

Tsinghua University Institute of Education
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The contribution of higher education to public and common good(s), East and West

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The problem of 'public' or 'social' goods in higher education

We can think we can measure private goods associated with higher education, such as augmented earnings ...

(though the extent to which they are really caused by the higher education? that's another story ...)

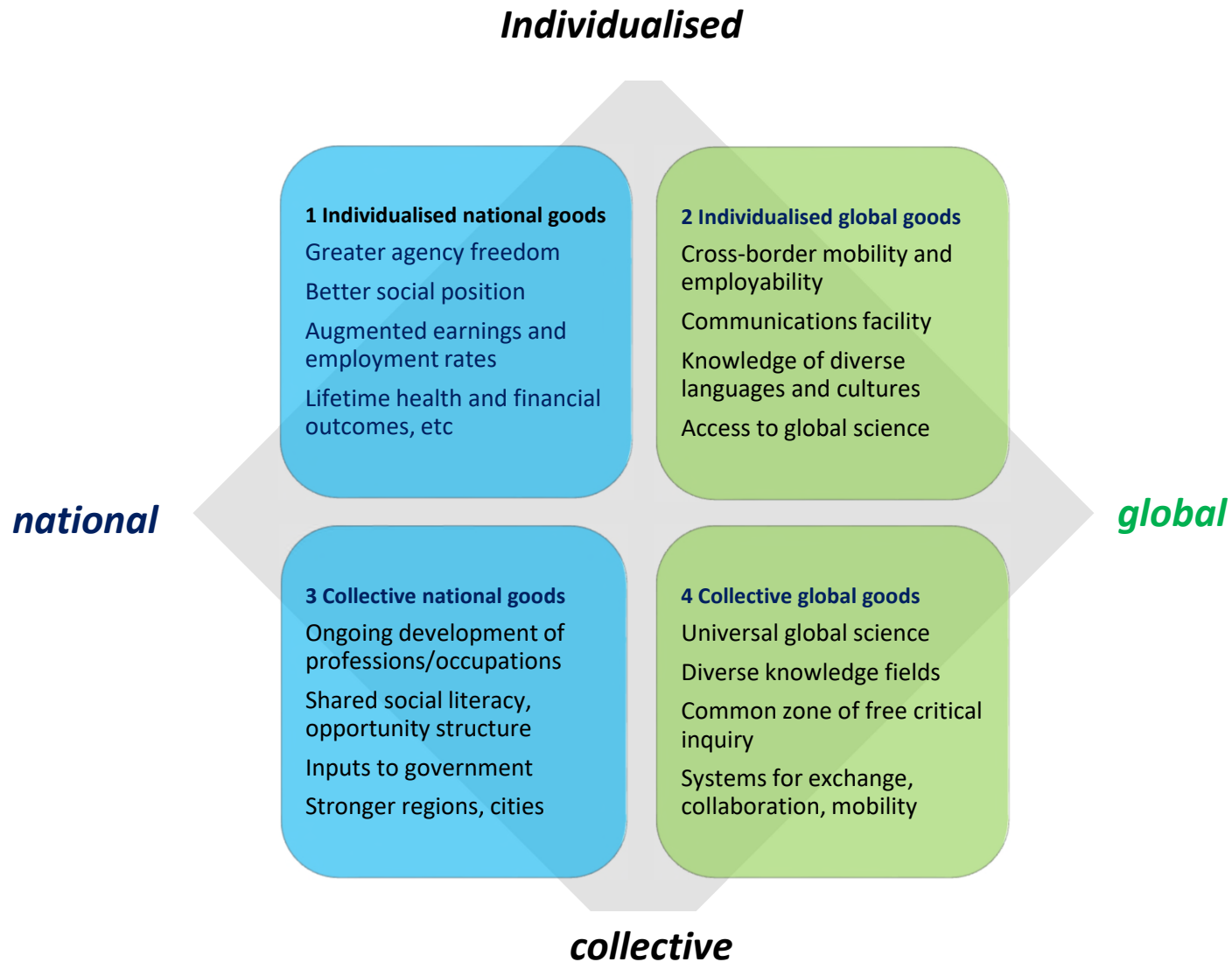
... but public good, or public goods, or 'social goods', are more elusive, especially goods collectively consumed.

