

The Changing Mission of Higher Education

- and the Idea of Academic
Responsibility

Presentation for Universities Norway
NARMA

© Chris Brink
chris.brink@newcastle.ac.uk

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Two key questions for academia

**What are we
good at?**

**What are we
good *for*?**

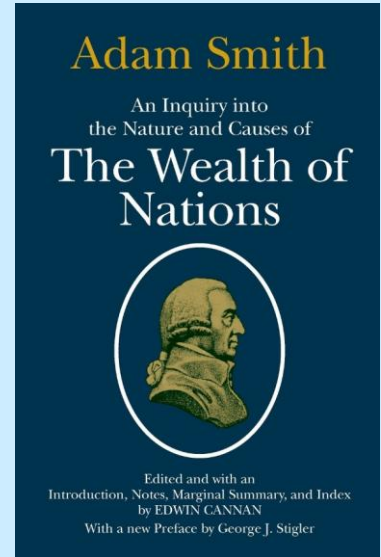


Our Rationale for pursuing the 'Good at' trend

The 'invisible hand' argument:

Free knowledge creation, the pursuit of knowledge for its own sake, and curiosity-driven research, if done well, will automatically benefit society in the long run

In support of this argument, we have many examples – and a well-developed conceptual framework



Immanuel Kant: *Academic Freedom*

**Wilhelm von Humboldt:
*Curiosity-driven research***



**John Henry Newman:
*Knowledge for its own sake***

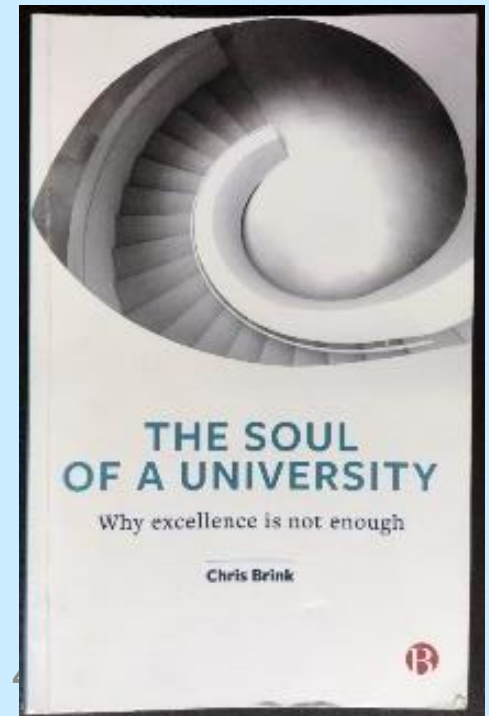
What we used to think

- Our academic job is to do research and teaching
- If we do that well, then society will automatically benefit in the long run
- Therefore, we must produce as many outputs as we can, and strive for academic excellence

This is true – but it is not the whole truth!

What we now think

- Excellence, by itself, is not enough
- Societal benefit delivered by just producing outputs is slow in coming and unpredictable in nature
- By definition, the invisible hand is not responsive to societal challenges
- The invisible hand argument looks like an abdication of social and moral responsibility
- We cannot fully respond to the ‘good for’ question in terms of the methodology of the ‘good at’ question
- In addition to research and teaching, we must engage with society and respond to societal challenges



