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Some Implications of 'Public/Private' Space for Professional Identities in Higher Education

Dr Celia Whitchurch
Lecturer in Higher Education
Institute of Education
University of London
20 Bedford Way
London WC1H 0AL
UK
Tel: +44 (0)207 612 6421
E-mail: c.whitchurch@ioe.ac.uk

Abstract

The interplay of public and private sector dynamics in higher education has impacted not only on the roles and identities of academic staff, but also on those of professional staff, who often have the task of bringing together, and achieving congruence between, activities that are geared towards the public good and also towards more commercially oriented enterprise. In this context, a new cadre of 'blended professionals' has emerged, whose roles include initiatives associated with the social responsibilities of institutions to their communities, as well as more market-oriented, income generating projects (Whitchurch 2008; 2009). This paper reports on case material relating to a sub-set of these staff, working specifically in the area of Community and Business Partnership, and on the impact of their work for traditional management structures and relationships. It will be argued that, although unlikely to be acknowledged in formal accounts of the university such as organisation charts or institutional plans, these staff are responsible for providing and maintaining a framework that holds together more publicly-oriented strands of activity, such as widening participation, with more privately-oriented strands, such as enterprise. In so doing, they make extensive use of multi-professional team- and networking with a range of colleagues, both inside and outside the university, not only helping to re-balance their institutions, but also to protect them against undue organisational fragmentation and bureaucracy. They therefore contribute to an increasingly 'mixed economy' of broadly based portfolios of activity. The implications of these 'public/private' spaces and activities for professional identities are explored in the context of institutional management.

Introduction

This paper draws specifically on the narratives of staff working in the area of Community and Business Partnership to develop understandings about the identities

that they form, the tensions and challenges arising from this, and the implications for understandings of management in 'public/private' space. The respondents were drawn from two studies funded by the UK Leadership Foundation for Higher Education:

(1) *Professional Managers in UK Higher Education: Preparing for Complex Futures* (2005-2007) (Whitchurch, 2008). This study involved 61 respondents drawn from seven institutions in the UK, Australia and the US.
(2) *Optimising the Potential of* Third Space *Professionals in UK Higher Education* (January to December 2009). This study involved an electronic questionnaire survey administered to 213 individuals in two UK institutions (which were different from those in the first study), and ten interviews with people who had volunteered to be interviewed at the end of the electronic questionnaire.

This paper draws on the narratives of a sub-set of respondents from the above studies working in the area of Community and Business Partnership. These included 24 respondents to the online questionnaire in Study 2, and six interviewees drawn from both studies. The research was originally prompted by a sense that, as higher education institutions had expanded and diversified to meet the demands of contemporary environments, the roles and identities of professional staff could no longer be described solely in terms of a shift from 'administration' to 'management', or of a collective process of professionalisation. Arising out of the first study it became apparent that a "Third Space" was opening up between professional and academic domains in which both professional and academic staff worked jointly on broadly based projects such as widening participation and community partnership (Whitchurch, 2008). This was likely to be colonised by "blended" professionals (Whitchurch, 2009) who were recruited to dedicated appointments that spanned both domains. They were likely to have been appointed on the basis of external experience obtained in contiguous sectors such as adult or further education, regional development, or the charitable sector, and offered academic credentials in the form of master's degrees and doctorates, although they were not employed on academic terms and conditions. The second project sought to explore working practices in *Third Space* in more detail, including the work of "blended" professionals, relationships between professional and academic staff, relationships with external constituencies and the nature of management and leadership in this space.

The questionnaire respondents and interviewees referred to in the current paper were involved in roles that included:

- Employability and employer engagement
- Regional regeneration
- Community development and partnership
- Research spin out
- Enterprise
- University-industry relations
- Workplace learning
- Widening participation
- Outreach
- Learning support

A significant number of respondents were employed on fixed term contracts. This may reflect that fact that Community and Business Partnership is an expanding 'business', as well as a 'casualisation' of the workforce, and the rise of the concept of the 'project manager' or 'internal consultant' (Gordon and Whitchurch 2009). The majority of respondents line managed teams of five or less, whose work was typically project-oriented. Around a quarter had held some form of academic post, although not necessarily in higher education.

