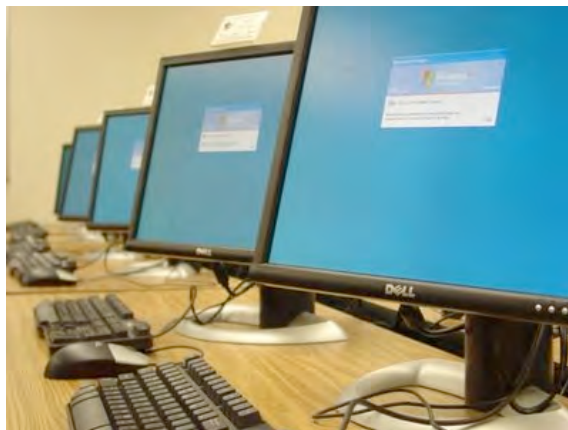


A funny thing happened on the way to the K-economy

The new world order in higher education:
Research rankings, outcomes measures
and institutional classifications

Simon Marginson
University of Melbourne, Australia

K-economy assembly line



Knowledge as a global public good



Paul Samuelson ...
public goods

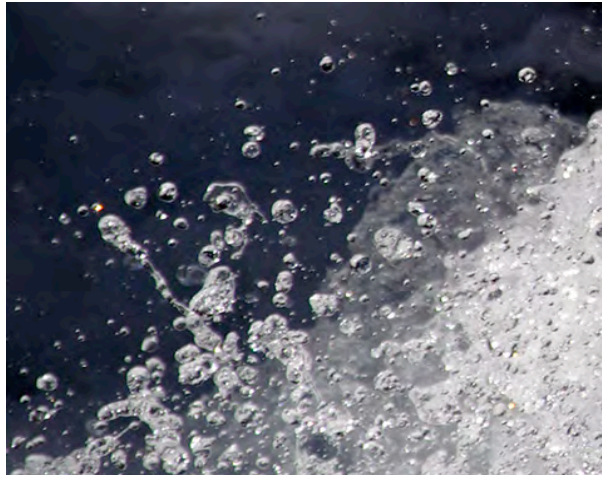


Joseph Stiglitz ...
knowledge as a
global public good

Open source knowledge



Knowledge flows



How do the chaotic open source flows of knowledge, which have no evident tendency towards predictability let alone to equilibrium, become reconciled with a world of national and university hierarchies, economic markets, and institutions that routinely require stability and control in order to function?

In the k-economy, public good knowledge flows are vectored by a system of status production.

This assigns value to knowledge, and arranges it in ordered patterns.

The new system for assigning ordered values to knowledge ('k-status') includes

- league tables and university rankings in research (to be mediated by institutional classifications)
- publication metrics and citation metrics
- journal hierarchies
- other comparative measures such as learning outcomes

tendentious and problematic they all are, but they are here to stay

Antinomy of the k-economy

Traditional status competition in universities is framed by closure, by the absolute scarcity of status, by one dominant circuit of knowledge

Open source ecology is characterized by many circuits of knowledge, by hyper-abundance, by dissemination without limit

(Industry will source innovations from both 'ordered knowledge' and 'knowledge without value')

Reflexivities of the k-order

- impact (Hazelkorn, 2008)
- self-determination and heteronomy
- diversity and variety
- is it possible to move up on the basis of merit?
- engagement with stakeholders
- creativity

R is for rankings



M is for metrics of publication and citation



C is for classifications



A (HELO) is for learning outcomes



Lines of action

- cultures of comparison
- clean comparisons: transparent, free of self-interest, sound social science
- comparisons that are inclusive on a global scale, permit a broad range of missions and institutional cultures, sustain self-determination, support genuine creativity
- comparisons that foster universal improvement, and competition for measured performance open to merit and innovation

Between the k-order and open source, establish

**plurality of rankings and
multiplicity of indicators**