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World-Class Universities: Towards a global common good and seeking national and institutional contributions

**Higher Education and Global Common Good**

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**[Title slide]**

Nian, thank you for your kind words. You do me a great honour today in inviting me to speak at WCU-7. I am conscious that you, perhaps more than any of us, have made practical the idea of a worldwide network of universities entrusted with shared responsibility for the common human condition.

[**Higher Education and Global Common Good – contents**]

Dear colleagues, in an era marked by the profound impact of globalization, higher education is not just a national common good, like all education, but a global common good. Especially, World-Class Universities (WCUs) are crucial in meeting the challenges of the time: climate change, food and water security, poverty and epidemic disease, rapidly growing cities, changing information and communications, industrial technologies and work patterns, and social and cultural transformations. The growth of research and science, with knowledge flowing everywhere like water, powers the role of WCUs in common goods. The education function, cross-border mobility people and the WCU contribution to international engagement, tolerance and understanding, also augment the common good; without necessarilyimpairing the WCU contribution to locality and nation (though some mission tensions do occur).

Though national governments often see science and WCUs as weapons of national competition, and while each universities wants a better ranking, WCUs are primarily cooperative and positive sum. Global and international relations have mixed benefits in finance and trade, where there are both winners and losers. However, in higher education and research, cross-border activity can be configured to benefit all the parties, when relations are conducted on the basis of equality of respect.

Today I will begin with underlying changes shaping the global landscape, before moving to the global common good or goods. The final part discusses tensions and synergies between national and global in higher education.

**[Underlying changes]**

First, then, changes in the landscape.

**[Modernization and urbanization]**

Much is written about globalization in higher education and research, about partial global integration and convergence. But the more fundamental driver, operating both beneath and between nations, is the underlying dynamics of development, the overwhelming drive to modernize economies and societies. This impacts differentially in nations with different starting points.

**[Urban share (%) of world population 1960-2016: World Bank data]**

The transformation of Neolithic communities dominated by mass agriculture into capitalist industrial civilization is now reaching into every corner of the planet and overturning the habitat of almost every species. Half a century ago a third of the world’s population lived in cities. The worldwide urban share climbed past 50 per cent a decade ago and is moving onwards and upwards. In China the urban share climbed from 17 per cent in 1970 to 54 per cent in 2013, in Indonesia from 17 to 53 per cent, and in India from 20 to 33 per cent.

Along with the cities comes energy, transport, communications, health and education, especially tertiary and higher education. Universities only flourish on a mass scale in urban settings, where social demand—first from the middle class and then from everyone—is concentrated, where professions and graduate employment are also concentrated, where supply achieves sufficient scale for large infrastructure and connections to worldwide science are made.

**[Gross Tertiary Enrolment Ratio (%) and urbanization in Indonesia 1990-2013 (1)]**

Overall, the growth of higher education is only loosely related to economic growth rates. A base level of resources is essential for mass higher education, and a higher level essential to a national research system and world-class universities. But the growth of student numbers is more closely correlated to modernization and urbanization than to economic growth. Take Indonesia. As the graph shows, since 1990 the share of labour in agriculture has declined while the share of the population in the cities has increased.

**[Gross Tertiary Enrolment Ratio (%) and urbanization in Indonesia 1990-2013 (2)]**

Correspondingly, as spring is followed by summer, the gross tertiary enrolment ratio has also increased. Like all governments, the Indonesian government responded to the growth of urban classes and the expanding demand for higher education by sanctioning an ever rising number of places.

**[Gross Tertiary Enrolment Ratio (%) in India and China, 1976-2015]**

In the two decades after 1995 the worldwide Gross Tertiary Enrolment Ratio jumped from 15 to 35 per cent. Levels and completion rates vary but about one quarter of all today’s young people enter degree programs. In sixty countries, half or more of the school leaver age cohort enter tertiary institutions. If the worldwide enrolment rate continues to grow by one per cent a year, in three decades 50 per cent will enter degree programs and take an advanced level of education into the workforce.

