Chapter 1
Welcome to the World Class University: Introduction

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The notion of World Class Universities, and the use of rankings in general, has been an object of study for decades. Perhaps the first major critical work was Ellen Hazelkorn's *Rankings and the reshaping of higher education: The battle for world-class excellence* (2011). Just as the influence of rankings shows no sign of abating, neither does the impetus to provide practical proposals for how to use them to advantage, or, alternatively, to examine the sources and effects of the practices involved. Recent interventions belonging to the first category are Downing and Ganotice's *World university rankings and the future of higher education* (2017), while Stack's *Global university rankings and the mediatization of higher education* (2016) and Hazelkorn's *Global rankings and the geopolitics of higher education: Understanding the influence and impact of rankings on higher education, policy*

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and society (2016) are notable examples of the latter.[1] The essays presented in the present volume are intended to contribute to our understanding of the phenomenon, its causes and consequences by filling three functions: (i) to provide an updated analysis of current trends in rankings and an examination of recent data regarding World Class University (WCU) initiatives relevant to the form and content of higher education; (ii) to study these especially with an eye to particular ramifications for work on the shop floor, that is to say, for university teachers and students; (iii) to investigate possible future courses and alternative trajectories.

Critics of rankings and the WCU discourse argue that the systems now in place have pernicious and perverse effects, not least on university faculty and students, skewing knowledge in favor of the calculable and cachet, the latter often a result of reputational and economic legacy. They argue that rankings do not actually live up to their promise of offering greater transparency and reliable bases for decision-making for students, university administrations, and governments. Rather, the algorithms are themselves both agents and effects of a technical ideal that lends a spurious objectivity to the processes involved in ranking, which, in turn, are integrated into marketing with ever finer differentiation and new sectors, giving rise to a steady stream of new rankings released to be utilized in the governance of global higher education. The ubiquity of rankings as a global service industry contributes significantly to the emerging redefinition of the social purposes of higher education, and facilitates the creation of a new, knowledge-identified, transnational capitalist class and new forms of social exclusion (Amsler and Bolsmann 2012).

With the development of research evaluation and the increasing sophistication of citation analysis and bibliometrics since the1960s, it has been possible to map the emerging economy of global science, at least on a comparative national and continental basis. The Institute for Scientific Information was established by Eugene Garfield in 1958. Garfield was one of the founders of bibliometrics and scientometrics, creating SCI, Current Contents, and Journal Citation Reports, and his work led to the calculation of the impact factor, and, later, information retrieval algorithms. The Science Citation Index, which was acquired by the Thompson Corporation in 1992, provides bibliographic and citational information from an expanded data base of 8897 (as of July, 2017) of the world's scientific and technical journals, covering over 100 disciplines. The SCI, Social Science Citation Index (SSCI) Arts and

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[1] There is now substantial literature on the World Class University. On the critical side, a good deal of research has focused on problems arising from the rules of play in "the ranking game", i.e. the explicit conjunction of academic standing with political and economic power (cf. Rhoads et al. 2014). Academic and political leadership around the world, as well as faculty and students, use the various rankings available today as instruments for achieving their goals and realizing their values (Kauppi 2018; Hazelkorn 2016; Altbach 2012; Kauppi and Erkkilä 2011; Holmes 2006). Others are more positive to rankings and the notion of World Class Universities, seeing them as means for improving higher education everywhere. On this account, rankings increase transparency by making comparison and the basis for it comprehensive and clear. For arguments to this effect, see the publications emanating from conferences on World Class Universities arranged by the International Ranking Expert Group and the Center for World-Class Universities at Shanghai Jiao Tong University (cf. Liu et al. 2011).

Humanities Citation Index (A&HCI) and the Web of Science were until recently owned by Thomson Scientific as part of Thomson Corporation, which advertises itself as "a leading global provider of integrated information-based solutions to business and professional customers". It is one of the leading information utility corporations, with some $8.5 billion in revenues from legal and regulatory, learning, financial, and scientific and health care global market groups.