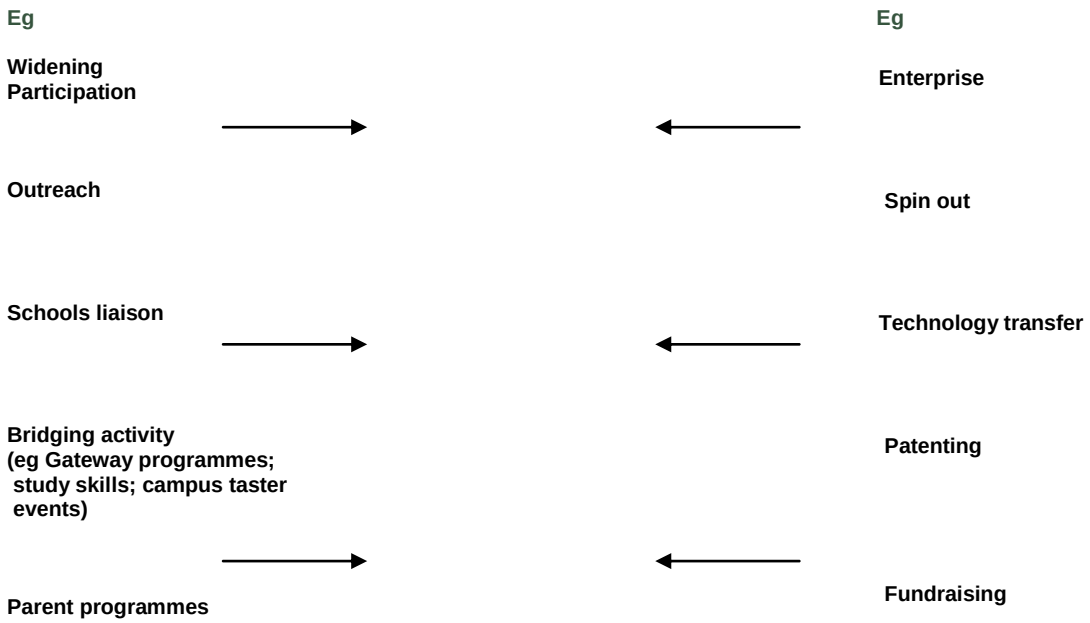
Convergence of 'Publicly-oriented' and 'Privately-oriented' Activity

Community and Business Partnership brings together what were hitherto discrete activities, widening participation (or 'access') to higher education, and enterprise and innovation. The former would be more generally regarded as a 'public' good, and the latter as having a more 'private' sector orientation. Over recent years, there has been evidence of convergence between these activities, which in the UK at least can be attributed in part to government agendas linking skills development to the knowledge economy, employability, and the regeneration of regions and inner cities. In response, universities have developed widening participation and enterprise units, with the aim of stimulating local economies, labour markets and communities by developing partnership activity between a range of players, including education providers, small and medium size businesses, and regional, national and international agencies. This convergence is represented in Figure 1.

These units, therefore, bring together the extension of educational opportunity with the regeneration of local communities. The type of activities and interactions that they undertake include:

- Linking employers to education providers.
- Solving specific problems for local businesses, be they technical or managerial.
- Organising student placements with local employers, thereby contributing to staff recruitment for the future.
- Developing programmes of work-based learning.
- Access to facilities such as accommodation for meetings, laboratory space, scientific equipment and multimedia facilities.
- Ambassador and mentoring schemes, and networking opportunities for both students and local business.
- Advice about intellectual property, technology transfer and marketing.
- Working with equal opportunity agencies to promote inclusivity and diversity.
- Developing schemes for the recognition and uplift of prior learning, and subsequent transition to work.

Figure 1: **Convergence of 'Publicly-oriented' and 'Privately-oriented' Activity in 'Public/Private' Space, as represented by Community and Business Partnership**



'Public' and 'Private' Domains in Higher Education: A False Dichotomy?