We know that mass higher education is highly uneven. But let’s take the ‘glass half full’ approach. Advanced education changes people, it builds what Amartya Sen calls capability. The worldwide growth of higher education, powered by modernization and cities, is a mighty growth of collective agency. Whether that agency will be matched by equivalent opportunity is not clear.

**[Spread of science]**

On top of more educated populations we also see the spread of science and growth in the number of networked WCUs. Almost everywhere research has moved from the margins of policy to the normal business of state.

**[Largest research universities, in terms of number of science papers produced 2012-2015]**

The birth of the Internet around 1990 triggered the emergence of a dominant world system of published English-language science. With the partial exception of the United States, most technological innovations are sourced not from national science systems but global science. It seems that all nations now want science capacity and WCUs to lead it (though not all nations can afford science)—just as all nations want clean water, viable banking and stable governance. States want WCUs not simply for national prestige, though that’s part of it, but because of what WCUs do. With access to global research now essential, nations must have their own trained scientific capability and interact continually with researchers abroad. Economic growth has fueled the rise in research capacity. Total scientific output is growing rapidly, especially in the newly arrived science countries. More than fifty countries now produce more than one thousand full scale journal papers a year in Web of Science.

**[Growth of WCUs]**

The number of WCUs grows, the number of countries with WCUs grows, and the size of individual WCUs grows. The overall worldwide tendency is to more comprehensive universities with all disciplines—though the disciplines often have unequal prestige. The WCU form is dominant—the multi-purpose, multi-disciplinary, multi-stakeholder and often multi-site large research university, Clark Kerr’s ‘multiversity’. This institutional form both enables economies of scale and scope and maximizes global rankings. In many if not most countries specialist universities and colleges, non-university sectors, and government research laboratories outside the universities, are playing a reduced role.

Large multiversities have more resources for national and global challenges, including ranking. WCUs use various combinatory forms to augment their size and reach, including mergers, multi-site and cross-border structures. Universities are becoming externally more homogenous and internally more heterogeneous. Much of the diversity that once lay between HEIs is now contained within them. It is significant that institutional higher education has developed, and continues to develop, through growth and combination, not by the de-bundled missions, nimble specialization and on-line substitutions suggested by the market imaginary.

Both expansion strategies (quantity) and concentration strategies (quality) generate prestige and resources for WCU. What has changed is that the average point of equilibrium between the quantity strategy and the quality strategy has become fixed at a larger level of scale and complexity. Many elite WCUs use growth and size to advantage, such as Toronto and Harvard.

**[Growing number of universities with over 10,000, 5000 and 1200 papers in Web of Science: 2006-09 to 2012-15 (Leiden University data)]**

Over the six years of the Leiden ranking, the number of universities producing more than 10,000 journal papers over four years, rose from 25 to 50.

**[More plural science power]**

In some nations, the growth of science is truly amazing.

**[Shanghai ARWU top 500 universities: Chinese systems 2005 and 2017]**

Between 2005 and 2014, published output in Iran multiplied by 5.5 times. In China, it multiplied by almost four times. China’s number of top 500 universities in the ARWU jumped from eight in 2005 to 45 in 2017.

**[Growth in number of top 10% papers, leading East Asian universities, 2006-09 to 2012-15]**

China’s total published science—in a second language, English—rose from 25 per cent of US output in 2005 to 80 per cent in 2014. China will soon pass the US in both aggregate R&D investment and the total volume of papers. China is playing a growing role in the creation of global common goods in its WCUs.

In total, 46 systems had at least one top 500 university in ARWU in 2017. But we are seeing not just the emergence of more diverse research countries but the pluralization of knowledge power, led by the rise of the great WCUs in East Asia, especially in China and Singapore. The United States still has much the strongest research universities across all fields, but in the physical sciences side of STEM, China and Singapore have just about caught up.

**[High citation papers, in top 10% of research field, in maths and physical sciences, 2012-2015 (Leiden data)]**

This table lists the top 15 WCUs in two discipline clusters, on the basis of the number of high citation papers, papers in the top 10 per cent of their field. On the left, papers published in 2012-2015 in maths and computing. China had more than half of the top 15 universities. Tsinghua was a clear number one with Nanyang second. The highest placed American university, MIT was fifth.

