

Universities as Regional Anchors, Place Leaders and 'Inclusive Growth'

Intended Supervisory Team: Professor Phil Tomlinson, Dr Felicia Fai, Dr Mariachiara Barzotto

Universities have long engaged with society in a variety of ways as part of their 'civic role'. The UK Government White paper on Industrial Strategy (HMG, 2017) outlined a clear expectation for UK universities to work closely with business and government within a *place-based* approach. During the COVID-19 pandemic, universities have played a critical role in sustaining regional responses to the health emergency (e.g. providing PPE). Post-COVID, universities are expected to be *place leaders* in fostering regional recovery plans; going beyond mere civic engagement to acquire new responsibilities for regional strategic steering, and mobilising and supporting local actors in the development of Regional Innovation Eco-systems (RIEs) (Goddard, 2020).

Yet, while universities are widely lauded as conduits to promote inclusive regional growth, there are many misconceptions (in policy and academic circles) about their anchoring roles and their local civic or place leadership responsibilities, which can undermine the efficacy of policy.

This PhD project seeks candidates who wish to explore the multifaceted anchoring roles of universities within their regions, and the institutional and regional contexts that both shape and are shaped by their place leadership capabilities and responsibilities. There is an opportunity for a granular study exploring the idiosyncrasies of university capabilities/capacities and how they align with underlying economic geographies, university place leadership roles and the development of place-based policy frameworks.

This may include addressing questions such as:

- i) What role do universities - as public anchors - play in the co-creation and dissemination of knowledge (with private firms/government/other public actors) and how might they act as public entrepreneurs within a regional innovation eco-system?
- ii) What are the nature of relationships between universities and other public/private sector anchors within regions? To what extent do the objectives/activities of regional public/private anchors complement/conflict with each other?
- iii) How might universities promote social innovation and help to meet societal challenges? How do these activities impact upon promoting inclusive regional growth?

These issues do not lend themselves to any particular methodology; the approach adopted will depend upon the context. It is possible to conduct in-depth, critical and evaluative research using quantitative and/or qualitative research methods that may focus upon two or more in-depth case studies. The project can be international and is not limited to the UK.

Candidates can apply from a range of social science/business disciplines. It is important they are highly motivated and have an interest in *place leadership* (see Beer et.al, 2018), *place-based policies* and/or regional development. They should have either strong quantitative skills and/or strong qualitative skills (or would be able and willing to develop them) to undertake the PhD beginning in September 2021.

Dependent upon the focus of the PhD, there is a potential opportunity to undertake a short internship at the UK Cabinet Office in the Department for Communities and Local Government/Business Energy and Industrial Strategy.

Informal applications should be directed to Professor Phil Tomlinson (P.R.Tomlinson@bath.ac.uk), Dr Felicia Fai (F.M.Fai@bath.ac.uk) or Dr Mariachiara Barzotto (mb2602@bath.ac.uk). This should include an outline of your proposed research and methodology (approximately 2,500/3,000 words).

