Chapter 9

The Paradox of the Global University

Mitchell L. Stevens and Sonia Giebel

Abstract No university of ambition officially claims to be local. Touting international reach and reputation is a nearly essential feature of university strategic planning worldwide. Yet being a global university is paradoxical. Academic institutions historically are servants of particular cities, regions, and nations, and one of their essential functions has been to connect particular places with world affairs. International rankings regimes, the search for tuition revenue among schools in a few large markets, and the remarkable consistency with which nations pursue status through higher education: all of these deepen the implication of universities in the fate and future of particular locales.

No university of ambition officially claims to be local. Touting international reach and reputation is a nearly essential feature of official university strategic planning worldwide. Transnational research and study exchanges, satellite campuses, web portals and offices and senior officials for global affairs—all of these are now routine and even essential components of academic organizational architecture (Friedman 2017). Some have argued that this transnational ambition represents a new chapter in the history of higher education (Wildavsky 2012). Others contend that it merely extends a longstanding ambition of academic cosmopolitanism (Levine 2016; Stevens et al. 2018; Willinsky 2018).

Our task here is to theorize the simultaneous truth of both of these approaches by arguing that the spatial implication of universities is paradoxical. A constitutional purpose of universities, continuous from their Medieval origins into the present, has been to connect particular localities with transnational webs of ideas, technologies, and people. This means that universities are cosmopolitan and parochial at the same time. However “global” they might be, universities almost never move from the

M. L. Stevens (✉) · S. Giebel

Graduate School of Education, Stanford University, Stanford, CA, USA

e-mail: mitchell.stevens@stanford.edu; sgiebel@stanford.edu

cities and regions of their origins. They are anchored in particular places in part through the sunk costs of their physical plants and their accumulated agreements with spatially specific clients and patrons, and additionally by a meaning constitutive of virtually all academic institutions: they are creatures of their places.

Surfacing this paradox has at least three utilities. First, it enables social scientists to better appreciate the university as a distinctive organizational form (Musselin 2007). Specifically, the place-specific anchoring of universities contrasts starkly with the peripatetic character of corporate firms, while rendering universities somewhat akin to the metropolises of nation-states and empires—albeit with highly circumscribed powers and jurisdictions. Second, it suggests limits to the universalizing and homogenizing capacities of transnational cooperative agreements, ranking schemes, and satellite campuses. Third, it offers wisdom to planners and boosters of particular universities, to wit: the desirability and status of any university are deeply linked with its region.

Our work below proceeds as follows. First, we borrow from a large historical literature to implicate universities in projects of place-making over hundreds of years. Here we specify the first side of the paradox: the cosmopolitan purpose of universities. Second, we consider the special roles that universities came to play in projects of state-building—first in the United States and then throughout the world—in the decades following World War II. Here we specify the second side of the paradox: the immobility of universities. Third, we address three major transnational academic phenomena of recent decades—the rise of third-party ranking schemes, the Bologna process, and the proliferation of satellite campuses—to consider the obdurate localism of universities in the twenty-first century. In the final section, we offer specific lessons for academic planners and policy-makers on how to think about university and regional advancement as coextensive.

Prioritizing rhetorical efficiency over concision, we use the terms “university” and “universities” as summary terms for the wide variety of organizational types that populate the academic world—polytechnics, liberal arts, and community colleges among them. While our inquiry is tuned to major research universities most closely, we suspect that our general insights apply to other academic forms to variable degrees.

Universities and Place-Making

When geographers and historians speak of “place-making,” they refer to the myriad ways in which people seek to create strong identities for particular locations—to put places “on the map” to various audiences and thereby aggrandize the fortunes and prestige of those places (Cronon 1992). The simple act of naming a place can be part of its aggrandizement: it is no accident that the city housing Harvard University is named Cambridge and that the larger regional settlement in which it is located is called New England. Identifying settlements with copycat names connotes a wish that one place be associated with the other. Building campaigns are important, even

essential, to making places as well. City halls, churches, schools and squares built to scales and designs intended to impress can enhance the knowability of a place to distant others. The goals of place-making are typically multiple: to underscore a particular group's domination of physical territory; attract human migration and economic investment; enhance real estate values; accrue prestige. In their names and physical plants, universities have been important mechanisms of place-making since their Medieval beginnings.