Comparable "products" in the social sciences (SSCI) and humanities (A&HCI) cover bibliographic information from 3000 journals in 50 disciplines and 1700 journals, respectively. The SCI eventually became the Web of Science, which provides access to current and retrospective multidisciplinary information from approximately 33,000 journals. The Century of Science was launched in 2005, extending back-files to 1900 and adding 850,000 fully indexed journal articles from 262 scientific journals published in the first half of the twentieth century to the Web of Science. On 11 July 2016, Thomson Reuters announced a definitive agreement to sell its Intellectual Property and Science business to private equity funds affiliated with Onex Corporation and Baring Private Equity Asia for $3.55 billion, giving rise to a new conglomerate called Clarivate.

The connection between the handful of Big Publishers who control the bulk of academic publications (Springer, Taylor and Francis, Elsevier, Wiley-Blackwell, Sage), universities that control academic labor and ranking agencies constitutes an algorithmic form of governance through a template for academic innovation and development. After nearly a half century of neoliberalism, the regulation of university life through New Public Management technocratic measures such as performance indicators now serves as the benchmark for a global system of knowledge that encompasses some 20,000 universities and other HE institutions worldwide (Peters 2017).[2]

Since the early 2000s, the growing impact of global rankings as a means of restructuring higher education systems in order to increase global competitiveness has led to a "reputation race" and the emergence of the global discourse of the WCU. The latest annual rankings among (the predominantly American and British) institutions that comprise the "winners" are used by national and regional governments, among other things, to repurpose higher education institutions as players on a global market, following an ideal of higher education that is "unsustainable for all but a small group of marquee universities" (Mittelman 2018, p 1). One major policy strand of this discourse anchored the concept of the WCU in a global competitive model of the knowledge economy promoted by The World Bank (Salmi 2002, 2009). The model concentrates resources in a small number of elite universities, creating a greater hierarchical reputational differentiation, often separating teaching and research

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[2] The ranking systems include: Academic Ranking of World Universities (ARWU, est. 2003); Performance Ranking of Scientific Papers for World Universities (National Taiwanese University, NTU, est. 2007); QS World University Rankings (Quacquarelli Symonds, QS, est. 2004); Times Higher Education World University Rankings (THE, est. 2004); University Ranking by Academic Performance (Informatics Institute of Middle East Technical University, URAP, est. 2009); US News and World Report Best Global University Rankings (USNWR).

universities to link resource allocation to institutional profiling or other classification tools informed by rankings; by contrast, the social democratic model attempts to balance excellence and equity, with an emphasis on horizontal differentiation and a "good quality" university system based on the integration of teaching and research (Hazelkorn 2015).

It has been suggested that the discourse of "quality" and "excellence" has been used to legitimate attempts to capture the characteristics of "world-class" universities, anchoring the idea in popular and political consciousness, and fueling the scramble to identify the formula for building world-class universities. The world ranking systems emerging in the mid 2000s have helped engineer the global obsession with WCU and are engaged in the hugely profitable proliferation of new data sets that endlessly refine regional and discipline groupings. Yet there are many problems with global rankings, not all of which can be solved through technical improvements to indicators: the seemingly irrevocable dominance of elite US and UK institutions, the relative neglect of the arts and humanities, the lack of recognition of cultural differences, the focus on research at the expense of attention to teaching, and the coarseness of rankings and single composite scores that conceal the complexities of academic institutions, and misrepresent what universities are and do.

There are a number of fundamental questions to ask about the widespread push toward world-class status for universities around the world. Why should the aspiration to build "world-class" institutions overshadow or even crowd out other models for tertiary education systems, such as increased access and equity? Might citizens not be better served by developing locally relevant systems, without concern for their relative merits in a global comparison? Is the definition of "world-class" synonymous with "rich", and if so, what are we prepared to invest and what are we prepared to forego in order to finance such efforts? Are only research universities world-class? Can other types of HE institutions (polytechnics, community colleges and open universities, for instance) aspire to be among the best of their kind? If so, what would that entail, and how are their respective achievements to be assessed?

