

## 4. Placing universities and regional relationships in context

### 1. Introduction

From a global perspective, HEIs contribute to regional development through different ways, depending on the local or national context, policy frameworks, and institutional leadership.

Based on the potential effects that HEIs have on the surroundings, many regional political leaders identify these institutions as the panacea to resolve local and regional development problems. However, even though we are already far from the classical portrayal of HEIs as an “ivory tower”, it is not possible that the development process of a territory is only related to the existence of higher education institutions in their regions”:

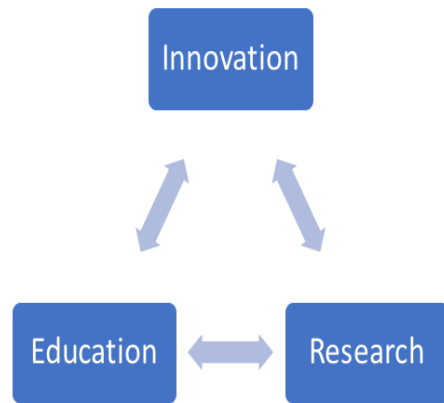
*“The existence, or even the creation, of universities does not, in itself, guarantee regional economic growth since the transfer of knowledge and the generation of innovations are not automatic and much less immediate”<sup>1</sup>.*

The limits (or barriers) on the regional effects of HEIs, in general, may be related to factors that concern the HEIs themselves or other local and regional stakeholders and how which the territorial ecosystem is structured<sup>2</sup>.

Therefore, it is essential to discuss how HEIs, together with stakeholders, can implement effective cooperation processes that promote higher levels of knowledge, competitiveness, cohesion, and quality of life. In this respect, the European Commission has recommended<sup>3</sup> the focus on the “regional knowledge triangle”, which combines research, education and innovation (see Figure 4.1).

In the contemporary economy, innovation is deemed to be the major driver of economic growth, and the stock of talented people and skilled human capital is a key factor in regions’ socioeconomic development.

### Figure 4.1: Regional Knowledge Triangle



Source: Authors, after European Commission.

In line with this point of view, four ways have been identified<sup>4</sup> in which universities could create activities globally, focused on knowledge and local engagement and innovation, by:

- i) supporting new enterprises and their emergence with labour market upskilling;
- ii) developing and attracting world-class academics who may contribute to regional innovation networks in their host regions;
- iii) creating structures to steer and support academics towards regional engagement; and
- iv) raising the regional innovation strategy processes and quality by helping to create collective innovation assets.

These perspectives stress the importance of human capital in the performance of regions. The role of both HEIs and companies in attracting and retaining students and highly qualified professionals is crucial in the framework of regional innovation performance<sup>5</sup>.

Graduates are truly relevant to a region's development process insofar as stakeholders absorb them in order to promote a better knowledge transference. Additionally, there is also the link between cutting-edge research and its regional application<sup>6</sup>. In the context of regional involvement, the cooperation between university and industry should privilege small to medium sized businesses and regional value chains, and adapt the knowledge transferred to the needs of local stakeholders. In

this sense, besides the absorptive capacity in companies, it is fundamental that researchers are motivated to do this.

## 2. Domains of territorial engagement <sub heading>

Regions are naturally different, the consequence of their physical/geographic conditions (relief, climate, hydrography, vegetation, the potential of natural resources, economic occupation, available labour, infrastructure). These factors stimulate or interrupt the regional development process, occurring spontaneously or induced through elements that are endogenous (internal) or exogenous (external) to the regional territory.

Other internal elements that are reflected in regional dynamics are the resistance of the physical or social environment with respect to changes, whether this is the result of environmental issues, religious beliefs or political cultures, and even the availability and transparency of intelligence and information, impacting upon the capacity for innovation, change and the absorption of knowledge, new technologies, and regulatory action of the institutions of government.

The exogenous elements (external to the region) refer to interventions to improve the profile of regional development or in a specific sector, mainly by the public sector, but can also come from the private sector. These interventions can, for example, improve the regional physical infrastructure, the policy context, governance or the quality of life itself, and can enhance the attractiveness (or otherwise) of the region for new investment, increasing local potential, strengthening the profitability of investments, and social and institutional innovation<sup>7</sup>.

