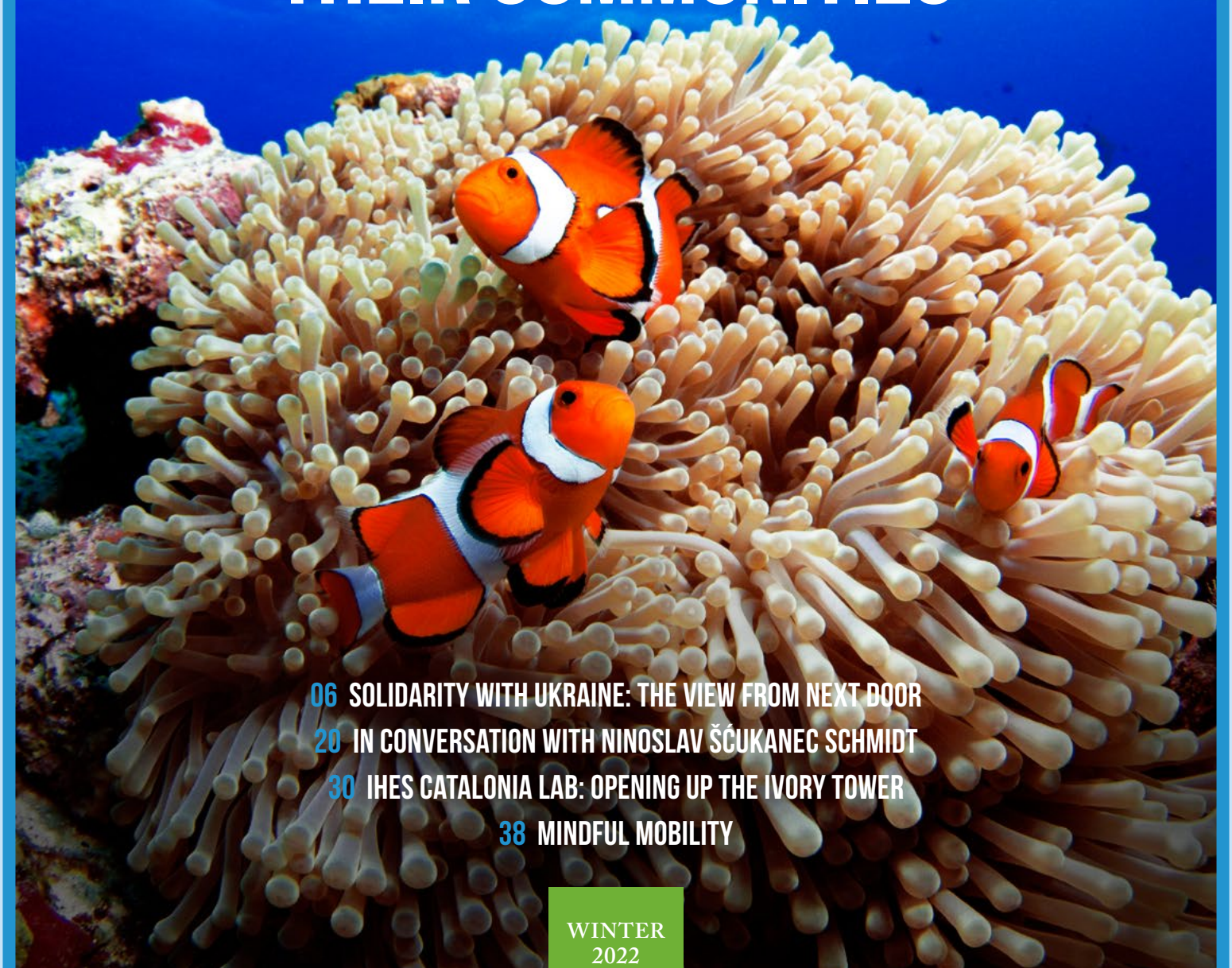
EAIE

FORUM

MEMBER MAGAZINE

Discussing international education

UNIVERSITIES AND THEIR COMMUNITIES



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EDITORIAL

The connections between higher education institutions and their communities are frequently discussed – what place is there for civic engagement in institutional strategy? How connected to the local community is the research undertaken by academic staff? How does an institution connect with prospective students and their families in a meaningful way?

In the context of international education, these questions turn to definitions of community which extend beyond local geography and national belonging – how does a university engage meaningfully with its alumni who live abroad? What value is placed on the global networks of higher education institutions to which a university belongs? And, importantly, how do the international activities of an institution inform and enrich approaches to community engagement at home?

At a time when the global pandemic has forced us to live locally, re-engaging with our local communities in the face of strict lockdowns in certain countries and discouraged (or even prevented) from international travel through public health directives, is it perhaps the case that many in our society have turned their backs on the world beyond their immediate locality? Increasing concerns about climate change are also discouraging many from air travel post-pandemic. As such, how will our institutions continue to nurture their community ties abroad in the face of possible disengagement at home?

These questions are put under the microscope in the Winter 2022 issue of *Forum*, which presents perspectives from across Europe and further afield on the intersections between higher education institutions and their multiple communities. Pressingly, in the face of ongoing military aggression by Russia against Ukraine, the international education community worldwide has sought to express solidarity with members of its community in Ukraine in meaningful and tangible ways, and I'm delighted that the two initial contributions to this issue address key perspectives on community engagement in this context. The EAIE's vision is for an equitable world in which international education connects diverse perspectives and fosters greater understanding. As such, there is no more contradictory act to the ethos of international educators than war between nations.

Other articles selected for this issue of *Forum* reflect on global citizenship and mobility, and their connections to community engagement locally. Further contributions reflect on the local democratic mission of higher education in Europe and the use of the UN Sustainable Development Goals in community engagement.

I am delighted that Ninoslav Šćukanec Schmidt, Executive Director and Founder of the Institute for the Development of Education in Croatia, agreed to be interviewed for this issue. Ninoslav has significant expertise in the social dimension of higher education, and his organisation has spearheaded two EU-funded projects designed to build the capacities of universities, policymakers and stakeholders in Europe for mainstreaming community engagement in higher education. Reflecting on seven dimensions of community engagement in higher education, Ninoslav recognises that internationalisation can be ingrained in each of these dimensions. Furthermore, he highlights the ways

in which community engagement is emerging as a policy priority in higher education in Europe.

It is certain that internationalisation has the potential to play a transformative role in society and in the various communities of higher education institutions. What is less clear still is how higher education itself conceives of the connections between community engagement and international education. Hopefully the development of new frameworks and policies at a European level will support clearer pathways to action worldwide.

In closing, I am reminded that the EAIE itself is a community and would like to thank the members of the 15 EAIE Expert Communities for their guidance and support to the work of the Publications Committee. A warm debt of gratitude also to Ragnhild Solvi Berg who joined me in reviewing submissions for this issue.

I hope that you enjoy reading this edition of *Forum*.

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SOLIDARITY WITH UKRAINE

THE VIEW FROM NEXT DOOR

Illustration: Shutterstock

Nothing underscores the need for solutions to global problems quite like violent conflict. When war broke out in neighbouring Ukraine, Polish universities and the societies around them wasted no time springing into action. At the same time that higher education institutions were rapidly implementing top-down programmes and policies to assist fleeing students and scholars, Polish communities were organising bottom-up initiatives to convert empathy into action.

Polish universities and their communities, like wider Polish society, were struck by feelings of terror and uncertainty when the conflict broke out. Here in Poland, next door to the conflict, we reacted by showing strong solidarity with Ukrainians, partly by following standard procedures for times of crisis but also by launching unprecedented support initiatives at the grassroots level, involving students, academic staff, administrative staff and other employees of higher education institutions in Poland.

UNIVERSITY-LED INITIATIVES

One of the first initiatives was the establishment of 'Crisis Staff for Ukraine' at the University of Warsaw. This is a cross-university body comprising representatives of different units and from all levels, from rector to student, bringing together a variety of expertise. It was acknowledged that extraordinary action must be taken and that the decision-making process must be particularly fast and effective. Cooperation with external stakeholders was part of this initiative, as it was necessary to stay in contact with ministries, embassies, non-governmental organisations and higher education institutions in Ukraine, as well as international partners, networks and societies. At the same time, representatives of different departments launched an initiative to ensure effective communication and cooperation within the university community. All the action plans, needs analyses and communication activities had to be updated and revised on a regular basis, as required by this specific, dynamic crisis situation.

Thanks to these initiatives and close cooperation between Polish universities and external stakeholders, it was possible for students, researchers, academics and administrative staff who were fleeing Ukraine to access a wide range of services and assistance: admission during the semester, flexible and simplified administrative procedures, exemption from registration and tuition fees, financial support, free legal services, free psychological support, translation services and language courses.

To address the needs of Ukrainian students and researchers, special short-term programmes have been developed with the aim of enabling Ukrainians to continue to research or study abroad during the war and then, when the situation allows, to return to their home country and complete their education there. A good example is the study visits programme for Ukrainian students and doctoral candidates at the University of Warsaw, funded by the national Excellence Initiative.

GRASSROOTS EFFORTS

Alongside those activities organised by universities or nationally, student organisations and individual academic community members have shown their empathy and been proactive in organising fundraising and other initiatives aimed at meeting the needs of Ukrainians – not only Ukrainian students and university employees, but also their families and other refugees. These initiatives have included collecting goods, finding accommodation and cooperating with volunteer services, non-governmental organisations and different Ukrainian institutions.

It has been common during the crisis for individuals to host Ukrainian refugees at their homes and provide them with shelter, food, clothing and assistance with legal and administrative matters, health issues and the search for jobs. Ukrainians have been treated as family by people they had never met before. Some individuals took the effort to travel to the Polish-Ukrainian border and started their help for refugees as soon as they entered the country, assisting them with formalities, travel, accommodation and finances. Both the number of Ukrainian refugees and the cordial engagement of Polish society have reached an unprecedented scale.