Two main trends in global Higher Education

'Good at' trend

'Good for' trend

Academic Outputs

- Research
- Teaching
- Esteem Indicators
- Metrics
- Rankings

Societal Role

- Engagement
- Social Responsibility
- Responsiveness
- Societal Impact

Established Trend

**The Narrative of Excellence:
'How good is it?'**

Developing Trend

**The Narrative of Impact:
'What difference does it make?'**

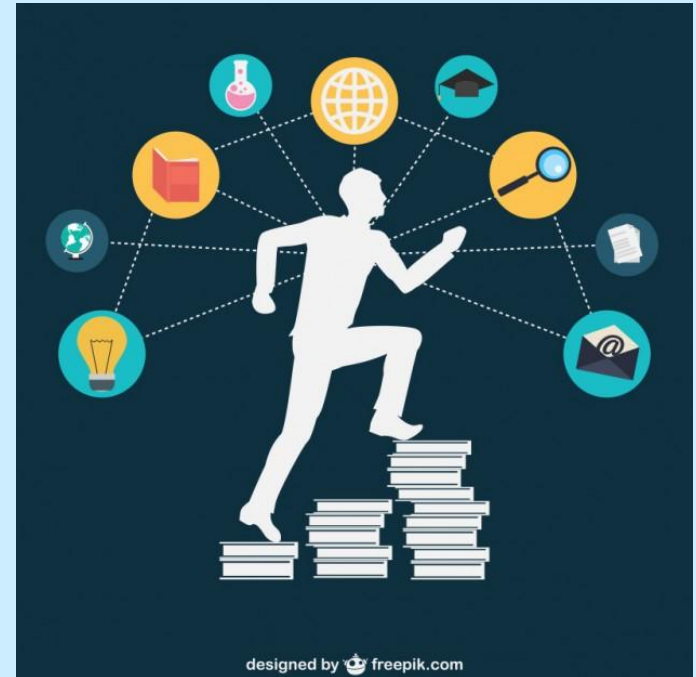
The Changing Mission of Higher Education

A global shift towards greater parity between the 'good-at' and 'good-for' questions in academia

This change has been happening for some time ...

... around the world, in various ways and under various names.

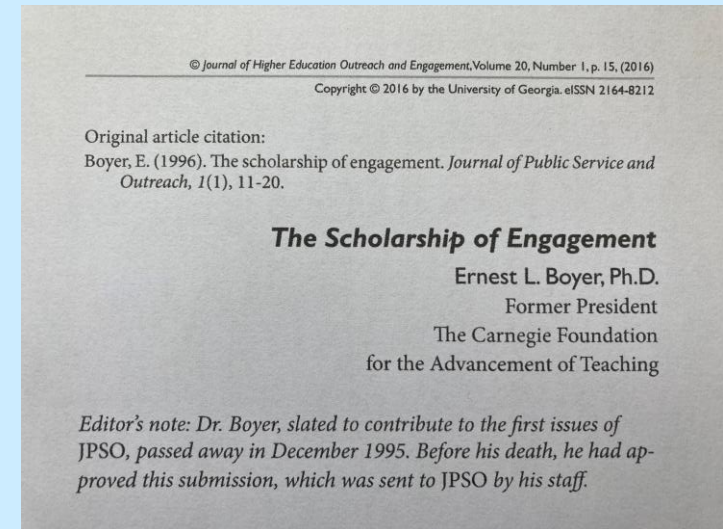
I give some examples, and introduce the Idea of Academic Responsibility



Example 1: The idea of engagement

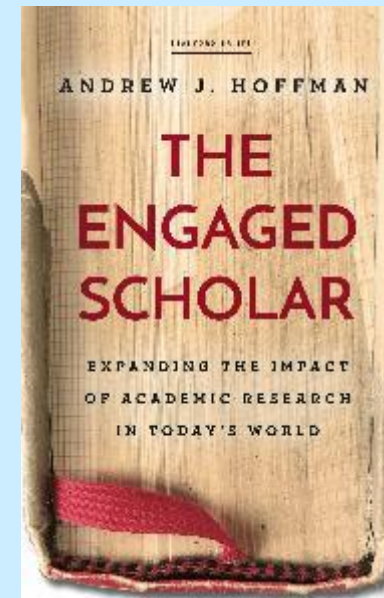
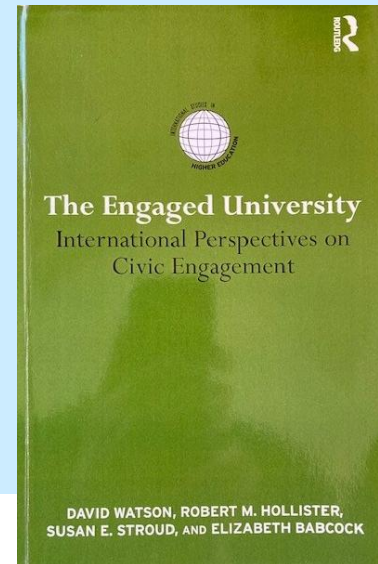
"[Our] outstanding universities and colleges remain, in my opinion, one of the greatest hopes for intellectual and civic progress in this country. I'm convinced that for this hope to be fulfilled, the academy must become a more vigorous partner in the search for answers to our most pressing social, civic, economic and moral problems, and must reaffirm its historic commitment to what I call the scholarship of engagement."