It is in this regional context, with internal and external differences, that HEIs are located. Just as cities and regions are heterogeneous, having different dynamics in terms of size, function, and relative territorial position and hierarchy, HEIs also present different engagements and impacts, as they may 'use' and will be 'used' in a different way by regions.

HEIs are complex organisations with specific traditions, diverse cultural heritage, distinct hierarchical decision-making, and heterogeneous interest-representation

structures. As was discussed in previous chapters, in recent years, several attempts have been made to create conceptual frameworks and models to help universities and policymakers to understand the role and contribution of HEI to local and regional development. But these models have failed to fully reflect (or give insufficient attention to):

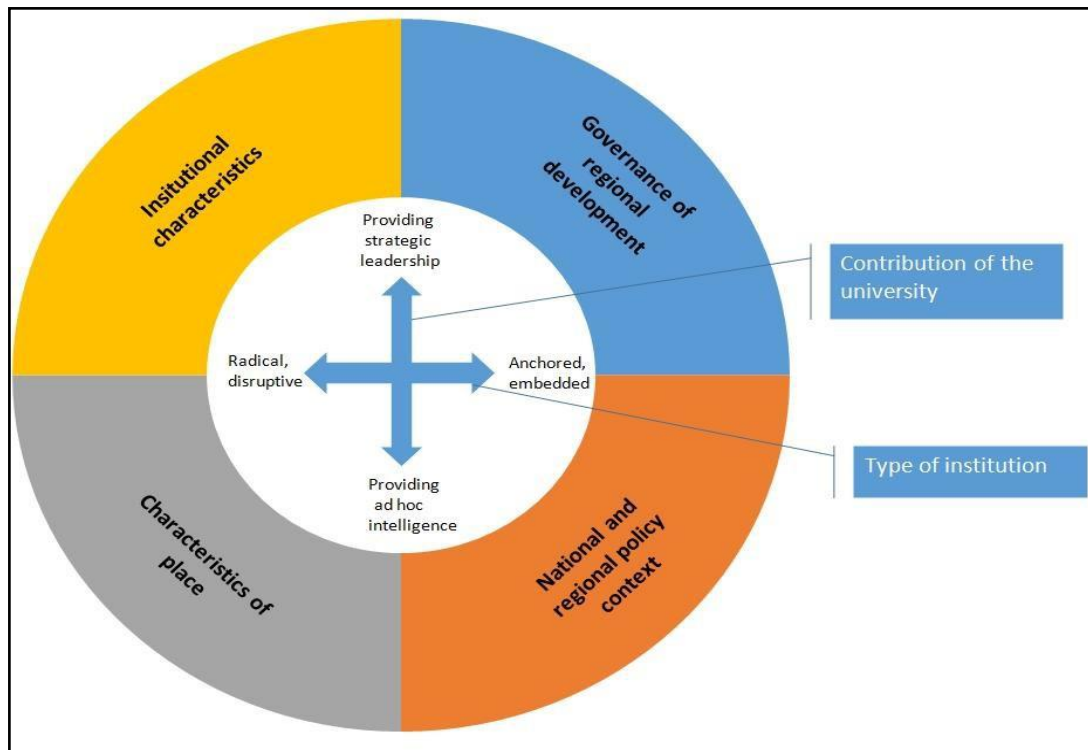
- i) the impact of the regional context (economic, social, political);
- ii) the policy environment for higher education and territorial development; and
- iii) the diversity of management and leadership structures of universities themselves.

The core of domains in the relationship between HEIs and the place where they are located is illustrated in Figure 4.2. The figure relates the internal context of HEI (institutional characteristics) with the external environment (governance of regional development, national and regional policy context, and characteristics of place).

Depending on the characteristics of these domains and the nature of their relationships, the territorial effects of HEI:

- \* bring different types of institutional linkages, which could be anchored (embedded) or, on the other side, radical (disruptive); and
- \* give rise to different HEIs contributions, which can be isolated and without much relational density (providing ad hoc intelligence) or strongly linked (providing strategic leadership).