John Willinsky (2018) notes the curious fate of Medieval monasteries. Built as cloisters of piety at a time when learnedness was a harbinger of heresy, they came to serve as aggregators of learning and knowledge and were early precursors of the modern university form. Monasteries were self-governing, highly disciplined, and occasionally well-endowed organizations that legitimately operated at some remove from other sources of social authority. They were in, but not fully of, the political regimes in which they were located. This partial autonomy enabled monasteries to serve as enclaves for manuscripts and religious travelers carrying new ideas throughout Europe beginning in the tenth century. Monasteries gradually developed new forms and functions to accommodate their accumulating intellectual wealth, first with cathedral schools, which would accrete into semi-autonomous scholarly organizations as expressions of place and patron renown. By the thirteenth century, entities known as *studium generales* emerged in Bologna, Paris, and Oxford and catalyzed enduring relationships between scholars from different fields, at different stages in their careers, for organized collaborative study. These were the seeds of the modern university.

Centuries later, the rise of modern European polities brought new and secular patronage to university evolution. Intellectual historian Emily Levine (2016) has recently explained how Prussian elites envisioned universities as mechanisms for putting science and systematic learning in the service of an enlightened, rational, and culturally progressive society. Cities were major functional polities of the Prussian lands. Governments and private patrons used city universities on the Prussian model to enhance the prominence and prestige of particular places. In this Levine finds an important parallel to academic place-making in the young United States.

A rich historical literature amply documents the remarkable extent to which Americans used the founding of schools to make places on the nation's western frontier (Thelin 2011; Labaree 2017). In contrast with Germany, however, US academic institutions were as likely to be created for reasons of piety and business as they were for civic uplift. The young United States included many who were deeply religious, many who were entrepreneurs, and many who were both these things. Planting colleges and universities was a frequent means of marking territory for particular Christian denominations, training clergy, raising real estate values, and enhancing the likelihood of securing stops on railroads and waterways. These incentives combined to fuel an enthusiastic stream of college-founding. By 1880, the nation boasted over 800 institutions, outnumbering the entire aggregate of European universities five-fold (Labaree 2017). As in Europe, colleges and universities marked the identities of particular places, often in name. The impressively scaled

Universities of Michigan, Texas, Washington and many others are prominent examples, even while many eponymous towns and schools remained small: Grinnell (Iowa), Middlebury (Vermont), and Oberlin (Ohio).

US colleges of the late nineteenth century were “contributing institutional citizens” (Owen-Smith 2018) of their regions at a time when such citizens were in short supply. Their endurance on the national landscape is testament to the importance of their role in creating and sustaining that landscape over time. On the normative valence of higher education’s role in the transformation of the North American frontier we remain ambivalent. By helping to “settle” the West, colleges and universities actively participated in the dislocation of Native peoples and a fundamental redefinition of the physical landscape as national territory and private property. They were institutional citizens of a particular nation and served to aggrandize the interests of particular people over others. The affectionate and even triumphant narration of this process in mainstream US history is testament to a certainty of national virtue that our analysis here does not share. But there is no question that in the nineteenth century and (as we shall see) well into the twentieth, postsecondary expansion was directly implicated in national aggrandizement.

As multiple sociologists have recently explained, institutions of higher learning provide complicated, plural value to their settlements. They are hubs, linking particular locations with people and ideas that would otherwise be hard to reach through their courses, colloquia, performances, libraries and museum collections. Those that endure become anchors, retaining the reputation and relevance of their locations in national and global networks of discourse and creativity. Those that grow and diversify internally become sources of new knowledge and technologies because their dense concentrations of varied expertise create ideal conditions for innovation (Owen-Smith 2018; Padgett and Powell 2012; Stevens et al. 2008).

Thus it is no accident that the most esteemed universities of the nineteenth century were located at or near the metropolises of global empires. Berlin, Cambridge, Oxford, and Paris all hosted institutions of higher learning, providing the personnel, knowledge, and technologies of governance and control that sustained colonial domination (Willinsky 1999; Steinmetz 2007; Stevens et al. 2018). The decline and ultimate demise of those empires hardly ended the utility of universities for place-making, however. Instead that utility was drafted into the service of fashioning twentieth-century nation-states. The federal government of the United States led the way.

