

16.3.2026

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**Title**

Beyond the Third Mission : toward an actor-based account of universities relationship with society /

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**Publication year**

2017

**Source/Footnote**

In: Universities in the neoliberal era : academic cultures and critical perspectives / Hakan Ergül ;

Simten Cosar (Hrsg.). - London : Palgrave Macmillan, 2017. - S. 41 - 59

**Inventory number**

45749

**Keywords**

Hochschule und Gesellschaft ; Ausland : Großbritannien : Hochschulwesen allgemein

**Abstract**

Recently, there has been an expansion of political narratives that seek to develop universities' links with society, predicated on the idea that academia needs to abandon the proverbial ivory tower and become more engaged with its environment. This chapter discusses the following questions: What is it that academics do when they engage with their societies? What are the ideas, issues and constraints surrounding these forms of engagement? How do they reflect and/or reproduce the concepts of (academic) authority? Based on ethnographic fieldwork in the UK, I develop a critical investigation of how academics' narratives and practices interact with the structural conditions of knowledge production, how they relate to the status and rewards associated with the academia, and how they (re)construct the boundaries and power relations between the university and society. (HRK / Abstract übernommen)

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