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Civic engagement in the superdiverse city?

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Introduction

- Civic engagement and HEIs
- Emergence of superdiversity
- University of Birmingham as England's 1st civic university
- Key questions
- Framework for evaluating engagement
- Discussions and conclusions – thoughts for the future of civic engagements and HEIs

Civic engagement and HEIs

- Individual or institutional?

- Institutions:

“Public engagement describes the myriad of ways in which the activity and benefits of HE and research can be shared with the public. Engagement is by definition a two-way process, involving interaction and listening with the goal of generating mutual benefit”

(National Co-ordinating Centre for Public Engagement 2013)

- Civic engagement for who? - “brand management” and institutional self interest vs social justice

- Balance of power may lie with HEIs

Challenges for civic engagement

- Pressure for increased marketization of HEIs
- Unprecedented demographic change
- Mass migration from many countries to many countries = superdiversity
- Rapidly growing BAME populations
- Emergence of superdiverse cities

“A civically engaged University and its scholarship seek to broaden the scope of conversation, not only about the public but also with the variety of publics that now occupy the diverse local landscape”
(Weis et al al 2007)

- To what extent do we engage with superdiverse populations?



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Civic engagement – Chamberlains’ legacy

- ❑ UoB England’s first civic university explicitly open “equally” to all religions and backgrounds
- ❑ Intended to support the city and region economically
- ❑ Dares to be different – first to establish a faculty of commerce, women’s halls of residence, build a students’ union and more
- ❑ Civic engagement central pillar of activity
- ❑ How is the mission adapting to take into account superdiversity?
- ❑ To what extent is superdiverse civic engagement institution or individual led?



Evaluating civic engagement

Hart & Northmore (2011) outline 7 domains of engagement

1. Public access to facilities

2. Public access to knowledge

3. Student engagement

4. Faculty engagement

5. Widening participation

6. Encouraging economic enterprise

7. Institutional relationships

Approach

- Literature review
- Review of University documents and strategies
- Interviews with key personnel
- Secondary analysis of NSS and A2B datasets and census data

Civic engagement in Birmingham

- 1. Public access to facilities** – extensive but no ethnic monitoring, increased marketization
- 2. Public access to knowledge (ie Science Fairs)** –individual led events i.e. *School and the Black Child*, events for and with communities, held in communities – no monitoring
- 3. Student engagement** – individual and institution led volunteering and internships into community organisations, sports volunteering – no monitoring

Civic engagement in Birmingham

4. Faculty engagement – involvement of BAME groups in advisory boards, research strategies for centres and institutes –individual and social justice led but impact agenda has added a commercial imperative

Institute for Research into Superdiversity and Practitioner Researcher Programme

Civic engagement in Birmingham

5. Widening participation –institution led Masterclasses and A2B

- Very successful engagement and recruitment of local BAME students - proportionally more than city's main ethnic categories
- Institutional awareness and actions to enhance experience for BAME students i.e. lower retention, satisfaction and degree classifications
- Investment into activities ie inter-faith events, BAME mentoring, new website

Civic engagement in Birmingham

6. Economic engagement –CREME

supporting BAME SMEs ie brokering relationships with finance

- specialist centres rather than institution led
- access to R&D resources limited and commercially orientated

7. Institutional arrangements – specific mechanisms i.e. PSA, extensive contributions to local authority, IRiS (supporting L/A, Police and Fire Brigade) – individual but extensive

Civic engagement and superdiversity

- Institutional role at UoB restricted to Widening Participation where it is highly successful
- Success of WP suggests need to increase institutional role – adapt culture to expand Chamberlain’s diversity to 21st Century superdiversity and to look at outcomes
- Research councils pushing for civic engagement but uncritically – must evaluate quality and equality
- Need to question the role of contemporary universities – as increasingly corporatized and marketised
- Overlap between commercial gains and social justice
- Better monitoring of all activities will help us to manage the balance
- Will be commercially important given demographic