Figure 4.2: Domains for territorial engagement considering institutional and local contexts specificities



Source: authors.

The interactions between HEIs and regions depend on the HEI's performance, the relationship they develop with their surroundings, and their characteristics, including the regions' historical legacy<sup>8</sup>. In each case, the dynamics of the regional ecosystems will be more as promoters of development, change and well-being in the region, features that are linked well to concept of the civic university.

A civic university is a HEI that possesses a place-based approach to link the activities of the university to its surroundings; the concept highlights and acknowledges the fact that HEIs can have a number of inter linkages with their environment and place, through interaction with the research and policy communities, and through the development of development projects such science parks, university hospitals, and creative or cultural quarters<sup>9</sup>.

In this respect, because universities can have multiple and different links with the place and institutions in their vicinity, the phrase ‘One size doesn’t fit all’ might be the best way to describe the range of interactions present:

*“Universities are more likely to be actors involved over multiple scales; they are global players who are highly influential beyond their immediate locale while exhibiting a significant capacity to affect the social, spatial, and symbolic structures”<sup>10</sup>.*

Geographical proximity is also an important feature when analysing the role of HEIs. The literature has shown that the greater the distance, the lesser the effects of the HEI in that region. Several reasons may explain this factor. The demand for universities tends to be higher among the resident population surrounding the university, that diminishes in strength as one moves away from the specific location of the HEI.

This proximity issue may be due to personal preferences, aptitudes, or socio-economic conditions, as distance will normally increase the financial and personal costs of attending higher education. This is particularly the case for less favoured socio-economic groups and regions in terms of both the demand for and supply of higher education<sup>11</sup>.

Likewise, the positive results of the direct and multiplier effects of income and employment, and the use of qualified labour and the overflow of research, tend to be greater the closer they are to HEIs. For this reason, several initiatives have emerged in nations to achieve a spatially balanced HEI network. This is not only for equitable purposes but also as a deliberate political tool to achieve regional cohesion, and is evident of parts of Northern Europe and in South America<sup>12</sup>. In Brazil, for example, affirmative action for higher education has sought to reduce social and racial inequalities in regions (see Box 4.1).

**Box 4.1: Addressing social and racial inequality through higher education**

In Brazil, the right to education is enshrined in the Federal Constitution of 1988, granted for its relevance in the process of education and instruction of citizens. However, in relation to higher education, regional asymmetries, racial, social and religious differences, and problems related to class inequalities, have forced the country to adopt measures to universalize access to higher education.

They are called "Affirmative Policies" or "Affirmative Actions", and are aimed at democratising access to universities, especially state and federal public universities, in order to promote equal opportunities. The intention is to facilitate access for high school graduates and low-income youth and, in parallel, access for young brown, black and indigenous peoples, and people with disabilities:

*"...the Brazilian government has structured, since 2007, a more general movement for reform and expansion of higher education, based on the Education Development Plan (PDE), whose main universal policy for higher education is the Program to Support Federal University Restructuring and Expansion Plans (Reuni). However, although Reuni organized and modulated public policies for higher education, a focused affirmative action policy had been created before it aimed at facilitating participation in higher education for low-income, disabled and/or young people from schools public: ProUni, focused on private higher education, was created by Law N° 11,096 of January 13, 2005, offering scholarships in courses from private institutions. On the other hand, after Reuni, a public policy focused on a broader scope than previous reparatory actions was created: the Quota Program, focusing on public higher education, was created by Law N° 12,711 of August 2012, with the objective of expand the access of the lower classes to federal universities and federal institutes of education"<sup>13</sup>.*

Under the Quota Law, at least 50 per cent of university places are offered to students who have completed high school in public schools. Of this percentage, 50 per cent is reserved for students from families with an income equal to or less than the minimum wage plus a half. Also, places are reserved for self-declared blacks, browns, indigenous people and people with disabilities in the population of the state where the university is located, according to the census of the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (IBGE). The remainder of the places, the other 50 per cent, are for non-quota holders; that is, those who make the selection process in wide competition, which do not fit the above criteria.

