

The University without Walls

Or, let the city teach us.

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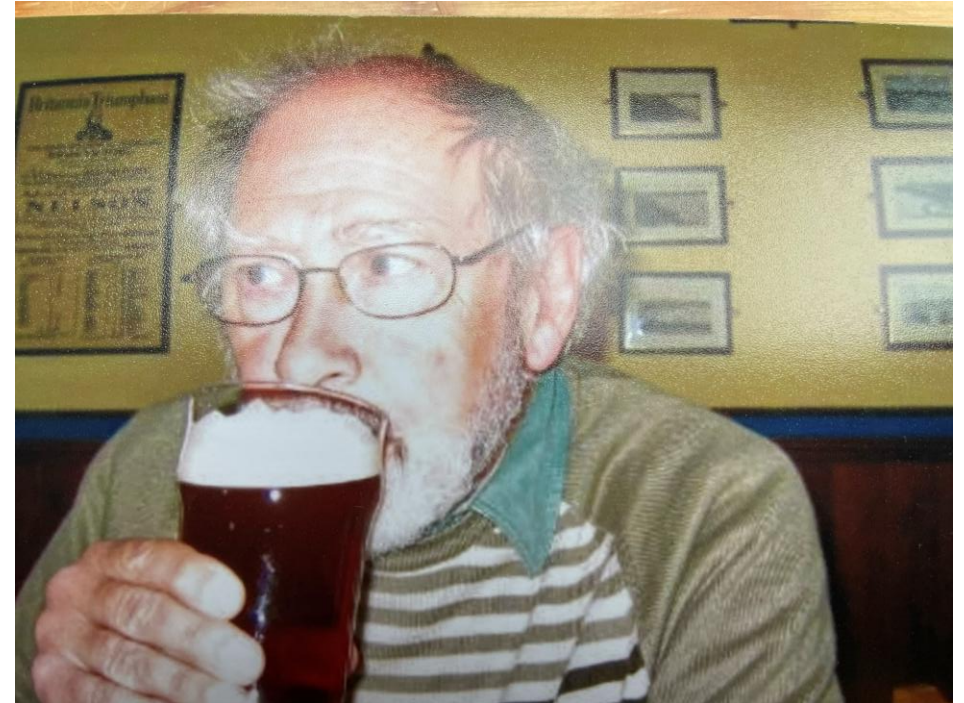
My dad (1933 – 2016)

Geoffrey Parker – geography and politics

‘Adult’ education

Workers Education Association

‘Extramural’ lecturer at the University of Birmingham



Walls

- Gradual 'mainstreaming' of adult education and closure of extramural departments
- Credit bearing modules with assessment
- Withdrawal of mature learner finance

(And REF, grant capture, citations, paywall journals...)

- Enclosure of the university?

University without walls

First applied to adult education in the USA in the early 1970s (Eldred and Johnson 1977), though it builds on a long tradition of 'extramural' education offered by universities to different types of student, perhaps in local community centres, and at evenings and weekends. In this paper, I want to use the concept a bit differently, though not at all in contradiction to that earlier usage and try to think about what it might mean to distribute the university in terms of its research and impact. In other words, can we do the university differently?

And now...

Martin Parker (1962 -)



Intramural lecturer, always within the walls

Universities of Staffordshire, Keele, Leicester, Warwick, Leicester, Bristol...

Inclusive Economy Initiative (2019-22)

- The 'civic' university
- 'Engagement', 'impact', 'innovation', Temple Quarter
- Helping to tilt the Bristol region towards a low carbon, high inclusion, high democracy economy.
- Bristol City Council, WECA, Avon Mutual, Business West, Aardman Animations, Bristol Climate and Nature Partnership, Asking Bristol, Can Do Bristol, UWE, Business in the Community, Bristol Bike Project, Cooperative Assistance Network, Watershed, Black South West Network, VOSCUR, SEUK, School for Social Entrepreneurs, Sawdays, Bristol Pound/Pay, Knowle West Media Centre, Babbasa...

Infrastructure

The question of boundaries has assumed a particular importance in my thinking about the IEI in part because I began by imagining it as something that would allow the university to 'reach out' into the city. Fairly quickly, the limits of that rather tentacular metaphor became clear and I began to think about involutions, semi-permeable membranes, colonies, skunk works and any other ways in which the definitions of 'inside' and 'outside' could be blurred and complicated. In this, ideas about **space**, **time** and **interests** seem to have become categories that help me understand the nature of the problem that I am dealing with.

Space

- Cafes
- Coming 'down' into town
- Organizing events 'up' at the university, in its old and security patrolled buildings
- Barton settlement. Wellspring community centre. Micro-campus.

Time

- Moving fast and responding to immediate demands. What can 'you'/'we' do now?
- Moving slow, and building trust, avoiding instrumental relations. Being in the room, being recognised, not asking for anything.
- Backdrop of a slow, sluggish, cautious, audited and massive institution that takes ages to pay.

Interests and identities

- The university sees the city in particular ways. Other people and institutions don't.
- When a white male 'Professor of Business' from a big university arrives in the room, he brings all sorts of expectations with him.
- Other people and organizations do not (necessarily) share those interests.
- Global majority activist. Co-op practitioner. Working class community organizer. Green Business. Artist. Voluntary sector co-ordinator. City councillor.

Without walls

- Extra-mural
- Organization and environment
- Connecting across boundary
- Involutions
- Tentacles
- Colonies
- Distributions



A foreigner visiting Oxford or Cambridge for the first time is shown a number of colleges, libraries, playing fields, museums, scientific departments and administrative offices. He then asks 'But where is the University? I have seen where the members of the Colleges live, where the Registrar works, where the scientists experiment and the rest. But I have not yet seen the University in which reside and work the members of your University.' It has then to be explained to him that the University is not another collateral institution, some ulterior counterpart to the colleges, laboratories and offices which he has seen. The University is just the way in which all that he has already seen is organized. When they are seen and when their co-ordination is understood, the University has been seen. His mistake lay in his innocent assumption that it was correct to speak of Christ Church, the Bodleian Library, the Ashmolean Museum and the University, to speak, that is, as if 'the University' stood for an extra member of the class of which these other units are members. He was mistakenly allocating the University to the same category as that to which the other institutions belong.

Gilbert Ryle (1949) *The Concept of Mind*

Everything is dangerous (Foucault)

My/our questions concerning the distribution of the university

- What do 'we' academics lose?
- What might be gained?
- What distinctiveness do 'we' want the university to have?
- Who is the university for?