A VIRTUOUS CYCLE

In the case of an armed conflict like the war in Ukraine, cooperation between universities and external organisations is both necessary and complicated. On the one hand, refugees need legal, financial and social support, in which universities do not interfere (or only in a specific context); on the other hand, however, higher education institutions and their communities can be very important in helping refugees to adapt to a new environment. Even if refugees are not going to stay in their host country, it is vital that they can continue their education, learn the language and culture and learn about the hosting society. They can acquire valuable competences and skills to enter the job market and they can build their cultural and social capital, which will allow them to successfully function both in their home country and abroad, in an international community.

More than five million people have fled Ukraine to Poland since the war began on 24 February 2022, although many have since returned to their home country. Throughout this ongoing tragedy, universities and their communities have shown the power of solidarity and empathy in helping refugees to rebuild their lives, whether as students, researchers or simply members of society. The combination of grassroots initiatives and university-led programmes in Poland is a shining example of the potential positive feedback loops that can emerge when higher education institutions and the societies around them commit to a common goal.

— ANNA SADECKA

NONVIOLENT COMMUNICATION

HEALING OUR GLOBAL TRAUMAS

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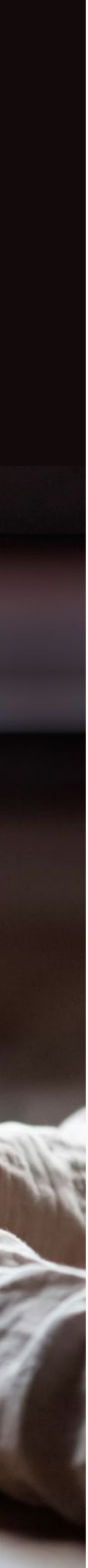

Despite our rapidly globalising society, wars of aggression like the one in Ukraine show that we still have a long way to go in establishing a true sense of shared humanity across the globe. But despite the many mounting challenges we face, higher education institutions are uniquely positioned to cultivate global citizenship in the often traumatised societies that surround them – and nonviolent communication can be a powerful tool for doing so.

Russia's ongoing invasion of my home country Ukraine has urged me to ponder on the topic of global citizenship. 'Global citizenship' is the umbrella term for social, political, environmental and economic actions of globally-minded individuals and communities on a worldwide scale. According to this notion, individuals are members of multiple, diverse, local and non-local networks, rather than single actors affecting isolated societies. However, what happens to global citizenship when these individuals are traumatised, and how can we go about fostering global citizenship in a world rife with trauma?

Definitions of global citizenship frequently encompass a wide array of features, including but not limited to the central role of individuals (as opposed to states) in comprising global civil society, recognition of the interconnectedness of all humans across cultures, an awareness of one's identity as transcending political or geographic boundaries, and a sense of social responsibility. Michelle Bachelet, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, considers global citizenship to be a vital force. She underlines the significance of global citizenship in connection with such renowned events as the formation of the United Nations, the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the adoption of the Sustainable Development Goals. The foundation for today's global citizenship is the recognition of the inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family.[1] Nevertheless, the situation in Ukraine and other countries experiencing similar circumstances shows that much progress remains to be made in cultivating true global citizenship across the world.

TRAUMATISED SOCIETIES

The main locus for the expression of global citizenship is the societies in which we live, often traumatised collectives which in turn reproduce the same traumas experienced by individuals. Our societies are made up of the individuals who live within them; 'society' is the outside world which mirrors the inner world of the human beings who comprise it. The condition of the individual psyche determines how we live together, and thus many traumatised humans together create a traumatised and traumatising society.

Traumatic experience is both individual and collective: everyone who lived through the Soviet Union has a collective trauma. Once again today, Ukrainians are undergoing a collective trauma at the hands of the Russian government, in the form of its unjustified

'Society' is the outside world which mirrors the inner world of the human beings who comprise it

invasion and the death and displacement caused by it. If the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the Sustainable Development Goals mark high points in the development of global citizenship, then surely the Russian invasion and other such wars of aggression make it clear that we have not yet succeeded in cultivating a true sense of connection across the globe.

But if nations are both the locus of citizenship and vectors for collective trauma, as is the case

currently in Ukraine and many other traumatised societies across the world, then what institutional options remain for instilling global citizenship?

INSTITUTIONALISING GLOBAL CITIZENSHIP

All of our societal institutions are made up of people like us. Simply existing and participating in human society can be traumatising,[2] and higher education institutions are no exception. However, while we can hardly point to one single identifiable institutional framework for implementing global citizenship, higher education is one context that particularly lends itself to cultivating globally-minded individuals and communities.

One of the acknowledged roles of higher education worldwide is to facilitate students' development of indispensable competencies for global citizenship, leading to graduates who will take an active role in their communities and work with others to make our planet more peaceful, sustainable and fairer. This brings us to the issue of values: human societies have different values which do not always coincide with the ideals of global citizenship. To transcend these differences, curricula need to put an emphasis on the core values that should be included in global citizenship education, namely "openness to and interest in the world as a whole and commitment to the process values of dialogic and nonviolent communication, coupled with the acceptance of the universal status of all human beings and a sense of trans-society responsibility for what happens in the world".[3] But how can higher education curricula instil such values?

NONVIOLENT COMMUNICATION AS TRAUMA PREVENTION

Under this rubric, nonviolent communication (NVC) deserves special attention, both as a philosophical approach and as an academic subject in its own right, as practising it amounts to a significant step in the direction of global citizenship. NVC is a strategy which contributes to compassionate communication, thereby helping us to connect with one another and, consequently, avoid inflicting traumas on fellow humans near and far. The four main components of NVC are observations, feelings, needs and requests, which taken together can help us to honestly express ourselves and demonstrate empathetic acceptance. Lack of awareness of one's responsibility for one's own deeds, thoughts, feelings is an all too human pitfall, thus global citizenship in higher education institutions can be facilitated by the implementation of nonviolent communication as its pivotal prerequisite.

Nonviolent communication helps us to connect with one another and, consequently, avoid inflicting traumas on fellow humans near and far

Why does nonviolent communication weigh so heavily in instilling global citizenship? The answer lies in its power to prevent those who use it from traumatising or being traumatised by others. When we employ its methods, we start to express ourselves differently: we acquire the ability to hear others' deep needs and gain awareness of our own needs, and as a result, human relationships are perceived in a new light. The emphasis is laid on deep listening to ourselves and others, which in turn enables respect, attention, empathy and generosity.

Moreover, NVC should be utilised not only as a tool for interacting among students and teachers in a university environment or teaching academic courses, but also as a formal curricular course in its own right. Such a course should be facilitated by academic mentors who can provide students with an exhaustive, rather than fragmentary, understanding of it.

In a world full of trauma, nonviolent communication can help us all better attend to our own needs and those of others, and in doing so take a significant step towards becoming true global citizens. The current conflict in Ukraine – and other ongoing violent conflicts across the world – won't be solved by a university lecture on nonviolent communication, but adopting it as our common practice may help us prevent the next conflict while nursing the wounds of this one. While it is true that human societies always have been and always will be full of challenges to be overcome, higher education is uniquely positioned within those societies to plant the seed of empathy and cultivate global citizenship in the young men and women who will lead the societies of tomorrow.

— ANTONINA BULYNA

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EASTERN EUROPE AND CENTRAL ASIA

SOCIETIES IN TRANSITION

The former Soviet sphere has seen decades of gradual transition, with the countries that comprise the region taking distinct paths towards development. For the group of countries whose systems still closely resemble their former socialist structures, the invasion of Ukraine has served as an impetus to speed up reforms in higher education and a number of other sectors. As this transition continues and accelerates, universities must rethink the way they engage with stakeholders both in their local communities and further afield. ▸

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After the fall of the socialist system in the Soviet Union and the countries of the Eastern Bloc from 1989 to 1993, new states began to chart their path into a new world. Some of them adopted a course of rapid 'Westernisation' and democratisation (*eg* the Czech Republic, Poland, Slovakia, Slovenia, Croatia, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania). Others initially carried out rapid and often painful liberal socio-economic reforms but then moved to a more state-centred government (Hungary, for example). Finally, there is another group that has swung between authoritarian regimes and relatively democratic rule but made definitive steps toward the formation of market economies (among others Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, Georgia, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Moldova, Bulgaria, Romania and Albania).

Transition economies operate under a system with rigid vertical bureaucratic structures that owe more to general post-Soviet inertia than to a deliberate political orientation

This last group is currently described by the term 'transition economy',[1] which refers both to economics and society. In this category large parts of the government, economy and civil society operate under a system with rigid vertical bureaucratic structures that owe more to general post-Soviet inertia than to a deliberate political orientation. However, for many of these societies, the war in Ukraine marks the beginning of a new era in which their orientation to Russia and the international community in general must be deliberately recalibrated. As these countries continue to chart their paths forward and reform their institutions, higher education – and its relationships to society at large – is poised to play a key role in the transition.

A NEW TURNING POINT

With the beginning of the war in Ukraine, these countries found that the even-handed approach of the past could no longer be maintained and no choice was left but to adopt a more coordinated set of international rules, standards and norms in higher education.

These crossroads overlap with broader processes of university transformation brought about by global shifts of agenda: geopolitical and economic change, decolonisation, technological revolution, climate change and the growing demands of society. The explosion of communication technology and access to information that has been the mark of the internet age has forced universities in the region to compete globally, update their educational programmes and reorient their citizenry toward life-long learning in order to adapt to the workplace in a changing world.

Successful examples of such transformations in post-socialist economies are well-known. Among others, Poland and the Czech Republic stood out by developing their national education brands Study in Poland and Study in the Czech Republic, which allowed them to be much more successful in attracting international students. In relations with key stakeholders, Polish universities and scientific institutions use the joint interface POL-ON,[2] which collects various statistics, reports, theses, scientometrics and other targeted data carefully prepared to meet demand. On the basis of the scope of the data collected, this resource significantly raises the bar for making science and higher education accessible and assessable, understandable and transparent. Such initiatives set these countries apart from their peers in transition economies.