Universities and Nation-States

While the university long precedes the nation-state as an organizational form, the implication of universities in projects of state-building is so ubiquitous as to suggest that in their modern expressions the two institutions have come to require each other. In the 1970s, Talcott Parsons and Gerald Platt theorized the indispensable role of universities in inculcating a “modern cognitive complex” for the functional administration of rational bureaucratic organization in government and economy

(Parsons and Platt 1973). Pierre Bourdieu later (1998 [1989]) explained how a modern elite inscribed its conception of an ideal society into a higher education system that enabled its domination of the government and political order in France. In the early twentieth century, Indian elites encouraged ambitious young Indians to seek technical training at the best universities in the West, then bring their skills home and put them in the service of building an independent and self-sufficient nation (Bassett 2016). City universities were important incubators for the expertise and personnel that scaffolded the Prussian state (Levine 2016). And in the loosely federated and geographically dispersed United States, the central government in Washington serially called upon universities to build civic infrastructure, disburse welfare programs, and wage wars. The multifarious roles of universities in projects of state-building have solidified a presumption that the primary patrons and beneficiaries of higher education are national. This history ties universities both materially and symbolically to their home countries.

We continue with what may read as a parochial focus on the United States for a historically and sociologically important purpose: the peculiar expression of the research-intensive, multi-purpose university that coalesced in the United States immediately following World War II set the model for excellence of “national” universities in the subsequent twentieth century. These in turn came to set benchmarks for what excellent “global” universities might be in the current era. We recognize the imperial connotation of this idea and address it below.

Our analytic account begins with the “land-grant” universities of the US nineteenth century, so named because their genesis was a result of serial acts of Congress—the Morrill Acts of 1862 & 1890—offering grants of physical property to state governments. The legislation enabled states to sell the land to support universities that would provide training and expertise in the applied sciences specifically. As is characteristic of the evolution of the US polity, these institutions were public-private amalgams (Stevens and Gebre-Medhin 2016): while the term “land-grant” is popularly associated with public state universities (e.g., Iowa State, Michigan State, Texas A&M), several prominent private universities (e.g., Cornell, MIT, Tuskegee) are also beneficiaries of the land-grant program. It is no accident that the dates of their passage surrounded the US Civil War. The 1862 act was intended partly to demonstrate the asset of national union; 1890 was partly an effort to restore industry and civic infrastructure to the US South (Thelin 2011). The Morrill Acts represented the explicit cooperation of universities and the federal government in projects of nation-building. Such cooperation would be rehearsed and expanded serially during the twentieth century.

Consider the New Deal. A sweeping welfare initiative that entailed massive spending by the federal government, what became Franklin Delano Roosevelt’s domestic legacy was, in the 1930s, a highly uncertain political proposition. With Southern Democrats wielding outsized political power and able to check any traditional attempt to disrupt the South’s anti-union, segregated political regime, President Roosevelt needed many allies to enact New Deal provisions. Distributed liberally throughout the nation’s continental expanse, colleges and universities proved to be readymade mediators of Washington programs during the 1930s.

Historian Christopher Loss (2011) explains how colleges and universities provided physical and ideological spaces, defined as politically neutral, where government-funded projects could be connected with local leaders who might otherwise be skeptical of their provenance. In this way, the US postsecondary sector acted as what Loss calls a “parastate,” catalyzing New Deal initiatives.

The New Deal was not just a portfolio of welfare programs. It also represented a new relationship between the federal government and common people that required both concerted explanation and attitudinal change among citizens (Loss 2011). New Dealers thus made educating the citizenry, especially adults past conventional college-going age, a primary objective. The Federal Forum Project (FFP) was one mechanism by which to achieve this aim. The FFP began by convening public-policy discussion groups in Des Moines, Iowa, and ultimately grew across the country, bolstered by the aid of local school districts, public libraries, and radio stations. University personnel served as discussion leaders. The FFP represented unprecedented discursive engagement between Washington, educators, and everyday Americans, abetting a slow but steady ideological shift in lay understandings of how the federal government might be more of a civic asset than an outside imposition. This was no small feat, since New Dealers needed to win the affection of a citizenry largely unfamiliar with the social-welfare logic the New Deal embodied.

On the skeletal network of relationships between Washington and universities built via the Morrill Acts and the New Deal, mobilization for World War II and the subsequent Cold War accreted the body of national higher education that would come to include and define “world class” universities. US entry into WWII required rapid and multifarious mobilization of technology, managerial expertise, and personnel, and the federal government relied on universities to aggregate and produce all three. University research labs were enlisted in the development of communications and weapons technologies; academic psychologists developed tests of human fitness and aptitude to rationalize the allocation of military personnel; and college campuses provided convenient bases for military recruitment and training (Lowen 1997; Loss 2011).

