



ENGAGING UNIVERSITIES AS PARTNERS AND PROPONENTS OF THE NEW URBAN AGENDA

Coordination, Spatial Strategies, Access

Research Brief for UN-Habitat UNI and the UN-Habitat Working Group on Higher Education for Sustainability

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Report authors

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For more information, see www.newurbanuniversity.org

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Cover image: Columbia University, Manhattanville Campus, April 2014 © Jean-Paul Addie



Summary

The relationship between the university and the city is evolving in an era of global urbanization. It is now a well-worn adage that we have entered an ‘urban age’ with more than half the world’s population living in cities. This epochal transition raises unprecedented opportunities for universities to mobilize their expertise, influence policy agendas, and assume critical roles as urban leaders on the global stage. Yet it also presents profound challenges for academic institutions, both in terms of changing expectations and functions of higher education and where in the world – and the city – university adaptations need to unfold.

Concerted attention has been paid to questions of capacity building and knowledge transfer in the run-up to Habitat III, and in conversations supporting the New Urban Agenda. Fostering cross-sectoral partnerships is a vital step towards ensuring the successful formation and sustained implementation of new sustainable urban development policy frameworks at a global scale, and on the ground. Universities have tremendous potential to contribute to this agenda. Agenda 21’s fourth Sustainable Development Goal highlights the importance of education for sustainable development, with higher education, in particular, playing an essential role in training urban decision-makers on the problematics and possibilities of sustainable urban futures.

Universities, however, have tended to be left off the map in extant policy discussions and reports. As large, heterogeneous, and complex institutions, it is often difficult for decision-makers to access the knowledge held by universities. Urban leaders can struggle to harness the significant capacity of their higher education institutions. In response, this report draws attention to:

- The need to account for the multiple dimensions of university mandates;
- The need to clearly understand how, when, and where university and urban interests align;
- How to take advantage of universities’ changing internal structures and external relations;
- How universities and cities can extend outreach and engagement to new communities.

The report presents a method to evaluate universities’ urban agendas across three key analytical categories: **Coordination, Spatial Strategies, and Access**. This approach, demonstrated through a comparative assessment of London and New York City’s urban higher education systems, highlights interfaces and points of strategic alignment that can enable cities to better leverage academic research and practice to improve both their own sustainability programs and the wider implementation of the New Urban Agenda. Building from the study’s findings, the report recommends that:

- **Cities should take stock of their higher education systems.** Variations in university type, size, and institutional orientation have significant impacts on the potential to forge strategic partnerships, and the contributions universities can make to sustainable urban agendas;
- **Urban decision-makers should utilize diverse, locally-specific mechanisms** when engaging universities in sustainable policy initiatives. This involves developing strong relationships beyond management and leadership levels to facilitate direct knowledge exchange with specific research institutes and individual academics;
- Sustainable urban policy frameworks should **adaptively capitalize on diverse knowledges and disciplinary contributions**. Universities function as knowledge producers that conduct, analyze, and disseminate data through teaching and research, and as capacity building institutions that bring together different groups and ways of understanding contemporary urbanization;
- The New Urban Agenda should **embrace universities, but** expectations should **be realistic**. Universities hold mandates and serve communities that are not neatly aligned to their local urban contexts. They are under significant financial and political pressures that limited their capacities and direct their orientations. Partnerships should be targeted in ways that strategically tap specific resources and to tackle specific objectives.

1. Overview

1.1 Background and Support

The *Coordination, Spatial Strategies, Access* report is part of ‘Situating the New Urban University’, a two-year research project based at University College London (UCL) and supported by UN-Habitat UNI, London Higher, and the UCL City Leadership Lab. The project is funded through the European Union’s Horizon 2020 research and innovation program under the Marie Skłodowska-Curie Grant Agreement No. 657522.

Situating the New Urban University provides a review and assessment of universities’ urban agendas, including broad trends, visions, and spatial strategies. This report builds on the project’s global scoping research to develop our understanding of the urban orientations and engagement practices of academic institutions. Particular attention is given to examining social and institutional variation across urban regions in order to reveal:

- Universities’ capacities as urban leaders in a globalizing world;
- How universities can better mobilize in, and for, their urban contexts;
- Prospects for urban actors to more effectively leverage universities’ resources, capacities, and strategic goals.

This report identifies key trends and intersections across city-university relationships and highlights how higher education institutions’ (HEIs) structures and spatial practices can be leveraged to inform sustainable urban policy. In doing so, it offers a practical means to develop cross-sectoral academic-policy collaborations capable of: (1) informing the application and implementation of evidence-based policy; (2) fostering sustainable and adaptive university-city collaborations; and (3) directing future debates and policy initiatives on sustainable urban futures.

1.2 Purpose

The Third United Nations Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development (Habitat III), convening in Quito from 17-20 October 2016, aims to secure renewed political commitment for sustainable development. The primary outcome of the conference is intended to be a forward-looking and action-oriented strategic document – the New Urban Agenda (NUA) – that will help direct cities and towns towards sustainable urban futures.¹ Capacity building, education, and the application of expert knowledge are central to the successful development and implementation of the NUA. The multiple development goals underpinning its objectives must be clearly informed by rigorous and locally-relevant knowledge. Universities have a key role to play here as urban leaders helping to shape public policy by producing the evidence base necessary to tackle the pressing challenges of ‘the urban age’ and convening key stakeholders to this end. Harnessing the potential of higher education is a crucial step in building resilient, informed, and enduring partnerships – and maintaining the momentum generated by Habitat III. Yet despite this potential, extant policy papers have so far paid scant attention to universities as a strategic driver for relevant capacity building and training.

The *Coordination, Spatial Strategies, Access* report is informed by objectives developed through UN Habitat UNI’s ‘Action Program for Universities’, and focuses on assessing, and expanding, the impact of higher education for sustainable urbanization. The report presents a method to evaluate universities’ urban agendas in order to identify key interfaces and points of strategic alignment that can enable cities to better leverage the capacity of academic research and practice to support their own sustainability goals. The report’s approach is directly relevant to city and state officials looking to increase the efficacy of the higher education sector in informing urban policy debates. It is also intended to be of use for university leaders and researchers who are interested in maximizing their institution’s contributions to broader sustainability agendas – including the NUA. The method is demonstrated, and recommendations drawn, through a comparison of the higher education sectors in London (United Kingdom) and New York City (United States), but the approach detailed in the following is readily transferable to universities in other cities and national settings.