HISTORICAL DISCONNECTS

Led by such successful examples, or simply by the spirit of the times, more and more universities (and their key stakeholders) in transition economies have come to recognise the need for transformation. But to make this happen, they will need to overcome barriers to success rooted in their common past, such as:

Gaps between education and research: For decades, universities in many post-Soviet countries have done the teaching while separate institutes have focused on science and research. Re-integrating research and education within a broad range of institutions will be a crucial paradigm shift for science, industry and education itself.

Gaps between universities and businesses: In transition countries, a late start on market reforms means that the state still controls, directly or indirectly, the lion's share of the economy. The private sector is represented by businesses too small to think about collaborating with universities, while university administration is often lacking the skills and connections to work with multinational businesses and organisations.

Gaps between universities and their host cities: Interactions between universities and their city (or region) in post-Soviet countries are often minimal or even antagonistic. Cities and regions do not see universities as driving forces behind growth, and universities do not see their host environments as strategic partners or incubators for innovation.
Key stakeholder attention gaps: In many cases stakeholders do not see the university as a strategic partner worth investing in. Governments see universities as troublesome hotbeds and budgetary black holes. Businesses can scarcely 'see' the universities at all. Cultural and healthcare institutions are financially and organisationally strapped and themselves lack the foresight to value institutional collaboration.
National expertise gaps: The lack of reputable experts at the national level and the shortage of skills required for global expertise result in a shallow pool of decision-makers and legal and regulatory obstacles to collaboration.

Without cooperation and community involvement, many of these issues have little hope of resolution.

KEY STAKEHOLDERS

Being connected is one of the keys to successful transformation, in universities as well as in broader society. However, many universities in post-socialist countries have not forged connections internationally and have not fostered the local connections that come along with their institutional status and location.

This is where deeper historical differences start to play a significant role. Eastern Europe has a long and rich university tradition of its own, with centres like Charles University in Prague and Jagiellonian University in Krakow among the 20 oldest universities in continuous operation. Instead, while Asia and the Caucasus have their own historical educational achievements, their modern universities were founded only in the Soviet period. As such, the main stakeholders have historically been governments, which set their budgets. The contributions of students and their parents as tuition payers has only more recently become important with growing privatisation. The potential contribution of stakeholders from local governments to businesses and civil society has scarcely been considered.

As universities in transitioning societies progress, they will be well-served by turning their attention to forging strong bonds with local and international stakeholders such as the following:

Private sector: Employers need talented graduates with relevant expertise. Capital and industrial investors need partners with assets such as real estate and intellectual property, along with opportunities for prominent joint ventures and R&D.
Public sector: Healthcare, environmental and public service institutions need potential partners for R&D and big data analysis.
Civil sector: Cultural and civic institutions can help improve a university's reputation, develop soft skills among graduates and raise civic awareness.
Host city or region: Cities need universities as sources of future pools of employment and custodians of valuable landmarks and green space. In turn, cities need to foster creative clusters to harness graduates as future entrepreneurs, employees and taxpayers. Cities can be active investors as well as testing grounds for R&D.
Alumni: Graduates carry institutional memory, and can act as brand ambassadors, donors, endowment founders and volunteer consultants.
International partners: Partners abroad can bring new competences and provide access to next-generation technologies and fresh ideas.

CONNECTING TO COMMUNITY

Local and global stakeholders are a part of the ecosystem in which a university must thrive, but this is not an easy path. Each requires a tailored approach with a careful audit of existing conditions, a clear vision, strategy and step-by-step implementation plan focusing on long-term results. To make the most of what universities already have, they first need to assess their latent potential. This includes the respect they command as institutions of science and learning, their physical location in the cities and regions they occupy, their social position as nesting grounds for future generations, and centres of creative and entrepreneurial gravity. The university that is responsive to the communities around it can help make a transition economy one of true transformation.

— ALEXANDRA BORISSOVA SALEH, OLGA KRYLOVA, WALKER TRIMBLE & EGOR YABLOKOV

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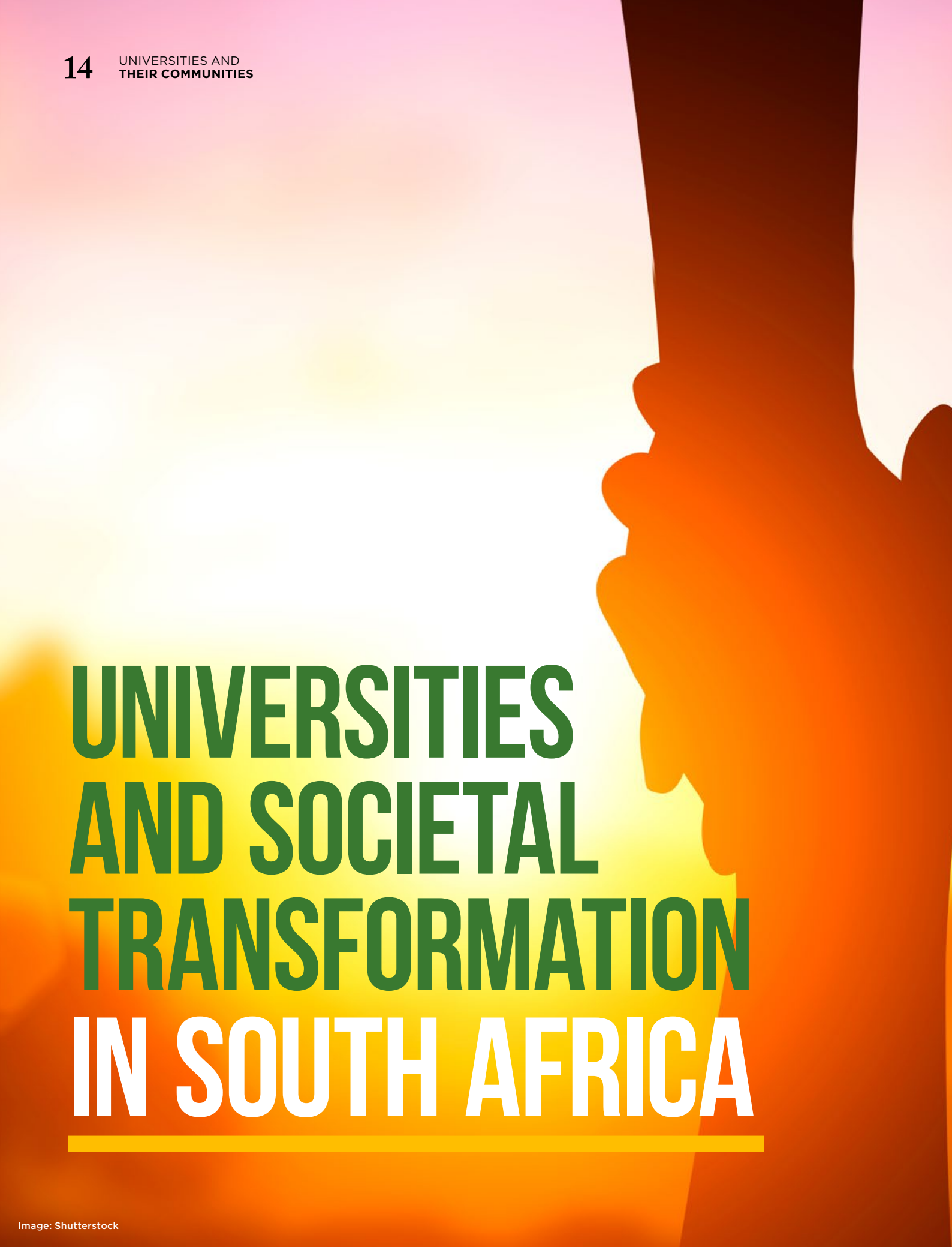

UNIVERSITIES AND SOCIETAL TRANSFORMATION IN SOUTH AFRICA

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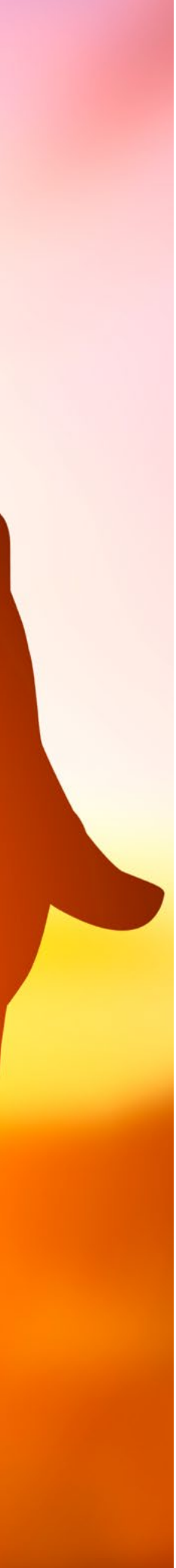

It's not only in Europe that higher education institutions are driving societal transformation. In post-apartheid South Africa, universities have an explicit mandate to engage with their communities in helping heal society's wounds – despite the lack of any formal national framework for doing so. Rhodes University offers one example of how South African universities might work with and for their communities to serve the common good locally while strengthening national society and tackling global challenges.

In South Africa, community engagement and service to society are intrinsically linked to the core mission of higher education institutions. After the formal end of apartheid, the Department of Education stated unequivocally in its *Education white paper 3: a programme for the transformation of higher education* that South African higher education "must contribute to and support the process of societal transformation".[1] It noted further that higher education was expected, "both within its own institutions and in its influence on the broader community, to strengthen democratic ethos, the sense of common citizenship and commitment to a common good". Since then, community engagement has been considered a key function of the country's universities, alongside teaching, learning and research.