In light of the US federal government’s serial reliance on higher education to disburse social provision and mobilize for war, it is perhaps of little surprise that Congress would turn to colleges and universities to reward veterans and manage their return to civilian life at war’s end. The Servicemen’s Readjustment Act of 1944, popularly known as the GI Bill, provided fully subsidized college educations to war veterans. This massive investment in human capital helped lay the foundation for postwar economic expansion and a broad-based postwar middle class (Mettler 2005; Goldin and Katz 2007). And of course, higher education was enlisted as well in the service of a different kind of warcraft after the Soviet launch of the Sputnik satellite in 1957, which almost overnight transformed national anxiety about the technological and military capacity of the United States into a decades-long investment in national paramilitary academic infrastructure (Kleinmann 1995; Gilman 2003; O’Mara 2015). In 1958, Congress authorized massive investments to address that problem with the National Defense Education Act (NDEA), which got welded into the institutional architecture of the US polity when it was superseded by the Higher Education Act of 1965 (HEA).

We rehearse this parochial history to make an important point about the evolution of higher education globally, to wit: the academic system built in the United States during the middle decades of the twentieth century was a project of nation-building. Propelled by domestic politics and international warcraft, the twentieth century US research university accreted over serial generations to serve the interests of a particular nation in particular times. To be sure, the US model of a multi-purpose, semi-independent, research-and-teaching university diffused globally during the second half of the twentieth century. Having at least one such university that took on the formal structure of this particular organizational type became an icon of social progress and modernity in nation-states worldwide (Frank and Gabler 2006; Schofer and Meyer 2005). Yet the model came from a particular time and history. The parochial became a global standard through a complicated combination of organizational mimicry, historical contingency, and US Cold War hegemony that has yet to be fully specified.

Simultaneously, a testament to the legacy of British empire and a manifestation of the current US higher education hegemony is the primacy of the English language in the global academic world. English is the *lingua franca* of contemporary transnational academic discourse and the preponderant language of publication for many disciplines. Classroom instruction conveyed in English is a strong signal that an institution seeks students and prominence worldwide. International faculty hires, colloquia, guest speakers, publications in “top” (i.e., English-language) journals and the smooth transmission of ideas increasingly require the use of English. Even in contexts where bi- or multilingualism is commonplace and many languages are spoken in close proximity, English tends to be the default linguistic medium of academic exchange.

The ubiquity and necessity of English poses existential questions for students, faculty, and academic leaders in countries without an indigenous Anglophone legacy. Whether or not and how well one is able to engage in academic discourse in English shapes individual careers and institutional fates. Yet the elevation of English tends to go hand in hand with the devaluation of native language. John Airey writes of “diglossia,” in which English becomes the privileged academic form over the native tongue (2004). Airey considers the case of Sweden, where concerns about “domain loss,” in which certain subjects can effectively only be discussed in English, raise additional concerns about the erosion of democratic access to scholarship. As is true for any hegemon, these are problems that Anglophone academics in predominantly English-speaking nations-states do not share.

Shanghai, Bologna, Abu Dhabi

Thus far we have sketched how colleges and universities have been implicated in the settlement and aggrandizement of particular places since their Medieval inception. We have focused specifically on the varied roles higher education has played in US territorial expansion and twentieth-century warcraft because US universities have

been preponderantly influential in higher education globally since the close of World War II. More recent developments in the worldwide evolution of higher education might seem to make ours a story of times past. The rise of third-party ranking systems, perhaps most prominently the Academic Ranking of World Universities (ARWU)—more commonly called the Shanghai Index—purported to recalibrate academic excellence according to universal metrics. In Europe, the declaration of the Bologna Process appeared to lessen the importance of national borders in the organization of academic study. Since 2000, many US universities have opened satellite campuses in Asia, Africa, and the Persian Gulf. Yet it is our claim that even as the global organization of higher education continues to evolve, universities remain deeply tied to and shaped by their localities in fundamental ways.

Rankings

Twentieth-century wars brought US higher education a political stature and material support it had not previously enjoyed. The close of the Cold War altered the social contract between the US state and universities and, more fundamentally, the meaning of higher education in American political culture. A college education came to be seen as a private good to be individually acquired, rather than a public good worthy of collective investment (Labaree 2017). At the same time, the market for high-achieving students was beginning to nationalize. College hopefuls with top grades and test scores had easier access to information about a wider variety of schools and could presume that low-cost transportation and communication would ease the friction of distance between home and school (Stevens 2007). As the economist Caroline Hoxby notes, “students used to attend a local college regardless of their abilities and its characteristics. Now [student] choices are driven far less by distance and far more by a college’s resources and student body” (p. 96). The result was a mutually constitutive process that increased competition among students and universities alike. Top students faced dwindling admission rates at top schools, which in turn were no longer guaranteed matriculants from their own backyards. Yet this intense competition for top academic talent has been restricted to the very elite end of the US academic order. Just 4% of the nation’s colleges admit fewer than 50% of their applicants (Hoxby 2009).

