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Social change and university development: Simon Marginson

I would like to sincerely thank Professor Shoo Jihong of Peking University and the organizing committee for inviting me to this meeting. I will talk about some implications of globalization for higher education and research, and their roles in society. I will not speak to the full paper but will summarize some points and illustrate them with slides.

‘Global’ refers to elements and processes occurring at the worldwide or planetary scale. ‘Globalization’ refers to growing convergence, tending towards integration, on a world scale. The human mentality is becoming more global, especially in higher education and research. Consider the goal mentioned by President Hu of China, concerning the achievement of a world society. A number of changes, coming together, have created this more global outlook. The first images of earth from space had a powerful effect in making the idea of one world a reality. The worldwide ecological crisis reinforced this sense of common interdependence within the one planet. Communications technologies mean we can now associate at will with people all over the world and transfer complex data. This is a staggering change. It lays the technical basis for worldwide community (though the social and cultural conditions are lacking). Already, in the form of the Internet, we have the forms of a single worldwide library and data base, though many cultures and languages are little represented in it.

Higher education is playing a key part in these changes. It has become a significant export market in its own right. Education is a primary mover in the growing flows of people (especially students, graduates and professors), and above all in the flows of ideas, knowledge and messages (especially in research). Meanwhile, higher education is itself being transformed, in its activities, organization and often its funding – though more in some countries than others – by these same global flows in which it is complicit.

Yet at times globalization appears like an unstoppable wave and it can be deeply threatening. The global flows of knowledge, communications and media, which have decisively opened up once separated national and cultural zones, are dominated by Western and especially Anglo-American contents. The capacity to exercise freedom, intervene actively and sustain identity in the global setting are not equally spread across the world. All countries, big and small, can ride this wave with the right policies and strategies but it is not easy to keep your balance.

I want to emphasize four aspects of globalization in higher education which go to the heart of the changes now taking place in the sector.

First, globalization is about much more than economics, that is trade, WTO, FDI and cross-border mobility of production. More important, especially in universities is the globalization of *communications and research knowledge*, and the part globalization of *culture*. Universities are not major producers or traders in their own right. They have an important indirect role in the economy by training graduates and producing research which enter into the chain of value creation in many different industries. But universities have a front rank role in the production and dissemination of knowledge and in cultural exchange. Research is amongst the most global of all systems.

Second, however, globalization has not lead to the displacement of the nation-state or the importance of locality in identity. Our mentalities have become partly global, but we are still also national and local. *Global, national and local*. Universities operate in all three dimensions at once. The diagram illustrates the different place of the global, national and local in the life of the university. The *global* is located in the head, where we do our thinking. Increasingly, we think broadly, and imagine globally, and connect to other universities all over the world. The *nation* is found at the heart, which is the seat of the emotions and the core of identity. The *local* is where we touch the earth. It is located in the *feet*. In the fast changing global setting we always need to keep our feet on the ground.

Third, as this suggests, the nation continues to be the main policy and funding influence on the university. Even in nations such as the USA where private funding plays a larger role than public funding, public funding sustains most of the basic research. At the same time governments vary in the extent to which they support higher education. Funding as a proportion of GDP is only weakly correlated to GDP per head. A feature of the last decade has been the increased investment by Korea, China and Singapore.

Fourth, however, globalization *has changed* the role of the nation-state and the policy approaches of governments have changed with it. Nation-states once acted with reference only to their own people. The nation-state is becoming a *global citizen state*, continuously focused on its place in the world, and it sees higher education as a vital instrument of both international cooperation and national competitiveness. It is difficult to strike a balance between these roles. The global-citizen states also have a common interest in a functioning world order that encompasses diversity. It is at the global level that harmony without the

necessity for agreement or sameness, has to be negotiated, in higher education as in other sectors of human activity.

At present worldwide higher education does not measure up to this ideal. It is overwhelmingly dominated by the wealthier nations, particularly the English-speaking nations which occupy 71 per cent of the Shanghai Jiao Tong top 100 list. American universities have most of the top 20 and house half the world's HiCi researchers who drive the Jiao Tong index. Anglo-American dominance in global competition is facilitated by the role of English as the sole global language of research. Knowledge produced in other languages is relegated to a position outside the mainstream worldwide research flows. The outcome in the humanities and social sciences, in which much of the work is in national languages, is a regime of forced conformity and standardisation in global research. This is agreement without harmony.

However, there are signs that a more plural distribution of higher education capacity is emerging. One is the work of European and American universities in capacity building in developing countries. Another is the rise of new Asia-Pacific science powers. For example, the rate of growth of investment in R&D in China in recent years far exceeds any of the OECD member countries. The last two decades have seen a very sharp rise in the number of scientific papers published in China, Korea and Singapore; consistent with and necessary to the growing role of East Asia, Southeast Asia and South Asia in world affairs. We might understand it as the restoration of older historical patterns. For example compare the changing shares of world output in 1700, 1978, and projected for 2030. However there is nothing inevitable about the balance of research capacity. It is a function of investment. There is a close correlation between the level of public investment in research and national performance in the Jiao Tong ranking.

There is a further question though. Will the growing global plurality of scientific research capacity be matched by an emerging plurality of research languages, which would help sustain a greater plurality in the humanities and social sciences? English is only one of two languages spoken by 1 billion people. Altogether there are 12 languages spoken by more than 100 million people. At least some are likely to become global languages, alongside English – Chinese national language, Spanish, perhaps Arabic, for example. This will determine whether we can move closer to a global higher education order characterized by mutual respect and harmony in diversity.