THE ENGAGED UNIVERSITY

Almost three decades into post-apartheid higher education in South Africa, the question of what role universities play in serving society remains topical. This was illustrated by the theme of 'the engaged university' at the October 2021 conference of Universities South Africa,[2] an umbrella body representing the country's 26 public universities. The conference aimed to provide a platform for robust contemplation of what it means to be an engaged university: What are universities good for and what are universities good at? What are the purposes of universities as social institutions? These questions are particularly pertinent in the context of South Africa's development challenges regarding rising levels of poverty, unemployment and inequality, all exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Despite being an integral part of the mission and fabric of South Africa's public universities, there is no common definition of community engagement in the South African context,[3] and the lack of a nationally agreed-upon framework is a major barrier to its implementation in universities.[4] However, a review of a select number of institutional websites reveals that South African universities generally embed their community engagement agenda in broader discourses on transformation, public service, social responsibility and responsiveness, inclusion, solidarity, social cohesion and social justice. To provide a more context-specific understanding of this, we will draw on the example of a specific university.

THE CASE OF RHODES UNIVERSITY

Rhodes University is situated in Makhanda, a town with high unemployment in the Eastern Cape, one of the poorest and most neglected provinces in South Africa. Community engagement assists Rhodes in its objective to be more responsive to its social context and more accessible to the community. Through the Rhodes University Community Engagement Division, the university aims to instil civic and social responsibility in all its students and staff by offering a variety of community engagement activities that range from formal volunteering to credit-bearing programmes. Key elements of this include the Engaged Citizen Programme, service learning, engaged research and the Social Innovation Hub.

The Engaged Citizen Programme encourages social responsibility in students through volunteer activities that help them become well-rounded graduates who can act as locally responsive and globally engaged citizens. Volunteering involves a wide range of activities including music, outdoor education and gardening, as well as mentoring, tutoring and homework support. The programme offers two accredited online short courses on community engagement and social responsibility.

Service learning is a pedagogical approach that favours active engagement and reconnection of theory and practice, cognitive and affective development, and classroom learning and community service. It aims to enhance students' academic and civic values and to promote real-world learning through reciprocal relationships between the university and its local communities, combining meaningful community service with curriculum-based learning and critical reflection. Discipline-specific knowledge is acquired through practical exercises carried out in the community, which require students to assess and reflect on the attitudes and values they hold. To be meaningful and effective, service-learning activities need to address recognised needs and interests of the community in question and be jointly planned and implemented with community partners.

Engaged research is research that responds to societal challenges and makes contributions to the public good. As far as methodologies and approaches are concerned, there is a strong focus on collaborative engagement with the community during the research process, addressing real community-identified challenges and needs. Ultimately, the aim is to co-create new knowledge and bring about change. Rhodes contributes to a global body of knowledge through the scholarship of engagement. It also runs an accredited short course providing theoretical and practical tools to enable researchers to design engaged research projects that are community-based and participatory.

The **Social Innovation Hub** is a public digital resource centre that aims to bridge the digital divide and improve social cohesion in the community. The hub offers training on a variety of digital media and computer skills and provides the Makana municipality, in which Makhanda is situated, with cost-free access to basic technologies such as computers and tablets. In its efforts to ensure city-wide access to digital equipment and the internet, the hub uses a mobile lab as well as semi-fixed labs in several locations. Using these digital resources, the hub supports social innovators with practical tools, platforms and psychosocial healing.

WIDER WORLD

Although it is important to link the development of students as critical and engaged citizens to a local community engagement agenda, societal engagement is not restricted to local communities; it can include broader national and international perspectives. Global citizenship education, for example, is one way in which the community engagement activities of South African universities intersect with those of institutions elsewhere in the world. In 2021, Rhodes University's 'Nine tenths matric mentoring programme' was the first initiative by a South African university to win first place in the MacJannet Prize for Global Citizenship, a prestigious prize sponsored jointly by the MacJannet Foundation and the Talloires Network, which is *the* authority on community engagement at universities globally.

In an interconnected world, students need to be empowered to understand that societal challenges "are global, not local issues", and they must "become active promoters of more peaceful, tolerant, inclusive, secure and sustainable societies" globally.[5] Such understanding provides ample opportunity for community engagement activities across national borders, for which the Common Good First Initiative serves as a case in point.[6] This initiative, developed and implemented by a consortium of South African and European universities, including Rhodes, and co-funded by Erasmus+, set up a digital network to "identify, showcase and connect community-driven social impact projects" between universities around the world for purposes of research, teaching, learning and student engagement. This is but one example of how the local and global are inextricably linked – and of how community engagement and internationalisation can go hand in hand.

— SAMIA CHASI & ORLA QUINLAN

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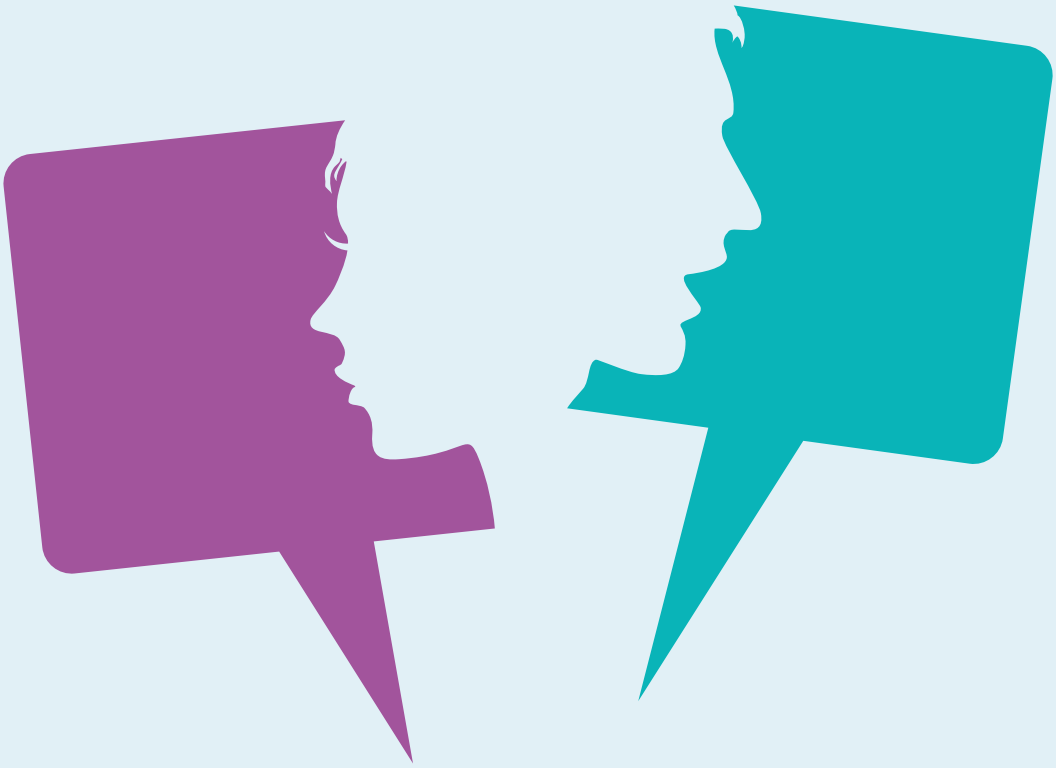

THE LOCAL DEMOCRATIC MISSION OF HIGHER EDUCATION

Our values animate the work we do in international higher education, and in Europe universities are nearly synonymous with democratic values, which most tangibly manifest themselves in how universities engage with their local partners – from students and staff to city and regional governments – each day. The Council of Europe is currently building a platform aimed at bolstering universities' commitment to place and their engagement with their local communities, in which democratic processes and democratic culture are most firmly anchored.

Saying that higher education institutions are part of their local community may sound like stating the obvious. Nevertheless, it is rarely community engagement that earns a university high prestige, increased budgets or a top spot in the rankings. While cooperation with local economic actors and the parts of local authorities that are focused on economic development is reasonably well established, cooperation between institutions and their broader local civil society seems less systematic.

Many European higher education institutions are already engaged with their local communities beyond a merely economic role. Some European projects and initiatives – notably the Erasmus-financed projects TEFCE and SHEFCE[1] – seek to develop the broader local mission of higher education. Many projects or initiatives, though, are conducted by individual members of an institution, or groups within it. They are not necessarily linked to broader institutional strategies.

Institutions therefore need a coherent strategy for working with their communities. Having such a strategy does not preclude having national, European or global ambitions any more than aiming to be a high-quality research university excludes aiming for excellence in learning and teaching.

There is a good argument for developing a European forum for this broader local mission, to develop policies and exchange experience. What works in one context will not always work elsewhere, but there is much that institutions can learn from each other. A common denominator is that institutions – their leadership, staff and students – must see themselves as part of and committed to their local community. Even if European institutions may not use the term, they must see themselves as what our colleagues in the United States call 'anchor institutions' – they are anchored in their communities and are unlikely to relocate elsewhere for economic or other reasons.

It is rarely community engagement that earns a university high prestige, increased budgets or a top spot in the rankings

ENGAGEMENT AND VALUES

Providing this kind of forum is what the Council of Europe is setting out to do by launching a Platform for the Local Democratic Mission of Higher Education.

This mission implies, firstly, a commitment to place. In many cases, this will be to the city in which an institution is located, but in some cases it may be to a specific neighbourhood within a city. Dublin City University, for example, focuses much of its work on the Ballymun area. In other cases, a whole region may be the target area, as with Queen's University Belfast or the Université Clermont-Auvergne. In countries like Andorra or San Marino, it may even be difficult to distinguish between the local, the regional and the national.

Secondly, the platform will not be content with institutions working *in* a community. They need to work *with* it. The institution should engage with one or more stakeholders in the local community, such as public authorities, schools, hospitals, civil society, cultural organisations or businesses. Institutions should see themselves as actors in, of and for the local community and have a policy for how they engage with it.

Thirdly, the local mission should be values-based, which is why the platform refers to it as the local *democratic mission*. It may be possible for a higher education institution to be an actor in its local community without having an explicit values basis, but it would be difficult to conceive of a Council of Europe initiative that did not build on a commitment to democracy, human rights and the rule of law. This is also why the platform will refer to a 'mission' rather than 'engagement'. The term 'mission' establishes a clearer link to higher education's *raisons d'être*. Along with the traditional missions of teaching and research, the mission that focuses on service to broader society will be of particular importance for this initiative. Higher education is unlikely to fulfil its societal mission without a clear values basis.