2. Evaluating Universities' Strategic Goals for Sustainable Urban Futures

2.1 Context

Four decades of political-economic restructuring and sectoral reregulation have reconfigured the social and spatial relationships in which universities are embedded.² Processes of massification have spurred the expansion (in number and size) of universities in most countries.³ At the same time, universities are increasingly expected to assume mandates that extend well beyond their established teaching and research missions. These range from serving as 'knowledge factories' that impact local economies through spillovers and bi-directional sharing with firms, through 'entrepreneurial' approaches to the commercialization of knowledge transfer, to 'engaged' university practices that actively seek to shape territorial developmental and civic agendas.⁴ The drive to expand and formalize the externally-facing 'third mission' of universities has been largely catalyzed by the rise of the 'knowledge economy' and the aspirational example of key success stories of university-led development – Silicon Valley and Route 128 in Massachusetts, Cambridge in the UK, and the southeast Netherlands. However, drastic cutbacks in public funding and the deregulation of markets since the 1980s have also done much to shift the demands placed on academic institutions, and condition their capacity to respond to new political and economic external drivers.⁵

The continued agglomeration of knowledge capital in key urban spaces has reinforced cities as centers of dynamism, production, innovation, and enterprise. There is a growing recognition of the mutually-beneficial relationships universities and cities can forge here around local and regional development. An influential 2007 OECD report states:

“As countries are turning their production towards value-added segments and knowledge-intensive products and services, there is greater dependency on access to new technologies, knowledge and skills... To be able to play their regional role, HEIs must do more than simply educate and research – they must engage with others in their regions, provide opportunities for lifelong learning and contribute to the development of knowledge-intensive jobs which will enable graduates to find local employment and remain in their communities.”⁶

A broad and popular public policy consensus – cutting across international, national, regional, and local agencies – now asserts that universities are essential, if under-leveraged, urban actors. They provided the highly-skilled labor and technological innovation necessary to drive growth, enhance regional resilience, and ensure territorial competitiveness at a global scale.⁷ In the United States, municipalities are being encouraged to leverage their universities as locally-embedded 'anchor institutions' capable of driving sustainable economic growth,⁸ at the same time as there has been a revival of interest in the public role of 'urban-serving' universities.⁹ In the United Kingdom, comparable policy approaches are attempting to harness universities as regional growth engines and adapt the institutional missions of the 'civic university' in line with a globalized economy and society.¹⁰ And across Europe, the European Commission's 'Smart Specialization' platform attempts to fully mobilize universities' capacities to contribute to regional economic and social development.¹¹ A recent spate of flagship projects – including Applied Sciences NYC, the MetroLab Network, Amsterdam Metropolitan Solutions, the University of Paris-Saclay, Daedeok Innopolis, and the Botswana Innovation Hub (to name but a few) – have positioned universities' as catalysts for urban innovation and hubs for 'smart' policy formation.

Such policy programs point to the synergies that may be forged locally between leadership in city hall and the ‘ivory tower’. There are pertinent lessons to be learned from the missions, ideologies, and practices of extant city-university engagement paradigms. They clearly articulate strong economic goals and the significant potential for universities to proactively assume civic leadership roles. But it is less clear how these mandates might be harnessed and applied to tackling questions of urban sustainability and policy impact. In part, this reflects a tendency to understand the arenas of university-city engagement through a narrow and highly-localized lens. The globally-networked nature of contemporary urbanization – and its sustainability challenges – means it is no longer adequate to think of urban, or urban-serving, universities as simply located ‘in the city’. Moreover, differences within and between universities – ranging from large multi-faculty and multi-campus comprehensive universities to niche, highly-specialized colleges – and their urban environments (including variations between the Global North and South) further impact the efficacy of HEIs in supporting public policy debates and decision-making on urban and sustainability issues.

Universities and cities are heterogenous entities. They negotiate complex social and spatial relationships and interact as self-interested actors. Sometimes their strategic goals align. Sometimes they do not. Clear and open lines of communication between institutional leadership are vital, but university-city interactions, knowledge exchange, and collaboration occur across multiple sites of teaching, research, partnership, and knowledge transfer, as well as at leadership levels. Universities are home to numerous research clusters, centers, institutes, and individual academics working on multi-disciplinary approaches to urban sustainability. There are varying degrees of formal and informal structures coordinating such efforts and even in the best cases, universities often struggle to host comprehensive repositories of their scholarship and outreach. At the same time, local government and state agencies house multiple departments engaging issues pertinent to sustainable urbanization that may or may not operate in strategic, functional, or collaborative alignment. And beyond formal governmental structures, non-profit organizations and community groups comprise a dynamic civic landscape that is itself generative of important and distinct urban knowledges. These diverse interfaces are likely to be increasingly important as the changing dynamics of metropolitan areas “have an undeniable and immediate impact on the way universities conduct their business as populations tend to relate to space and place differently now than in the past”.¹² It is therefore necessary to consider the broad set of ways universities are operating in and across urban contexts – including the potential disconnects emerging between HEIs and their cities – in order to adequately grasp their capacity to impact sustainable and equitable urban futures (Figure 1). The challenges of contemporary urbanization now unfurl at the global scale: from fiscal crises and enhanced socio-economic polarization to global pandemics and climate change. The latent capacity of academia to analyze and inform debates on competitiveness, sustainability, social inclusion, and resilience, consequently demand a clear reappraisal addressing:

- How universities can foster sustainable urbanization and realize greater influence on urban decision-making;
- How and where universities should adjust institutional infrastructures, pedagogies, and ways of operating to respond to new demands and expectations;
- The ways in which urban communities and public agencies can more effectively engage and inform universities’ strategic actions.

Figure 1: A non-exhaustive typology of university spatial strategies

Elite Strategies	Bypassing local needs and expectations to: pursue globally-renowned research excellence; tap into global markets for students, faculty, and administrators; and target influence on national or international decision-making.
Internationalization	Enhancing global presence through opening branch campuses; increasing involvement in student mobility programs (study abroad, exchange partnerships); Internationalizing curricula, and adjusting pedagogies to accommodate diversity in the classroom.
Network Building	Establishing consortia to exchange knowledge, expertise, or specialized equipment between HEIs; Fostering cross-sectoral ‘triple helix’ linkages across academia, industry, and government to boost regional innovation and economic development.
Place-making	Collaborating to market urban centers as ‘knowledge cities’, ‘learning regions’, or ‘technology triangles’; Embracing active roles in local growth and development frameworks (e.g. science parks, techno-poles, green manufacturing).
Identity Formation	Embracing their local urban environment (from the neighborhood to the city or region) to establish a niche in competitive higher education sectors; Elevating ‘anchor institution’ goals within strategic plans and institutional missions; Promoting the city as a laboratory for university research, or as a campus to enhance the student experience.
Opening Access	Developing new pedagogical practices and ways of operating to broaden participation in higher education (e.g. for part-time or non-traditional students); Developing knowledge exchange interfaces; Investing in digital technologies, MOOCs, executive education, short courses, community-engaged education.
Urban Knowledge Production	Producing, collating, and disseminating knowledge directly related to sustainable urbanism through interdisciplinary ‘Grand Challenges’; Providing support and training for academics contribute to urban planning and policy; Opening the classroom to local knowledges and underrepresented communities; Fostering community-based university practice.