To begin answering these questions, the first section of the book consists of reflections on the nature of the beast. Part one begins with Jon Nixon's essay, "Disorderly Identities: University Rankings and the Re-ordering of the Academic Mind", in which he elucidates the characteristics of the dominant order engendered by rankings and the WCU ideal, and, in particular, how this order establishes a particular field for academic labor, circumscribing the space for following the norms dictated by academic professionalism. Finally, he maps out alternative routes that make room for principled intellectual and pedagogic activity beyond the metrics. In "Becoming World Class: What it Means and What it Does", Mats Benner surveys university strategies to achieve WCU status, and examines how such goals and strategies emerge from the reification of indicators associated with successful institutions or ones in ascendancy. His analysis shows how the fetishization of ranking hierarchies, publication patterns, patents and the like can undermine the quality of the activities measured through the increased monitoring and control that the adoption of, and adaptation to, the standards demands. In the last paper in this section, "Three Notions of the Global", Sharon Rider argues that the idea of international

comparisons between institutions and university systems assumes a confused notion of the global that conflates economic, political and epistemic ideals and yardsticks, with the consequence that the achievement of "global excellence" in one respect can actually entail deterioration in another.

The second section, "World Class Around the World", consists of articles that describe the conditions and study the implications of the world-class discourse in different countries from various perspectives. Cris Shore and Sue Wright draw on ethnographic cases from the UK, New Zealand and Denmark for their account of "The Kafkaesque Pursuit of 'World Class': Audit Culture and the Reputational Arms Race in Academia". Echoing Nixon's concerns regarding the disciplining role of rankings on academic culture, they consider the reputational arms race in terms of how HEIs are reconfigured through the audit regimes developed to win it. In particular, they examine the changes in institutional behavior arising out of the focus on international standing with respect to its effects on faculty. In "World Class Universities and Global Rankings", Jack Lee and Rajani Najdoo pursue a similar line of inquiry, here inspecting the footprint left by metrics on institutional conduct in the Global South. They address how the hegemony of the rankings is reproduced under different conditions and therefore with somewhat different effects. Most analyses of rankings focus on top or mid ranking institutions, often in the Global North, and therefore miss the specificity of the influence of international comparisons on the Global South, as well as their concrete effects on institutional behavior, emphasizing that the actors involved are not carried away by the storm, but are actively complicit. Judith Novak's study of a legal case in Sweden, Dickinson v. Mälardalen University, shifts focus from broad political and economic strategy to the creeping effects of juridification. Novak argues that litigation, or even merely the perceived threat thereof, is increasingly seen as a tool in the development and maintenance of WCUs. She demonstrates, however, that the reliance on formal rules and strictures is not simply one route to achieve the goals pursued. To the contrary, choosing this path will have significant repercussions on HE policy in the long run. Remaining in Sweden, in "World Class at all Costs", Mats Hyvönen takes up the now infamous case of the so-called Macchariani Scandal in light of the Karolinska Institute's tactics for maintaining and enhancing its position as a WCU. Hyvönen pays special attention to research funding policies in general, and, in particular, the role of the chairman of the Institute's Board of Trustees, the Liberal politician Lars Leijonborg, as an example of how the dream of becoming a world-class country in the increasingly fierce global competition can have far-reaching negative consequences for national higher education systems as well as for individuals. Finally, in "The Paradox of the Global University", Mitchell Stevens and Sonia Giebel elaborate on what they call the "paradox" of being a "global university". While touting international reach and reputation is a nearly essential feature of university strategic planning worldwide, institutions historically are servants of particular cities, regions and nations. International rankings and the competition for tuition revenue on a global market ignore the fact that all HE, like all politics, is (also) local.