Several existing initiatives focus on specific aspects of higher education's engagement with society, such as service learning, science shops or business

cooperation. This platform aims to create a pan-European framework that will connect the different aspects of higher education's engagement with society and thus support the institutionalisation of cooperation with local communities.

ADVOCACY, EXCHANGE AND RESEARCH

The platform will, at least in the early stages, focus on a few main areas.

Advocacy is needed to make the case for the local democratic mission of higher education both within the higher education community and among policymakers and civil society, including those who will be local cooperation partners. Successful advocacy will rely on successful policies, some of which still need to be developed as proposals within a European platform.

Some policies and practices already exist, so the platform will provide a forum for exchange of experience. That will include an emphasis on the most challenging aspect of case studies: identifying what factors make a specific experience transferable to other contexts, or not, aiming to identify examples of promising practices. The platform will also conduct studies on specific issues. One potential area is to see what lessons both institutions and local communities can draw from the COVID-19 pandemic.[2]

In the first instance, the platform aims to gather organisations and networks with an interest in, or experience of, working on the local democratic mission of higher education. Through these, it will then reach out to involve individual institutions. A few institutions may be involved from the beginning, but it is judged preferable to 'start small'. Early invitations will be extended to representative organisations of institutions, staff and students, as well as to bodies working with local communities.

The Council of Europe's Platform for the Local Democratic Mission of Higher Education is still in the starting blocks. It will depend on political support and institutional policies, but also on the work of individual staff members in reaching out to local community partners. The local democratic mission of higher education will ultimately rely on the work of many members of the European Association for International Education and others conducting the day-to-day work of international education.

— SJUR BERGAN

> Having a local engagement strategy does not preclude global ambitions any more than high-quality research precludes excellence in teaching

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IN CONVERSATION WITH

NINOSLAV ŠĆUKANEC SCHMIDT

JACOB GIBBONS
EAIE

Photo courtesy of Ninoslav Šćukanec Schmidt

For professionals working on community engagement in European higher education, the Institute for the Development of Education in Croatia is blazing important new trails. As Founder and Executive Director of the Institute, Ninoslav Šćukanec Schmidt has been intimately involved in important initiatives like the TEFCE Toolbox and the push for more qualitative and bottom-up approaches to community engagement. In our conversation, he espouses an optimistic view of the coming decade for universities and their positive engagement with society.

As Executive Director and Founder of the Institute for the Development of Education (IDE) in Croatia, you have written frequently on the connections between higher education institutions (HEIs) and their communities. What role does the IDE play in this space?

NS: Community engagement is a process whereby universities engage with community stakeholders to undertake joint activities that should be mutually beneficial. Rather than being motivated by a sense of moral or social responsibility, the engagement of universities with communities brings tangible benefits to the university's knowledge process, and university knowledge helps the community partners fulfill their needs.

In order to support the development of community engagement in higher education in Europe, IDE initiated two EU-funded projects entitled 'Towards a European Framework for Community Engagement in Higher Education' (TEFCE)[1] and 'Steering Higher Education for Community Engagement' (SHEFCE).[2] These projects aim to define a common European approach to community engagement in higher education, as well as creating assessment tools and policy recommendations that could push this agenda forward by both assisting universities and supporting policymakers.

The TEFCE project developed a new framework to support community engagement, without using metrics, ranking or bureaucratic self-assessment questionnaires: the TEFCE Toolbox, which is an institutional self-reflection framework for community engagement in higher education. In practice, the TEFCE Toolbox serves as a reference tool for universities, communities and policymakers to better understand the dimensions of community engagement in higher education and serves as a practical tool for universities to determine how well they perform according to each dimension, as well as where they can improve.

The TEFCE Toolbox has received positive feedback from international stakeholders. For this reason, a follow-up project proposal was developed entitled 'Steering Higher Education

for Community Engagement', and the proposal was awarded Erasmus+ funding in July 2020. The project, which began in 2020 and will last until 2023, will undertake the crucial next steps in the process of building the capacities of universities, policymakers and stakeholders in Europe for mainstreaming community engagement in higher education.

Sometimes referred to as the 'social dimension' of the work of HEIs, how do you view the connections between higher education institutions and their communities in the context of internationalisation? Do you see this reflected differently in relation to education, research and engagement?

NS: Community engagement in higher education works best when it is embedded in teaching and research and is engrained in universities' institutional culture, rather than being considered a 'third mission' that represents an additional and often peripheral activity on top of teaching and research. It can also happen through a range of other activities, including knowledge-exchange and service, student- and staff-led initiatives, as well as through support from university management. This is the reason why the TEFCE Toolbox defines seven dimensions of community engagement, encompassing the different areas of activities of the university: learning and teaching, research, service and knowledge exchange, students, partnerships and openness, policies and support structures, and supportive peers.

Internationalisation is engrained in all seven of these dimensions of community engagement in higher education. For instance, in learning and teaching, it could happen through service learning programmes. Such programmes can be designed relying on expertise and best practices that are available internationally, and you can cooperate with different international actors to implement them. This is one example of how you can solve a local problem by establishing an international partnership.

Another example, related to research, is citizen science projects with international partners. There are excellent examples of this in US universities working with different community stakeholders like hospitals, kindergartens, schools and museums, and I think different forms of internationalisation could play an important role here.

> Community engagement in higher education works best when it is embedded in teaching and research and is engrained in universities' institutional culture

Does Europe have the right policy settings to encourage these connections? What policy tools exist to support and monitor community engagement at the institutional or European level? Are there particular countries, networks or institutions which model good practice?

NS: Policy priorities in higher education in Europe still focus on excellence and global rankings and do not explicitly encourage community engagement. The focus of universities' activities has been increasingly on forms of engagement that have more tangible economic benefits and are easier to measure, like university technology transfer and associated activities focusing on the commercialisation of intellectual property. A 2022 Eurydice report[3] shows that the majority of higher education systems in Europe (22 out of 37) provide no support or attention to the community engagement role of higher education institutions.

However, there are new initiatives on the European level which demonstrate that community engagement is emerging as a policy priority in higher education. For example, community engagement is appearing in the EHEA documents: in the 2020 Rome Ministerial Communiqué,[4] 49 ministers of higher education committed to building an inclusive, innovative and interconnected European Higher Education Area (EHEA) by 2030. Under the goal of building a socially inclusive EHEA, the ministers adopted a new strategic document called 'Principles and guidelines to strengthen the social dimension of higher education in the EHEA'.

University-community engagement could also be particularly fostered by the European Universities alliances whose mission is dedicated to fostering connectivity and co-creation opportunities with

their external communities and citizens – as the alliance Young Universities for the Future of Europe (YUFE) and European University of Post-Industrial Cities (UNIC) already demonstrate.

What role do you see for 'global citizenship' education in support of the social responsibility agenda in HEIs and their connections with local society?

NS: Global initiatives, including 'global citizenship' education, could support development of the community engagement agenda in higher education, because these initiatives promote overcoming disciplinary silos and including multiple stakeholder partnerships, such as with governments, civil society, the media, industries, policy think tanks, and so on. The readiness to share substantial resources possessed by higher education institutions with the partnership may require a more flexible and responsive leadership of HEIs.

The United Nations' 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is a very good example of the global initiative that contributes to the development of community engagement in HE. It elaborates 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) addressing global challenges, including those related to quality education, inequality, innovation, sustainable cities and communities, climate change, environmental degradation, and peace and justice, and set targets to be met by countries and territories by 2030. Higher education institutions have the potential to make significant contributions to all 17 SDGs based on their traditional functions of teaching, scientific research, innovation and their links with society.

What effect(s) do you see the growing commercialisation of international higher education having on third mission engagement by HEIs? What does this mean for the future trajectory of community engagement in higher education?

NS: The concept of community engagement covers a wide range of objectives, activities and outcomes, and as such it is resistant to being measured. The 'new public management' approach – which seeks to make the administration of public and non-profit organisations more efficient through the application of private sector management models – can only work on the basis of efficiency, by turning quantifiable data into simple indicators, which is often incompatible with the multifaceted and context-specific nature of community engagement. Instead, we need more qualitative, bottom-up approaches when we speak about community engagement, and this runs counter to the trend of commercialisation.

The concept of community engagement covers a wide range of objectives, and as such it is resistant to being measured

'Community' refers to a broad range of external university stakeholders, but ideally with an emphasis on those with fewer resources. Universities engage regularly and systematically with businesses and policymakers, but have far more difficulties engaging with NGOs, social enterprises, or other civil society organisations that do not have the resources to easily engage with universities. Those less privileged stakeholders should therefore be considered the primary beneficiaries of community engagement.

Despite this trend, the period from now to 2030 has the potential to become the decade of community engagement in higher education in Europe. This vision could become a reality if all stakeholders succeed in creating a European movement for community engagement in higher education that combines the top-down and bottom-up approaches to policy making and policy advocacy.

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THE UNICORN APPROACH TO SERVICE LEARNING

Structural support for service learning projects is a rarity in higher education, but the UNICORN consortium is taking it from fantasy to reality. Led by the University of Bologna, this group of universities is pioneering a new mobility scheme that integrates community engagement into the curriculum by giving students the opportunity to learn through service in their host communities.

The global challenges of the 21st century have generated a demand for universities to be more socially responsible, meaning more aware of their potential impact on society and of the contribution they can make to tackling societal challenges.

This shift in perception has brought about a similar shift in universities' international activities and strategies, which increasingly intersect with their community engagement and social responsibility. Internationalisation of higher education has been defined as "the intentional process of integrating an international, intercultural or global dimension into the purpose, functions and delivery of post-secondary education, in order to enhance the quality of education and research for all students and staff, and to make a meaningful contribution to society".[1] More recently, the notion of 'internationalisation in higher education for society' has been developed[2] and global citizenship has become a key objective of internationalisation.

In its bid to "make a meaningful contribution to society", the International Relations Division of the University of Bologna has been aiming to reorient student mobility to make it more clearly about the common good, doing so through the framework of the UNICORN consortium, which it coordinates.