The federal government delegates to affirmative action policies, a central role in combating inequality in higher education, taking a proactive stance on the issue of exclusion. This policy does not solve the whole problem, and there remain issues of young people starting from different points in competing for places. But it is a commendable action for countries with such pronounced racial and social inequality.

Source: Gianezini and Rodrigues (2019); Morais et. al (2020)<sup>14</sup>.

Regions with dynamic and more consolidated productive structures tend to have a regional system of innovation either present or in formation. In these regions, HEIs play a central role as they can carry out R&D and interact locally from their teaching, research and entrepreneurship missions. As a consequence, universities' strategies

and policies often change to adapt to this external need as the academy interacts with the productive sector.

Universities often seek to stimulate these processes through the creation of Industrial Liaison Offices (ILOs), Technology Licensing Offices (TLOs), or Innovation and Technology Centres (NITs). However, as it has been pointed out, HEIs do not need to interact only with the provision of technologies in their strict sense<sup>15</sup>. They can promote collective learning and communication processes, social and non-technological networks, and of course trust.

In peripheral regions, or those regions lacking a regional innovation system, the main contribution of HEIs in and to a region is enhancing the qualifications of local students, encouraging new ideas, and enhancing the intellectual capacity of communities.

These are not, in themselves, insubstantial contributions, but some universities manage to go much further in their regional contributions. The ability of HEIs to go that extra distance is largely dependent on their local conditions:

*"Entrepreneurial ecosystems do not emerge just anywhere. They need fertile soil... entrepreneurial ecosystems have typically emerged in places that already have an established and highly regarded knowledge base which employs significant numbers of scientists and engineers. These organisations are the source of the skilled personnel who start businesses. These knowledge institutions – research universities, public research laboratories and corporate R&D labs – perform several roles in seeding the cluster" <sup>16</sup>.*

The traditional functions of HEIs – teaching and research – are in themselves essential for this more entrepreneurial possibility. But universities need to accelerate their regional intervention if they are to become more progressive and active agents of change in their own places. This would include, for example, stimulating their local engagement, getting involved with their immediate neighbourhoods, transferring knowledge, participating in discussions with a range of sectors, and influencing and informing the development of new policies and new economic initiatives.

As a result of pursuing these accelerated forms of regional interaction, universities will be much more closely aligned to the productive sector, able to offer assistance to local companies, active in the political discussions of development choices with local, sub-national and national governments, and become actively involved with local



communities<sup>17</sup>. See Box 4.2 that outlines a case study university that has gone on to accelerate its regional role.

**Box 4.2: Developing entrepreneurial capacity. A case study of Federal University of Pará (UFPA), Brazil.**

The Federal University of Pará (UFPA) is a university located in a developing country (Brazil) and in a peripheral Brazilian region. The state of Pará is rich in natural and mineral resources, multi-ethnic, but marked by the existence of a discontinuous and low-density urban network in a state of vast territorial dimension (the size of Spain, France, Portugal and Iceland put together together). It is a region that has serious social and economic vulnerabilities and limited and fragile university-business relationships. However, UFPA has also become a case study reference HEI in Brazil. Even in a region with so many difficulties in developing a regional innovation system, UFPA has carried out its teaching and research missions and has intensified its regional engagement.

UFPA decided to participate in the National Training Plan for Basic Education Teachers (Parfor), proposed by the Coordination for the Improvement of Higher Education Personnel (Capes), which aims to minimize the problems of the low level of teaching qualifications in the basic education network of many regions of Brazil, mirrored in Pará State. Just 10 per cent of teachers had adequate initial qualifications, and the other 90 per cent either did not have higher education experience or, if they did, they did not work in their area of formation.

It was in this context that UFPA accepted the challenge of trying to change these statistics by signing a Term of Adhesion to the Technical Cooperation Agreement with Capes and the State Education Secretariat of Pará for 2009-15.