These public goods tend to be under-recognised, and hence are probably under-funded and under-provided

The contribution of higher education to public and common good(s), East and West

- Contributions of higher education – individual and collective
- Higher education as a public sphere
- Higher education as public good(s)
 - Economic definition
 - Political definition
 - Combining the two definitions
- Higher education as common good(s)
- Global public and common good(s) in higher education
- Concepts of 'public' and 'common' in China

Mapping the contributions of higher education: Individualised and collective



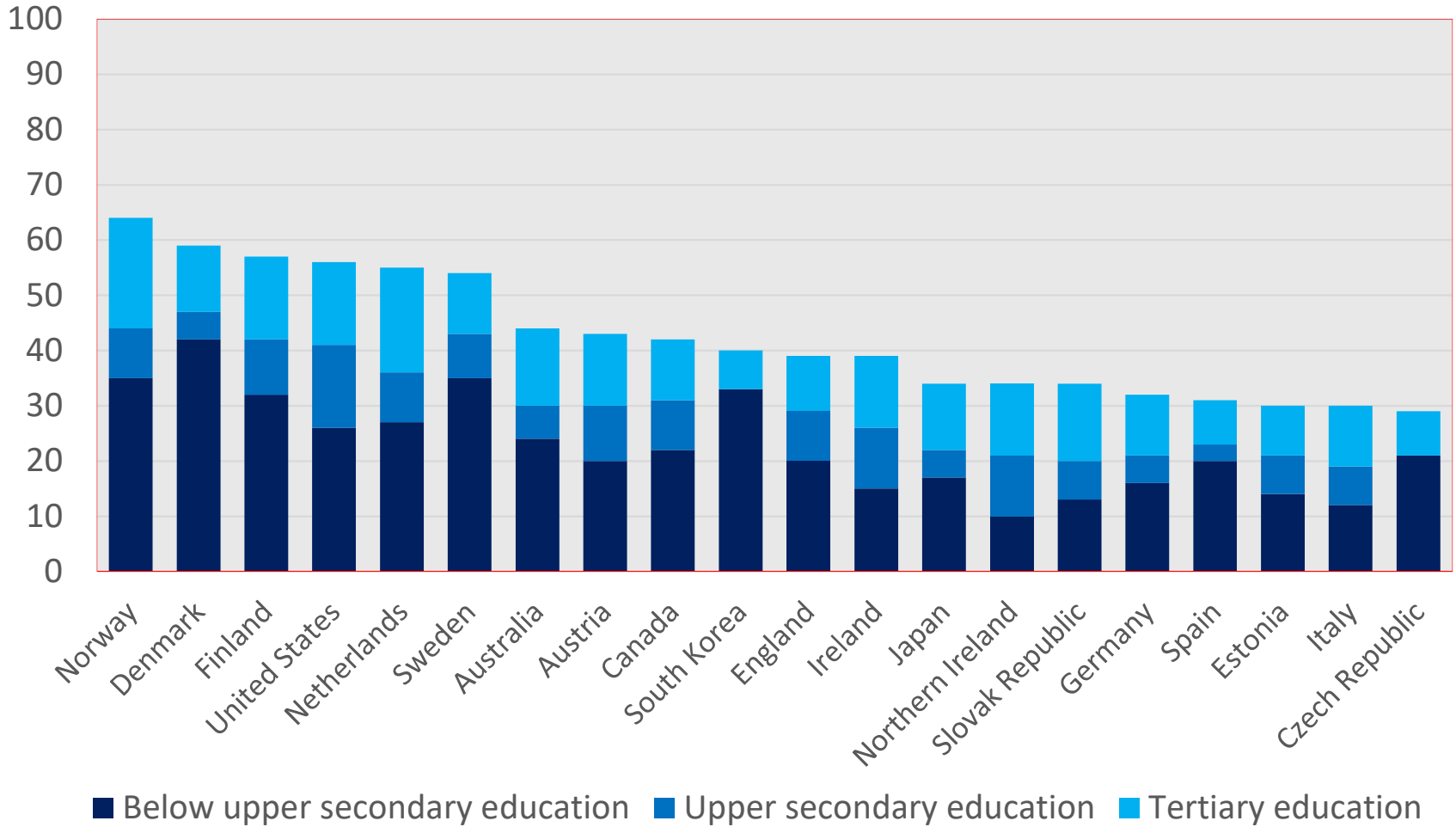
1. Individualised national-local goods

goods of self-formation, many affecting social relations
