

The Political Sphere

This session examines questions of political interdependence between different scales of government. Cities and universities alike have been struggling to emancipate themselves from government on the provincial, state and federal level while the latter have responded to such demands in various ways. The result differs vastly across countries and continents, formally (through constitutionally guaranteed autonomy) and informally (through negotiated equilibriums). Increasingly, cities are seen as the optimum scale of regulation for a large set of societal problems (e.g. Barber 2013) and take a more active role in national and international politics, especially through networks (also see session 4). Similarly, universities are seeking to be more self-governing with governments shifting from micro- to macro-management of universities by developing new modes of governance, mainly by agreed targets.

This session will question some of the basic assumptions about how cities, universities and higher-order strands of government work together. It attempts to arrive at a better understanding of the opportunities and challenges of autonomy across various national systems. It also examines the question whether and how autonomous cities are better able to support their universities, and vice versa. The session will look into the various factors that determine the patterns, intensities and modes of cooperation between cities and universities, such as the institutional setting, size, economic potentials, agency, and the functions the relevant actors may have (or see) for each other. These variables may include the number of levels of government, the robustness (and room for manoeuvre) of city self-government and the outcome and impact of political interactions (e.g. to which degree can party-political contestation be productive, and where does it lead to. gridlock? How much heterogeneity, or pluralism, can the definition of “the city’s interest” or “the university’s interest” afford? How are factors of mutual interest, benefits and usefulness perceived?).

The Economic Sphere

The relationship between the university and the city is highly ambiguous. On the one hand, there is, especially in the United States, “an impulse to build campus environments, even in cities, with ‘an affinity with the purified, safe and calm life of the suburbs’”^[1]. Here the university is exalted for its “independence”, a somewhat lonely, alienated and disconnected institution with a lofty anti-urban and anti-economic stance. On the other hand, the university can never be “self-contained” as it lives on an intellectually and culturally fertile surrounding, with which it interacts by generating new knowledge, not for its own contemplation, but - in its widest sphere of influence - for social and economic development. Further to its search for knowledge and engagement, the university plays a crucial role in academic training and cultivation. And its role as a top employer of highly qualified staff, international magnet for visiting fellows and researchers, focal point of information networks, and catalyst for a large body of seminal students renders the university an important economic factor for the city.

^[1] David C. Perry and Wim Wiewel (eds.), *The University as Urban Developer*, New York 2005, p. 4.

The interconnections of a city with its universities and colleges are particularly relevant when it comes to social and economic development. Academic researchers, scholars and graduates can generate vital impulses for the local and regional economies whether through a single university, such as for Silicon Valley that grew up around the Stanford campus, or several institutions, such as for metropolitan Boston with its 60-odd academic facilities.

Fruitful economic synergies between the university and the city thrive best where there is willingness to match the structures of the university and the local economy, and to engage in an active and candid dialogue between theory and practice. The university is expected to facilitate original, issue-relevant research, to transfer knowledge by fostering two-way “data pipelines”, to develop tools for analysis and mapping academic and professional interests, to create permanent platforms for discussions and to work collaboratively with officials, city planners, entrepreneurs, lawyers, technicians, and other practitioners. Moreover the university study catalogue ought to reflect, to some extent, the needs of local public, social and economic agents, in fairness to both students who expect decent job opportunities after graduation, and to local employers who wait for highly qualified and motivated staff.

The city, as the physical, economic and cultural environment that shelters the university, has a key responsibility in supporting its endeavor to attract high-caliber faculty and students, as the city has an interest in attracting high value-adding industries and services. An attractive university needs a generally favorable regional environment, in particular a qualified, open and internationally oriented education system, first-class cultural institutions and programs, and attractive surroundings for leisure activities. The real estate development of the city and the university is just one dimension in this context. The provision of decent local infrastructure (for instance in transportation, health, culture, or housing for students and academic visitors from abroad), procuring adequate local services and establishing meaningful interactions between the university and its environment (for instance by supporting the bilateral dialogue and the transfer of knowledge between the economy and the university), are key responsibilities of the city.

Whose University, Whose City? Civic Engagement

Both universities and cities are dependent on popular support. For cities this is their reason d’etre, for universities it is important to contribute to solving societal problems and global challenges through research, empowering local residents in the process. Citizens’ participation also opens up new student groups (“University of the Third Age”) and helps universities develop new streams of income through philanthropy. To what degree should universities be influenced by civic engagement? Is this engagement inextricably linked to the idea of an autonomous university? Similarly, cities are keen to involve the civic sector in their conceptualization and operation but also struggle with concepts like direct democracy and value for money for taxpayers. This session aims to shed light on how universities and cities invite civic participation, how it changes the organization, how universities and cities can work together in achieving a balanced and productive relationship with active citizens, and what value the city/citizens attributes to its university.

Synergies, Cooperation and Competition: Alliances among Cities and Universities

Cities and Universities are in similar situations. Many of them face financial hardship and bear the brunt of competition. Yet both types of organizations are not merely passive recipients of social, economic and political forces but increasingly seek to advance their position in the competitive order

by exploiting synergies and entering into alliances. Since the 1980s cities have formed associations on the national and international level, such as Eurocities as a political lobby organization or theme-based networks such as Civitas (sustainable transport) or C40 (climate change). Cities' increasing involvement in international politics stems from the recognition that many of the world's most pressing problems can only be solved through local action. Universities have started forming networks from the 1990s when competition was unleashed in most national higher education systems. International alliances vary in intensity and membership, ranging from general networks based on mobility and facilitating collaborative research such as Universitas 21 or the World University Network to sponsor-based networks such as Santander Universidades to one-on-one relationships such as the Warwick-Monash Alliance, the most comprehensive international university partnership to date. Formal partnerships between cities and universities are the next logical step and they have begun to evolve, an example being the alignment of international relations between the City of Frankfurt and Goethe University.

This session addresses questions on the interplay between alliances and competitiveness, the relationship between autonomy and propensity to engage in partnerships, and the future of university-city alliances. Will "non-aligned" universities and cities be left behind?

References

Barber, Benjamin (2013), *If Mayors Ruled the World: Dysfunctional Nations, Rising Cities*. New Haven (Yale University Press)

Le Galès, Patrick (2010), *Le Retour des villes européennes? Sociétés urbaines, mondialisation, gouvernement et gouvernance*, Paris (Presses de Sciences Po.)