Chapter 6

The Civic University, the Engaged Scholar:
Implications for Scholarly Work

Al Lauzon
University of Guelph, Canada

ABSTRACT

This chapter begins by arguing that universities and scholars have come under criticism for failing to address problems identified as relevant by their stakeholders—the general public—and there is a need to reclaim the civic mission of the university. This need arises as a result of our current inability to deal with "wicked problems." The development of the modern university is then traced, arguing that while originally it was rooted in the "university as ivory tower" and then evolved into the "university as marketplace partner," neither is adequate to meet contemporary needs. The university that is emerging—the "university as civic partner"—is described and its implications for scholarship explored. A case study is then presented as a means of illustrating the implicit ideas of this form of emerging scholarship and by reflecting on the case and its implication for how we understand scholarship. The challenges we face in transforming scholarship are then identified and discussed.

INTRODUCTION

Bridger and Alter (2006) have argued that universities are facing unprecedented scrutiny and criticism. As they state, faculty are faulted "for conducting research that is disconnected from real world problems, and worrying more about personal advancement than service to community (p. 163)." Others have argued that the university has become part of the marketplace and that they differ from others in the market in name only (Bok, 2003). As

Bridger and Alter continue, "criticisms are rooted in the perception that universities are out of touch and out of date, and that they are not addressing important societal issues (p. 163)." Castle (20014) argues we need to reclaim the civic university. But as he noted, to reclaim something means that it has changed in some fundamental way and we need to draw it back to what it once was. And while one might not disagree with Castle, there is a need to reclaim the civic university, and it must be viewed from an evolutionary perspective; the

emerging university imagined will be very different than in the past, even if both visions of the university have a civic mission. And while the civic university of the past was in search of the "truth", the one universal knowledge, the new civic university must recognize that there are multiple valid truths, more than one valid reality (Sinnott and Johnson, 1996). Dealing with multiple truths and realities, as Lauzon (1998) has noted, requires a more complex structure of consciousness. This is deserving of more discussion in order to establish the larger context for this chapter.

The historians Luckacs (2002) and Hobsbawm (1994) have argued that starting in the 1980s there began a fundamental transformation in the organization and structure of human societies with networks replacing the modern hierarchy. Many of these changes are captured by Castells (1996) in his book *The Rise of the Network Society.* Hawken (2007) writes that there is a proliferation of diverse networks today working on the behalf of others related to issues of social justice. As he further posits, networks consists of webs of relationship that link individual actions to "larger grids of knowledge and movement (p. 144)" and at the heart of these networks is not technology but relationships. Capra (1996) has suggested that sustainable human communities must take the form of networks. He further argues that networks, as a basic pattern of life, are nonlinear with multiple pathways for feedback making this form of organization both resilient but unpredictable. Harvey (1990) has argued that the human journey is characterized by the ongoing compression of time and space meaning that the rates of change we experience escalate. Networks are ideal forms of social organization as they can reconfigure themselves more quickly than hierarchical structures, and this means they are more resilient and better able to negotiate escalating rates of change. Networks are emerging as the dominant form of social organization replacing the modern hierarchy.

Rifkin (2011, p. 12) has traced transformations across humanity's history and argues they are driven by a convergence between emerging communication technologies and new energy systems. As he wrote, "New energy regimes make possible the creation of more interdependent economic activity and expanded commercial exchange as well as facilitate more dense and inclusive social relationships. The accompanying communication revolutions become the means to organize and manage the new temporal and spatial dynamics that arise from new energy systems." According to Rifkin, modernity arose as a result of the development of the steam engine in conjunction with the printing press, while the current transformation is a function of the integration of the computer and communication technology in conjunction with the development of alternative energy technologies. Rifkin suggests that these transformations are also indicative of transformations of human consciousness, leading to more inclusive forms of consciousness. There are others who agree and argue emergent forms of consciousness are institutionalized in emergent forms of social organization. (Elgin, 1993; Wilbur, 1995; Lauzon, 1998), creating opportunities to know the world in new ways, transforming our understanding of knowledge.

Lauzon (1998, 2013) has suggested that the dominant worldview of the last 500 years—the modern worldview—has become increasingly dysfunctional. This dysfunction is expressed in a number of ways, including escalating environmental destruction and global climate change, increasing inequity both across and within countries, anomie, and alienation resulting increasingly in an existential abyss of meaninglessness that finds expression in crass consumerism as people in developed economies seek meaning through consumption (Rifkin, 1987). Lauzon (2013) has further argued that we are seeing the emergence of a participatory worldview and that part of a participatory worldview constitutes a movement

18 more pages are available in the full version of this document, which may be purchased using the "Add to Cart" button on the publisher's webpage:
www.igi-global.com/chapter/the-civic-university-the-engaged-scholar/120334

Related Content

Summer Mentoring Experiences for Students in Online Doctoral Programs: The Llano Estacado Writers' Alliance
Julie Smit, Elizabeth Jones, Michael Ladickand Mellinee Lesley (2021). *Handbook of Research on Developing Students' Scholarly Dispositions in Higher Education (pp. 109-131).*
www.irma-international.org/chapter/summer-mentoring-experiences-for-students-in-online-doctoral-programs/285114

Melbourne's Advanced Rail Transportation: Innovative Systems and Their Future Perspective
Koorosh Gharehbaghi, Ken Farnesand Matt Myers (2020). *International Journal of Strategic Engineering (pp. 24-36).*
www.irma-international.org/article/melbournes-advanced-rail-transportation/255140

How Big Data Transforms Manufacturing Industry: A Review Paper
Victor I. C. Changand Wanxuan Lin (2019). *International Journal of Strategic Engineering (pp. 39-51).*
www.irma-international.org/article/how-big-data-transforms-manufacturing-industry/219323

Implementing Design-Based Research in Developing Mobile Flipped Learning Module at TVET Institution
Norharyanti Mohsinand Siti Hajar Halili (2025). *Multidisciplinary Educational Perspectives on Design-Based Research (pp. 429-470).*
www.irma-international.org/chapter/implementing-design-based-research-in-developing-mobile-flipped-learning-module-at-tvet-institution/368367

Implications of Economic Decision Making to the Project Manager
Brian J. Galli (2021). *International Journal of Strategic Engineering (pp. 19-32).*
www.irma-international.org/article/implications-of-economic-decision-making-to-the-project-manager/269715