[bold = measurable]

- Greater agency freedom, the capacity for confident autonomous action
- Capability in dealing with states, markets, institutions
- **Augmented earnings and employment rates**
- **Better social position**
- **Lifetime health outcomes**
- **Personal financial management**
- Augmented social-relational capabilities – **capacity to communicate, use technology, understand and tolerate cultural difference, trust other people**
- Augmented **political participation**

Level of education and political connectedness

Q. 'Do you believe you have a say in government?' % 'Yes' (OECD 2014)



2. Individualised global goods

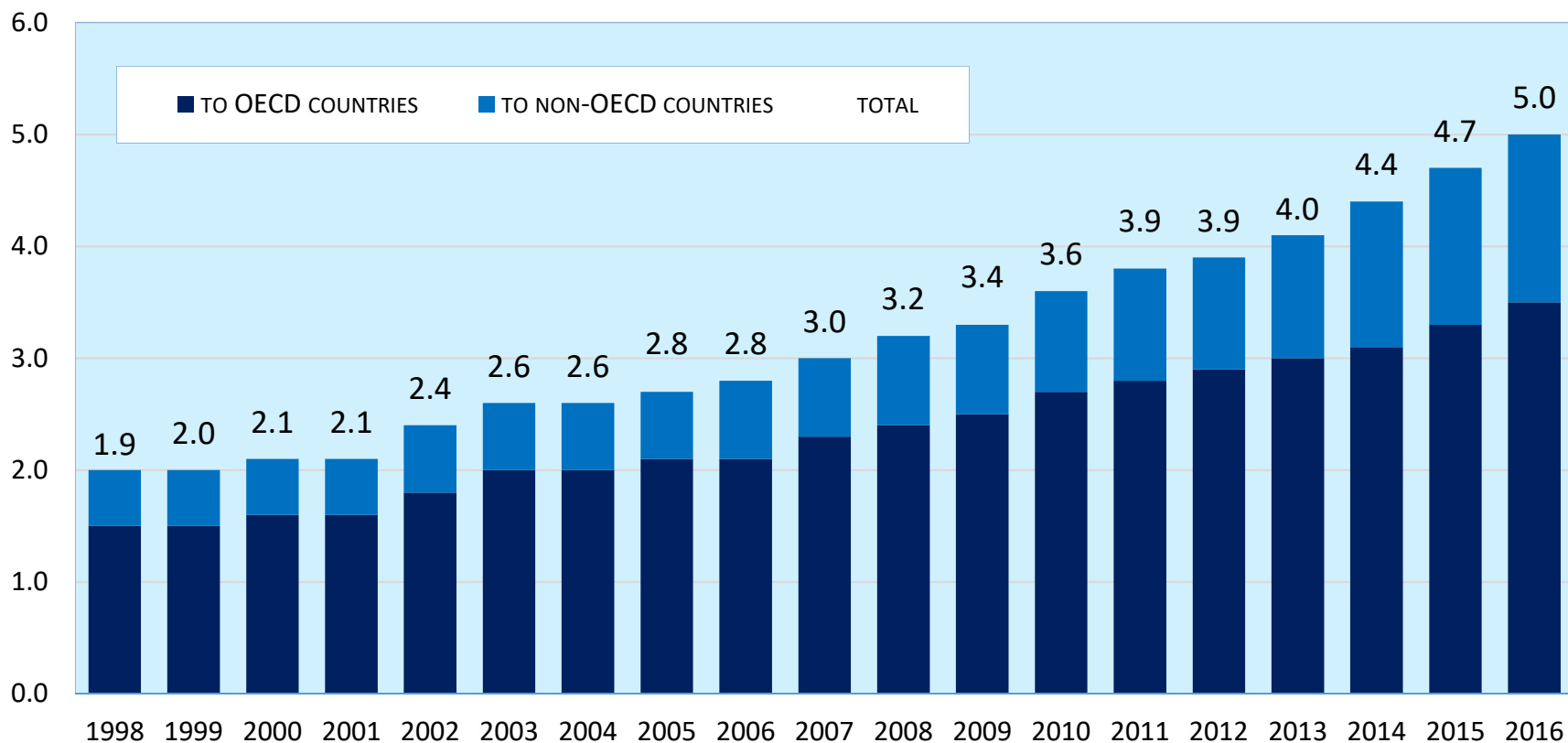
Goods of self-formation in global society (global systems and cross-border mobility)