Ernest L Boyer, 1996



By now, the idea of engagement is a standard part of the academic lexicon, and academic practice

- A whole Literature on this topic: Books, Conferences, Networks, etc.
- International networks of engaged universities
- Sometimes characterised as the 'third mission' of HE (but the terminology is problematic)



Example 2: The idea of university social responsibility

“University social responsibility (USR) extends the traditional mission of universities in an endeavour to develop solutions for economic, social and environmental problems in society.”

<http://www.usrnetwork.org/about-usrn/background>

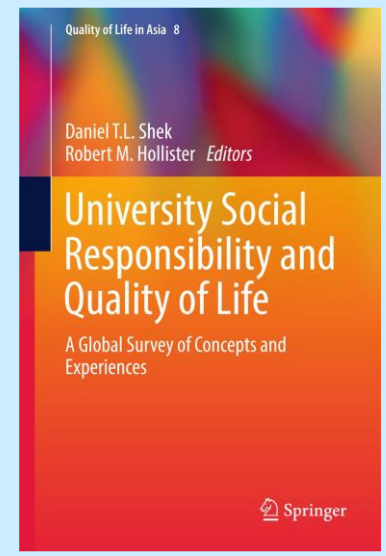


THE TALLOIRES DECLARATION On the Civic Roles and Social Responsibilities of Higher Education (2005-09-17)

<https://talloiresnetwork.tufts.edu/who-we-are/talloires-declaration/>

University Social Responsibility: A Common European Reference Framework, Final Public Report of the EU-USR Project, February 2015. See: Guidelines for Universities Engaging in Social Responsibility

https://www.iau-hesd.net/sites/default/files/documents/io8_guidelines_final_version_2017-09-12_print.pdf



“Sharing a culture of intellectual social responsibility”

<https://www.un.org/en/academic-impact/member-institutions-unai-inspire-action-sustainable-development-goals>