2.2 Methodology

The *Coordination, Spatial Strategies, Access* report presents a method to evaluate universities' urban agendas. Its aim is to identify key interfaces and points of strategic alignment that can enable cities to better leverage the capacity of academic research and practice and improve their own sustainability goals. The methodological approach outlined has been developed through a scoping inquiry into universities' urban spatial strategies and engagement practices. It provides a coding strategy to guide content analysis of universities' strategic plans, institutional reports, and interviews conducted with university administrators, researchers, and boundary actors. Strategic planning is a key instrument used by university leadership to respond to external challenges, direct institutional priorities, and establish internal benchmarking indicators. Strategic planning documents highlight key areas where universities are looking to enhance their capacities, strengthen their engagement, or address perceived institutional deficiencies. As such, they provide a means for HEIs to articulate their overarching missions, visions, and priorities in their own terms, while framing the key challenges and external drivers to which they are responding.

It is necessary, though, to acknowledge the limitations of strategic plans as a measure of university engagement. Discursive framing does not, of course, equate to material actions. Universities act through the negotiation of policies and mobilization of multiple, not necessarily coherent, channels – not through plans themselves. Variations in institutional missions, strategic planning processes, and national higher education regimes mean that strategic documents vary in content, scope, and depth. As plans may prioritize areas of institutional weakness, the absence of evidence relating to key indicators may reflect the established (or assumed) strength of a universities' engagement practices rather than indicating an area of oversight or neglect. Strategic plans present a partial, often idealized, articulation of universities' values and objectives. Yet in providing a clear window onto institutional priorities, strategic planning documents and processes can effectively serve as a foundation for conversations on capacity building and tactical alignment with public and private actors in and across urban regions.

Universities are assessed through a framework that consists of three analytical categories – **Coordination**, **Spatial Strategies**, and **Access** – covering eight key indicators (Figure 2). Each draws attention to the strategic priorities of academic institutions and identifies potential areas of synergy for those constructing and implementing policies to direct sustainable urban development at a number of scales.

Figure 2: Urban university engagement framework

Internal Coordination	Knowledge Exchange	External Relations	Access
Research clusters	Structures of knowledge mobilization	Partnerships connecting HEIs with targeted groups	Widening participation
Institutional ‘Grand Challenges’	Incubators and accelerators	Links with public agencies	Accessing non-traditional, part-time students
Integration of teaching, research, and engagement	Enterprise offices	Synergies with local plans and development agendas	Open access publishing
Interdisciplinarity	Policy institutes		New technologies and pedagogical methods: e-learning, MOOCs...
Institutional Networks	Campus Development	Community	Scalar Orientation
University partnerships	New campus development	Identification of internal and external stakeholders	Relation to urban context
Student and staff mobility	Response to estates challenges	Community engagement	Scales of engagement
Multi-campus facilities	Investment in soft and hard infrastructure	Service learning	Balancing local, national, and global visions
Domestic and international branches	Links to surrounding urban development	Volunteering	Urban ‘anchoring’

Activities reviewed through the **Coordination** category focus on issues of knowledge production and dissemination within universities:

- **Internal Coordination:** considers extant or proposed institutional mechanisms to connect research, teaching, and engagement across the university. Interdisciplinary teaching and research, prominent and well-resourced research centers, and cross-campus societal ‘Grand Challenges’ (global health, sustainable cities etc.) help integrate university activities while presenting clear ‘front porches’ to external actors looking to access academic expertise. Coordinating and institutionalizing university activities provides a foundation for sustainable partnerships and strategic engagement. *Are key societal challenges being used to galvanize university activities? What research centers are being developed and prioritized? Is facilitating interdisciplinary education and research a key strategic principle?*
- **Knowledge Exchange:** identifies how universities are approaching the mobilization, transfer, and exchange of academic knowledge. Strategically prioritizing knowledge mobilization opens new avenues within universities to reward and encourage the realization of impact (social, economic, political) from academic scholarship. This builds the active role and capacity of the university as an actor beyond questions of training and education. *What mechanisms are being established promote and facilitate knowledge exchange practices (technology incubators or accelerators, commercialization and enterprise offices, policy institutes etc.)?*
- **External Relations:** assesses if universities are prioritizing the development of targeted and sustainable relationship with external partners. External partnerships are significant as they further integrate universities into wider networks of collaboration and exchange. This helps universities adapt to the needs of broader stakeholders, integrates possibilities for new forms of teaching (bringing ‘real world’ into the classroom), and raises awareness of what universities do – and have to offer – for relevant public agencies and communities. *Who are universities looking to connect their activities with? Are there specific connections linking to public agencies, city plans, or development agendas?*

The second category, **Spatial Strategies**, examines the networked, territorial, place-based, and scalar strategies being prioritized by universities. *Where* interactions happen plays a significant determining role on institutions’ capacity to engage urban inhabitants and inform urban decision-makers:

- **Institutional Networks:** assesses whether universities are building institutional partnerships and networks with HEIs to enable the mobilization of knowledge and individuals. This opens mechanisms to transfer expertise between different contexts and raises awareness of the global nature of urban sustainability challenges. Similar advantages may also be realized by effectively leveraging multi-campus locations within an urban region, or through domestic or international branches. *How are universities prioritizing inter-institutional partnerships around research, student mobility, staff exchange? Are universities involved in institutional or research networks, or targeting partnerships in key global markets? Are there any attempts to leverage multi-campus facilities or branch campuses (including domestic and international)?*
- **Campus Development:** is a primary mode of university spatial engagement. When campus improvements need to be made, there are possibilities to approach the campus as a classroom demonstrating new technologies (e.g. through green construction and manufacturing techniques) or new spatial planning practices. Investment in the hard and soft infrastructure of university campuses offers scope to open facilities to the public and key stakeholder groups. *Does the university face estates challenges, particularly surrounding where their territorial footprint interacts with broader processes of urban development? Is investment in university facilities internally or externally facing?*
- **Community:** identifies who universities see as their key communities of interest. Universities operate with diverse understandings of their internal and external stakeholders. Oftentimes they seek to foster academic and learning communities that build internal institutional affinity. However, some universities operate with a stronger sense of their wider communities and the stakeholders who are interested in, and interact with, HEIs. *Does the university prioritize enhancing community relations and processes of place-making? What types of relationships are strategically central? Is community engagement, service-learning and volunteering central to the student experience?*