In the following years, research showed a significant improvement in the rates of basic education in the municipalities of Pará, where UFPA had achieved some influence either directly or indirectly, and increased the number and quality of teachers with basic level qualifications. UFPA's participation was so important and significant that in 2015 there were already 60 teacher training centres formed across the Pará State.

The university has since consolidated itself as a strategic actor in government policies. In the long run, UFPA's participation in educational strategies for the basic level may further cause the development of a viable and consolidated structured innovation system from Pará as a whole.

Source: Serra et. al (2018)<sup>18</sup>.

The interactions described above are part of the Regional Innovation Systems (RIS) framework. RIS, aligned to the regions' characteristics and needs, are potentially effective instruments in improving competitiveness and wealth creation. Box 4.3. presents the case of a RIS in a peripheral Portuguese region of Alentejo.

### **Box 4.3: A Regional Innovation System in a European Peripheral Region**

Alentejo is the largest Portuguese region (NUTS II), occupying one-third of the area of the mainland; it is located in the centre-south of the country and has about 5 per cent of the Portuguese population. Alentejo is a convergence region (with a GDP per capita below than 75 per cent of the EU28 average).

The regional economic activity — based primarily on services and non-tradable goods — creates low income levels: Alentejo is a traditionally large-estate (*latifúndio*) agricultural region with heavily rented landowners. It faces a “vicious cycle of low density”, whereby the effects of a shrinking and ageing population and declining economic activity are compounded and perpetuated.

Évora, a small-to-medium sized town, is the largest in Alentejo (with about 50,000 inhabitants), where the main regional public services are located. The predominant sector in the city is tertiary, with an emphasis on trade, public administration, tourism and education. The city has a diverse range of small companies and some multinationals manufacturing electronic components and parts for the aircraft industry. Évora is also known for its culture and heritage (UNESCO classified its historic city centre in 1986 as a World Heritage Site).

Within the framework of EU structural policy, a set of diverse regional entities promoted the Regional System of Technology Transfer of Alentejo (RSTTA). RSTTA embeds the concept of the value network, based on the development and qualification of regional competences, reinforced by market-oriented national and international networks, and focused on the development of innovative goods and services that promote the region through the improvement of its entrepreneurial dynamics.

RSTTA is organized into five components: The Alentejo Science and Technology Park (PACT), and four subsystems (technological incubators, scientific and technological infrastructures, infrastructures with high synergetic potential, and technological and industrial parks and areas). RSTTA is grounded on PACT's roles as a focal point and a provider of leverage for the other subsystems. The Park is the central infrastructure of the RSTTA; It is also the region's primary incubator for technology development, fostering the environment required for accelerating the commercialization of research and to support innovation and entrepreneurship.

The PACT focuses on diverse themes and competences, which are critical for developing regional innovation and competitiveness, namely: Energy and Mobility, Mechatronics, Information and Communication Technologies, Food and Agricultural Technologies, Materials, Biotechnology, & Environment/Sustainability.

PACT is located in Évora's Industrial Park and has access to the resources of its cluster of leading higher education institutions: The Polytechnic Institutes of Beja, Santarém, and Portalegre and the University of Évora, its principal shareholder. It

started its activity in 2011 to create and develop companies in Alentejo, promoting scientific capacity, encouraging knowledge transfer for this region, and becoming a pole of attraction for innovative companies with sustainable results.

PACT's mission is defined as: i) boosting the creation and growth of companies in the Alentejo; ii) creating an innovation ecosystem, attracting innovative companies with sustainable results; iii) promoting Alentejo's scientific capacity and international ambition; and iv) contributing to an innovation agenda, encouraging the transfer of knowledge between the research base (universities, polytechnics, and the state) and innovative companies<sup>19</sup>.