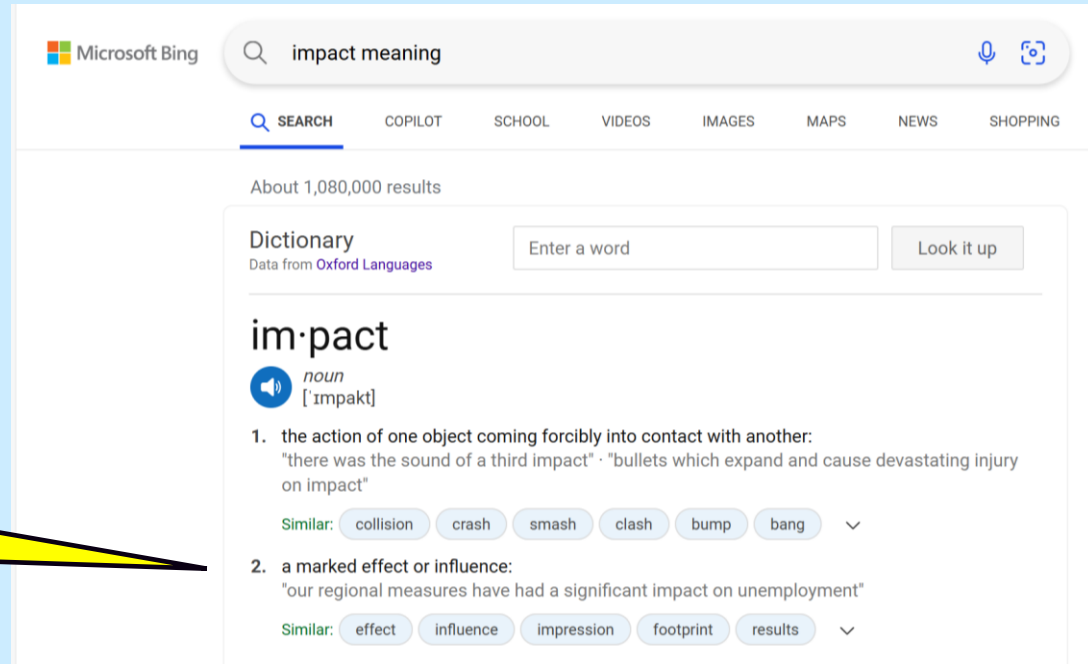


Example 3: The idea of research impact

**What does
'Impact' mean?
(In general)**

**"A marked
effect or
influence"**

**Check any
dictionary!**



Microsoft Bing search for "impact meaning". The search results show "About 1,080,000 results". The dictionary entry for "im·pact" is displayed, including a pronunciation guide and two definitions. The first definition is "the action of one object coming forcibly into contact with another" with an example: "there was the sound of a third impact" and "bullets which expand and cause devastating injury on impact". The second definition is "a marked effect or influence" with an example: "our regional measures have had a significant impact on unemployment". Similar words are listed for both definitions.

Dictionary
Data from Oxford Languages

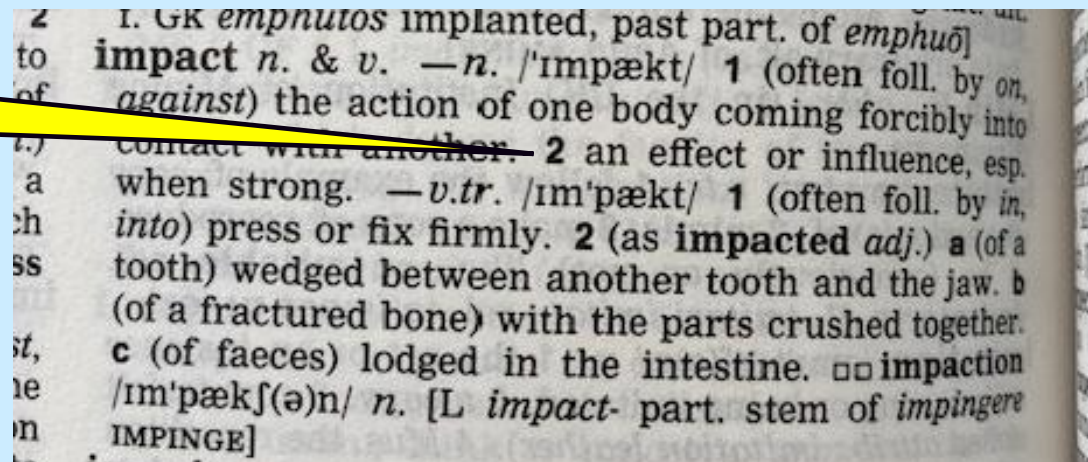
im·pact

noun
[ˈɪmpækt]

1. the action of one object coming forcibly into contact with another:
"there was the sound of a third impact" · "bullets which expand and cause devastating injury on impact"
2. a marked effect or influence:
"our regional measures have had a significant impact on unemployment"

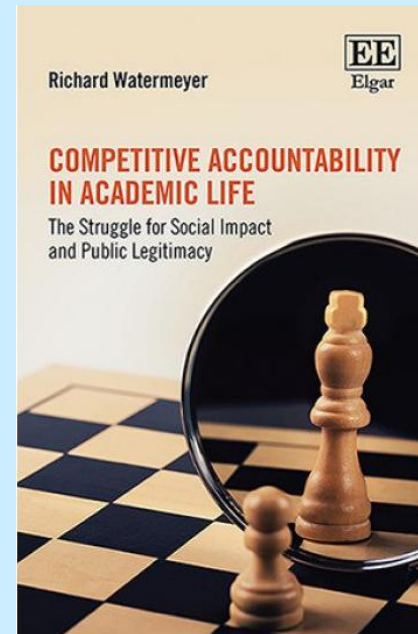
Similar: collision crash smash clash bump bang