ENGAGED MOBILITY

In addition to the University of Bologna, the Erasmus+-funded UNICORN project involves the University of Antwerp, University College Cork, Complutense University of Madrid and Leipzig University, plus community partners from the same countries (ASP Cesena, UCSIA, Cork City Council, Coslada Municipality, Forikolo). There is also the University of Pretoria in South Afri-

Image: Shutterstock

ca, a non-EU partner with considerable expertise in community engagement. Furthermore, the Utrecht Network of higher education institutions from across Europe is an associated partner.

The UNICORN consortium set itself the goal of designing a new mobility scheme that would offer higher education students the opportunity to combine their mobility period with a component of community engagement, namely an experience of service learning in the hosting community. This project benefits from the complementary expertise of the partner institutions in both student mobility and service learning. It also relies on the findings of previous EU-funded projects, in which the University of Bologna took part, on the topics of service learning, intercultural competence and student mobility.

For students to develop into active citizens and competent professionals who can contribute to solving societal challenges, they will need transversal competences and skills. The development of these skills is what we are aiming for by setting up a new international mobility scheme that complements regular mobility formats with the added experience of serving society. The theoretical (and practical) reference point for this understanding of global citizenship is the Reference Framework of Competences for Democratic Culture[3] produced by the Council of Europe.

The experts behind this framework thoroughly explained how the technical, disciplinary competences acquired by students in traditional classes are not sufficient to prepare them to really work and act for the common good – that is, to ultimately contribute to objectives such as the Sustainable Development Goals. A new generation of global citizens – socially aware and engaged professionals – is only possible if their educational path involves a set of curricular experiences that can strengthen their 'competences for democratic culture'. Boosting student mobility with a curricular component of service to society can represent a substantial contribution to this purpose.

> The UNICORN consortium designed a new mobility scheme that would offer students the opportunity to combine mobility with community engagement

THE UNICORN MODEL

In the UNICORN project, the component of community engagement has been conceived as inherently curricular: the courses themselves – or other curricular learning activities in which the students can

participate, such as intensive programmes and research – adopt the pedagogical approach of service learning. This ensures that civic and democratic competences are listed among the learning outcomes of the courses and activities, and that community engagement activities are automatically recognised in the curriculum and in the evaluation of student performance.

The UNICORN model comprises several elements, starting with the UNICORN Living Catalogue of 16 projects offered by the five EU partner universities – 15 teaching courses and one research placement – in different disciplinary areas. These projects adopt the service learning approach and are available for both enrolled students and international exchange students.

Then there is the UNICORN Staff Training Handbook, addressed to academics and to the staff of community organisations, to guide them in jointly designing the service learning component embedded in the learning activity. This component can be implemented from scratch for a brand new curricular activity, or embedded in existing activities, which must then be reworked. The training workbook relies on the UNICORN Taxonomy, outlining seven dimensions that have to be addressed to set up a UNICORN learning activity.

The UNICORN Administrative Toolkit has also been put together to guide other higher education institutions, in particular mobility experts, to set up similar mobility schemes that combine international mobility with service learning. Finally a massive open online course has been set up to teach students about the fundamentals of service learning, competences for democratic culture in general and intercultural issues in particular.

We are also developing the UNICORN Recommendations for Policymakers to illustrate the benefits of the UNICORN mobility scheme and to help in promoting, institutionalising, consolidating and upscaling it. All the outputs of the project will be made available on the UNICORN website by its end date of December 2023.

CHALLENGES AND EXPANSION

So far, 16 international exchange students have tested the UNICORN mobility scheme, all during the second semester of the 2021–2022 academic year. Others will do the same in 2022–2023. The UNICORN mobility scheme will also hopefully expand to include other Utrecht Network universities, and some European University alliances connected to the UNICORN partner universities (Una Europa, YUFE, UNIC) have shown an interest in adopting the model.

The three-year UNICORN experience so far – which has been intense, especially given that it coincided with the COVID-19 pandemic – has taught all of the partners some important lessons. The first is that the UNICORN model can be successfully implemented only if three different sets of actors – academics, mobility experts and community partners – are fully engaged in the process and committed to cooperation. The initial training of academics and community partners is essential to ensure that the quality standards outlined in the UNICORN Taxonomy are met in the international service learning projects. And let's not forget the students: the added value of the UNICORN experience must be promoted to them so that they choose a service learning course.

The road to institutionalisation of service learning in European universities is still a difficult one. Often, existing service learning experiences available for students are isolated cases, not acknowledged by the university governance. Consequently, no special administrative support is offered to encourage pioneering academics to manage the service learning component. Until service learning is a more widespread pedagogical approach adopted by taught courses across different disciplinary areas – which remains the most desirable outcome – it is essential that the existing service learning courses open up to students from as many disciplinary backgrounds as possible. Erasmus mobility, so well established within European universities, is probably the best 'natural habitat' for UNICORN mobility, but it is a challenging one because it is hard to make space for the special requirements of the participants in international service learning in the highly standardised processes of regular Erasmus mobility.

To sum up, in spite of a road to success that seems anything but short and easy, it is our belief that the UNICORN model for international service learning has strong potential to become one of the main ways in which EU universities can truly put their 'third mission' statements into practice, by teaching students the necessary competences to deal with the challenges faced by our societies.

— ALESSIA MARCHI & FRANCESCO GIROTTI

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GEN Z

READY TO TACKLE THE SDGS

The UN Sustainable Development Goals can in some ways be seen as the most clear-cut set of instructions for higher education institutions seeking to engage meaningfully with society. Lucky for universities looking to demonstrate their impact, Generation Z is keenly aware of and sincerely invested in a sustainable future. How can institutions both engage meaningfully with SDGs during students' time on campus and activate alumni networks after graduation to effect real change?

Image: Shutterstock

The unprecedented heatwaves and floods of the past year have confronted us once again with the urgency of the climate crisis. The COVID-19 pandemic, ongoing wars, famines and civil unrest are pressing global challenges. Many scientists and scholars have asserted that we must find a different societal model that places the ecosystem and planetary survival above national and individual economic gains.

The United Nations' 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) aim to find solutions for global challenges such as ending poverty, protecting the planet, and ensuring economic prosperity, social inclusion and peace for all people. The SDGs can guide international higher education in helping to refocus economic and societal models not only to be more sustainable and greener, but also to nurture peaceful and just societies. Internationalisation plays an indispensable role in educating global citizens and supporting transnational networks that can co-create solutions for global challenges.

INTEGRATING SDGS

The UN Sustainable Development Solutions Network mobilises global scientific and technological expertise to help implement both the SDGs and the Paris climate agreement. In 2014, it founded the SDG Academy, its flagship education platform, which offers free massive open online courses and other educational materials on sustainable development and the SDGs. It also published *Getting started with the SDGs* in universities, a guide to mainstreaming the SDGs in education. To boost higher education institutions' commitment to the SDGs, the SDG Accord was launched in 2017 as a high-profile international initiative. It supports a network of over 2300 signatories (including nearly 300 universities and more than 50 student unions) all committed to embedding the SDGs into their education, research, leadership, operations, administration and engagement activities.

The SDG Accord has been surveying its members annually. In its 2021 survey, 123 higher education institutions participated, of which 70% were publicly reporting on SDGs, up from 51% in 2020.[1] In addition, 88% of participants declared that integrating SDGs "opened a more relatable and clear dialogue on sustainability within the institution", and 69% emphasised that SDGs "positively influenced the image of the institution by showing its contribution to global and local well-being". The report further showed that the SDGs were becoming a powerful engagement tool and were helping institutions address barriers to sustainability. But the 2022 survey report indicates that only 27% of participating universities have established a strategic approach to embedding SDGs across the institution.[2]

These results offer opportunities for international higher education to accelerate its contribution to the SDGs. By integrating SDGs into their internationalisation strategies, institutions can make essential contributions through both global citizenship education and international alumni relations.

ALUMNI AND STUDENT AMBASSADORS

Alumni, with their multifarious positions in civil society, are rich resources for universities. They can contribute with their academic knowledge, intercultural competence, professional expertise, entrepreneurial mindset and networks. There are various examples of universities engaging alumni strategically to advance their sustainability agenda. For example, as part of its commitment to its strategy on sustainability, the University of Auckland's Alumni Relations Office organised its first Volunteer Impact Week in 2019. This attracted hundreds of alumni volunteers from all over the world to contribute their time, knowledge and expertise to sustainability across New Zealand and the world.

As an early pacesetter in the UK in terms of making social responsibility a core goal, the University of Manchester

Alumni, with their multifarious positions in civil society, are rich resources for universities

plays a leading role in tackling the SDGs in four ways: research, learning and students, public engagement activities, and campus operations. Its 2021–2022 SDG report[3] provides a clear overview of how the university has embedded every SDG into its education, research and service missions, involving staff, students and alumni. The Manchester Day of Action, a global volunteer activism programme, inspires alumni worldwide to support a local cause. In 2019, 380 alumni abroad

organised 23 projects across 19 locations, accruing 1300 hours of volunteering.[4] All the projects were aligned with the SDGs and supported the university's social responsibility agenda. The Manchester Day of Action provides an inspirational snapshot of how alumni can contribute.

Universities embedding SDGs in their activities often engage students by creating SDG ambassador programmes. For example, the Rotterdam School of Management in the Netherlands recruits 17 students annually as SDG ambassadors to organise local projects for each of the 17 SDGs.[5] Through SDG ambassador programmes involving study abroad and Internationalisation at Home, students can learn and participate in projects that teach them more about the SDGs and inspire them to stay active after graduation.

Gen Z makes up 32% of the world population, comprising more than two billion young people globally

AN INSPIRATIONAL GENERATION

Many of the older members of Generation Z – a generation comprising people born roughly between 1997 and 2009 – graduated from university in 2020. The class of 2020 did not experience in-person graduation ceremonies with their classmates, and they entered the labour market during an economic crisis. Considered the largest generation on the planet, Gen Z makes up 32% of the world population, comprising more than two billion young people globally.[6] They are also the first fully digitally native generation and have grown up in the midst of nonstop crises: the 2008 economic recession, civil unrest, climate change and the pandemic.

