

## Campuses and Communities Hub

Summary of key ideas from the Hub Zoom discussion on December 17<sup>th</sup>, 2014

### Participants:

Colin Hocking – La Trobe University

Sandy Murray – University of Tasmania

Jen Dollin – University of Western Sydney

Corey Peterson – University of Tasmania

Liz Sidiropoulos – University of Central Queensland

Gitanjali Bedi – Swinburne University

Nick Towle – University of Tasmania

What is the relationship between universities and communities? What might be the win-win relationships/partnerships for EfS?

The issues of University and community relationships for sustainability are in part a sub-set of overall issues for University-Community relationships.

The relationship between communities and university research is uncertain – their agendas are likely to be different, and the community has some level of suspicion around University interests in research.

Experience of RCE at University of Western Sydney: importance of establishing what is the value and value add for - careful use of the word ‘research’ – very much participatory action research. Partly about defining what the shared language is – for example, framing regional challenges in terms of this shared language. Don’t use research as an up-front reason to connect – rather, what is the un

Okayama Framework: a way to share language and frameworks -

[http://www.city.okayama.jp/esd/esd\\_00098.html](http://www.city.okayama.jp/esd/esd_00098.html)

People use the concept of information sharing & gathering, and most people understand the importance of KPIs and the need to defend this with information, including figures.

A lot of people in communities don’t have experience in the research setting, so words like research, even the way the issues are talked about, are not familiar with research concepts and language. Also the reputation of Universities in terms of doing research with communities is not great – so the importance of establishing shared value is important

Engagement Australia has already looked in detail at University-Community relationships – see <http://www.engagementaustralia.org.au/home.html> .

Universities are diverse places so the points of connection with community are not always clear. To some extent we tend to expect the community to step inside the University space, whereas in practice it should arguably be the other way. We need to explore and set models for the best ways of doing this.

Mode 1 versus Mode 2 Universities – engagement with community is more what Mode 2 do, whereas Mode 3 describes where the University sits with government and community in a collaborative process.

- see

[http://www.uws.edu.au/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0017/405251/Gibbons\\_What\\_Kind\\_of\\_University.pdf](http://www.uws.edu.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0017/405251/Gibbons_What_Kind_of_University.pdf)

Some Universities have a mandate to develop some of this; e.g. University of Western Sydney: still wrestling with these challenges and barriers – still some distinctions and differences in way that sub-groups see the issue of engagement.

Deep critical engagement is in line with Mode 2 Universities – a lot of time is spent looking for funds in partnership with communities – not necessarily always.

UTas academic operations integration program might be an example of a mode 3: critical engagement – need to get the model working well within the University and then go out into communities. All of the seminars and workshops are focused on having communities and others leading, not necessarily the University: “How will EfS benefit the communities of Tasmania?” – and then trying to get the whole university behind it.

Other examples: Swinburne University and sustainability champions – see <http://www.swinburne.edu.au/media-centre/news/2014/06/sustainability-champions-program-longitudinal-evaluation-report-released.html>

Ways to make it acceptable in the University to be other than a leader in discussions with community – critical to look at this as a multi-year effort – make sure engagement is embedded in overall strategic plan, but in ways that deliver with the community – then find the groups and places where this can be integrated.

Where this approach is being successful is in ‘sustainability science’ – where experts across disciplines are : a multi-disciplinary approach. May be more capacity for engagement around research – rather than education for sustainability – for active learning and change.

EfS with communities could be around learning, changing, building community capacity – but perhaps not as clear cut as community - although will be some deep learning involved in the engaged science approach. Some USA colleges do community-based research – figuring out how to frame the research. This is not being pursued in any major way in Australia – perhaps because of the liberal arts college tradition in the USA. TAFE institutions in Australia are arguably more connected with local communities.

How questions get framed with community can change, with changes in priorities of the institution/unit. The ways that Universities set research agendas can in part mitigate against this – as do the ebb and flow of resources. Some

interesting work coming out of UK around connected communities (e.g. Univ of Sheffield). In part this might be preceded by establishing a base more in things that are of primary interest to the University – the RCE approach can be useful in a number of ways, for example around the co-production of knowledge, and knowledge translation – for example, cleaning up rivers and the science behind what constitutes a healthy river. This can in part use the RCE as a conduit for knowledge sharing and knowledge generation.

Other areas of interest regarding university-community engagement might be around engagement with Asia-Pacific and also valuing indigenous knowledge.

One key message that was clear was the importance of keeping the relationships with the community going, for example, via the RCE approach – and ways of mediating institutional changes that affect these ongoing relationships.

Trying to put together some frameworks for what we might share in our understanding might be good as a next step.