The concept of 'third space' in the context of higher education, of which 'public/private' space can be seen as one element, was devised in response to a series of binary divisions found in the literature (Whitchurch 2008). Central to these was a perceived split between 'collegial' approaches to institutional management, implying academic autonomy and freedom, underpinned by the contribution of higher education to the advancement of knowledge; and 'managerialism', implying an approach dictated by market imperatives in support of socio-economic goals, that fostered competitive behaviour both within and between institutions. 'Managerial' approaches, therefore, implied a polarisation of 'academic' and 'management' activity, including perceptions of increased regulation of the work of academic staff by those with management responsibilities. Such binaries are reflected in an extensive literature (see for instance, Deem 1998; Fulton 2003; Halsey 1992; Yielder and Codling 2004).

More recently, there has been some acknowledgement that the diversity and range of staff in contemporary higher education, as well as the complexity of activities that they undertake, may have been underplayed. Although specialist professionals have been appointed in areas such as enterprise and business partnership, they often work alongside academic colleagues to perform translational functions between academic agendas and the interests of external agencies. A partnership manager, for instance, may tread a path between gaining the confidence of external colleagues in a regional development agency, learning from them and building knowledge for the institution on the basis of this, at the same time as encouraging institutional colleagues to interact in ways that will benefit both partners. There would therefore appear to be evidence to support the suggestion that "dichotomous analyses of managerialism and professionalism [including academic activity] are now outmoded" (Kolsaker 2008: 523).

There is also evidence that both academic and professional staff are adopting more project-oriented approaches to their roles, and that portfolio-type careers are becoming more common. To quote Musselin:

> "The logic of staff organizing around… projects is… based on individual professional competences rather than on qualifications (specific degrees and credentials), while autonomy at work, responsibility, accountability and individual performance within a collective group becomes more important than hierarchical authority and vertical control" (Musselin 2007: 184).

Furthermore, Middlehurst's concept of "borderlessness" suggests the colonisation of new spaces, incorporating ideas of professionalism that comprise "both traditional and new elements, notably increasing customer-focus, specialised and expanded skills"; and "new configurations of roles, operations and organizations" (Middlehurst 2009: forthcoming). Kehm, likewise, picks up a sense of movements that are occurring:

> "…we can observe developments that are either increasingly less linked to routine administrative tasks or created particularly outside such routines" (Kehm 2006: 169).

She sees these new roles as synthesizing, facilitating, championing and implementing institutional development, although they are not always openly acknowledged.

This paper uses the example of Community and Business Partnership to illustrate the possibility of moving beyond some of the dichotomies found in the literature, and offers a theoretical framework to describe the process by which 'public/private' spaces and identities are being constructed.

Reconstructing identities

In this section, narratives arising from the case material are theorised using Bhabha's conceptualisation of "third space" (Bhabha 1990; 1994). Three aspects of identity construction within 'public/private' space are identified, involving processes of *Contestation*, *Reconciliation* and *Reconstruction*. In the process of *Contestation*, staff are likely to be operating in spaces that are strongly influenced by existing "rules and resources" (Giddens 1991), in this case associated with either the public or private spheres. During the processes of *Reconciliation* and *Reconstruction*, staff develop and establish new working practices with their own "rules and resources". In practice, the three processes intertwine, and are likely to occur in parallel, as working practices mature and gain legitimacy.

Contestation process

From the narratives, it was apparent that working across 'public' and 'private' spheres of activity involved an engagement with challenges and tensions including:

- Operational issues associated with process and bureaucracy.
- The speed of and timescales within which activity takes place, described by one respondent as different "rhythms" between academic and entrepreneurial approaches.
- The contractual nature of privately-funded work, involving clear delivery goals and outcomes, as opposed to the more open-ended nature of academic work.
- Political issues and negotiations.

- The nature of teaching and research activity in 'public/private' space, referred to by two respondents as being regarded as "trade" or "dirty" work.

Individuals also displayed frustrations typically associated with academic staff, for instance, what were seen as 'management' requirements (perceived as restrictions on autonomy and the ability to make decisions), and resource constraints (such as funding and time).

During the *Contestation* process, individuals define themselves according to what they see as the dominant "rules and resources". In an academic environment, the emphasis is likely to be on 'public' working practices, and these are assumed to be the default position. Staff who work in 'private' spaces may feel that they are seen as outsiders, and find themselves negotiating their position. The following comments illustrate ways in which *Contestation* might occur:

- "My ideas have been taken away by [academic] managers and developed by them rather than by me".
- "… [I am obliged to be] reactive to others rather than having autonomy to assume more proactive roles".
- "… [the] contributions [of professional staff] not always recognised and respected, or only after a lengthy period of building that trust".