- **Scalar orientation:** consider the spatial scope of strategic university action. Universities are operating near and far and in new ways. This brings divergent scalar strategies into frame as institutions prioritize (and seek to balance) local, national, and global visions. Gauging universities’ scalar orientation and spatial imaginaries highlights potential disconnections with their local urban settings but also offers opportunities to develop synergies with diverse public and private actors to harness global connections, expertise, and city-university strategic goals. *Is the university’s position in their city or region central to its institutional mission and strategic planning? What scales of engagement are articulated? How are local, national, and global visions articulated and how are they balanced?*

The third category, **Access**, considers whether universities are actively engaging wider communities of urban stakeholders (as students, collaborators, audiences), enhancing participation for diverse communities, investing in technologies to facilitate broadening mandates, and increasing the availability of academic knowledge through open access publications, massive open online courses (MOOCs), online repositories, e-learning etc:

- Opening **Access** brings differing communities, stakeholders, and ideas together, broadens the base of the university’s own ‘community’, and forges new pedagogical approaches that can be used to harness academic knowledge for sustainable urbanisms. *Is there evidence of established mechanisms to widen participation, target non-traditional students, develop novel pedagogies, or exploit new technologies to promote teaching and research?*

In reviewing universities’ strategic and planning documents (strategic plans, mission and vision statements, interviews with university leadership, academics etc.), the place and prioritization of the above indicators are assessed through a qualitative content analysis of the universities’ strategic and planning documents. Each is assigned a rating from 0-4 to reflect their substantive weight and centrality to the institution’s future development and engagement practices. These qualitative scores are color-coded through the report – see Figure 3.

Figure 3: Evaluation Criteria

4 Explicit: Dedicated Engagement

The indicator is explicitly identified as a key strategic planning principle, or as an area for prioritization with direct reference to specific mechanisms, processes, relations, or objectives targeting development to this end.

3 Explicit: Identified Priority

The indicator is explicitly identified as an area for strategic prioritization, but without evidence of specific and detailed mechanisms to develop an institutional agenda through.

2 Implicit: Embedded Importance

The indicator is acknowledged as an important consideration for the university, but without specific connections drawn with institutional programs or planning.

1 Implicit: Acknowledgement

The indicator is mentioned passively through a general appeal to its importance, but it is not emphasized.

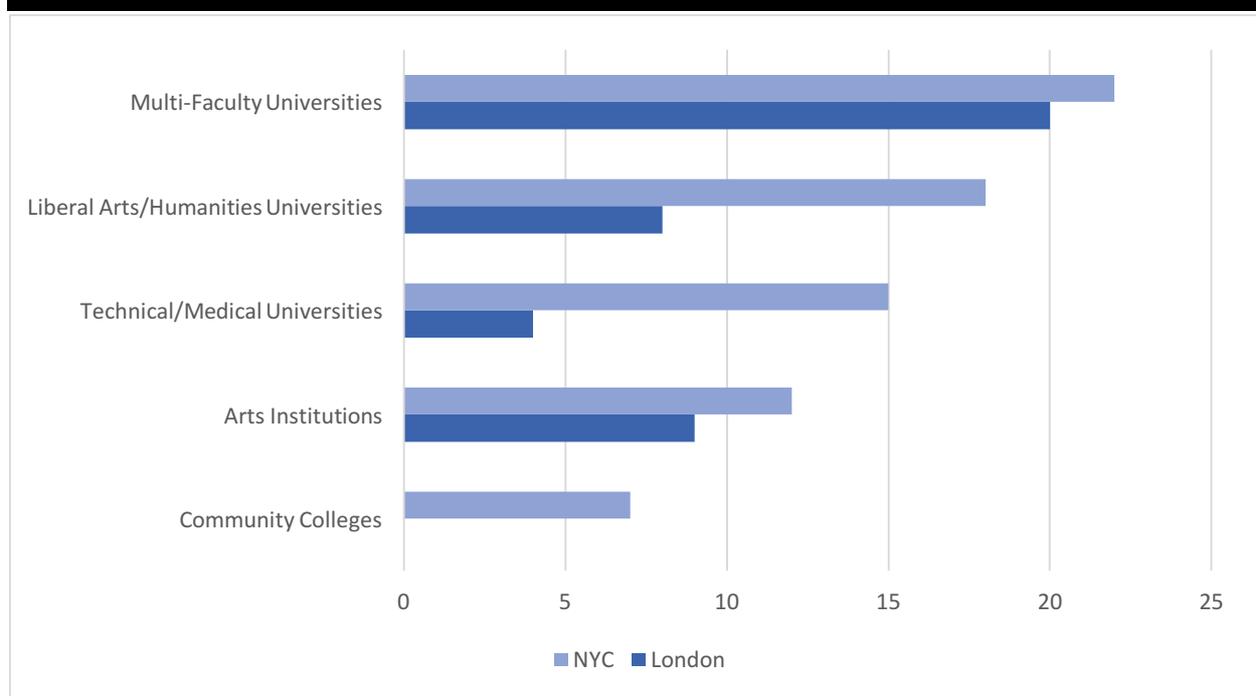
0 No Evidence

The indicator does not appear at all.

3. London and New York City: Initial Findings

London and New York City exhibit monumental social diversity across extended urban agglomerations. These include traditional urban cores, booming suburban areas, and marginalized spaces. They also host large and diverse higher education sectors comprised of leading global research universities, through local technical schools, to highly specialized niche institutions (Figure 4). Academic and urban leaders in cities with one or two universities can open dialogues aimed at stimulating citywide collaborations towards unified ends, but such strategies are rendered highly complex in larger, globally-integrated metropolises where provosts and presidents must compete for attention in a crowded governance arena. Yet the geography of global city and university rankings have shown a degree of overlap in recent years.¹³ London and New York City are therefore somewhat exceptional cases, but the diversity of universities they house draws clear attention to the visions, interfaces, and strategic alignment that can be pursued in other cities and urban regions.