- Greater agency freedom, the capacity for confident autonomous action, in global society
- **Capacity for cross-border mobility**
- Negotiation of unfamiliar sites and institutions
- **Global employability and augmented earnings**
- **Facility in cross-border communications and cooperation**
- **Knowledge of diverse languages and cultures**
- **Other global competences including understanding, tolerance and negotiation of cultural difference**
- Access to global science and other knowledges

- OECD, Perspectives on Global Development 2017: International migration in a shifting world (2016)

Total international/ foreign students in tertiary education, 1998-2016 (millions)

OECD data 2018



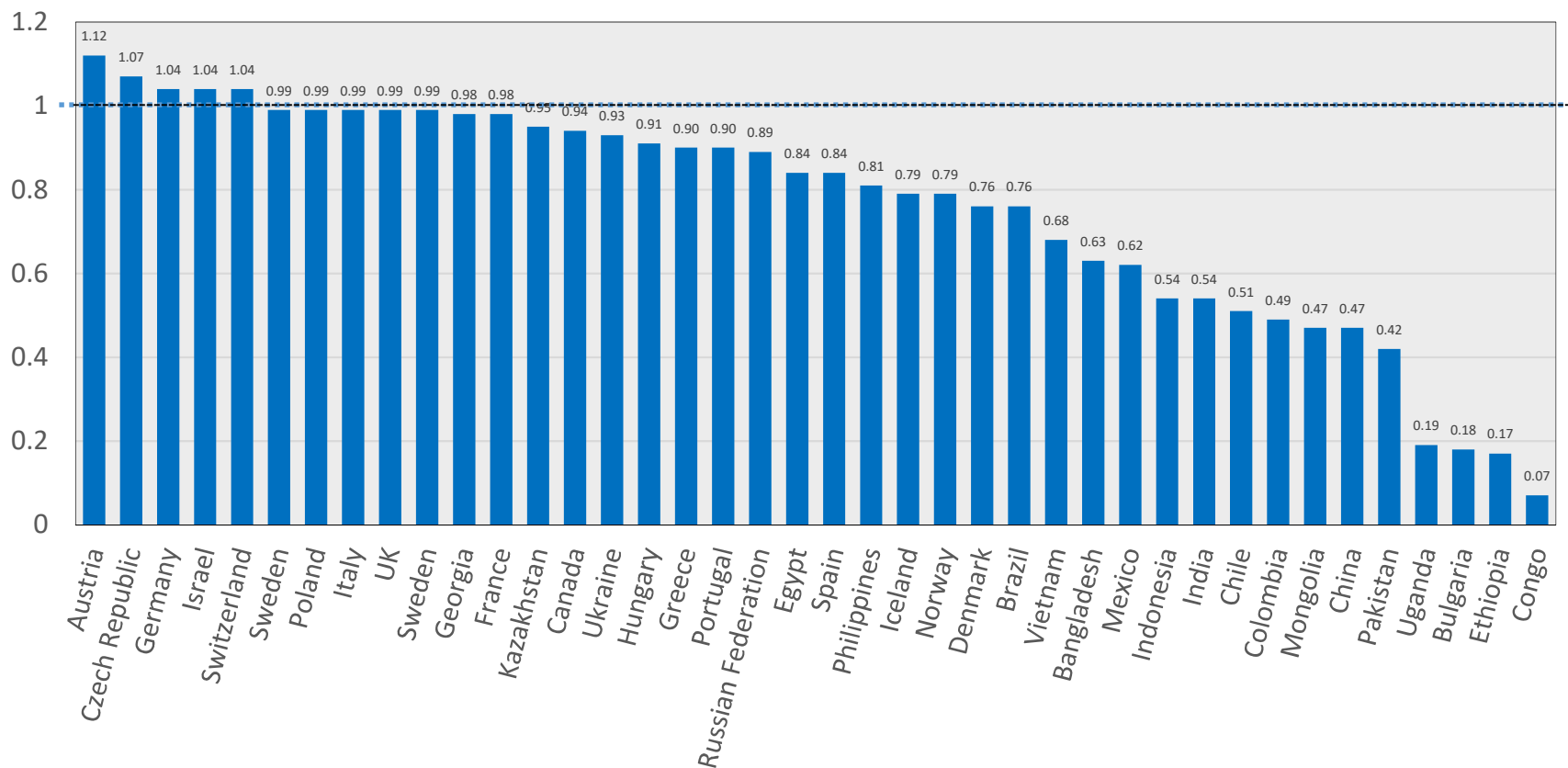
3. Collective national-local goods

Goods that are jointly consumed (some of which are jointly produced)
[bold italics = partly measurable, or at least observable]

- Ongoing development of the professions/ occupations as cooperative social activity
- Graduate work that constitutes common social benefits (e.g. in health care, education)
- **Shared social literacy**
- **Nationally-specific knowledges (e.g. in professional fields such as law)**
- *Higher education as an opportunity structure that delivers [?] socially just outcomes*
- *Academic inputs to government policy and regulation*
- *Economic, social and cultural building of localities, cities, regions [but unequalising]*

Rural disadvantage in school completion

Ratio of rural end-school completion rate to urban completion rate
2009-2014, selected countries. UNESCO data



■ ratio of rural school completion rate to urban completion rate

4. Collective global goods

Goods that are jointly consumed (some of which are jointly produced)

- **Global knowledge, in diverse fields especially in science** [but biases, omissions]
- ***Systems of universal global science, including publishing, certification protocols***