Reflected in these comments is a sense of self as 'the other', and a lack of understanding on the part of academic colleagues about activity in 'public/private' space, or of the challenges associated with it.

As a coping strategy during the *Contestation* process, individuals may privately contest inherited "rules and resources", whilst abiding by them for pragmatic purposes. This can result in a process of "splitting", which involves "living on the cusp, to deal with two contradictory things at the same time without either transcending or repressing that contradiction…" (Bhabha quoted in Mitchell 1995: 5-6). In these dual conditions of acceptance and challenge approaches to and understandings of working practices are "interrogated and reinitiated" (Bhabha 1994: 6). This process is reflected in Kehm's suggestion of "'secret' managers" (Kehm 2006: 170), and in Rhoades' concept of an "invisible workforce" (Rhoades 2009, forthcoming).

The process of *Contestation*, therefore, might be characterised as representing a state of perpetual tension, generating identity narratives that have "a double edge" (Bhabha 1994: 13). In this way, it represents a testing ground for new forms of activity and identity that may not be fully recognised or acknowledged, and are on the cusp of legitimacy. It can also be risky, because new "rules and resources" are not yet established or internalised. *Contestation* therefore involves "the inter-animation of different voices at the heart of meaning-making", of which "struggle, conflict and difference" are an essential part (Pryor and Crossouard 2008).

Reconciliation process

The *Reconciliation* process is underpinned by a belief in the possibility of:

- Collaboration between interested parties who can be persuaded that they have something to contribute to, and gain from, joint endeavour.
- Perceived added value such as a development or initiative that would not occur otherwise.

- Outcomes to which participants feel ideologically committed, such as raising educational or employment aspirations, as well as material benefits such as improving market opportunity.

During the process of *Reconciliation*, difference is negotiated, so as to "provide the terrain for elaborating strategies… that initiate new states of identity, and innovative sites of collaboration, and contestation…" (Bhabha 1994: 1-2) In the case of the current study, "originary and initial subjectivities" could refer to working practices and approaches that originate from either public or private spheres. The *Reconciliation* process is therefore "a place of invention and transformational encounters, a dynamic in-between space that is imbued with… ambivalence, ambiguities and contradictions, with the feelings and practices of both sites, to fashion something different, unexpected" (Bhabha, quoted in Moles 2008: 4). It therefore enables new forms of activity to occur in a 'public/private' environment, for instance, for professional staff to undertake work from which they might otherwise be excluded, such as teaching students or business incubation.

Work in the *Reconciliation* process is characterised by comments about facilitating understandings and developments across different spheres of activity, such as:

- "… giv[ing] voice to the student learner, whilst presenting findings to the relevant committees".
- "… work[ing] with a wide pool of colleagues from a wide geographical patch, making linkages across the network and being able to offer development opportunities".
- "… connect[ing] people together to solve problems and translate their different languages (technical, business, education); enabl[ing] them to meet their own challenges".

During the *Reconciliation* process, new understandings are found by "learning how to conceptualise 'contradiction' or the dialectic as that state of being or thinking that is 'neither the one nor the other, but something else besides'" (Bhabha, quoted in Mitchell 1995: 9-10). This involves "cultural translation" (Bhabha 1990: 211), to offer a safer, more permissive place for new activities and relationships, and might be represented by space created for a project within institutional structures, via representation of a project in formal committees, or by the creation of a new department or unit. The *Reconciliation* process might, therefore, be said to be "a place of critical exchange where the… imagination can be expanded to encompass a multiplicity of perspectives… the original binary choice is not dismissed entirely but is subjected to a creative process of restructuring that draws selectively and strategically from the two opposing categories to open new alternatives" (Soja 1996: 5).

Reconstruction process

Identities built during the *Reconstruction* process are no longer defined via an individual's relationship to "rules and resources" deriving from one or other "originary" spaces, but via the creation of a plural environment of 'public/private' space. They are represented by comments such as:

- "Interaction with, and respect received from, academic colleagues on an equal intellectual footing".
- "My particular combination of experience and expertise is valued and unique".