In the larger Physical Sciences and Engineering cluster, the US still had the world’s top two, Berkeley and MIT; but China had five of the top 15. The two Singapore universities were in the top 15 in both discipline clusters.

**[Combining all top 10% papers in maths, computing, physical sciences, engineering, 2012-2015 (Leiden data) ]**

When the two columns in the previous table are aggregated, Tsinghua just shades MIT as the world’s top physical sciences STEM university—though the US has four of the top seven. However, in comparative terms, WCUs in China and East Asia are significantly weaker in the biological and life sciences, and medicine, and weaker still in psychology and the social sciences. Not all initiatives in East Asia are STEM-based. There are interesting liberal arts developments, but that is a secondary strand at this stage.

**[High citation papers, in top 10% of research field, in biomedical and health sciences, 2012-2015 (Leiden data)]**

In biomedical and health sciences, the highest placed university from China was Shanghai Jiao Tong at 117. Eleven of the top 14 were US American.

So these are underlying patterns. Modernization and urbanization, driving the growth of participation, research and science. Converging institutional forms in an isomorphic process dominated by WCUs. Uniformity suppresses a useful diversity of institutional type; and in association with rankings tends to undermine diverse local and national cultures. At the same time, standardized institutional forms and globalized academic cultures speed people mobility, underpin collaborative projects and publications, and ease the framing of joint academic programs and negotiation of partnerships across borders.

**[Global common goods in higher education and science]**

The upside of global homogeneity, especially in research, is that it facilitates collaboration for the global common good. So let’s now look directly at global common good, the theme of WCU-7.

**[Public goods and common goods]**

The potential of WCUs is larger than suggested by the Anglo-American model of the university as self-serving firm with customer/students. The social meanings of WCUs derive from their many connections with other social sectors and their ongoing direct and indirect effects in the lives of their students, graduates and many other people. WCUs also sit in an open information setting with many potentials for global collaboration.

The conceptual tools we have for understanding this larger role of universities are those of ‘public goods’ and ‘common goods’, or common good.

The better known term ‘public goods’ is ambiguous, being used in two different ways that partly overlap. In the political definition of ‘public goods’ these are goods seen to be a matter of policy interest or public interest, and produced, directed or controlled by the state. In the economic definition, ‘public goods’ are goods that cannot be produced profitably in a market because they are non-rivalrous and/or non-excludable. Such goods must be at least partly funded by government or philanthropy the point where the economic and political definitions overlap. Basic scientific research is a classic example of a good dependent on public funding because it is a public good in economic terms. Teaching and degrees can be produced either in the form of public goods or of private goods, and often function as a mixture of both.

There are three broad types of public goods produced in higher education.

1. Goods consumed by individual students and not directly rewarded in graduate labour markets; for example, knowledge, cultural sensibility, learning how to learn.
2. Goods received by individual students, again not directly rewarded in graduate labour markets, that affect others and are formative of society—such as social and scientific literacy, the effects of higher education on political participation, tolerance, and the graduate contribution to joint productivity at work. Such public goods can arise as spill-overs from private investment in higher education, and are produced in private as well as public higher education institutions. It is not always essential for government to finance them, though government financing may enhance their production and distribution.
3. Collective goods produced by WCUs, not received by individuals, and again formative of society, including research, the maintenance of the system of disciplinary knowledge, university cultural contributions, academic work for policy and government, international activities not financed by student fees, and the contributions of universities to building cities and regions, especially in disadvantaged zones. Also, education as a system of opportunity, social equity. For the most part these collective goods are subject to market failure and depend on at least part funding from government or philanthropic sources.

What then is meant by the term ‘common goods’? As I see it, common goods in higher education are a subset of public goods type 2 and 3—they are those individual effects on graduates that have a relational meaning in society as a whole, that contribute to human rights, agency and sociability, and the contribution of universities to collective goods such cities, communities and regions, and to solving global problems. Here the term ‘common good’ refers to positive social values, as in the Chinese tradition of ‘public’.

