A response to a brilliant and troubling book

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Brilliance

- Detailed mapping of the development High Participation Systems in 8 countries;
- Shows the limits of higher education’s shaping of society;
- Shows the power of narratives about higher education;
- Charts the damaging impact of the rhetoric of world class universities;
- Development of theoretical propositions using transpositional objectivity and existing literature.
Troubles with the world that *High Participation Systems* highlights

Marketization ‘worked’ quite well both for the state and higher education institutions... but, perhaps, did not work so well for higher education as one of the key institutions of society

(Anna Smolentseva, Isak Froumin, David L. Konstantinovskiy and Mikhail Lisyutkin, p.304)
Troubles with the world that *High Participation Systems* highlights

- Charts a moment of global higher education dominated by institutions – 10 of 17 propositions explicitly mention institutions.
- Also shows that where there are more equal systems, where you study is less important.
Troubles with the world that *High Participation Systems* reflects

- Infected by the self-aggrandizing narratives of noisy universities;
- Shifting definition of the artisan institutions;
- Implicit view of isomorphism;
- Implicit view of the educative aspects of higher education.
Troubles with the world that *High Participation Systems* reflects

The potential for self-formation is maximized in well-funded elite universities with knowledge-rich curricula, and reduced when higher education consists of shorter instrumental programmes in impoverished demand-absorbing institutions

(Brendan Cantwell, Simon Marginson and Anna Smolentseva, p.459)
Addressing the troubles with the world that *High Participation Systems* reflects

*The potential for self-formation is maximized in ... universities with knowledge-rich curricula* that take seriously who their students are and who this knowledge will help them to become, and reduced when higher education consists of shorter instrumental programmes...
Where to next?

- Need to develop a better understanding of the higher education system as a systems of education;
- The part different institutions play in these systems;
- At the moment our knowledge is incredibly partial;
- How do we develop a vision of an inclusive, transformational higher education system rather than a elitist, reproductive one?