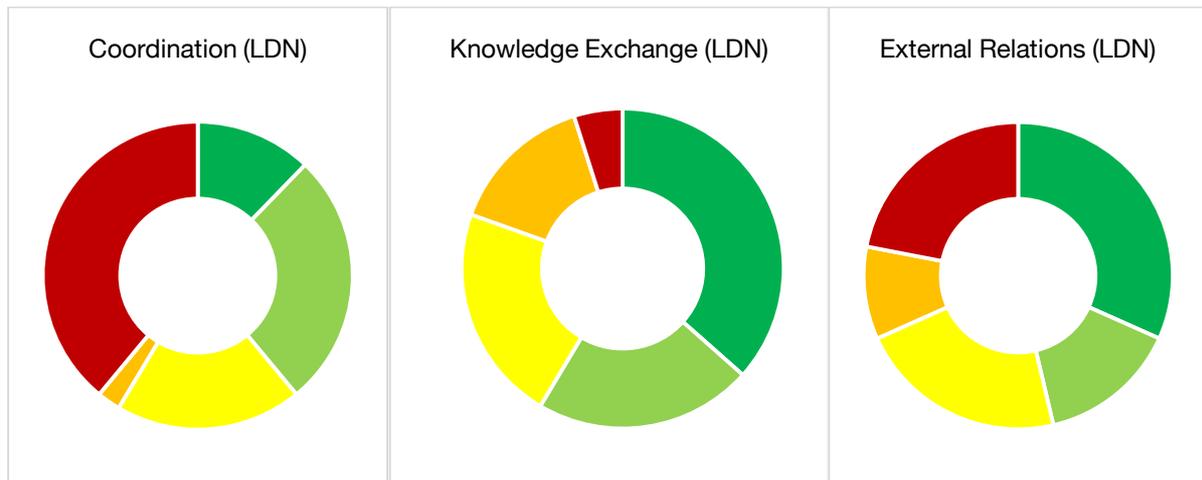
Figure 4: London and New York's higher education systems



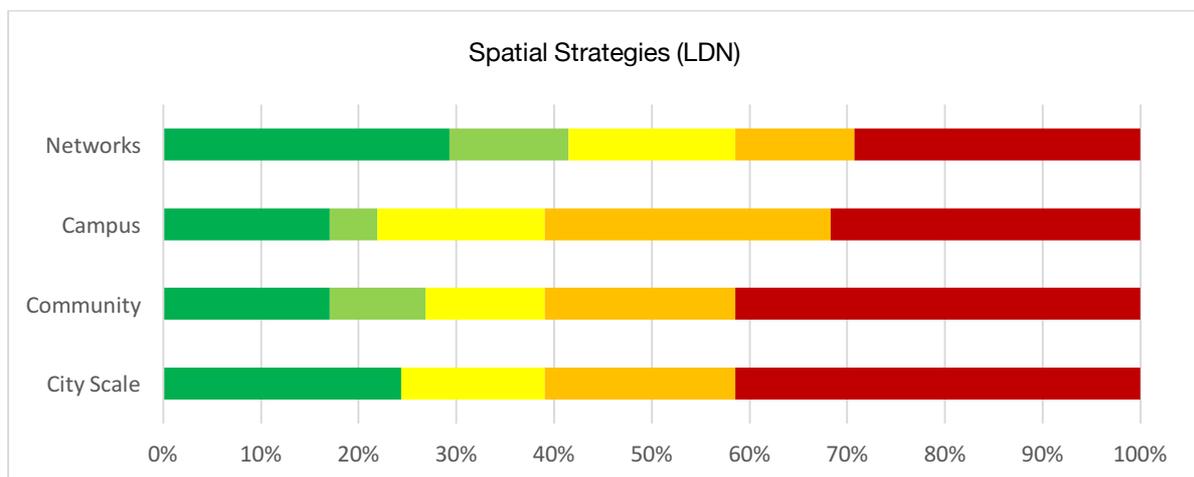
In Summary:

- 2 case study urban regions – London (41 HEIs, Figure 5 and 6) and New York (74 HEIs, Figure 7 and 8) – drawing attention to institutional variation and diverse engagement across metropolitan environments;¹⁴
- 3 categories (Coordination, Spatial Strategies, Access) examined through 8 indicators (Internal Coordination; Knowledge Exchange, External Relations, Institutional Networks, Campus Development, Community, Scalar Orientation, Access);
- Data collection: publicly available materials were obtained through online searches of university websites. Specific plans and strategic goals (e.g. related to campus development proposals, cross-disciplinary institutional initiatives, or community outreach programs) were reviewed through, but strategic documents for individual departments, schools, or administrative offices were excluded. Documents reviewed for the study ranged from comprehensive reports in excess of 50 pages, through glossy 10-20 pages promotional-style brochures, to bullet point 1-pagers – while some universities eschewed the production of comprehensive strategic plans altogether. In cases where universities did not produce pan-institutional plans, institutional mission and vision statements – and, where available teaching and research strategies – were consulted in order to build a picture of the school's overarching orientation and goals. Secondary data was complimented by 70 interviews with university leaders, academics, and city officials across both cities.

3.2 London

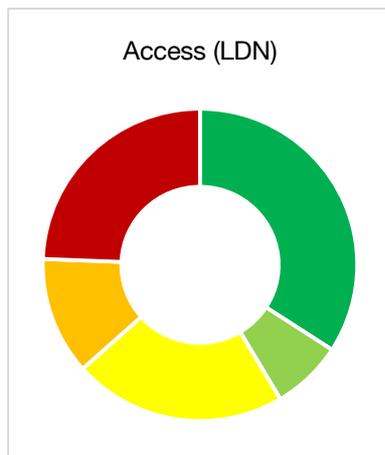


The analysis reveals London’s universities are placing significant priority on **Coordination** indicators in their strategic planning. 70% of the city’s 20 multi-faculty universities (excluding humanities-based, medical, and arts institutions) explicitly reference plans to promote **Internal Coordination**. Moves towards internal coordination, however, were less prevalent in smaller universities and arts institutions. It should be noted, though, that the relative size of these institutions means teaching and research are more likely to already be integrated across departments or be oriented towards niche markets. **Knowledge Exchange** appears as the most significant strategic priority for London’s universities. 39 of 41 institutions reference knowledge mobilization as a strategic concern, with 15 universities (37%) detailing dedicated engagement policies targeting the mobilization of knowledge beyond the academy. The development of **External Relations** and partnerships also emerges as a key mechanism to enhance knowledge exchange. This was especially the case across the city’s flagship research universities (members of the ‘Russell Group’) where University College London, Imperial College, King’s College London, and Queen Mary University all outlined dedicated policies to build external partnerships. Notably, the London School of Economics’ (LSE) strategic plan did not contain reference to developing external relations although this likely reflects the strength of the university’s existing networks with government and industry. Several non-Russell Group schools demonstrated a commitment of building external partnerships at the local level, including Middlesex University (with the Borough of Barnet) and the University of East London (across East London), while niche arts institutions including the Trinity Laban, the Guildhall School of Music and Drama, and the Royal College of Art articulated plans to engage the capacity of London’s cultural facilities.