It is these same few schools that carry the prestige of what counts as “US universities” to competitive observers elsewhere. For example, the ARWU/Shanghai Rankings rate institutions according to their collective academic or research performance, including “alumni and staff winning Nobel Prizes and Fields Medals, highly cited researchers, papers published in *Nature* and *Science*, [and] papers indexed in major citation indices” (Shanghai Ranking Consultancy 2018). Since their inception in 2003, the top slots on the ARWU/Shanghai rankings have overwhelmingly gone to a handful of US universities. Only Oxford and Cambridge have ever managed to break a complete American monopoly on the “top ten” slots. Thus, even while elite US universities are in direct competition with each other for students and

prestige, they collectively reenforce the hegemony of US schools in global rankings regimes. Rankings strengthen the dominance of American higher education in the global academic order.

Viewed one way, global ranking systems are sure to agitate already competitive actors in the quest for the title of the world's best. Indeed, much has been made of the rise of international academic rankings regimes and their standardizing and homogenizing effects on conceptions of academic quality (see Espeland and Sauder 2016 for an exhaustive review). Yet for all their evident capacity for normative coercion, rankings do not explicitly challenge national and institutional sovereignty. Rankings produce comparisons across political and organizational boundaries even while leaving those boundaries in place. In fact, the spatial paradoxes of universities are manifested every time boosters of particular universities use rankings to proclaim their assets to various constituencies. Rankings enable claims that a particular university is “the best” in the US, or Sweden, or Europe, or the southern hemisphere, or the world. We note also that the ARWU/Shanghai website offers “location” as a first-order filter to users, enabling swift and simple within-nation comparisons. Our conclusion is that global rankings surely refract, but hardly sever, the relationships between universities and places.

Bologna

The Bologna process is a spectacular endeavor of transnational academic cooperation. First formally declared in 1999, the agreement now includes nearly fifty countries in a compact to enable mobility of academic credits, degrees, students, and personnel throughout greater Europe (Crosier and Parveva 2013). This rationalization of the continental higher education ecology has smoothed academic commerce across national borders and enabled the forwarding of European ambitions to build an integrated and globally influential knowledge economy (Zahavi and Friedman 2019). While at first blush it might seem that Bologna undermines our claim about the enduring ties of universities to particular locations and nations, in fact Bologna does not diminish so much as refract and remediate those ties.

First, Bologna recognizes national sovereignty over universities. In contrast to the governance structures of the European Union (EU), Bologna is fully voluntary. It does not tamper directly with legal, financial, and normative relationships between universities, government agencies, and other national academic units. Instead, Bologna enables transactions across national and organizational borders even while it recognizes them—a strategy that has characterized academic diplomacy in other times and places (Hutt and Stevens 2017). Under Bologna, people and credits move smoothly across borders even while borders are maintained and universities themselves stay put.

Second, Bologna facilitates national status competition. Above and beyond administrative capability, Bologna is an academic treaty that explicates mutual trust and terms of academic commerce across national borders. As with economic

treaties, Bologna enables participating nations to engage in “coopetition:” the simultaneous competition and cooperation between rivals (Nalebuff and Brandenburger 1997; Luo 2007). In contrast with international rankings, which were created by non-academics in the mass media (Espeland and Sauder 2007), Bologna was an indigenous effort by European academic elites to enable transnational coordination. Students and faculty can freely navigate the continental academic infrastructure, taking advantage of academic opportunities far afield from their home countries. In doing so, students and faculty act as ambassadors of their universities and locales, bringing recognition to their home institutions whenever they cross borders. We do not mean to suggest that Bologna is fully cooperative while rankings are fully competitive; instead, we posit that the fundamentally competitive character of academic life is mediated and sustained in Europe by Bologna’s cooperative accord. Much like intercollegiate sports enables the routine performance of fierce institutional rivalries through the precise specification of shared rules of play (Lifschitz et al. 2014), Bologna makes it possible for participating nations to compete rationally, systematically, and even congenially.