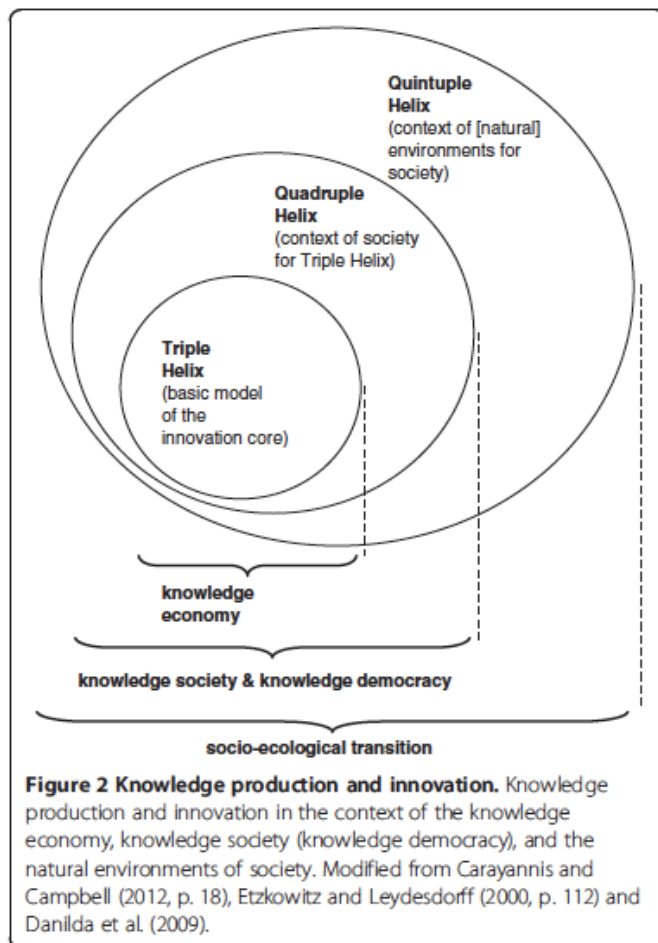
PACT web page <https://www.pact.pt/site/sobre/>.

The RIS development is, in line, with what is theoretically recommended by a "triple-helix" concept. The knowledge-based region is a consciously built entity structured by several actors, including a triple helix of government, industry and university as its engine<sup>20</sup>. Based on the triple helix framework, the regional advantage is intrinsically related to the endogenous capacity for knowledge creation and exploitation. Its construction depends on several factors, ranging from governance systems and knowledge bases, to a better interaction between the public and private sectors.

However, it is worth stressing that the interplay between the actors of the triple-helix<sup>21</sup>, assumes particular importance insomuch as it is essential for promoting regional economic activities:

- i) the university plays a pivotal role, through knowledge production under distinct ways; it forms highly skilled human capital, promoting the processes of technology transfer, and sets up science and technology parks and incubators, that may lead to generating spin-off companies;
- ii) the companies and public organizations must correspond to this interaction through the absorption and integration of innovative knowledge, the retention and attraction of graduates, and the communication to HEIs of innovation and technology needs.

Figure 4.3: Knowledge production and innovation



Source: Carayannis et.al, 2012: 4<sup>22</sup> <NB. This will require redrawing without reference to “Figure 2”>

Following the evolution of social challenges, the triple helix framework has evolved into a new matrix that also includes a civil society, named the quadruple helix<sup>23</sup>, and more recently a quintuple helix<sup>24</sup> that includes the natural environment (see Figure 4.3).

The helix model appears as a theoretical framework for the transdisciplinary analysis of sustainable development and social ecology. With this concept, we can understand the evolution of the nature of the relationships established between all regional stakeholders in the relevant domains at each historical moment, highlighting HEIs’ pivotal effect in relation to other regional institutions. It has a strong potential to accompany and accommodate the evolution of societal concerns over time and, in relation to them, set out an articulated community interaction.

Another dimension to the role of the university in the region is related with the main funding source: HEI can be either public or private, since that will allow or limit their

ability to respond to regional issues in different ways, and this might vary greatly, country to country.

The public HEIs can be supported by governments, religious organisations, other non-profit institutions, or can operate as collaborations with local and international institutions. The private HEIs are institutions that aim for profit. This is important to consider because a university's overall mission might be to proceed for private value rather than as a public good. However, the distinction is more blurred than it used to be. Actually, even public HEIs can operate as businesses in a globally competitive market for students and research funding.