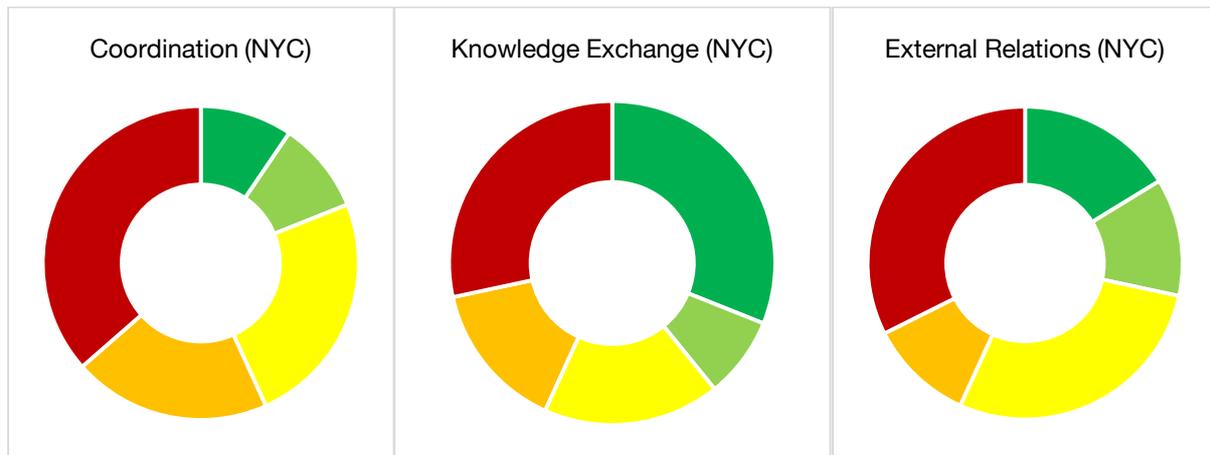
London’s universities performance in terms of the **Spatial Strategies** indicators suggest they are less focused on developing highly spatialized engagement strategies compared to an overall interest in knowledge mobilization. Universities are strongly prioritizing **Institutional Networks**, with 29 (71%) referencing networks in their strategic documents, and 12 (29%) explicitly outlining dedicated strategies to promote such activities. Only 9 (22%)

of London’s universities strategically engaging in **Campus Development** in explicit terms. However, those that do are involved in prominent urban redevelopment plans across London, including University College London (UCL East, Stratford)¹⁵, Imperial College (Imperial West, White City),¹⁶ and King’s College London (Canada Water).¹⁷ UCL East forms part of a broader program to place education at the core of both the legacy agenda from the 2012 Summer Olympic Games and the wider regeneration of East London. The University of East London frames its multiple campus structure as forming an ‘arc of opportunity’ for social polarized areas of East London, while the University of Loughborough has opened a satellite campus at Here East on the Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park. Strong synergies between universities, city officials, and local residents have been established through these developments (for example, at UCL East between UCL, Newham Council, the London Legacy Development Corporation, the Greater London Authority, the Mayor of London’s Office, the Smithsonian Institute, and the Victoria and Albert Museum). Yet when form such partnerships, clear attention needs to be paid to balancing universities’ spatial requirements, municipal interest in local economic development, and the interests of the communities surrounding new campuses. This highlights the limited attention afforded to **Community** engagement across London universities’ strategic plans. 17 (41%) excluded evidence of prioritizing community relations while only 7 (17%) express dedicated proposals centered on community issues. A notable example here is the University of Greenwich, whose strategic plan asserts the university’s role in building a strong internal and external sense of community as the institution embeds itself within the demographic and economic growth of East London. Overall, London’s universities strategic plans exhibit a weak **Scalar Orientation** towards their urban contexts. Yet although only 10 universities (24%) reference London as more than an attractive location for students or a general site of cultural amenities, those prioritizing their relationship with the city do so in strong and cohesive ways. University College London, King’s College London, and Queen Mary University are among the HEIs actively leveraging their position in, and relations with, London – offering scope to develop sustainable urbanism with local and regional partners. The University of East London, while lacking comparable resources to the Russell Group schools, offers an alternative approach to developing regional collaboration through a strategy that links the university’s strengths to the demands of a rapidly changing area of the city.

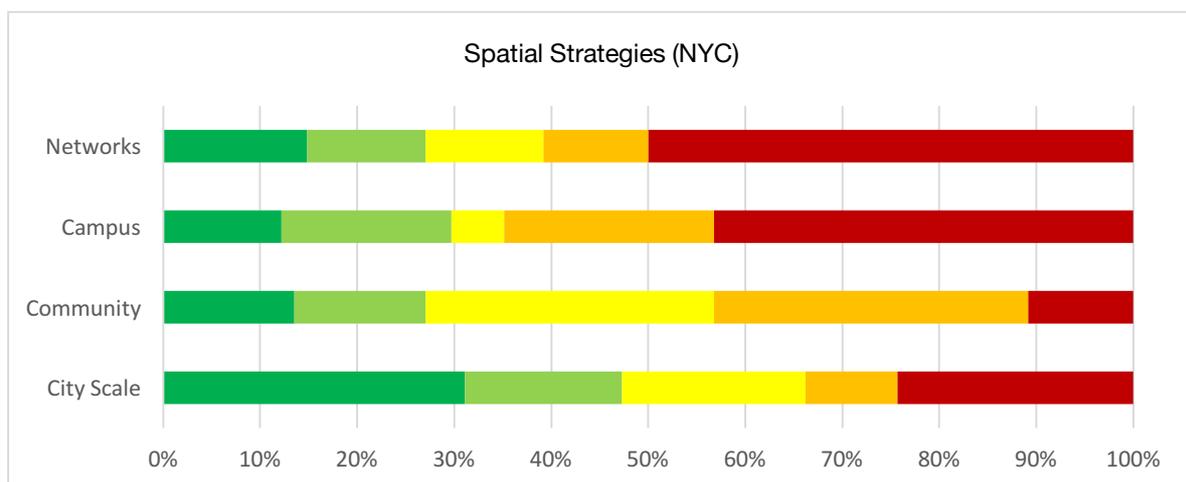


With regard to issues of **Access**, 14 of London’s universities (34%) have dedicated engagement strategies to promote broadening participation and diversity, with 3 other institutions explicitly highlighting these issues as a priority. The analysis reveals technology-enabled teaching and blended learning as key areas of interest for universities looking to modernize both their facilities and pedagogies. Professional education emerges as a strong secondary theme. London’s arts institutions, in particular, demonstrate an interest in enhancing institutional commitment to extending access and reaching out to under-represented communities (notably Trinity Laban, the Royal College of Music, and the Royal Central School of Speech and Drama). 10 universities (24%) do not reference access issues as strategic priorities.