The third section, "Playing The World-Class Numbers Game", scrutinizes the very methods and results of the comparisons that constitute rankings and relative

standings. In "World Class Universities, Rankings and the Global Space of International Students", Mikael Börjesson and Pablo Lilla Cea take a truly global look at rankings, analyzing them in light of the international market for HE. Their contribution links the rankings of WCUs to the global space of international student flows, demonstrating that this space has three poles, corresponding to three different logics of recruitment: a market logic, a proximity logic and a colonial logic. They show that the market pole dominates the space due to the high concentration of economic, political, educational, scientific and linguistic assets resources, and that this dominance is reinforced by the ranking itself. Focusing on Europe, in "What Counts as World Class? Global University Rankings and Shifts in Institutional Strategies", Tero Erkkilä and Ossi Piironen scrutinize policy discourse, paying careful attention to the likelihood that a given institution has any realistic chance of being counted among the top 100 and thus being designated a WCU. Analyzing the strategies of 27 Northern European universities in different tiers, they show that the discourse of global comparison and excellence has become more common. They also discern an emergent trend among those clearly outside the top-100 ranked institutions to refer to the regional role of universities. China is the focus of Tien-Hui Chiang et al's discussion of "The Role of the State in Excellent University Policies in the Era of Globalization". Using the successes and failures of China's Double-First-Class-Universities initiative as their case in point, they warn that the catchword of efficiency in achieving pre-set goals for HE may jeopardize state sovereignty, and that social responsibility can conflict with the logic of the free market, especially capital accumulation.

In the fourth and final section, "The Future of World Class Universities", the tone is intentionally optimistic and even speculative. Here the hope is to articulate visions of an alternative way of thinking about the world, classification and the university. Paul Gibbs's essay, "The Marketingisation of Higher Education", sets the stage by reviewing the structural changes alluded to in earlier essays in this volume, acknowledging that increased accessibility and greater transparency have been beneficial, while noting that these improvements, as consequences of market interventions by governments, media attention to league tables and stakeholder demands for skill sets has also led to a displacement from universities' core mission of educating to enhancing return on capital. Following on Gibb's reflections on the consequences of marketingisation, Michael A. Peters and Tina Besley suggest a way of conceiving the tension as a productive one. In "Contesting the Neoliberal Discourse of the World Class University: 'Digital Socialism', Openness and Academic Publishing", they contrast the global competitive model of the knowledge economy with a social democratic model based on open science and education. Arguing that universities need to share knowledge in the search for effective responses to pressing world problems of fragile global ecologies and the growing significance of technological unemployment, the paper makes the case for 'knowledge socialism', a communitarian ideal of a sharing and participatory academic economy based on peer-to-peer production, social innovation and collective intelligence. In "Spaces of Life: Transgressions in Conceptualising the World Class University", Sonja Arndt, Søren Smedegaard Bengtsen, Carl Mika and Rikke Toft Nørgård draw on Julia Kristeva's

notion of revolt, Emmanuel Levinas' conception of Otherness and Novalis' idea of *Romantisierung* to formulate an ideal intended to radically call into question the market and measurement as standards for defining World Class Universities. They propose that in lieu of the streamlined, benchmarked economic powerhouse ideal of a WCU, we should consider a greater globalism, one which includes the perspectives and interests of inhabitants of a world that no longer is and which has not yet arrived. The final contribution to the collection is by Ron Barnett, who offers a framework for "Realizing the World Class University: An Ecological Approach". Barnett asserts that the trope of WCU is employed from two rivalrous perspectives: on the one hand, by transnational and national organizations and institutions to promote global positioning; on the other hand, as a target of critique by those who observe that the WCU-discourse presses the interest of cognitive capitalism. In his intervention, Barnett seeks to find a way to hold onto the term—'world-class university'—that retains links with core values of the university. In his "ecological approach", Barnett focuses on the ecosystems connecting the university to the world—such as those of knowledge, learning, social institutions, persons, the economy, culture and the natural environment—and lays out the ways in which they are impaired. He proposes then that a 'world-class university' would be one that draws on its resources to advance the wellbeing of the major ecosystems of the world. Such a university, he concludes, would be a university in a *class-of-and-for-the-world*.

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