HEIs, whether public or private, can therefore differ in terms of accountability, budgeting, ownership, and overarching goals. Human resource systems in public organizations tend to be merit based, and performance incentives tend to be lower than the private sector. According to the literature, public HEI organisations are more open to environmental (i.e., contextual) influences as a result of their accountability to multiple constituencies, policymakers, and legislative mandates<sup>25</sup>.

### 3. Conditions for territorial engagement <sub heading>

The connection between the presence of an HEIs and regional prosperity is neither automatic nor deterministic, since there are several constraints. Besides the impact on the regional income and improvement of competitiveness, related to the supply side effects of HEIs, cooperation can contribute to territorial cohesion. This domain includes the contribution to social, cultural and environmental development through formal and informal participation in regional networks of learning, innovation and governance<sup>26</sup>.

The perspective of a "civic university" implies a greater, and mutual, alignment between the higher education functions and regional development trajectories. This challenges the traditional idea of universities, as institutions that not only promote entrepreneurship and innovation, but also integration and socialization<sup>27</sup>.

Given the potentialities, and the constraints, of cooperation between HEIs and local stakeholders, it is important to discuss the determinants that shape this interaction.

The characteristics and level of competition of universities, and the characteristics of regions, can all determine interaction:

- Newer universities, and those located in peripheral regions, tend to maintain more substantial cooperation levels with the community: “Universities that are comprehensively engaged in their region’s development tend to be single relatively large scale universities located in peripheral regions”<sup>28</sup>;
- New or modern universities, more geographically disperse, tend to prioritize local development, more so than older universities;
- Traditional HEIs tend to be more concerned with their position in higher education rankings.

The activities carried out also depend on the characteristics of the regions, once the contributions to social life or, globally, community engagement, are more common in peripheral areas. One of the main determinants for HEIs regional involvement is the motivation of their teachers and researchers. The possibility of finding funding in these regional surroundings often stimulates the decision whether or not to cooperate: “Small, teaching oriented universities and, in the German case, universities of applied science are key to the emergence of local pools and networks”<sup>29</sup>, which reflects the important role of so-called ‘mid-range universities’.

The implementation of regional cooperation processes is just one of the tasks in which university staff can be involved, but these take their place alongside traditional research and teaching roles. Studies have highlighted frequent internal conflicts within HEIs between the pursuit of excellence activities in teaching and in research (which can be often associated with increasing the institution’s prestige and reputation in national and international terms), and commitments to and time for regional engagement<sup>30</sup>.

Traditional academic values within universities have, historically, given little weight for staff to engage with local communities; HEIs offer limited incentives or resources to pursue an activity that serves the region. The scope of internal institutional acknowledgements (for example, through incentives, rewards and promotion criteria) is important in stimulating and incentivising academics to engage and cooperate with stakeholders<sup>31</sup>. As cooperation activities are less valued and associated with lower levels of international and national reputation, albeit may generate significant local

and regional impacts, it will always be a second choice for some teachers and researchers. It is not only individual staff that this applies to.

Regional engagement must be, clearly, part of the institution's strategy, recognised at all levels and divisions internally, if a wider set of values and missions are to emerge. The autonomy of HEIs to make decisions in this respect is fundamental. However, there remain challenges between the autonomy of individual teachers and researchers to embark on regional engagement, and possibly contrasting attitudes and values of senior managers in universities who may reiterate alternative priorities.

In regional cooperation, the participation of industry or policy organisations is essential. The construction of good communication mechanisms between HEIs and companies or governments should make it possible to blur barriers in order to enhance HEIs' knowledge missions. In addition, knowing about the absorptive capacity allows the process to be effective: on the one hand, the knowledge transferred must correspond to needs; on the other hand, external organisations must identify and convey their needs to universities.

For industrial partners, what are the reasons why firms wish to collaborate with local HEIs? According to some authors<sup>32</sup>, there are proximity benefits, confidence, reputation, and the goal of building a more prosperous region. In fact, the knowledge transference cost increases with distance and collaborating locally reduces the risk of information loss. Face-to-face contact helps to transfer knowledge and engender trust; if the local HEI can make a useful contribution, satisfying the requirements of external agencies, companies may see collaboration as a long-term investment, helping to build regional research quality, to benefit future development while contributing to the community.