- "I have a good deal of freedom to produce solutions appropriate to the situation and/or project".

Throughout the process of *Reconstruction*, new "rules and resources" are created. In Bhabha's terms, the space it offers "displace[s] the histories that constitute it, and set[s] up new structures of authority… which are inadequately understood through received wisdom… a new area of negotiation of meaning and representation" (Bhabha 1990). The plural environment thereby created may be represented by new forms of language, such as 'partnership', 'capital building', 'networking' and 'creativity', which permeate the literature on boundary-crossing (for instance, Dowd and Kaplan 2005; Williams 2002; Zeichner 2008). As a result, understandings of activities during the process of *Reconstruction* are drawn less from regulatory procedures or organisational structures than from the connecting thread of an overarching project such as Community and Business Partnership.

Reconstruction involves the active contribution of individuals to the formation of new, plural space, at the same time as developing new identities for themselves and their teams. This is reflected in comments such as:

- "… finding time to undertake a doctorate… required within higher education to be taken seriously".
- "[Gaining] acceptance of project officer experience as relevant background …".
- "… there is always a tension between general management skills and craft-specific skills. I am studying for an MBA to improve the former and training at work for the latter".
- "It's a constantly evolving role, always something new to learn".

During the *Reconstruction* process, individuals are likely to invest in both "strong" and "weak" ties (Granovetter 1973) with key individuals and networks, integrating different threads of activity, creating reference points, and using tensions productively. They are also likely to be ideologically committed to the work they are doing, illustrated by comments such as:

- "Moving forward an agenda I believe in".
- "I'm working for an institution that can transform the world for the better".

Thus, the possibilities provided for institutional and professional growth during the *Reconstitution* process appear to mitigate some of the frustrations that characterise the *Contestation* process.

In practice, the spaces represented by the processes of *Contestation, Reconciliation* and *Reconstruction* are not mutually exclusive, and may represent stages in the maturation of activities and identities. Individuals and activities may be at different stages of development, and therefore be more closely aligned with one or other process at any one time. In practice, therefore, the processes intertwine, although some people and activities may be more oriented towards one or other of them, or display the characteristics of more than one, according to circumstances. Some individuals may prefer to work with the process of *Contestation*, and use this as part of a portfolio of experience. Others may prefer to focus on the people aspects of their work, working with different groups, interpreting between them and negotiating solutions as part of the *Reconciliation* process. Others may be involved in all three processes. At the same time, however, the *Reconciliation* and *Reconstruction* processes depend on an ability to recognise and work with the tensions in the

Contestation process. This may shed some light on the fact that there was evidence among respondents of both ideological commitment to, and disenchantment with, 'public/private' environments. Those who were disenchanted might well have been predominantly involved in processes of *Contestation* at the time. The concepts are, therefore, a tool for describing the multi-dimensional nature of working in *Third Space*, and represent a way of conceptualising the dynamics involved.

For some, therefore, 'public/private' space may be seen as one destination among others, in which they work for the time being, as suggested by the following comment:

> "I have a PhD. Currently higher education does not support people like me – there is a conflict between publishing papers and making systems benefit communities… It is hard for people like me to stay in higher education."

Such individuals would be more likely to inhabit *Contested* space, interrogating and deconstructing existing "rules and resources", than to become involved in the processes of *Reconciliation* and *Reconstruction*. They would also be likely to focus on "weak", rather than "strong" ties, taking advantage of opportunities for exchanging intelligence and practice through extended networks, in preparation for a further career move (Granovetter 1973).

Case profiles

Two case profiles illustrate examples of individuals who have successfully created new forms of 'public/private' space. One might be seen as originating from 'private space' (the Business and Industry Liaison Manager), and the other as originating from 'public space' (the Employability Manager). They had both developed *blended* identities by reaching out to the 'other' sector, and demonstrated a significant degree of inventiveness in doing this. The case profiles illustrate the processes of *Contestation*, *Reconciliation* and *Reconstruction* at work.