3.3 New York City

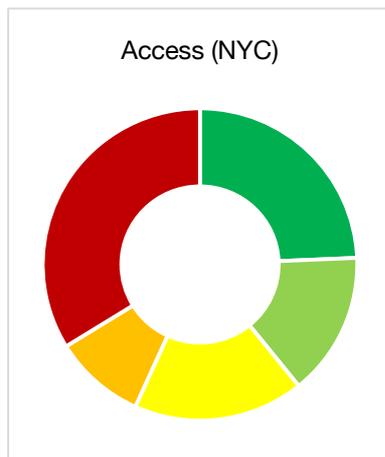


Coordination indicators do not appear a strong driver shaping university strategic action in New York City. **Internal Coordination** is a marginal concern for most of New York City’s universities. 14 of 74 universities (19%) explicitly reference such activities among their strategic goals; including 6 of 22 multi-faculty institutions. As with London, many smaller schools likely have extant programs in place to coordinate more specialized university functions. Yet only 4 of 18 liberal arts and humanities-based universities strategically prioritize internal coordination beyond an institutional commitment to interdisciplinary education. The Pratt Institute is a notable outlier here, reflecting the school’s strategic orientation around an established commitment to applied urban scholarship and service learning. **Knowledge Exchange** emerges as a stronger driver with 29 universities (39%) explicitly referencing this indicator, but it is significant that 21 institutions (28%) do not include it in their strategic plans. Concerns regarding knowledge mobilization appear most strongly in New York’s public university systems, with 7 City University of New York (CUNY) and 3 State University of New York (SUNY) campuses explicitly targeting programs to this end. Key examples include CUNY (Central), which has established a Center for Innovation and Enterprise¹⁸ across the city’s public schools, and the CUNY Graduate Center, which intends to promote the school’s academic expertise through its Office of Public Affairs and Publications. Further, the CUNY system’s recently concluded ‘Decade of Science’ strategy has importantly meshed with the City of New York’s efforts to boost local engineering and applied science capacity. Despite such targeted policy agendas emerging from City Hall and elsewhere, the development of **External Relations** appears an implicit goal for many of New York’s universities (39%), rather than an explicit strategic focus (26%).



The **Spatial Strategies** of New York’s universities reveal a differentiated approach to developing interfaces for engagement. Only half of the city’s universities articulate a strategic interest in developing **Institutional Networks**, and only 11 (15%) have dedicated engagement plans outlined in their strategic documents. A similar story emerges with regards to **Campus Development** proposals, with only 9 schools directly pursuing such activities. In both instances, it is New York’s multi-campus institutions who are most clearly engaged in

networking and built environment transformation. Columbia University’s Manhattanville project¹⁹ and New York University’s expansion into Greenwich Village and downtown Brooklyn²⁰ serve as highly visible and contested examples of the challenges universities face when engaging in estate developments in the dense core of the global city. Alternatively, both Pace University and Long Island University intend to foster distinct urban and suburban/rural identities across their multi-campus structures (which transcend municipal boundaries) in order to leverage the opportunities and identities presented by their position in diverse regional environments. Such thinking is indicative of New York’s universities clear interest in fostering their institutional **Community**. In most instances (62%) this is articulated through implicit appeals, predominantly to an internal university constituency (comprised of students, faculty, staff, and alumni) rather than promoting interaction with external stakeholders. New York City’s urban setting provides a strong institutional narrative and **Scalar Orientation**. 35 schools (47%) explicitly forward their position in the city as a key benefit, with 23 universities (31%) outlining dedicated mechanisms to capitalize on the facilities and cultural amenities concentrated in New York City. With this, there is clear scope for strategic collaborations to be developed between New York’s higher education sector and agencies seeking to promote sustainable urban futures in, and beyond, the city.



New York’s universities are evenly divided with regard to the **Access** indicators. 29 universities (39%) explicitly identify key indicators within this category as a strategic priority. 20 institutions (27%) implicitly acknowledge the importance of extending access, with 32 schools’ strategic plans (34%) showing no evidence. Opening access is most clearly a concern for the public CUNY and SUNY systems. These schools are focusing attention on promoting creative teaching and flexible pedagogies to support first generation students from immigrant communities and improving graduation and retention rates. Additionally, 13 of the city’s 22 comprehensive, multi-faculty schools (59%) are explicitly prioritization access issues in their most recent strategic documents.

3.4 Discussion: Comparative Lessons

Comparing the strategic plans of London and New York City’s universities indicates that London’s urban higher education regime is more broadly open to research, teaching, and collaboration for sustainable urban futures. Analyzing university strategic plans in both cities reveals London’s universities are prioritizing coordination indicators to a significantly greater extent than their New York counterparts. London’s universities are also more likely to pursue collaboration through institutional networks. New York City’s university sector, however, is strategically more oriented to issues of community development and engagement, and more likely to mobilize city-focused strategies (Figure 9). 4 of London’s 41 universities (12%) average an urban engagement score (averaged across knowledge, interfaces, and access categories) of 3.01-4, compared to 6 of 74 institutions in New York (8%). 13 London universities (29%) scores range from 2.01-3, compared to 17 (23%) in New York. In both cities, the highest number of universities average 1.01-2; 15 (37%) in London and 31 (42%) in New York. 9 universities (22%) in London average <1, compared to 20 (27%) in New York City.

Figure 9: Comparing London and New York City’s urban higher education regimes



London’s universities placed a much higher prioritization on knowledge exchange and mobilization than schools in New York City. The continued roll out of austerity politics, disciplinary logics of the national Research Excellence Framework (REF), and the growing economic pressures placed on the United Kingdom’s higher education sector form a clear and pervasive trope shaping strategic priorities. Given that the majority of London’s universities (39 of 41) are public bodies, there is a significant degree of concern given to demonstrating the public utility and impact of academic research in order to justify continued public financial contribution to higher education. In contrast, strategic plans for universities in New York City are near-uniformly headed by a concern with attracting and retaining the best students and faculty. This reflects, in part, the differing priorities and multiple institutional missions of American universities. The 46 universities in New York City not part of CUNY (which includes 7 2-year community colleges) or SUNY are private. Many private universities are animated by religious missions, from large comprehensive schools such as Fordham University, St. John’s University, and Touro College, to the myriad number of smaller Christian liberal arts colleges in the city. The missions of religious institutions may overlap with civic modes of engagement and outreach, but a commitment to serving their urban communities is often a secondary imperative rather than a primary institutional priority.

Across both cities, large multi-faculty universities are most likely to be coordinating their internal knowledge production, opening new spaces to university engagement, and expanding access. The 20 comprehensive universities in London average an urban engagement score of 2.22 while in New York, the comprehensive university average score is 2.28 across 22 institutions. Large, multi-faculty schools have significant existing capacity and are looking to mobilize it in response to a number of internal and external drivers. Across the 15 highest scoring institutions, 12 are multi-faculty, research intensive schools (Figure 10). Smaller institutions lack a comparably broad capacity but can therefore be engaged through programs that are locally-focused or that leverage targeted areas of institutional specialization. Globally oriented niche schools can perform specific strategic roles (arts institutions for representation and outreach, engineering schools for technical expertise within collaborative platforms etc.). The presence of Barnard College and Ravensbourne among the highest scoring urban universities indicate smaller institutions also have the capacity to elevate substantive urban engagement through the strategic priorities and institutional practices.