**[Social-relational goods in higher education]**

In sum, common goods foster such qualities as shared social welfare, inclusion, integration, solidarity, tolerance, equal human rights, the growth of individual capability on a democratic basis, and shared enrichment. In a world where networked inclusion continually expands, joining once separated localities together, all persons are increasingly engaged with others and the scope for common goods expands also. The term ‘common goods’ has now been taken up by UNESCO, which notes that private as well as public higher education institutions can contribute to the combined store of common goods.

The creation of more educated societies greatly expands the scope for WCUs to contribute to common public goods, provided WCUs are effectively engaged within their societies. Higher education is itself a common good in three difference senses. It is part of the new normal, it is a commonplace human experience. It is an experience widely shared, one in common. And it can help to build social solidarity in often fractured communities.

**[Level of education and political connectedness]**

The OECD publishes data on the contribution of higher education to relational common goods. The consistent story is that higher education contributes to graduate agency which in turn builds sociability. For example, there is a close association between graduation, and possessing skills in information and communications technology—electronic sociability. Also, as the graph shows, people who complete tertiary education are 16 per cent more likely to believe they have a say in government, than people who left before upper secondary.

**[Level of education and interpersonal trust ]**

On average 20 per cent more people who complete tertiary education said that they trust others (p. 163), compared to early secondary leavers. Solidaristic trust reaches close to 50 per cent in the Nordic countries.

**[The university as public sphere]**

WCUs contribute to the common good in another way. Jurgen Habermas famously identifies a ‘public sphere’ located on the edge of the state, adjoining civil society. His example is late seventeenth century London with its network of salons, coffee houses and broadsheets that together constituted public opinion and provided a critical reflexivity for the state. Universities operate in analogous fashion as semi-independent adjuncts of government, a source of constructive criticism, strategic options and expert information that helps state and public to reach considered opinions. In many countries, some of the time, the university is a zone of reasoned argument and contending values. American higher education has been the medium for successive political-socio-cultural transformations, such as the 1960s civil rights movement. This idea of critical policy-related discussion adjoining the state has resonance in China, where leading national universities perform the Habermasian role in criticism, debate and innovation on the inside edge of the party-state, rather than outside and as part of civil society as in the US. Peking University was the starting point for most twentieth century political movements in China. One test of the contribution of WCUs to the common good is the extent to which they provide space for criticism, challenge, controversy and new public forms.

Many other examples of common goods can be cited. However, the common goods associated with higher education are under-recognized, and this contributes to their under-financing and under-provision. The exceptions are jurisdictions such as the Nordic where education is openly treated by the whole society as a shared benefit and a universal right. *Global* common goods in higher education, while understood by many people working in WCUs, are even more liable to be under-estimated by governments and the community.

**[Global common goods]**

*Global public goods* in economic terms are goods with a significant element of non-rivalry and/or non-excludability that affect a plurality of countries. *Global common goods*, a sub-set of global public goods, are broadly available across populations in more than one group of countries and contribute to human capability, sociability and solidarity within and between nations. The world system of publicly accessible scientific knowledge is a good example.

Arguably, the most fundamental global common good maintained by WCUs is the networked global space for free inquiry and dissemination. All indicators show that cross border cooperation is increasing, for example the data on joint publications. The intellectual tradition inherited by European WCUs has been extended to many more universities. Here academic freedom, not institutional autonomy, is decisive. University autonomy has always been partial. WCUs are largely creatures of the nation-state era and accountable for the public (and private) goods they create. However, the key feature of the European university form is that these institutions, being semi-independent of both church and state, harboured a shared mental zone controlled by neither. It remains crucial that scholars and researchers make the positive decisions about research and teaching, while WCUs protect them from coercion by state or market. Here events in Turkey, and the Hungarian government’s attempt to suppress the Central European University in Budapest, are of great concern.

Free mobility is another crucial global common good. Hhigher education and mobility form a common interdependent system, together fostering people with distinct attributes. On one hand, global mobility is integral to knowledge systems and cross-border learning in WCUs and beyond. On the other hand, many studies show that cross-border experience facilitates attributes such as cosmopolitan tolerance, cross-cultural awareness, knowledge of foreign languages and international understanding; and also flexibility in the face of difference and change, awareness of self-identity, confidence and self-determining agency. These effects arise whether cross-border mobility is financed by families, or by governments or universities, though distribution of the attributes is more equitable with public financing.