The Business and Industry Liaison Manager

This individual had a background in the commercial sector and had run a business for more than ten years. Their key responsibility was to develop in-house management and executive development programmes and to "project manage the selection, timing and customisation of courses to best suit the education and development needs of industry". They therefore represented the 'commercial' arm of the university's education provision, encouraged academic staff to participate in such programmes, and translated the needs of business partners to that end. Although they were required to ensure that their programmes were run on a financially sound basis, they were also part of the university's contribution to local regeneration and a "rebuilding of the skills base" in an urban area that required inward investment. They therefore contributed to the teaching and research profiles of the university via activities that had both 'public' and 'private' elements.

Contestation

This manager experienced some frustration about the slow pace of decision-making in the university, and also about the fact that "the extent of my… jurisdiction is unclear". They sometimes found themselves "hitting a wall of politics" in trying to develop new initiatives, and there could be a sense of 'living on the edge': "it's often easier [to make the decision] and ask afterwards… there's a few things lately that have necessitated that… and, in the end… because it's made money… nobody's

actually complained". There could be tension, therefore, in obtaining the requisite support to achieve positive outcomes: "Every so often… I get to the brink of 'I might resign today'… [For instance, on one occasion] they wouldn't give me the resource… but then [at the last minute] I was able to have the support to build the team of people I now have around me…"

Reconciliation

Despite feeling frustrated from time to time, this manager was able to reach out to external partners and to academic colleagues in a way that translated the needs of each to the other, provided incentives for collaboration to occur, and opened up new spaces for both groups: "We act as the bridge between the university and industry, and when industry says 'This is what we'd like to do' we… talk it through, understand their context, what their learning outcomes are, then come back and sit down with the academics and work it through…" This was a facilitative process involving forethought and practical assistance, in a spirit of genuine partnership: "We get fabulous feedback from academics who work with us because they say 'You guys have organised everything. All I have to do is turn up and deliver'". The incentive for academic staff was that they could test out some of their research ideas in a workplace setting: "They weave in their research, and through links with industry, we create [more] research projects, and [industry] pays a stipend for a PhD student who can do specific research on leadership and management [in that industry]". Nevertheless, some of the external environments in which academic staff would teach could be more challenging than they were used to at the undergraduate level. Therefore "part of our [translational] role is to help the academics understand what they are going into … [so that] they are not phased by that environment".

Reconstruction

By encouraging and enabling academic colleagues to contribute in environments that might be new to them, this manager was bringing together a number of 'public/private' initiatives, helping local students to progress their careers, local businesses to build capacity, and the university to contribute to regional development: "[Students] put time and effort into their studies; assignments relate to real issues, [so that] it flows through into the overall skills development and strategic development of organisations…" Nevertheless, enthusiasm to extend public service programmes was tempered by pragmatism in consolidating a niche: "I'm trying to go deep into an industry; instead of having lots of partners we have a selected few, but carve a real expertise in that area…" Such an approach enabled success to be embedded, while retaining the possibility of future development, again achieving a balance between expansion on commercial grounds and building strong partnerships for the university that would feed back into the university's teaching and research base. The process of Reconstruction was reflected in the identities of this manager and their team, all of whom had MBA degrees and were undertaking doctorates, both to lend "strength and credibility" to their activities, and so that they could "understand the [academic] process" first hand. They also taught on business programmes, undertook applied research on university-industry collaboration, published papers and attended conferences.

The Employability Manager

This individual had a background in staff development and training. Their key responsibility was to improve the graduate employment outcomes of an inner city university catering for the mass market, to raise the aspirations of students, and to

develop positive relationships with local employers in preparing students for work. Because of a lack of resources, they were obliged to attract sponsorship from the private sector in the form of, for instance, student placements and training opportunities. This manager, therefore, drew on professional and academic constituencies to raise both educational and employment aspirations.

Contestation

The Employability Manager found that they were obliged to overcome deep-rooted beliefs within the university, and among the students themselves, that its students were not high achievers, and that, therefore, "the odds are against us". As a result, the university's employment record had been poor, with few initiatives being taken to improve perceptions of their students by employers. Thus, "The first thing I had to do was have a belief [in student potentials]… I've got to be ambitious [for them]… as long as that's there, there will always be opportunities". Furthermore, in talking to employers, this manager took a proactive approach to overcoming potential resistance: "it's no use me saying 'we're at the bottom of the league table, and… our students haven't got [the highest grades]…', and on the whole I always get something from [employers]." There was an element of risk and uncertainty in that their credibility depended on achieving outcomes that would raise confidence levels in the institution, students and employers, and reinforce the possibility of future success.