Leadership, and the implementation of regional development and education policies, particularly higher education policy, can also be key determinants of cooperation.

The ability of HEI to become regional leaders assumes that:

*“they act not only as educators but also as institutional entrepreneurs, proactively networking, shaping regional strategies and attempting to change local routines as well as national policies”<sup>33</sup>.*

The regionalization of the higher education system, regional identity, and networks are among factors that can foster or hinder the HEI regional engagement. More active regional engagement can be constrained (or even promoted) by the orientation of public policy, funding and incentives, decisions of leadership within HEIs, and the capacity of local and regional agents to get involved with higher education.

Regional engagement strategies of HEIs depend on the role the HEI chooses for itself and the leadership role it adopts. The options about governance, leadership, and management of HEIs, define the scope of active regional engagement, since – as we know – leadership and management styles vary by person and by sector.

In order to improve the regional commitment of HEIs, some public policy measures can directly relate to HEIs, as well as their relation with the environment (see Box 4.4)<sup>34</sup>. Many of these requirements coalesce around calls to increase funding for higher education specifically to resource the costs of regional engagement.

#### **Box 4.4: Measures to improve HEI regional commitment**

Universities can enhance their role within their own regions through a number of direct measures. They could:

- Include regional engagement as an institutional mission
- Consider allocating a proportion of the public budget to support the missions of regional engagement
- Identify distinct discretionary funding for engagement activities
- Promote involvement with the community, through cooperative relations, in order to obtain new financing as well as the possibility of applying for national or international support, in partnership with other local agents
- Increase and diversify financing related to collaborative and impactful research, focused on regional firms, and linked to regional priorities
- Develop worked based learning programs through lifelong and e-learning activities, as well as enhancing the links with employers to support the regional labour market



- Support regional distinctiveness and identity through programmes for social, cultural and environmental development.

Source: Benneworth, P. and Charles, D. (2013).

There are critical drivers of change for better regional commitment. Table 4.1 presents these drivers by building on the framework, Figure 4.2, outlined previously. What matters, really, is the character of the place, the region's spirit of authenticity, and common purpose shared by all regional stakeholders, including HEIs<sup>35</sup>. Successful regions rely, in part, upon a dynamic interplay between actors who engage in sharing knowledge and expertise, that encourages a cooperative spirit and environment.

The contribution of higher education to regional development can be successful if it is based on the distinct characteristics of regional ecosystems and the diversity and heterogeneity of HEIs, enhancing a higher education policy with local characteristics. This, in turn, fosters a *place-based* higher education policy).

Table 4.1: Drivers for better regional engagement (commitment)

Institutional Characteristics	Governance of Regional Development	National and Regional Policy Context	Characteristics of Place
Recognize and valorise local engagement, in the academic <i>milieu</i>	Decentralize the decision making by political, local and regional, institutions	Build place-based policies in the domain of regional development as in higher education field	Explore the characteristics / specificities of place, strengthening capacity building

Source: authors.

### Conclusion <sub heading>

This chapter discusses the context for universities and their regional relationships. HEIs contributions to regional development depends on a large set of characteristics

from local and national context, policy framework, institutional leadership and positioning in relation to the place where they are located.

The domains in the relationship between HEIs and surroundings are described and discussed, standing out the diversity resulting from the articulation of the internal characteristics of HEIS with the external environments. These differences are illustrated through cases analysed in several geographical contexts. The determinants of territorial engagement presented shows that HEIs and regions evolve into different levels of commitment due to the characteristics of HEIs and the institutions or companies with whom they interact.

In the next chapter, a new ORPHIC framework for universities and regional contributions, in order to strengthen the role of universities in their place, will be presented.

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<sup>4</sup> Benneworth, P. and Dahl Fitjar, R. (2019), 'Contextualizing the role of universities to regional development', *Regional Studies, Regional Science*, 6:1, 331-8. doi: 10.1080/21681376.2019.1601593.

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