upmarket suburb of Rondebosch. Poorer black students find themselves excluded from university neighbourhoods that have been gentrified and privatised, and instead are often cramped into over-priced rooms let by unscrupulous landlords in relatively deprived inner-city neighbourhoods that lack adequate facilities and services. Here, they are often unable to access safe public spaces, affordable cafes or food shops, necessary communication services (such as high-speed internet and/or free mobile data), appropriate sports and cultural facilities, and relevant academic-related work opportunities. Where such services and facilities are available, they are generally privatised, driving up the cost of higher education for those least able to afford it. Unregulated partnerships between universities and private real estate interests have at times exacerbated the exploitation of the housing needs of disadvantaged students. Meanwhile, the unaffordability of student life has compounded the difficulties faced in paying fees and has been an important factor in the high drop-out rates among poorer university students.

Accommodation protests at many South African universities have been driven by the issue of inequitable access to neighbourhoods; this matters not only in terms of universities’ capacity to connect to the wider city and region where economic opportunities exist, but also as places where student life is socially reproduced. In this regard, greater place-based sensitivity in higher education planning and development would support racial redress within the higher education system, and foster greater engagement by higher education institutions in broader socio-economic development. Unlike many parts of the global North and Asia, South Africa lacks a policy framework to deal with the relationship between higher education and place-based development (see Samuel Fongwa in this volume). How should these relationships be structured? Who should be involved and with what outcomes in mind? Few efforts have been made to answer such questions, although most South African universities have been engaging with their
neighbourhoods in the absence of a clear set of government policies to structure these interactions. The main function of this book is to begin to explore these issues, consider what some of these relationships look like on the ground, and study how they are evolving within the current policy vacuum. There are two main parts to the book. The first interrogates these relationships internationally and in a range of South African cities. The second focuses on the University of Fort Hare at the time of its centenary and its changing relationship to place as a ‘restructured’, traditional, historically black university in South Africa.

In South Africa, the current model for university development since apartheid has moved away from earlier concerns with place-based development, which were seen as pathological and divisive under apartheid. The lesson from history here was that engagements with place brought about a dangerous parochialism and opened the door for state capture, which the English-speaking white universities had fought so hard to avoid in their defence of academic freedom. The rise and dominance of the many global university ranking systems at a time when South Africa re-entered the global community meant that the research-intensive, traditional university became the national ideal. It is a model which has now been destabilised by five years of political turmoil and calls for decolonisation, where the state is called on to restructure the sector in a way that will address the colonial legacy of a society constructed on successive models of racial modernism. Student unrest, the demoralisation of staff and the calls for immediate racial redress and rapid Africanisation have already pushed some leading traditional universities down on the global ranking charts. The higher education spokesperson for the official opposition (the Democratic Alliance), Belinda Bozzoli (2018), has responded by arguing that there is an urgent need for a more differentiated system in which the research-intensive, historically white universities are separated and supported in order to retain their research excellence, while other universities, such as Fort Hare, would become primarily teaching institutions enabling wider access to the higher education system. Her views are strongly supported by former University of the Free State vice-chancellor, Jonathan Jansen, who has provided a very pessimistic outlook for higher education in his most recent book on the topic, *As by Fire: The end of the South African university* (2017).

If the South African university is to survive and thrive, it needs to be ‘pondered anew’. The kind of model that Bozzoli proposes is problematic in South Africa because it would entrench the systemic inequalities in the system to which the student protests have been
opposed. The nub of the problem lies in how the roles and functions of higher education institutions in South Africa are conceptualised at present and, we would argue, their level of disconnection at present from the urgent place-based development challenges of the society at large. One answer might be for universities to start to address decolonisation and development simultaneously in line with the idea of a developmental state. The recognition of sub-national place-based issues and challenges urgently needs to penetrate the imagination of the universities and their place-based partners in more nuanced and productive ways, where meaningful roles are found in policy for cities, regions and even neighbourhoods. We are still politically very far from that sort of imagination within the sector as a whole and, hence, even beginning to engage with some of the models and approaches discussed above.

But let us not simply assume that a university that is embedded in place will necessarily be ‘captured’ by private capital and neoliberal agendas, or a parochial irrelevance devoid of local and global connections. The way that universities relate to place can be varied and diverse, despite some of the tendencies in high-end capital-intensive precincts in the global North. The one lesson we do learn from this literature is that without some form of regulation or social contract with the cities/towns as communities in which universities operate, the negative tendencies of the neoliberal model for city-campus development is difficult to avoid. In South Africa, and despite the absence of any policy framework to think about the place-based agency of universities, it is already evident that many of the country’s institutions, especially those in large cities, are proceeding to extend their influence and ambitions within and beyond their surrounding neighbourhoods. In some cases, opportunities are being seized by capital, such as in the area of student accommodation where gentrification is evident, but in others it is the university which is leading the charge with interventions (e.g. the University of Witwatersrand’s new information technology hub in Braamfontein or their decisive public health interventions in Hillbrow). The aim of this volume is to draw attention to some of these processes in motion as they are unfolding, while highlighting the opportunities and barriers that exist for an enlarged place-based role for universities in cities and small towns.

This volume was initiated through a grant made to the University of Fort Hare by the Ford Foundation in 2015 to explore the re-imagination of that institution at the time of its centenary. Quite a
number of the chapters focus on the Eastern Cape as a region and the University of Fort Hare in particular. So, there is a regional focus and a particular institutional focus in the volume. But the volume also includes a number of chapters on universities such as the University of Witwatersrand, the University of Pretoria and Nelson Mandela University, as well as comparative perspectives and analyses of developments in other parts of the world, especially the US rust belt – a comparative focus favoured by the Ford Foundation. The volume is really intended as a starting point for a conversation about universities and place-making that tries primarily to capture current experience, rather than drive new theoretical debates on the plethora of issues involved. It should be read and reviewed in that context. It should also be noted that many of the contributors are or have worked within and with university planners at the universities covered and, therefore, bring a set of engaged perspectives from the coal-face.

References


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