Various polls[7] of Gen Z-ers have identified global warming as their most pressing issue, with one survey finding that 87% of them in the United States are worried about the environment and the planet. They greatly value diversity, equity and inclusion, as well as social causes. According to Roberta Katz, co-author of *Gen Z, explained: the art of living in a digital age*, "a typical Gen Z-er is a self-driver who deeply cares about others, strives for a diverse community, is highly collaborative and social, values flexibility, relevance, authenticity and non-hierarchical leadership, and, while dismayed about inherited issues like climate change, has a pragmatic attitude about the work that has to be done to address those issues".[8]

As an example of a Gen Z network in action, Action Not Excuses[9] is a global youth-led environmental campaign supporting 100,000 young people around the world to create green jobs, fight for zero waste and pollution, and reverse deforestation. Using a digital platform, these Gen Z-ers support each other by sharing experiences, showcasing their impact and helping to mobilise others.

Gen Z-ers will stand up for the SDGs. They can use the SDGs as a compass to collaborate and innovate in solving global challenges. When international higher education engages its students and alumni in advancing the SDGs, institutions benefit significantly by demonstrating their societal impact and aligning with the values of future generations – and the world benefits greatly from young people being inspired to act for the common good.

— SANDRA RINCÓN

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IHES CATALONIA LAB
OPENING UP THE IVORY TOWER

International higher education is abuzz with talk of 'internationalisation in higher education for society' – but what does it actually entail? An Erasmus+ Strategic Partnership between two universities in Spain and the Czech Republic has resulted in two regional 'IHES laboratories' to help translate theory into practice. At the Catalonia lab, it's becoming increasingly apparent that the time for universities to start learning with and from the communities beyond their walls is now.

In the past few decades, higher education has been making itself more available to the wider community and the society it serves. In most higher education institutions, this pledge to social commitment has taken the form of incorporating new objectives linked to the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals into their university policies and strategic plans. At the same time, universities have realised that they possess a wealth of experience in terms of internationalisation and that the international values they promote can greatly contribute to a more open and fair society if taken outside the university walls.

A renewed objective has therefore emerged: internationalisation in higher education for society (IHES), a concept defined by Uwe Brandenburg, Hans de Wit, Elspeth Jones and Betty Leask in 2019, which explicitly aims to benefit the wider community, at home and abroad, through education, research, service and international or intercultural engagement.[1]

The concept and practices of IHES are being thoroughly tested in an Erasmus+ Strategic Partnership also entitled IHES, led by Palacký University in the Czech Republic. The Universitat Rovira i Virgili (URV) in Spain is a partner in this project and is responsible for implementing two regional IHES laboratories: one in Catalonia (Spain) and another in the Olomouc region (Czech Republic).

These two laboratories have been created to develop and implement a set of university activities aimed at incorporating a strong internationalisation


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component within society. These IHES activities will be evaluated from the perspective of promoters, actors and beneficiaries, and may serve as examples for others to follow suit.

TRAINING AS A FIRST STEP

In order to create the Catalonia lab, the first step was to raise awareness of the importance of this 'new' concept within our institutions. To this end, a training course for all the promoters and actors of the planned IHES activities was organised. The three-day course had the following main components:

- Internationalisation of higher education: what it is, its objectives and global trends
- Intercultural communication: basic concepts and ready-to-use tools
- IHES: what it means, key components, objectives, benefits and challenges

Participants were immersed in this highly interactive peer-learning experience, which allowed them to rethink and redefine through an internationalisation lens the social engagement activities that they were already conducting. At the end of the training, they all presented their projects and received feedback from their colleagues, while finding new collaboration synergies.

VARIED ACTIVITIES

The Catalonia lab was then ready to start in the academic year 2021–2022 with the following eight activities: bringing the Erasmus experience to secondary schools via URV Erasmus alumni; international service learning placements; a project to send used computers to those in need; sports including canoeing and hiking; videos and poster presentations on climate change realities from around the world; international activities at 15 locations in the Tarragona region; international lectures for senior citizens; and a language programme for incoming international students.

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With their international component, the lab's activities have an impact on the local community by interacting with different systems and networks, such as the regional primary and secondary education system, public administrations, non-governmental organisations, small businesses, volunteers, town councils, active members of the university community and society at large.

THREE C'S

Alongside the great opportunity that the IHES project has brought about for the URV and its region come great challenges. One of these is stakeholder engagement. In order to reach society, the university community needs to be part of the process and engaged in its vision, but it can only do so if it understands what IHES is about (comprehension), knows how to engage (competence) and has opportunities to contribute (connection). The training course was considered key to making a start on the first two Cs of this 'three Cs' approach.[2]

This engagement needs to be maintained in the implementation phase through the addition of the third C: connection. This can be done through follow-up meetings, through appointing a coordinator for the lab who is there to assist and accompany the different actors in the field, and through implementing a proper system of evaluation, a crucial tool to prove the worth of IHES to all those in doubt. The survey system set up within the IHES project will produce results in due course and a full evaluation report will be published in 2023. Nonetheless, what this experience has highlighted so far is the importance of the 'intangible', which is so present in the internationalisation of higher education, so difficult to 'sell' to scientific minds and yet so meaningful for the human experience.

Another point that has emerged with regards to connection is that in order to strengthen the IHES commitment, higher education leaders must find ways to recognise its protagonists. Our experience thus far tells us that a key asset and undisputed leader of IHES is the student – both the international student and the local student with international experience – because they have the potential to naturally transmit to younger generations the importance of social commitment in today's world. Consequently, recognising the engagement and commitment of all those who play a role in IHES is key in ensuring that institutional change is enduring and profound.

What this experience has highlighted so far is the importance of the 'intangible', which is so present in internationalisation

OUTSIDE OUR WALLS

At the Catalonia lab, we have learned to be adaptable and open to the unpredictable. The fact is that some activities that seemed easy to implement turned out to be challenging or even impossible to put into practice, while other activities that initially seemed more complex showed unexpected potential or became a great success. Some have even had such an impact that society itself is demanding more such initiatives. Interacting with the wider world undoubtedly leads to new and surprising results, if only we are willing to look outside our institutional walls and learn with and from society.

To conclude, we believe that the IHES concept is here to stay in deeper ways than we can now envision. It could very well become a future indicator for assessing the quality of teaching, research, innovation and other higher education activities. And universities should, as it has long been suggested, get out of their ivory towers and put their resources and wisdom in the service of society. But are universities truly ready to address or lead the way in tackling growing and ever more complex and urgent societal needs? IHES could be a possible first step in the right direction.

— SUSANA DE LLOBET MASACHS, JOSEPA GARRETA-GIRONA & MARINA CASALS SALA

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CONNECTING CITY AND

Post-industrial cities face a unique set of challenges. It is precisely such challenges that the European University alliance UNIC has emerged to target, both through service learning initiatives and – in the case of University College Cork – a curriculum that seeks to bring research and education closer to the needs of the community.

Community-based learning is growing in importance as educators look for ways to increase students' understanding of what it means to be a global citizen. It is said that incorporating community-based learning into study abroad experiences is "an effective way to expand on existing internationalisation efforts […] to enhance students' language and cross-cultural communication skills, and maximise their ability to adapt, thrive and contribute to the public good".[1] Moreover, studies of the development of intercultural competence in global leaders have found that only 20% of measurable growth can be cultivated through traditional classroom experience, whereas 50% of all intercultural growth is learned through personal experience of working with people from different cultures.[2]

University–community partnerships provide an opportunity for actions that promote inclusion. At University College Cork (UCC), our academic strategy for 2018–2022 was based on the 'Connected Curriculum', a framework put forward to bring university research and student education into a more connected, more symbiotic relationship.[3] The strategy aimed to build connections to provide curricular coherence and to enhance the student and staff experience. Components including global reach and civic and community engagement were identified as crucial for a connected curriculum. The priority has been to surface good practice and provide inspiration and tools to support staff in integrating the distinct components of the Connected Curriculum framework into their work.

At the same time, the university connected to seven other institutions under the European Universities Initiative, with the aim of tackling societal challenges in post-industrial cities. Ruhr University Bochum, the University of Liége, the University of Deusto, Erasmus University Rotterdam, the University of Zagreb, the University of Oulu, Koç University and UCC are now united in UNIC, the Euro-

Illustration: Shutterstock

CURRICULUM

pean University of Post-Industrial Cities, which is committed to boosting mobility and inclusion for societal impact.

These two developments – our embrace of the Connected Curriculum and our membership of UNIC – have enabled us to devise and implement international service-learning projects.

MIGRANT SUPPORT CLINIC

One of those projects, with a focus on civic and community engagement from an Internationalisation at Home perspective, was the creation of a 'migrant support clinic'. The clinic seeks to provide opportunities for our students who are close to completion to develop skills and competences in their chosen professions through service learning, by engaging with local communities of people who have recently relocated to Ireland, specifically to Cork, and are in need of advice and services.

In particular, the project seeks to provide student-led guidance, service, advice and support to a group of self-employed women from Latin America in areas including management and marketing, accountancy and taxation, and aspects of Irish law and the English language. While there are various instances of student engagement with the local community in UCC and elsewhere, for example through student clubs and societies, our aim with this project is broader. We are seeking to mobilise resources in the university and the city – including, for example, entrepreneurial support, or policy design and implementation – in such a way that we do not duplicate the efforts of various providers already in the community but instead add value, and ideally craft a blueprint for working on the integration of other migrants in the near future, including refugees.

CITIES AND SOCIETAL CHALLENGES

The migrant support clinic is also part of the CityLabs programme in UNIC, which adds to the international dimension of the project. UNIC CityLabs are designed as both physical and virtual meeting points where students, citizens, academics and city stakeholders can work together to identify and solve societal challenges faced by superdiverse post-industrial cities. While the first phase of a CityLab takes place at city level, during the second phase CityLabs from all cities in the UNIC network that address similar concerns gather together to share and compare the cases they have been working on, so as to learn from each other and identify best practices for implementation in a third phase.