Similar: effect influence impression footprint results



The 'Impact Agenda' is a significant manifestation of the developing 'good for' trend

- A new kind of question about the way we evaluate research: 'What difference has it made?'
- Specifically:
 - 'What beneficial effect has the research of your University/Department/Unit made on society at large?'
 - 'And what evidence can you provide of such impact?'
- **Impact is about improving people's lives. It could be in terms of the economy, technology, industry, innovation, health, culture, policy, services, ...**
- Already in place in a number of countries, and happening in others



“ Political decision-makers worldwide commit substantial amounts of public funds to support and foster scientific research on behalf of and for the society they represent. In return, they expect publicly funded research to generate some measure of impact. ”

Global Research Council, 2019

Evaluation of Impact

- **UK Research Excellence Framework (REF) 2014, 2021**
- **Hong Kong Research Assessment Exercise (RAE) 2020, 2026**

In addition to each individual academic submitting research outputs, each academic Unit (Department) has to provide some narrative Impact Case Studies of the societal impact of its research.

- **Each Impact Case Study had to address two basic questions:**
 - What beneficial contribution has the research of your unit already made to society? (Outside of academia!)
 - And what evidence can you provide of such contributions?
- **Thousands of such Impact Case Studies now available online in searchable Repositories:**
 - Universities South Africa: <https://usaf.ac.za> ('Societal Impact' tab on home page)
 - UK REF 2014: <https://impact.ref.ac.uk/casestudies/>
 - UK REF 2021: <https://results2021.ref.ac.uk/impact>
 - Hong Kong RAE 2020: <https://impact.ugc.edu.hk/>
 - Australian ERA 2018: <https://dataportal.arc.gov.au/EI/Web/Impact/ImpactStudies>
 - Research Impact Canada: <https://researchimpact.ca/kmb-research/case-studies/>

Evaluation of Impact

- **Impact Case Studies must be:**
 - Research-based (There needs to be a causal chain leading back to original research conducted at that particular university)
 - Substantiated by verifiable evidence (which can be of various kinds)
 - Retrospective (The impact must already have happened)
- **Evaluation by peer-review panels, with additional lay members from civil society**
- **Qualitative more than quantitative**
 - Metrics may be used at most to inform the judgment of a panel, but not to determine its judgment
- **Evaluation criteria:**
 - 'Reach' (How far/wide has the impact spread? – within its domain of applicability)
 - 'Significance' (How much of a difference has it made?)
- **Evaluation rating on the same scale as research outputs**

Formal definitions of 'Reach' and 'Significance' are available

Example 4: The *Magna Charta Universitatum*



<http://www.magna-charta.org/>

1988 Version: *“Freedom in research and teaching is the fundamental principle of university life.”*



2020 Version: *“Universities acknowledge that they have a responsibility to engage with and respond to the aspirations and challenges of the world and to the communities they serve, to benefit humanity and contribute to sustainability.”*

Example 5: The idea of responsiveness

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS



HIGHER EDUCATION'S RESPONSE
TO THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC
Building a more sustainable
and democratic future

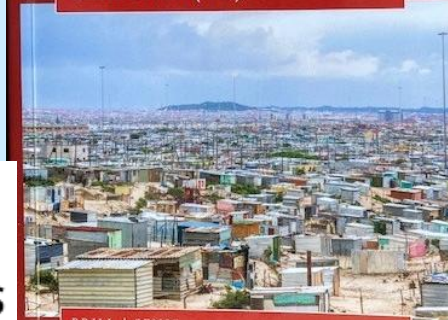


Council of Europe
Higher Education
Series No. 25

AFRICAN HIGHER EDUCATION: DEVELOPMENTS AND PERSPECTIVES

The Responsive
University and the
Crisis in South Africa

Chris Brink (Ed.)