Indeed, it is worth noting the institution whose strategic priorities rank highest on the urban engagement framework is Cornell Tech; the winner (announced in December 2011) of the City of New York's Applied Sciences competition to build a new applied sciences or engineering campus in the city.²¹ When the new Cornell Tech graduate campus opens on Roosevelt Island, it intends to form the basis of new, deep partnerships (university–university and university–business). As such, there is scope for foster new teaching and research opportunities with significant latitude for the actors involved, and establish new mechanisms for the City to access and exploit these resources, although the specific outcomes remain to be seen. While the resources put into the Applied Sciences initiative by the municipal government are somewhat unique (including city-owned land, seed investment of up to \$100 million, and substantial administrative support), the potential of such city-university collaborations is now being explored by other cities, including Amsterdam and Singapore. There are lessons to be learned and adapted from such projects around, for example, rendering the university more porous, engaging industry and communities in co-produced student projects, and linking educational programming to locally-defined and globally relevant challenges.

Figure 10: The top urban universities in London and New York by average score

Rank	Score	University	City	Type	
1	3.75	Cornell Tech	New York City	Technical	Private
2	3.63	City University of New York (Central)	New York City	Multi-faculty	Public
		University College London	London	Multi-faculty	Public
4	3.38	Baruch College (CUNY)	New York City	Multi-faculty	Public
		University of West London	London	Multi-faculty	Public
6	3.25	Barnard College	New York City	Liberal arts	Private
		King's College London	London	Multi-faculty	Public
8	3.13	City College (CUNY)	New York City	Multi-faculty	Public
		Ravensbourne	London	Liberal arts	Public
		Lehman College (CUNY)	New York City	Multi-faculty	Public
11	3.00	City University	London	Multi-faculty	Public
		Hunter College (CUNY)	New York City	Multi-faculty	Public
		Middlesex University	London	Multi-faculty	Public
		Queen Mary University	London	Multi-faculty	Public
		University of East London	London	Multi-faculty	Public

4. Conclusions and Recommendations

Reviewing universities' strategic plans across London and New York City reveals a broad array of spatial strategies and a significant degree of variation in the prioritization of the report framework's indicators. Cities should therefore take stock of their higher education systems. Variations in university type, size, and institutional orientation have significant impacts on the potential to forge strategic partnerships with HEIs and the contributions universities can make to sustainable urban agendas.

Universities, just as the cities and neighborhoods in which they are located and act, cannot be considered as singular, homogenous entities. Being "engaged" can mean different things to different actors on both sides of city-university partnerships. Developing a comprehensive understanding of the interfaces between cities and academic institutions beyond top-tier leadership – including the work of research institutes, branch campuses, university networks, and individual researchers – opens new avenues for collaboration, network-building, and knowledge exchange. Urban decision-makers should utilize diverse, locally-specific mechanisms when engaging universities in sustainable policy initiatives. This involves developing strong relationships beyond management and leadership levels to facilitate direct knowledge exchange with specific research institutes and individual academics. Moreover, sustainable urban policy frameworks should adaptively capitalize on diverse knowledges and disciplinary contributions. Universities function as knowledge producers that conduct, analyze, and disseminate data through teaching and research, and as capacity building institutions that bring together diverse groups and ways on understanding the challenges of contemporary urbanization. Systematic conversations aimed at engraining broad, multi-layered urban agendas within the institutional structures and spatial strategies of universities is a vital first step.

Municipalities' desire to leverage their universities, though, should be tempered. When the luster of courtship fades, universities have not always embraced leadership roles in their communities; particularly when their strategic interests diverge from those of their municipal hosts. Branch campuses, both locally and globally, have produced mixed results while the utility and capture of academic knowledge does not neatly align with geographic proximity.

An Action Program for Universities should form a pivotal element of the NUA. Universities have tremendous capacity to inform and implement the outcomes of Habitat III in diverse urban contexts. While attention is being paid to questions of training and capacity building, a deeper and more sustainable agenda can be forged by tapping into the research and knowledge production functions of universities across urban and regional higher education sectors. Yet expectations should be realistic. Universities hold mandates and serve communities that are not neatly aligned to their local urban contexts. They are under significant financial and political pressures that limited their capacities and direct their orientations. Partnerships should be focused and strategic. Universities themselves are increasingly looking at the potential of inter-institutional networks, which can form the basis of knowledge exchange, sharing expertise, and collaborative funding opportunities. These are important connections that cities can look to leverage when operationalizing sustainable urban policy agendas.

Finally, the relationship between the city and university (as heterogeneous entities) cannot be solely abstracted from key exemplars in the Global North, nor apart from the specificities of their wider social, spatial, and political relations. The uptake and broad application of the report's method will build a clearer picture of the opportunities and challenges facing universities in the NUA, and developing from the initial research presented here, can form the basis of a network database for practitioners to collaborate and share best practices following from discussions at the Quito conference.

5. Notes and References

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- ¹² Addie, J.-P. D., Keil, R., & Olds, K. (2015). Beyond town and gown: Higher education institutions, territoriality and the mobilization of new urban structures in Canada. *Territory, Politics, Governance*, 3(1), 27-50, p. 31
- ¹³ Jöns, H., & Hoyler, M. (2013). Global geographies of higher education: The perspective of world university rankings. *Geoforum*, 46(1), 45-59.
- ¹⁴ This report focuses on universities, understood as institutions awarding bachelors’, masters’ and doctoral degrees, rather than the broader category of HEIs, including community colleges (which may award diplomas and bachelors’ degrees) and educational technology companies. Community colleges that are part of the City University of New York (CUNY) system are included as an integral element of the city’s public higher education structure.
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- ¹⁶ Imperial College London, White City Campus, <http://www.imperial.ac.uk/white-city-campus/>
- ¹⁷ Kings College London, Canada Water – Mulberry site, <http://www.kcl.ac.uk/aboutkings/orgstructure/ps/estates/Real-Estate-Development/current/Canada-Water---The-Mulberry-Site.aspx#ad-image-0>
- ¹⁸ CUNY Hub for Innovation and Enterprise, <http://ihub.cuny.edu/>
- ¹⁹ Columbia University, Manhattanville Campus, <http://manhattanville.columbia.edu/>
- ²⁰ New York University, NYU 2031, <http://www.nyu.edu/nyu2031/nyuinny/growth/the-plan.php#Intro>
- ²¹ New York City Economic Development Corporation, Applied Sciences NYC, <http://www.nycedc.com/project/applied-sciences-nyc>