Reconciliation

Starting from the premise that qualifications were only one element in a student's employability, the Partnership Manager offered programmes of transferable skills, such as creating a cv and giving presentations. They also contributed to appropriate modules in the undergraduate curriculum, integrating understandings of employability into mainstream activity: "we… do… development work with [academic staff] in terms of their own practice, linking with the modules, and [helping students to] understand what employers are looking for". This manager, therefore, was able to use their hinterland of experience in other sectors to re-fashion attitudes and approaches to careers and employability in their institution. The work of their team fed back into the teaching and research profile of the university including, for instance, 'Mode 2' institutional research into employability issues.

Reconstruction

By refusing to be constrained by existing boundaries, ín this case attitudes and beliefs, this manager was not only able to establish new space that crossed conventional parameters, but also to move the institution forward. Furthermore, within this space, they were seeking to replicate the 'real world' of work, and therefore all opportunities were offered on a competitive basis: "Nobody just gives you a job…" They assisted employers by, for instance, providing appropriate shortlists. At the same time, all applicants, successful and unsuccessful, were offered formative feedback that would help them in the future, so that every initiative became a learning opportunity. Furthermore, the Employability Manager saw themselves as leading by example, describing their career as a "steep learning journey" in which they did "what needs to be done", and "offered people places that they wouldn't normally go to". They inculcated an ethos of 'self-help' in their team, bypassing agencies that the university had traditionally used. At the same time as raising students' aspirations, therefore, this manager was providing opportunities for their team to build confidence by giving them challenging projects. There was therefore a sense of partnership between the team, academic colleagues and employer representatives.

Thus, both the Business and Industry Liaison Manager and the Employability Manager displayed an ability to hold both 'public' and 'private' worldviews in their grasp, tolerating a significant degree of ambiguity, uncertainty and risk. They enlisted 'private' activity in service of the 'public' good of lifelong and workplace learning for individuals, at the same time as adding value to their institution and enhancing socio-economic agendas in their region. There was also a sense of learning and personal growth as they went along, both for themselves and for their teams.

Management contexts

It is significant that a majority of case respondents emphasised lateral relationships and team working, in which networks were as important as line management relationships. This type of environment might be seen as "transformative" in that "…hierarchies are flattened and considerable attention is paid to long-term goals and to the management of organisational cultures" (Deem 1998: 50). Such environments also demonstrate the increasing significance for institutions of individuals who are "only partially recognised in formal organisational structures", but may have valuable connections inside and outside the university (Bolden, Petrov and Gosling 2007: 78).

Institutions may wish to consider, therefore, whether and how 'public/private' space, and associated identities, might exist for them, including ways in which processes of *Contestation* might translate into *Reconstruction*, what might be the conditions and variables that affect this, and reasons why some spaces might remain contested. Variables might include, for instance:

- Staffing profile (background, length of service, experience, networks, qualifications).
- Nature of project (balance of 'public/private' components, number of partners, maturity of partnership, extent of "strong" and "weak" ties).
- Institution/sub-institution mission, aspirations, niche market.

Institutional responses to 'public/private' working, and (in practice) the response of managers of departments and functional units, may vary from active encouragement to allowing it to evolve rather by default than by design. In reviewing 'public/private' dimensions within specific organisational contexts, therefore, institutions may wish to consider:

- Lines of communication between project teams and senior institutional managers, especially when a team has no formal status via representation on committees or senior management groups.
- The development of 'mature' relationships during the *Reconstruction* process, which may supplement formal reporting lines.
- Sub-optimal positionings in formal organisation charts, for instance people with project portfolios located in inappropriate environments, possibly with an inappropriate reporting line.
- Recognition of 'management' as being an enabling rather than a controlling process, allowing decisions to be made closest to the point of action.
- The creation of job descriptions that are facilitative rather than constraining.Use of rewards and incentives (not necessarily financial) for 'public/private' activity, such as responsibility allowances and professional development opportunities.

- Rotation of staff in and out of 'public/private' space, for instance, via secondments.