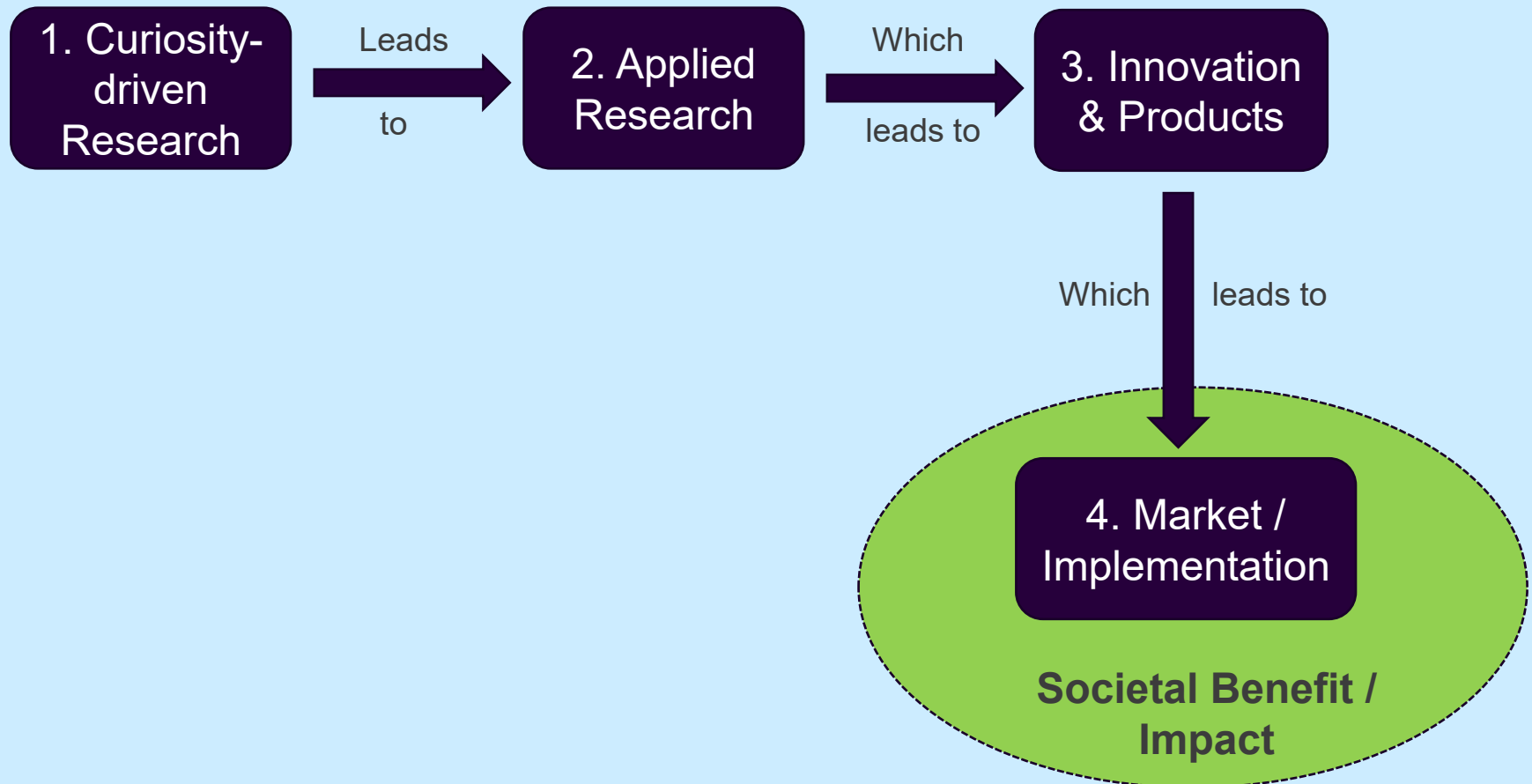
BRILL | SENSE



UNITED NATIONS
UNIVERSITY

