



UNIVERSITIES
SOUTH AFRICA



THE 2nd USAf NATIONAL HIGHER EDUCATION CONFERENCE 2021

PLENARY SESSION 3: REIMAGINING ENGAGEMENT AND TRANSFORMATION

*The Transformative, Responsive
University in South Africa*

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Four 'interwoven' ideas

- First, I reflect on the dominant character and orientation of the university on the South African higher education landscape that is trapped in a modern/colonial imaginary.
- Second, I propose *thinking* and *doing* the university at the engagement/transformation interface as a way to escape this imaginary.
- Third, I suggest that a new imaginary can only emerge on the basis of 'undoing' the university as we know it.
- Fourth, such 'undoing' presupposes a radical reformulation of the notion of 'social justice'; from which a 'different' praxis can take shape.

The transformative, responsive university

An emancipatory reading of the responsive university envisaged one that responds to the needs of the communities as articulated by themselves and co-constructed with universities. But to be able to “hear” these articulations in their authenticity requires deep institutional transformation within the university and its academy – hence the proposition of the transformative, responsive university.

Some concluding ideas

- Acknowledge complicity in and reality of our modern-colonial higher education imaginary
- Facing the challenges of unravelling the ‘academic self’
- Embracing an interrogating self-reflexivity that incorporates the notion of transformative change
- New, radical ‘conceptions’ of social justice within higher education; different from those floating around at present



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