Third, Bologna serves to construct broader continental Europe as a coherent academic place, even as it reinforces the national identities of its member countries. As Zahavi and Friedman (2019) remind us, “[H]igher-education policy is formed at three different levels simultaneously—the national and the local, the European and the regional, and the international and the global” (p. 28). Bologna was built specifically to enable cooperation across European borders so as to realize a continental higher education enterprise that might compete on the global stage. We follow Zahavi and Friedman’s notion that Bologna contributes to the vision of a cosmopolitan European citizen: a well-traveled and educated individual who can freely inhabit Europe’s many academic anchors. Bologna defines Europe as an academic place in its own right, with its own distinctive means of conducting academic business.

At the same time, and in keeping with the paradox, the implementation of the Bologna Process demonstrates that Europeanization and re-nationalization processes occur in tandem. More specifically, as Musselin (2009) argues, even as Bologna served to further the construction, diffusion, and institutionalization of policy paradigms and shared beliefs across Europe (Radaelli 2002), it also enabled the French ministry to achieve domestic goals: the promotion of university autonomy and the standardization of degrees across different institutional sectors, among others. In this way, French universities were “renationalized” so as to remain distinctively French, even as they contributed to an emergent, coherent European identity in the global higher education market.

It may not be too much to assert that the Bologna process serves as a European counter to American domination in global rankings. A few US universities may be “the best” according to the rankings, but that is not the only way to be demonstrably excellent. While the continent may have few universities in the highest tier of international rankings, overall academic quality in Europe is impressively high. Consider for example what Aghion et al. (2008) found when they assessed European universities through the lens of the Shanghai Index. Their research confirmed a growing

lead for the US over European universities in the top 50 spots in the rankings; at the same time, Europe does considerably better than the United States in the number of universities in the top 500. This suggests far less variance among European universities and an ongoing construction of Europe as a globally distinctive academic place.

Satellite Campuses

One of the most dazzling manifestations of the spatial paradox of universities is the proliferation of satellite campuses of US institutions in Asia and the Persian Gulf since the 1990s (Miller-Idriss and Hanauer 2011). Typically the result of public-private partnerships between particular schools and national governments, these campuses might seem to defy the notion that universities are bound to stay put in their original locations. With branches of Cornell, Georgetown, and Northwestern in Doha, NYU in Abu Dhabi, and Yale in Singapore, it may seem that the weight of geography no longer bears on the evolution of higher education. But a closer consideration of this phenomenon betrays the paradox once again.

First, institutions stay put. They neither move, nor create entirely new versions of themselves, but instead evolve hybrid branches far afield from their original locations. The identities of the legacy institutions remain linked to Ithaca, Washington D.C., Evanston, New York City, and New Haven even while the new locations extend that identity to fresh populations. Second, the patrons of the satellites stay put too. The patrons recognize the ability of a university's physical presence to enhance the connectedness, visibility, and prestige of *their* places. In effect, satellite campuses represent a compromise in light of the spatial paradox. The legacy institutions exchange spatial extension for patronage, while the patrons exchange the loss of nationally identified universities for the prestige and know-how of offshore brands.

What is historically novel in these joint ventures is that the rising global powers of the current era are not just mimicking the academic organizations of their predecessors; they also are joining those organizations. The direct patronage of elite US schools by governments elsewhere may represent capitulation to American academic hegemony or, perhaps, a new form of cooptation whose terms and metrics remain under construction.

Conclusion

We have challenged our readers to recognize universities as simultaneously local and global, despite the tendency of contemporary scholars to emphasize the latter. We have argued that universities have played key roles in creating localities from their Medieval inception into the present era; that they were elemental to the project of nation-building in the United States and, after World War II, worldwide; and that recent transnational developments that beg internationalization refract, but hardly

undermine, the essential ties between universities and their places. In addition to suggesting a tempering of scholarly enthusiasm about a “globalizing” academy, we believe that our work might imply useful advice for academic leaders.

If our general argument about the peculiar relationship between universities and places is correct, those who have influence over particular universities are obliged to attend to their localities at least as much as to patrons and possibilities far afield. To our knowledge, no university of national or international stature has ever moved its physical location. This means that the economic vitality and quality of life in any university’s immediate environs will affect its ability to attract and sustain students, faculty, and attention far into the future. Local communication and transportation infrastructures matter a great deal, as does the international reputation not only of universities, but also of regions. Sustaining and enhancing localities must be a priority of every university leader, as must collegiality and ongoing collaboration with regional civic leaders and even nearby academic competitors.

