

Professor Simon Marginson University of Oxford

Distinguished speaker



Simon Marginson is Professor of Higher Education at the University of Oxford, Director of the ESRC/OFSRE Centre for Global Higher Education (CGHE), Joint Editor-in-Chief of Higher Education, and Lead Researcher with Higher School of Economics in Moscow. Simon is one of the most cited scholar-researchers in the world in the field of higher education studies (h-index Google Scholar 65, Web of Science 28). Simon's research is focused primarily on global and international higher education, the contributions of higher education and higher education as a public and common good, and higher education and social inequality. At Oxford he leads the MSc (Education) subject on 'Global higher education'. His recent books include Higher Education in Federal Countries, edited with Martin Carnoy, Isak Froumin and Oleg Leshukov (Sage, 2018) and High Participation Systems of Higher Education, edited with Brendan Cantwell and Anna Smolentseva (Oxford University Press, 2018).

What drives global science? Four competing narratives

Short abstract

Since 1990 there has been remarkable growth and diversification of worldwide capacity and output in science, and a distinctive global science system has emerged, primarily grounded in research universities, fostered by Internet-mediated communication and publication in English, cross-border authorship and researcher mobility. While global science overlaps with and is affected by national science systems, it is constituted by pan-national knowledge flows and collegial collaboration and has partial autonomy. Four different interpretive frameworks (narratives) have evolved to explain the dynamics of global science: science as an expanding cross-border network; science as an arms race between competing nations; science as a global market of competing institutions or 'World-Class Universities'; and science as a centre-periphery hierarchy in which emerging countries are permanently constrained by Euro-American dominance. The intervention reviews each narrative in relation to the literature, especially studies in scientometrics, and in relation to empirical tendencies in global science, tracked in secondary data derived from bibliometric collections. While each narrative contains at least a grain of truth, each also conflicts with the others and each is radically insufficient. A better explanation of the drivers of global science combines (1) flat open networked relations with (2) the inequalities and closures shaped by global hegemony, arbitrarily modified by (3) national governments and specific resources.

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