

Connecting Universities to Regional Growth

Emeritus Prof John Goddard, CURDS

The Centre for Urban and Regional Development Studies (CURDS) has been investigating innovation and regional development with particular focus on the role of Universities in fostering local social and economic development since the 1980s. CURDS research suggests that far from the 'ivory towers' of isolated learning and knowledge, Universities can in fact play a vital role in their regions by contributing to sustainable development, public health and the cultural sector of cities. Universities can attract investment, support all learning, engage in community development and share their knowledge through research and consultancy.



In 1994 CURDS undertook a study for the Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals (CVCP now Universities UK) which produced pioneering guidance on the role of Universities in the regions. The guidance was then implemented nationally in the Dearing Report, the largest review of UK higher education since the 1960s. Previous to the Dearing Report, local and regional involvement of institutions was patchy and lacked a national strategy. Professor John Goddard's underpinning research identified the opportunities for universities to contribute to the economic, social and cultural development of the places where they were located.

This work has been influential in many areas of research, policy and practise, including regional studies, politics, planning and university management, and has had a wide uptake internationally. Between 2004 and 2007, the analytical framework developed in CURDS was used by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) in assessing how the higher education institutions contribute to city and regional development in 40 areas in 35 countries. The key lessons have now been codified in a practical guide published by the European Commission - Connecting Universities to Regional Growth. This has been widely utilised by universities and regions across Europe and beyond such that the role universities need to play in employment generation, shaping the built environment ('making the place'), business innovation and local civil society, is a widely accepted as a priority by most university and city and regional leaders across the globe.

“Universities have been reinventing themselves as institutions embedded in the city; but now in a globalised economy”

Emeritus Prof John Goddard



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