- ***Fostering of global cooperation in research including that on common global problems***
- Common global zone of free critical inquiry, with cross-border disciplinary networks
- ***Systems for international collaboration, exchange, mobility between universities*** (recognition protocols, Erasmus, etc)

Extensive data available on research outputs and cooperation patterns

Differing uses of the term *public*

- The public sphere as a zone of communicative rationality and open debate (Habermas's reworking of the Kantian idea)
- The normative 'public good', an idea of the collective welfare
- The public/private distinction in political theory, a distinction between state and non-state
- The public/private distinction in neo-classical economics, a distinction between market and non-market
- Neoliberal ideology's simplistic definition of public/private as a distinction between state and market. This is incoherent, as it omits the role of non-market private actors (families, philanthropy), and the use of markets as an instrument of government (public enterprises in China, neoliberal quasi-markets in education policy)

Economic public goods are non-rivalrous and non-excludable

- Goods are non-rivalrous when consumed by any number of people without being depleted, for example knowledge of a mathematical theorem, which sustains its use value everywhere, indefinitely, on the basis of free access
- Goods are non-excludable when benefits cannot be confined to individuals, eg clean air regulation, national defence
- Private goods are neither non-rivalrous nor non-excludable. Private goods can be produced, sold and bought as individualised commodities in economic markets
- Here the public/private distinction is a distinction between non-market and market production, and way of determining the minimum necessary government expenditure