Not all students and faculty in WCUs have cross-border experiences. Yet higher education augments everybody’s capacity for mobility. The OECD’s *Perspectives on Global Development 2017: International migration in a shifting world* compares the cross-border mobility of people with, and without, university degrees. For those *without* degrees the tendency to move across borders is correlated to income. As income rises people are more likely to move. Makes sense, doesn’t it? *But* among those with degrees the pattern is different. First, at a given level of income, those with degrees are more mobile than those without: higher education democratizes mobility. Second, for those with degrees, as income rises, once a modest threshold level is reached there is little change in mobility. The propensity to travel is income inelastic. In other words, in helping graduates to greater personal agency in the domain of mobility, higher education weakens the effects of economic determinism on their imaginings, choices and decisions. Significantly, *degree level education directly constitutes greater personal freedoms*. This is a very clear example of the way higher education in itself augments the common good.

**[Social equity as a common good]**

WCUs can also contribute to the common good, within nations and worldwide, within the system of social opportunities in higher education. Here the effects of WCUs are less automatic and more ambiguous, and vary between countries.

The growth of tertiary education, like the evolution of capitalist societies, is socially and geographically uneven. In all countries places that offer significant positional advantages for individuals are often captured by students from the affluent families best able to compete, reinforcing starting inequalities. Low income families and rural students are under-represented, especially in selective programs and WCUs. Poor students are more likely to drop out or to access low quality institutions in stratified systems. These patterns limit possible upward mobility and undermine higher education as a common good. But the extent of inequality varies at both institutional and national levels.

For example, the public University of California system takes in high numbers of students from low income families despite the fact that the US is a highly unequal society. Yet some other WCUs are seen by government and by their own marketing departments solely as producers of valuable private goods. However, the private goods role is defensible only when there is genuine commitment to opening up to under-represented families at scale.

**[Proportion of 25-29 year olds who completed at least four years of tertiary education, by income (top income quintile compared to bottom), 2008-2014]**

The graph indicates the national variation. It compares the proportion of 25-29 year olds who achieved at least four years of tertiary education, from two social groups—those from the highest family income quintile, the dots at the top part of the graph, and those from the lowest family income quintile, the dots at the bottom. In most countries very few bottom quintile students make it. Yet in the Netherlands 60 per cent of 25-29 year olds from the top income quintile had four years of tertiary education and a high 40 per cent in the bottom quintile.

The crucial issue is the extent to which higher education is inclusive, especially of low income people and those outside the cities. As noted, higher education confers on graduates relational attributes, an advanced agency and sociability. As the boundary of participation advances and tertiary education becomes the norm, those without access to the agency become especially disadvantaged. They lack not only the job opportunities, but have less of the personal skills and confidence and flexibility associated with graduates.

At global level there is a parallel set of equity issues—and at global level equity is impossible to regulate consistently because there is no global state. WCUs can practice their own principles of fairness and justice but there is no means to devise a general rule. At worst international education provides privileged access to cross-border students with the private means to pay, who often leverage their foreign degrees to secure better careers when they return home, enhancing social and economic stratification. This makes it essential to foster the scholarship-based mobility of students from modest backgrounds.

**[National versus global?]**

In this final section I want to reflect on recent problem of national/global tensions, conflicts between national public goods and global common goods, and on where we go from here.

**[Global, national, WCU]**

Global action and national action have long been bound together, in a relationship that is both conflicting and mutually formative. Contemporary globalization can be dated from the emergence of a new kind of coherent, focused nation-state in Prussia, England and France in the late eighteenth century, followed by Holland, the US and Japan in the nineteenth. These were the first ‘global competition states’ (Cerny, 1997) that saw themselves in world context. They watched their rivals closely and strove by turn to imitate each other’s success, or innovate to gain an advantage, especially in military and industrial matters. In the twentieth century this kind of state became widespread. Global visioning and convergence is integral to this kind of world but at the same time, bounded nation-states tends to resist the dissolution of their identity into a larger world polity. We have massive cross-border interaction, especially in culture, higher education and research, but no global governance.