Our argument echoes many who have advocated for higher education to be considered primarily as a public good that prioritizes service to whole societies, rather than their own or any others’ parochial interests (Owen-Smith 2018; Labaree 1997). Indeed, we see universities playing a pivotal role in knowledge creation, in connecting individuals and ideas from across the globe, and as hubs where scientists, government officials, business firms, and the organizations of civil society intersect (Stevens et al. 2008). In the twenty-first century, however, the constituency that counts as “the public” for academic public goods is not obvious.

The towns and cities within which universities reside are certainly part of that public. So too are the nation-states that imbue universities with their charter to produce and certify knowledge (Meyer 1970) and underwrite so much of this activity with subsidies and tax exemptions. It also is the case that universities increasingly contribute to what we might call global public goods: knowledge, relationships, and modes of collaboration that can benefit humanity regardless of where on the planet beneficiaries reside. Yet the world is at present without mechanisms for enlisting academic fealty or patronage from this global public, nor does this largest of publics have any recognizable mechanism for defining its collective academic interest and influencing academic policy. This leaves university leaders with global ambitions no clear polity to honor, consult, nor enlist.

For better or worse, this means that universities are obliged to contribute to local, national, and global public goods simultaneously. Even in an increasingly interconnected and internationalizing world, it is a risky misconception to think that attending to the global should override local needs or national service. To chase global ambitions at the expense of local and national ones not only undermines the quality of life in one’s own backyard; it also potentially jeopardizes the largesse and goodwill of patrons who remain anchored in local communities, regional economies, and national governments.

We recognize that the allure of expanding global reach is strong and ubiquitous, and that attention to local priorities is unlikely to move institutions upward in international rankings in the near term. Institutional theorists would posit that global engagement is now a requisite element of any legitimate university (DiMaggio and

Powell 1983), and we agree. Yet by the same token, being global is no longer distinguishing or novel. As competition for talent, attention, and distinction grows more intense with each academic planning cycle, the most audacious ambitions might be close to home.

References

- Aghion, P., Dewatripont, M., Hoxby, C., Mas-Colell, A., & Sapir, A. (2008). *Higher aspirations: An agenda for reforming European universities*. Bruegel. Blueprint Series, Volume 5, July 2008. [Policy Paper].
- Airey, J. (2004). Can you teach it in English? Aspects of the language choice debate in Swedish higher education. In R. Wilkinson (Ed.), *Integrating content and language: Meeting the challenge of a multilingual higher education* (pp. 97–108). Maastricht: Maastricht University.
- Bassett, R. (2016). *The technological Indian*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Bourdieu, P. (1998 [1989]). *The state nobility: Elite schools in the field of power* (L. Clough, Trans.). Oxford: Polity Press.
- Cronon, W. (1992). *Nature's metropolis: Chicago and the great west*. New York: W.W. Norton.
- Crosier, D., & Parveva, T. (2013). *The Bologna process: Its impact in Europe and beyond* (Fundamentals of education planning) (Vol. 97). Paris: UNESCO.
- DiMaggio, P. J., & Powell, W. W. (1983). The Iron cage revisited: Institutional isomorphism and collective rationality in organizational fields. *American Sociological Review*, 48(2), 147–160.
- Espeland, W. N., & Sauder, M. (2007). Rankings and reactivity: How public measures recreate social worlds. *American Journal of Sociology*, 113(1), 1–40.
- Espeland, W. N., & Sauder, N. (2016). *Engines of anxiety: Academic rankings, reputation, and accountability*. New York: Russell Sage Foundation.
- Frank, D. J., & Gabler, J. (2006). *Reconstructing the university: Worldwide shifts in academia in the twentieth century*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- Friedman, J. (2017). *Global distinction: Social status, organizational change, and the internationalization of American and British Universities* (PhD dissertation). New York University.
- Gilman, N. (2003). *Mandarins of the future: Modernization theory in cold war America*. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Goldin, C., & Katz, L. F. (2007). *The race between education and technology*. Cambridge, MA: Belknap/Harvard University Press.
- Hoxby, C. (2009). The changing selectivity of American colleges and universities: Its implications for students, resources, and tuition. *Journal of Economic Perspectives*, 23(4), 95–118.
- Hutt, E., & Stevens, M. L. (2017). From soldiers to students: The tests of general education development (GED) as diplomatic measurement. *Social Science History*, 41(Winter), 731–755.
- Kleinmann, D. L. (1995). *Politics on the endless frontier: Postwar research policy in the United States*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Labaree, D. F. (1997). Public Goods, Private Goods: The American struggle over educational goals. *American Education Research Journal*, 34(1), 39–81.
- Labaree, D. F. (2017). *A perfect mess: The unlikely ascendancy of American higher education*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Levine, E. J. (2016). Baltimore teaches, Göttingen learns: Cooperation, competition, and the research university. *The American Historical Review*, 121(3), 780–823.
- Lifschitz, A., Sauder, M., & Stevens, M. L. (2014). Football as a status system in U.S. higher education. *Sociology of Education*, 87(3), 204–219.
- Loss, C. P. (2011). *Between citizens and the state: The politics of American higher education in the twentieth century*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Lowen, R. L. (1997). *Creating the cold war university*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