Students are first confronted with new societal challenges in their local context – in our case, in Cork. They then learn to approach these challenges using new, hybrid forms of knowledge, and to compare their context with those of the other cities. It is expected that innovative solutions will be generated from this international approach.

In this way, international strategy is at the centre, acting as the link between students, who gain valuable experience and networks; the university, which can foster graduates' employability through participation in this project; the migrants themselves, who will gain valuable skills and knowledge; and the city of Cork, as the migrants will be enabled to more fully contribute to Irish economic, social and cultural life. Moreover, the experience in Cork will perhaps be replicated in other UNIC cities. It is a great example of internationalisation and community-based learning working hand in hand to improve conditions for all.

—ARMIDA DE LA GARZA & HUGO SANTI

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HOMESTAYS

CONNECTING STUDENTS, UNIVERSITIES AND COMMUNITIES

An often-overlooked approach to international student mobility is the homestay model, in which students stay with a local family during their mobility period. Such an immersive intercultural experience brings with it a whole host of benefits and knits close ties between the student, the host university and the host community.

Illustration: N. Nguyen

For international students, living with a host family can provide the perfect opportunity for immersion into the local community. Day-to-day life with a host family makes their study abroad experience like no other; every family is different and so their education journey is truly personalised.

Hosting, meanwhile, offers a unique and fun experience whereby residents can enjoy introducing students to their home life and promoting their local area whilst making a personal commitment to enhancing the international student experience. Many hosts comment that being introduced to different cultures in such a subtle way allows them to self-reflect and see their own life and neighbourhood through a fresh lens.

When an education provider delivers its own homestay service, matching hosts and students with sensitivity and care, it offers an extraordinary opportunity to help bridge any potential gulf between the local community and its international student population. Our international students become agents of change, not only as a dynamic network of ambassadors, representing our values and extending our civic reach, but also by facilitating inclusivity. They help introduce people to aspects of our work with which they may not have been previously familiar, by inviting closer contact and increased interaction with our campuses.

Education institutions are communities within communities. They do not operate in isolation and must not allow themselves to become a fortress of culture. The recruitment of international students alters both internal demographics and the diversity of the surrounding community. Helping to harness this diversity for the common good, the homestay experience has mutuality at its heart and fosters natural ties between international students, the institution and the local community that might otherwise be difficult to forge.

When crafted with purpose and deployed as an explicit internationalisation initiative, homestay schemes bring benefits to both regional environments and civic relations. They are fine examples of inclusive and accessible values-based projects: a means for institutions to extend intelligent internationalisation into the community by offering meaningful contributions and representing clear value to local society. They allow students to personalise their education experience through the enjoyment of solid community relations and a framework for the informal curriculum. A strengthened civil society and an engaged host community is the result – and it is one that should be celebrated.

—LAURA SPENCER

Five benefits for international students

1. Homestays help instil a sense of belonging;
2. They deliver transformative, 'real world' experiential learning that complements the traditional academic environment by building confidence and language fluency;
3. They provide a sense of measured independence;
4. They provide opportunities for students to engage with people from different cultural backgrounds and to develop respectful and mutually beneficial relationships; and
5. They allow for deep social bonds to be established, enhancing personal and professional development and often continuing long after graduation.

Five benefits for education institutions

1. Homestay schemes can have an extremely positive impact on student retention rates;
2. They offer an opportunity for communities to engage in and support institutional internationalisation agendas;
3. An actively engaged network of hosts can help institutions achieve lasting social change;
4. A future network of authentic institutional champions can be built up; and
5. International and intercultural competences are strengthened and community relations between 'town and gown' are enhanced based on mutual trust and understanding.

Five benefits for the local community

1. Hosts often develop skills and competences through their interaction with the international student;
2. Hosts often develop lasting relationships with both the student and their family;
3. Homestay schemes enhance diversity within the local population, which can be a driver for tackling challenges related to inequality and development;
4. Successful schemes can help shape a community's perceptions of equality and diversity; and
5. Hosts especially benefit when encouraged to become active stakeholders who enjoy access to new educational and intercultural training opportunities.

MINDFUL MOBILITY

Mobility is at the core of not only the work we do in international higher education, but also of our shared humanity and shared global home. To help develop our students into truly global citizens who can tackle major societal and ecological challenges, we must encourage them to fully immerse themselves in their host environments, connecting mindfully with communities and caring for their new locales.

Image: Shutterstock

Internationalisation in education, for so long a beacon of human progress and cooperation towards a responsible and flourishing global society, is under pressure in light of the climate crisis and crumbling communities.

Why do globalisation and the exchange of knowledge and experience – the cornerstones of our efforts to promote internationalisation in higher education – appear to have so little to offer in terms of building sustainable societies? Why has global citizenship failed to move on from being a mere concept to being a way of tackling major global challenges?

I still believe that fostering a mindset of global citizenship bears immense potential for the emergence of sustainable societies. I am also convinced that internationalisation in higher education has a crucial role to play – but we will have to alter our way of perceiving international mobility. Rather than seeing it simply as a means to gain experience, credentials or credits in an international academic context, we must focus on how it connects participants in mobility programmes to the people and environment of a new place. It invites them to immerse themselves in a new community and take care of the place they inhabit. I would like to coin the term 'mindful mobility' for this. And I propose that as international officers, we should firmly incorporate mindful mobility into our programme design and do everything in our power to proliferate and facilitate it.

TAKING RESPONSIBILITY

Hans Jonas saw mobility – the possibility of approaching, being near or moving away from objects – as a prerequisite for developing mental conceptions of the world and ourselves.[1] The process of moving helps to refine and develop mental activity: the more we move and perceive the world, and the more we see objects from different angles, the better and more comprehensive a picture we will build up of our environment. This in turn not only allows us to navigate purposefully through the world, but is also a prerequisite for taking responsibility, which for Jonas is the main task of a person.

So, the better an idea we have of our environment (the way it moves us), the better we can take responsibility for it. But the reverse holds true just the same: the more we take responsibility for our environment (the way we move it), the better it will evolve. The act of moving therefore enables us to make the world a better place for all. Through movement, we have managed to become mindful beings; thanks to our mindfulness, we can move in the right way and take care of the places where we live.

In moving around, we gain a broader perspective of our surroundings – but only by immersing ourselves in our environment do we make this a meaningful endeavour

But the fact that human beings have the power and responsibility to take care of a place does not indicate that a place should serve human needs only. When we get to know a place, we soon realise that it consists of a complex and multidimensional network of relations connecting all beings, with the purpose of allowing everyone and everything there to flourish. Fostering mindful mobility, then, will help build our capacity to take care of a place by appreciating, respecting and foregrounding the intrinsic value of its constituents, wherever that place may be. In our ability to move around, we gain a broader perspective of our surroundings – but only by immersing ourselves in our environment do we make this a meaningful endeavour.

ETHICS OF PLACE

We are all familiar with the sometimes acute feeling of not belonging in a new location: we call it 'culture

shock' and it often leaves us suffering from homesickness. We usually overcome this after a while by getting more and more accommodated in our new place, but this doesn't just happen by itself: it is achieved through unceasing efforts to accommodate ourselves and slowly connect with our new environment.

Intercultural competence builds on a commitment to participate in a new environment. International and exchange students want to be part of their new place, if only for a limited time. To paraphrase a key sentence of deep ecology, "taking care of a place is a matter of making it a home" – and it can only become a home if others feel at home there too.[2]

The message to the international officer eager to see more than a hollow phrase in the goal of fostering global citizenship is simple. It's all about bringing forth an ethics of place and allowing students to seize opportunities to engage with and take care of the place and its diverse members. Building meaningful relations and caring about all the various components of a place is key to living communities and the sustainable flourishing of a global society.

OUR ROLE

So how can we apply these concepts to our work as international officers? We must look beyond the benefits of contributing to international academic exchange and sharing knowledge. An even more important task of the mobility adviser is to convey a deep sense of 'place' to their students and foster and facilitate opportunities for them to create a bond with their new environment. After all, if global citizenship bears some practical value, it must involve caring for the places we are invited to or choose to become part of. We should see it as a disaster if international students remain isolated from local communities, absorbed in an international bubble. Hosting a welcome event during the first week of a semester is not enough to help students connect to their new place or encourage them to get involved. In fact, welcoming someone, in its warmest sense of making someone feel at home, can mean no less than inviting them to take care of a place.

> Taking care of a place is a matter of making it a home – and it can only become a home if others feel at home there too

> Welcoming someone, in its warmest sense of making someone feel at home, can mean no less than inviting them to take care of a place

We must establish a culture of open social access, reaching beyond the academic realm into local communities. A good start to achieving this is for international officers to forge close ties with existing student associations. Many of these associations are very active players in taking care of places, which also connects them to the wider local communities. In particular, student sustainability groups offer the perfect setting for international students to become involved in a caring community because of their own commitment to taking care of their place.

There are numerous possibilities to volunteer in various frameworks such as student associations, non-governmental organisations, festivals, co-op farming and neighbourhood schemes, and it is our responsibility to raise awareness of such opportunities. Furthermore, we should gather and share information about local initiatives, projects and social programmes beyond the campus, encouraging students to join. In this regard, I also want to mention University Community Learning, or UNICORN, where volunteering is internalised into curricular community learning outcomes.[3]

It is not the purpose of this article to deliver a ready-made action plan to invite international students to become part of your local community. In the end, each destination, each place, must create its own openings to invite students to become part of it. Each individual must find it in themselves to take care of a place. But as international officers, we should embrace our role in helping students to find these openings in a new place. Because if we can't take care of a place, how can we ever become responsible global citizens?

—PATRICK BISANG

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11 OCT

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EAIE PODCAST

20 JUL

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31 AUG

Alyona Ovchinnikova and Christof Van Mol: Language proximity and student mobility

What role does language play in influencing international students' decisions when choosing a destination for their studies?

http://ow.ly/ZGyr50Kwqvb

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