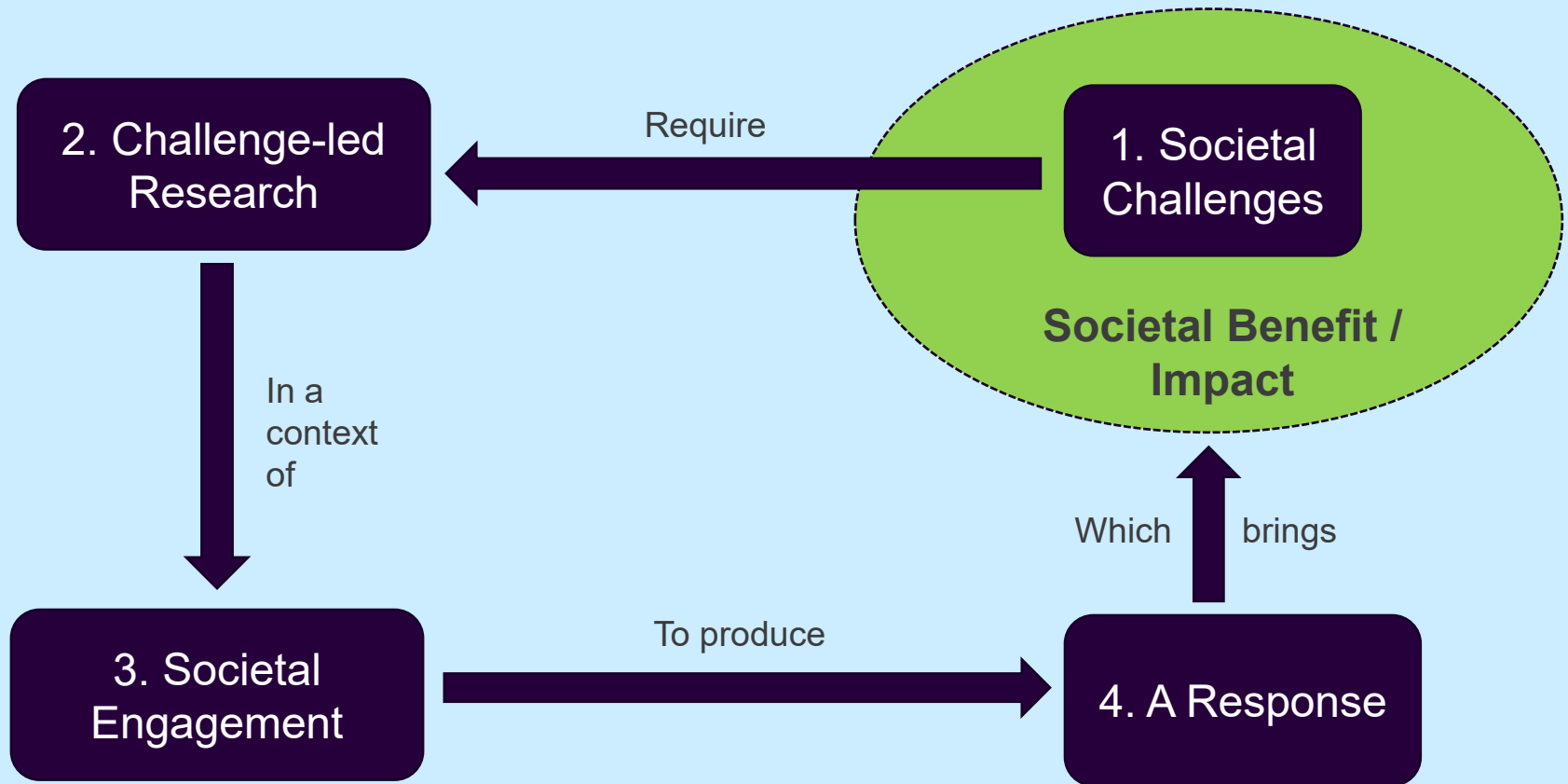
The Linear Model of Knowledge Production