- Luo, Y. (2007). A coopetition perspective of global competition. *Journal of World Business*, 42(2), 129–144.
- Mettler, S. (2005). *From soldiers to citizens: The GI bill and the making of the greatest generation*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Meyer, J. W. (1970). The Charter: Conditions of diffuse socialization in schools. In W. R. Scott (Ed.), *Social processes and social structures* (pp. 564–578). New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston.
- Miller-Idriss, C., & Hanauer, E. (2011). Transnational higher education: Offshore campuses in the Middle East. *Comparative Education*, 47(2), 181–207.
- Musselin, C. (2007). Are universities specific organizations? In G. Krücken, A. Kosmutzky, & M. Torka (Eds.), *Towards a multiversity? Universities between global trends and national traditions* (pp. 63–84). Bielefeld: Transcript Verlag.
- Musselin, C. (2009). The side effects of the Bologna process on national institutional settings: The case of France. In A. Amaral, G. Neave, C. Musselin, & P. Maassen (Eds.), *European integration and the governance of higher education and research* (pp. 181–205). Dordrecht: Springer.
- Nalebuff, B. J., & Brandenburger, A. (1997). *Co-opetition*. New York: Doubleday.
- O'Mara, M. P. (2015 [2005]). *Cities of knowledge: Cold war science and the search for the next silicon valley*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Owen-Smith, J. (2018). *Research universities and the public good*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- Padgett, J. F., & Powell, W. W. (2012). The problem of emergence. In J. Padgett & W. W. Powell (Eds.), *The emergence of organizations and markets* (pp. 1–29). Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Parsons, T., & Platt, G. M. (1973). *The American University*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Radaelli, C. (2002). The domestic impact of European Union public policy: Notes on concepts, methods, and the challenge of empirical research. *Politique européenne*, 5(1), 105–136.
- Schofer, E., & Meyer, J. W. (2005). The worldwide expansion of higher education in the twentieth century. *American Sociological Review*, 70(6), 898–920.
- Shanghai Ranking Consultancy. (2018). *Methodology*. Retrieved April 1, 2018. <http://www.shanghai-ranking.com/ARWU-Methodology-2018.html>
- Steinmetz, G. (2007). *The Devil's handwriting: Precoloniality and the German colonial state in Qingdao, Samoa and Southwest Africa*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Stevens, M. L. (2007). *Creating a class: College admissions and the education of elites*. Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press.
- Stevens, M. L., & Gebre-Medhin, B. (2016). Association, service, market: Higher education in American political development. *Annual Review of Sociology*, 42, 121–142.
- Stevens, M. L., Armstrong, E. L., & Arum, R. (2008). Sieve, incubator, temple, hub: Empirical and theoretical advances in the sociology of higher education. *Annual Review of Sociology*, 34, 127–151.
- Stevens, M. L., Miller-Idriss, C., & Seteney, S. (2018). *Seeing the world: How US universities make knowledge in a global era*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Thelin, J. R. (2011). *A history of American higher education*. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Wildavsky, B. (2012). *The great brain race: How global universities are reshaping the world*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Willinsky, J. (1999). *Learning to divide the world: Education at empire's end*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Willinsky, J. (2018). *The intellectual properties of learning: A prehistory from Saint Jerome to John Locke*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Zahavi, H., & Friedman, Y. (2019). The Bologna Process: An international higher education regime. *European Journal of Higher Education*, 9(1), 23–39.

Open Access This chapter is licensed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>), which permits use, sharing, adaptation, distribution and reproduction in any medium or format, as long as you give appropriate credit to the original author(s) and the source, provide a link to the Creative Commons license and indicate if changes were made.

The images or other third party material in this chapter are included in the chapter's Creative Commons license, unless indicated otherwise in a credit line to the material. If material is not included in the chapter's Creative Commons license and your intended use is not permitted by statutory regulation or exceeds the permitted use, you will need to obtain permission directly from the copyright holder.