For their part, WCUs are profoundly affected by both the global competition state, and by globalization as world process. WCUs are constantly affected by cross-border flows of English-language knowledge, ideas, systems, people and capital; and by global comparison and ranking, visioning and strategy-making. Though some nations earn trading revenues in the global student market, WCUs are more affected by cultural-scientific globalization and people mobility than by economic globalization. This does not mean there are no downsides, for example for non-English speaking scholars, whose knowledge is marginalized and devalued, and countries that suffer a net brain drain of skilled research personnel. But the point is that WCUs are more global in outlook than nation states, more globally cooperative, even though WCUs compete for global esteem with each other. On the whole the strongest research universities have the most organizational agency and scope for global engagement and tend to become partly disembedded from the nation-state—though the national dimension remains crucial for nearly all WCUs. Not only do they have formal policy obligations, they source most of their public and private funds at national level.

While global knowledge flows are largely beyond the scope of nation-states to regulate, people mobility is more open to national intervention, through migration regimes, and national and institutional protocols concerning employment of foreign staff. Here tensions between national and global objectives in higher education are apparent. The situation is inherently unstable, because there is a latent, unresolvable conflict between two differing virtues, or objectives if you like. The first virtue is the common good right of people to cross-border mobility (a global public good)—their right to go anywhere they want, to flow freely across borders in the manner that knowledge and ideas can flow freely. The second virtue is the national public good right of nations, and national populations, to control access. The inherent tension is intensified when urban terror stimulates national security fears, or there is popular resistance to migration, as in the UK in recent years. But underneath the potential national/global tensions in higher education there is also something more fundamental, a conflict within the processes of very processes of globalization themselves—conflicts felt more strongly in some countries than others, and especially acute in the United States.

**[Divergence between economic and cultural globalization]**

In the accelerated globalization of the 1990s, trade liberalization and financial deregulation coincided with a vast expansion of synchronous worldwide communications following the advent of the Internet. Cultural integration, together with world brands, cross-border supply chains and global transfers of production rendered global convergence more visible than before. Following the collapse of the Soviet Union and prior to the fuller rise of China, it seemed that the whole world was being rapidly Americanized. Political globalization lagged behind the economy and culture but the US powerfully supported globalization as a neo-imperial project, advocating cross-border openness in all domains. The 1990s globalists saw economic and cultural openness and globalization as two sides of the same coin. Communications technologies supported world market growth while global technology companies drove a one-world culture. It was often argued that nation-states were decisively losing ground amid the roll-out of world markets and worldwide consciousness. The death of the nation-state thesis collapsed by the early 2000s, however, and by the early 2010s it was clear that trends in economic and cultural globalization had diverged.

**[Momentum of economic globalization slows]**

The momentum of cultural globalization continues. Internet penetration reached 52 per cent of the world population on 30 June 2017 (Internet Stats, 2017). Global ecology is more strongly felt than ever. Cross-border collaboration in science continues to grow. But economic globalization has faltered, the business pay-off from open trade and cross-border production is less clear-cut, the downsides are more obvious and the backlash is apparent.

Much of the 1990s globalization was driven by the growing weight of multinational companies and the associated practices of foreign direct investment, extended cross-border supply chains and offshoring of production. In January 2017 *The Economist* published an article on ‘The retreat of the global company’ which argued that except in the tech sector, foreign direct investment and multinational sales growth were both down, smarter local firms had narrowed the efficiency gap and were better at product nuancing, and offshoring and cross-border supply chains were vulnerable to national intervention. The share of global profits going to multinationals had fallen from 35 to 30 per cent since 2007. This helps to explain the detachment of part of the Anglo-American elite from globalization.

