



3LE on...university and anchor institutions

The importance of Universities in city and community leadership and management and their contributions to local growth, development and public services reform is now part of the orthodoxy of place-based policy agendas. In many places they are amongst the largest and, in some cases, the wealthiest organisations – especially in terms of those with integral public and social purposes.

Two LGIU policy briefings in 2015 and 2016 provide a good background for local leadership teams seeking to progress more purposeful relations with their Higher Education (HEI) partners – [“Making the university-anchor-institution a reality: Towards more purposeful local government-university relations”](#), April 2015; and [Making the most of your universities](#), August 2016.

However, these overviews are immensely enriched by two major projects in which 3LE played a leadership role in 2015/16 and 2017/18.

Leadership - the University refreshes its commitment to being a proud constituent part of an increasingly successful global region, exemplified in its approaches to...

Vision and mission	The University of Warwick's strategic plans articulate clear statements of local and regional intent and purpose.
Participation	The University recognises it needs to be an active participant in defining and delivering local, sub-regional and regional success, along with the relevant supporting leadership structures.
Leadership	When appropriate, and in consultation with partners, the University takes a lead of specific local and regional priorities.
Insight	The University plays a full role in thought leadership and knowledge aggregation of local and regional intelligence.

Partnership - the University delivers effective local and regional interventions, working closely with partners and beneficiaries, through...

Accountability	A senior manager is clearly accountable for regional engagement and owns the strategy.
Resources Management	The University strengthens intelligence, review and evaluation processes that assure the effectiveness of priority interventions to which it has committed with local and regional partners.
Information and Consultation	Stakeholders are involved in selection, design, delivery, and review of these particular priorities.
Collaboration and co-production	The University's strategic collaboration with other Universities and strategic partners is agreed and purposefully delivered.

Citizenship - the University is consistently a 'Good Citizen' in the way it engages and behaves with those communities where its presence has the most significant impacts by...

Understanding its externalities	The University recognises, anticipates and proactively plans and manages externalities of local and regional impact.
Social Responsibility	There is an explicit commitment to the economic, social and environmental wellbeing of communities most affected by the University.
Access	Wherever possible local communities have access to the campus, facilities and services of the University.
Widening participation	The University is committed to intensive support for local widening participation programmes.

In the first, as Executive Commissioner of the University of Warwick Chancellor’s Commission, we produced a flagship report on [‘The future role of University of Warwick in Coventry, Warwickshire and the wider region’](#). This independent, innovative, evidence-based and consultative/deliberative report looks at how Warwick – a large research-intensive global HEI - can refresh its engagement and uplift its positive impacts on the city, region and communities where it is located. Both the findings and methodological approach of the commission has potential read-across to other cities, regions and their HEIs. The report also suggests a new framework for local and regional engagement that provides an interesting starting point for universities who aspire to be even more ‘civic’ anchor institutions in the future.

The Warwick Commission provides a robust way for the larger anchor institutions to mediate their local and regional positioning and relationships. However, as the Commission ended, and we moved into the post-referendum period, the whole position of ‘anchor institution’ orthodoxy has become much more problematic.

Are large anchor HEIs inevitable part of incumbent elites – even more so when they are as if not more powerful than the local authorities in whose areas they are located?



These questions are beginning to be answered in a 2017/18 project collaboration with Plymouth College of Art (PCA). ‘Anchors’ may fundamentally be heavy, clumsy objects preventing forward movement in places that need radical transformation. This recent work puts forward the need for HEIs to be ‘loosener’ rather than anchor institutions. Another major, evidence-based and deliberative investigation, the final report is awaiting publication, but a new framework and some of the findings have been anticipated in three blogs, and presented at the November 2017 RSA Winter Conference, and the GuildHE Annual Conference.

- [Reflections on universities and place: More about navigating than anchoring](#)
- [Will smaller specialist universities drive place-based industrial strategy?](#), and
- [Anchors aweigh! Universities and local industrial strategies](#)

This is a hugely important, new area of work, and one which 3LE intends to progress much further in 2018 and beyond. Please get in touch if you wish to be part of the process and/or to be kept informed (e.g. when the PCA report is available).