... is situated within the 'good at' paradigm



In addition, we need a *Responsive Model* of Knowledge Production

... situated within the 'good for' paradigm



A further key question for academia

Given all the empirical evidence of an expanded understanding of the mission of HE:

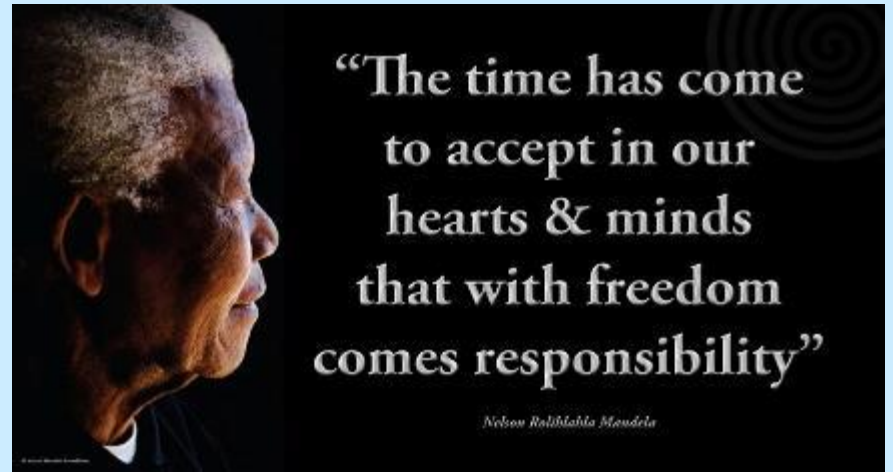
Is there a single unifying principle for the changing mission of HE?



Unifying Principle: Academic Responsibility

No freedom comes without responsibility

Why should we think that academic freedom is any different?



We spend lots of time talking about academic freedom

It is time to give equal attention to academic responsibility

-- That is, our freely-chosen responsibilities to society

BEYOND the IVORY TOWER

Social Responsibilities
of the Modern University

DEREK BOK

The Responsible University

Exploring the Nordic Context
and Beyond

Edited by
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Jouni Kekäle · Rómulo Pinheiro



SJUR BERGAN

EUROPEAN HIGHER EDUCATION, SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY, AND THE LOCAL DEMOCRATIC MISSION

Global Sustainability and the Responsibilities of Universities

Lac E. Weber
James J. Duderstadt (eds)



The Research Impact Handbook



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NETWORK FOR INNOVATION

palgrave pivot

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Stephen Chan
Grace Ngai

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Harald A. Mieg Editor

The Responsibility of Science



COMPANION DOCUMENT
A REFERENCE FRAMEWORK
FOR ASSESSING
UNIVERSITY SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY:
FROM THEORY TO PRACTICE

ECONOMICA



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Daniel T.L. Shek
Robert M. Hollister Editors

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A Global Survey of Concepts and
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Edited by
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BEYOND THE ACADEMY

INTERNATIONAL AND DEVELOPMENT EDUCATION

The argument for academic responsibility

-- Understood as 'freely-chosen responsibilities to society'

The empirical argument. (The shift in this direction is happening already – as per the examples given.)

The logical argument. (Responsibility is the inescapable counterpart of freedom.)

The moral argument. (Where Academia has the ability and the means to contribute towards solving societal problems, it would be morally indefensible not to do so.)

The strategic argument. (Voluntarily adopting a chosen set of societal responsibilities will enhance the argument for academic freedom.)

Academic Responsibility in the Context of Democracy

- **We have a problem!**
 - The loss of trust in academia
 - The vagaries of a 'post-truth' society
 - The erosion of democracy from within
 - Academic freedom under threat in unexpected quarters
- **How should we respond?**
 - Excellence, by itself, is not enough
 - More of the same, in the 'good-at' paradigm, will not change perceptions
 - We need, in addition, a value proposition that can be understood and will be accepted outside of academia
 - The argument for academic responsibility and societal impact is such a value proposition.
- **In summary:**
 - *Every university should be free to decide for itself what its responsibilities to society are, and how to implement them*
 - *No university should neglect doing so.*

Takk!