Although this paper focuses on the processes involved in the construction of identities in 'public/private' space, as exemplified by staff working in Community and Business Partnership, these may be further contextualised, in the post-*Reconstruction* phase, against the framework devised by Whitchurch (2009) (Figure 2), which relates identity dispositions to professional spaces, knowledges, relationships and legitimacies. Thus, individuals who work through the three processes of identity construction might be said to reflect the concept of identity as a "project" rather than as a fixed sense of belonging to either public or private spheres (Giddens 1991; Henkel 2000). They might also be said to work in conditions of "weak boundary maintenance" in relation to their occupation of plural space, and the knowledge that they construct from public and private sources (Bernstein 1970: 61). Furthermore, their ability to negotiate new "rules and resources" and relationships reflects Habermas' concept of "communicative action", that is "oriented to reaching understanding" by:

> "harmoniz[ing] their plans of action on the basis of common situation definitions … " (Habermas 1984: 286).

Whitchurch's framework conceptualising "blended" professionals around the spaces, knowledges, relationships and legitimacies they form (Whitchurch, 2009) has been adapted as follows for the case of staff working in 'public/private' environments in Community and Business Partnership (Figure 2):

Figure 2: Conceptual Framing of Staff Working in 'Public/Private' Space in Community and Business Partnership

Dimensions of 'public/private' activity	Identity dispositions	Theoretical frames
Spaces	An ability to: - work with multiple strands of 'public/private' activity - accommodate the ambiguities of 'public/private' space - re-define, modify spaces and boundaries - work round formal structures	Reflect: - idea of identity as a "project", involving an individual's interpretation of their positioning in relation to others, rather than a fixed core or sense of belonging (Giddens 1991) - "supercomplex" conditions with multiple dimensions (Barnett 2000)
Knowledges	- integrate knowledge of both public and private spheres - engage in research around 'public/private' interface - create an integrated knowledge environment	- "weak boundaries" in relation to professional knowledges (Bernstein 1970) - "relaxed" frames of reference (Bernstein 1970)
Relationships	- enter and understand academic discourse/debate - form alliances with key partners - promote the interests of both academic and external colleagues - facilitate autonomy of own staff as team - construct professional networks, internally and externally - build client relationships (public and private)	- "strong ties" to own internal networks (Granovetter 1973) - "weak ties" to external networks (Granovetter 1973)
Legitimacies	- promote public and private interests - create mutual advantage - achieve credibility with academic and external colleagues - challenge the status quo - add value to both public and private spheres of activity	- "communicative action", establishing "common definitions" oriented to "coming to an understanding with [others]", as opposed to "exerting an influence *upon* others." (Habermas 1984)

Conclusion

The study has illustrated identities and working practices that tend to be hidden as a result of 'binary' understandings about institutional activity. Examples of 'public/private' activity in Community and Business Partnership are given as an illustration of the formation of "blended" identities, acknowledging tensions and challenges as well as more developmental and creative aspects. It therefore offers a way of understanding increasingly complex working practices and relationships. It may also help to mitigate what might be seen as somewhat idealised descriptions of boundary crossing (for instance, Williams 2002), and to foster "reflexive management", based on "critical thinking" (Marginson and Considine 2000: 251-252), with a view to "contest[ing] the excesses of managerialism, [and] conserv[ing] the successes of management" (Bundy 2004: 173).

The capacity of individuals to contribute to the formation of new space depends partly on their own agency, and partly on facilitation provided by institutions. It is suggested, therefore, that both individuals and institutions may wish to consider the implications of "blended" forms of working, of which Community and Business Partnership is given as an illustration in this paper, in particular of ways in which 'public' and 'private' forms of activity, which are increasingly integral to contemporary institutional contexts, might be interwoven. There are, for instance, implications for recruitment, career and professional development, motivation and morale. It is suggested that working in 'public/private' space, therefore, not only involves significant agency on the part of individuals, but also recognition by their institutions of space that "…enable[s] other positions to emerge… displace[s] the histories that constitute it and set[s] up new structures of authority… which are inadequately understood through received wisdom" (Bhabha 1990: 211). Achieving this understanding is, in practice likely to mean achieving "… find[ing] a common language, and if necessary, creat[ing] a new vocabulary adapted to the project in hand" (Czarniawska 2007). Some of the ways in which this is already occurring have been brought into view in this paper.

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