Common goods in and from higher education

- Common goods are one kind of collective political public good. These are relational social goods. They are about the qualities of a shared community, e.g. social solidarity, equality, human rights, democratic self-determination, social and geographic mobility (freedom of movement), shared knowledge and conversations
- They can only be produced jointly. Some are experienced by individuals (e.g. human rights) and some by groups (e.g. laws)
- ‘The shared action is intrinsic, as well as instrumental, to the good itself and ... its benefits come in the course of that shared action. Goods of that kind are, therefore, inherently common in their “production” and in their benefits’

– Severine Deneulin and Nicholas Townsend (2007). Public goods, global public goods and the common good. *International journal of Social Economics* 34 (1/2), pp. 19-36

Shanghai Jiao Tong research on the public good role of higher education in China

- “Though higher education in China is largely government-led and regulated its contributions to people, society and the whole nation receive wide attention. Culturally, higher education is seen as a collective endeavor. Politically, it is common to all people... describing it in terms of ‘common’ good(s) may be more comprehensible than the term ‘public’. Moreover, given that higher education in China is neither a pure public good nor a pure private good, describing it as a common good(s) may be more reasonable for that reason.
- “Common good(s) are defined in terms of a given group/community, socially embedded with a common interest, and require collective participation. Global common good(s) relate to all people worldwide. The Chinese concept of ‘a community of shared future for mankind’ (*ren lei ming yun gong tong ti*) implies that all humans live in the same planet and they shoulder the same responsibility to make their lives better...”

- Tian, L. and Liu, N. (2019). Rethinking higher education in China as a common good. *Higher Education*, 77 (4), pp. 623-640

What of *global* public and common goods?

- ‘Global public goods are goods that have a significant element of non-rivalry and/or non-excludability and made broadly available across populations on a global scale. They affect more than one group of countries, are broadly available within countries, and are inter-generational; that is, they meet needs in the present generation without jeopardizing future generations.’

~ Inge Kaul, I. Grunberg and Marc Stern (Eds.), *Global Public Goods: International cooperation in the 21st century*, New York, Oxford University Press, 1999, pp. 2–3

- ‘Global common good’ is ‘participation of all persons in a diverse and differentiated, yet solidaristic and collaborative, world society’ – Deneulin and Townsend (2007), p. 29

- The provision of global public goods cannot be left to the global market or to any one single national government. Multilateral forums and ‘state-like agencies’ such as United Nations and OECD have a role.
- The world research system and communication system provide great scope for global common goods (while noting that with companies such as Google or Elsevier, common knowledge intersects with commercial goods).
- Cross-border mobility is a global common good that enables many private goods, and national public goods.

National-cultural variations and generic 'good'

- Understandings of 'public' and 'common' varies between nations, and regional cultures. Is there a generic/worldwide public or common good in higher education?
- Which tradition of 'state' and 'public' should we use and which understanding of the public role of the university—the Anglo-American, Nordic, German, Chinese, Latin American, etc? Should we continue to impose one national idea of what is global public good – or should we devise a *composite* global idea of global public good, combining different national ideas?
- Which language should we used in determining global good? Often, in languages other than English there is no direct translation of concepts like 'public goods'. Understandings of the social role of higher education are different also. An Anglo-Chinese lexicon is currently in preparation

Extracts from Chinese-Anglo Lexicon

公 Gong	Public; common; justice; for all's benefits; altruism and selfless spirit; state; social; international; openly; official; equally divided; male; Duke	There are no explicit explanations of '公' in Chinese, similar to 'public' in English. It has different meanings in varied situations
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individual	个人：单独一个人，与集体相对应而言；某个特定的人；单一个体。	Translates, but Anglo term more 'individualistic' in connotation
collective	集体/集体的：代指由多人组成团体的；有集体主义特点的。	High degree of overlap
public goods	公共利益；公共物品；国有利益/物品	The Chinese term is narrower
private goods	私人利益；私人物品；商业产品和服务	The Chinese term is narrower
global public good	世界公共物品/利益；在世界层面上可获得的公共物品/利益（经济学） 公益；世界公益	The Chinese term is narrower
common good	共同利益；公益；公用资源	High degree of overlap
global common good	世界公益	High degree of overlap