



**UNIVERSITIES
SOUTH AFRICA**

UNIVERSITIES AS ANCHOR INSTITUTIONS

**HE for diversity, social inclusion and community
a democratic imperative**

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LUMSA University
Rome

Since we are in Rome

INFINITESIMALS – Amir Alexander

“On August 10, 1632, five men in flowing black robes convened in a somber Roman palazzo to pass judgment on a deceptively simple proposition: that a continuous line is composed of distinct and infinitely tiny parts. With the stroke of a pen the Jesuit fathers banned the doctrine of infinitesimals, announcing that it could never be taught or even mentioned. The concept was deemed dangerous and subversive, a threat to the belief that the world was an orderly place, governed by a strict and unchanging set of rules. If infinitesimals were ever accepted, the Jesuits feared, the entire world would be plunged into chaos.”

Scientific American



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Student Activism 2015-2017

#RhodesMustFall

#FeesMustFall

Free education
Decolonised education



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What we see around us....

erosion of democracy

a slide towards anti-intellectualism

escalation of political violence

ease with which we construct 'the other'

growing levels of inequality

growing levels of violent poverty

global migrations

a number of unprecedented global challenges

Freezing Borderlands



Universities are Social Institutions

involved in the production, application and dissemination of knowledge

they exist within contexts which are simultaneously intensely local and intensely global

they are complex social spaces

they intersect with other social spaces



purposes of higher education

creating active citizens
meeting the needs of the economy
producing new knowledge
generating social mobility
nation building

building new cohorts of intellectuals

critical thinking
systemic thinking
problem solving
working in diverse teams
ethical reasoning
effective communicating
innovating



challenges

underfunding and its impact on teaching and research

legitimacy deficit

deeply fractured schooling system

creating sustainable meshes between

society and universities

students and universities

staff and universities

students and curriculum

complexity



at institutional level – through deliberate design

a strong social justice agenda – as a rubric for design

access and success

research and innovation for development

graduate employability/entrepreneurialism

intellectual, social and emotional student development

building new communities of intellectuals

new communities of servant leaders



raison d'être of the S African university?

Like universities everywhere they produce public and private goods

- a. produce and disseminate knowledge of the context in which they are located
- b. directly address the sociopolitical and economic challenges
- c. embed this knowledge in the global knowledge system

This requires

**engagement
partnerships**



ENGAGEMENT

dynamic interfaces and porous boundaries

advisory bodies

work integrated learning – theory and praxis

anchor institutions

Mode 2 Knowledge Enterprise



UNIVERSITIES AS ANCHOR INSTITUTIONS

- They have a permanent physical footprint
- They share a sociocultural history with the context
- Their economies are large
- They procure goods and services
- They are large employers
- They feed graduates and R&D into local businesses
- They are centres of culture, learning and innovation with significant human resources?



THEN THE UNIVERSITY MUST.....

see the city/community as a site of

- of engaged research, innovation, teaching
- that defines the intensely local
- of long-term engagement

with the express purpose of bringing R&D, Innovation and Teaching to bear on improving the quality of life in the city.



SOME EXAMPLES

MILE in Durban

MIDI in Pietermaritzburg

GCRO in Johannesburg



SOME CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

Focus on demand side

Engagement as an engine of transformation –
as a way to reshape the knowledge project
as a way to re-envision the structure of the university
as a way to re-envision the relationship between the
university and its communities
as a way to produce new generations of social
activists, engaged intellectuals and





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THANK YOU