**[The anti-global backlash]**

Harvard economist Dani Rodrick (2017) argues that when trade barriers are lowered a long way, further reductions generate marginal efficiency gains but continue to generate economic losers, such as unskilled workers displaced by the offshoring of production. Because offshoring is seen as unfair competition, it has generated widespread resentment in the United States. In addition, global financial deregulation has generated a small number of economic winners but fostered economic instability overall. In sum, states Rodrik, globalization had upsides for exporters and for countries able to use export industry to drive urbanization and modernization. But in the United States ‘the decline in global inequality was accompanied by an increase in domestic inequality and cleavages. Globalization drove multiple… wedges in society’ (p. 21). While the political left creates an ‘income/social class cleavage’ to explain the growing inequality, the populist right has created ‘an ethno-national cultural cleavage’ (p. 24) in which non-white migrants and urban cultural cosmopolitans are seen as the beneficiaries of globalization. This latter narrative sweeps up WCUs and their mobile faculty and students along with all other cosmopolitans.

**[Brexit and education, June 2016 referendum UK]**

With the same populist backlash working its way through the June 2016 Brexit referendum in the UK, universities and degree holders found themselves positioned on the elite side of an elite/mass divide. Voting in the UK Brexit referendum was determined by whether people lived in large cities (those voted for the EU), or small towns and rural areas (those voted for Brexit), and whether they had degrees: 26 per cent of degree holders supported Brexit, but 78 per cent of people without qualifications (KCL, 2016). Young people, the most educated generation in UK history, more at ease with mobility, migration and multiple identity, overwhelmingly voted remain. The American vote for Donald Trump was concentrated not only among white voters but in small towns and rural areas, and among those without higher education. This conjuction points to the potential for a deep divide in modern urban-oriented societies between city-based persons with education, at ease in the global setting, and those outside both large cities and education who are insecure, and fall back on fundamentalist forms of identity as a substitute for the agency-power they lack.

**[Rural disadvantage in school completion: Ratio of rural completion rate to urban completion rate]**

It must be emphasized that the limits to economic globalization, resentment at growing inequality and the populist anti-global backlash are apparent only in some parts of the world. They are a bedrock challenge to WCUs in Europe and North America, where WCUs must now find new ways of fostering the common good. The issues are not felt in the same way in East Asia, South Asia and Latin America. Higher education is read differently by nations, according to where they sit in the continuum between the rural economy and the modern. In China, the rising Gini coefficient is masked by the rapid growth of the industrial economy and new opportunities for the expanding middle class, and less potential for backlash against universities and global cosmopolitans.

Further, rural/urban inequalities in education vary across the world. In the graph, UNESCO’s index of locational disadvantage compares school completion rates of rural students to their urban counterparts. It varies from 0.42 in Pakistan, 0.47 in China, 0.54 in India and Indonesia and 0.76 in Brazil, to 0.89 in Russia, 0.99 in United Kingdom and 1.04 in Germany. Note that even where rural students finish school at the same rate as their urban counterparts they may still lack access to local higher education institutions. Regional inequality is often a more significant marker in education than is income inequality.

**[National-global harmonization]**

The present and future contributions of higher education and science are enormous. Above all, collaboration between WCUs feeds the slow historical process whereby the different national societies, without ceasing to be diverse, are becoming part of a one-world society. We need to become much better in social science terms, in identifying, observing and measuring (where possible) the contribution of WCUs and other institutions, indeed whole national systems, to the common good and to the furthering of global society. We will also need to consider equitable ways of financing global common goods in higher education and of managing cross-border downsides such as brain drain. We also need to work harder on making our international work beneficial at local level, and many are focused on this.

**[Unity in diversity ]**

In sum, we need to focus more closely, explicitly and precisely on the public and common good role of WCUs, in all of their practices, and to do so in a manner which foregrounds and values the values that we share—above all *Ren*, human enrichment, including academic freedom and knowledge sharing—and also foregrounds the diversity of common goods in the sector. When international tensions are rising, the benefits of globalization are widely questioned, and national identity is being stridently asserted, there is a real danger that the knowledge making sector can become sidelined, despite its great recent growth and its deep long-term potential for human formation and social transformation. At this time, it is both more difficult and more crucial to balance the global, national and local contributions of WCUs, while advancing their essential role in building the common global good.

Thank you for listening. May I wish you well, and hope you have a great conference.