

A short communication on glocal universities

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ABSTRACT

This paper deals with the dual responsibilities of universities at local and global scale, exploring the potential conflict, or intrinsic difficulties, in addressing both local demands of society based on the race for global competitiveness and local and global demands to contribute to a more equitable and sustainable society (at local and global scales). Like many other organizations today, universities are under intense pressure, coming especially from “local” demands. The paper analyses and proposes the elements that allow for the global and local engagement of universities.

The vision of a university as a “social force for good” makes engagement compatible with the immediate needs of local societies and the global challenges of the world. This is the real challenge of many universities all over the world that may be able to take on the responsibility of being a glocal university.

KEYWORDS

glocal university. engagement. social engagement. locally engaged university. globally engaged university. global and local engagement of universities. globalization, regionalization and universities. higher education and engagement. global challenges of the world.

INTRODUCTION

Stavros Moutsios (2012) provides an excellent historical account of how “higher-learning” institutions spread all over the world in the wake of advancing civilization to respond to the need of granting formal certificates, and training experts, and administrative or professional elites. The earliest examples go as far back as the Chinese *Taixue* of the year 3 AD; the *Daigakuryo*, the ‘Imperial University of Kyoto’, founded in 671; and Nalanda, a centre of learning founded in the fifth century in the state of Bihar (India). As Moutsios says “Islamic countries are famously considered to have the oldest institutions of higher learning: the University of Al Karaouine in Fes, Morocco, founded in 859, is the oldest continuously functioning institution of higher learning and the Al

Azhar University in Cairo, established in 970, is regarded as the second oldest in the world.” The particularity of European universities, the first of which was the University of Bologna (1088), is the idea of academic freedom, now inherent to the concept of university. Throughout this multiseular history, universities have continuously evolved and adapted to their societies’ needs for higher education so one can hardly claim now to be at a turning point. Nevertheless, in the last decade universities have certainly undergone fundamental changes: their overall mission has been redefined and they have been repositioned at the very centre of the social structure in which they are embedded. The phenomenon is complex and multifaceted, so it can be approached in many different ways, as it is reflected in the extensive literature that has been produced on the subject in recent years.

A variety of adjectives have been used to define the roles that universities should play and the challenges they face. The latest report on global higher education (GUNI, 2013), for example, spoke of ‘engaged universities’ whereas John Goddard (2009) developed the idea of ‘civic universities’. Other terms that have been proposed in recent years are ‘entrepreneurial universities’ (Allan Gibb, 2005), ‘innovative universities” (Clayton M. Christensen and Henry J. Eyring, 2011) and ‘globally competitive, locally engaged universities’ (OECD, 2007). Perhaps the latest significant contribution is the return to the concept of ‘flagship universities’ by John Aubrey Douglass (2014).

The vast majority of the literature in this subject draws its inspiration from the fact that university activity – training professionals and community leaders, generating advanced knowledge, and transforming knowledge into new products and processes – plays a central role in economic development and the competitiveness of nations and regions. However, the 2013 GUNI report and other organizations such as the Talloires Network focus more on social commitment and the universities’ response to the major problems of humanity. Both of these approaches have emerged from the same phenomenon and the same need: the challenges posed by globalization to people, societies, nations and the world at large. One of the unique features of the current age – and one that we have had the privilege to witness – has been the shrinking of the world as we know it.

In one of his last books (2011), aptly entitled *Ill Fares the Land*, Tony Judt takes a pessimistic look at the world and the effects of globalization. However, in a finite world, globalization is inevitable and essential to human development: sooner or later all points on the Earth will be connected and, therefore, all human activities interrelated.

Glocalization is by no means a new term. It was popularised by one of the first theorists of globalization, the sociologist Roland Robertson, and it was used nearly thirty years ago particularly by economists in Japan, a country that has always taken great pride in its significance and cultural space. Nowadays it has become an umbrella term to refer to the phenomenon of the interaction between vision and the global and local impact of human activity. Nevertheless, although communication has been totally globalised, knowledge economies are quick to highlight the importance of location, proximity and uniqueness. As Manuel Castells pointed out (2004), “... the network society diffuses selectively

throughout the planet, working on the pre-existing sites, organizations, and institutions which still make most of the material environment of people's lives. The social structure is global, but most of human experience is local, both in territorial and cultural terms". The phenomena of localization and globalization complement each other; regions lose their "provincial" character and become launching pads for global competition. Or, in the words of the eminent sociologist Saskia Sassen (2007), "Globalization and the new information and communication technologies (ICTs) have enabled a variety of local political actors to enter international arenas once exclusive to national states." So, paradoxically, globalization reinforces regionalization. At a regional level, the triple helix – university, administration and business – is of particular relevance, since all three agents identify more closely with the immediate, shared geographical environment and its population, thus creating what is known as the quadruple helix; even a quintuple helix is even being postulated to include environment issues (Carayannis, EG & Campbell, DFJ [2010]).

The importance of local issues is perfectly illustrated by the new European regional policy, which requires applicants to develop a Regional Smart Specialization through Research and Innovation (RIS3) strategy if they want to have access to cohesion funds (structural and social action). The Europe 2020 Strategy highlights the key role that innovation plays in smart, sustainable and inclusive growth. Regions play a crucial role because they provide opportunities and the playground for interaction to companies, public authorities and civil society.

One of the ways in which society can rise to global and local challenges is for universities and other higher education institutions to develop knowledge, which can then be used to create innovative products and provide public and private services. This process can involve specialists not just in science and technology, but also in the humanities and social sciences. Universities have a range of mechanisms at their disposal to transform knowledge into development and wealth. These include providing counselling and services to SMEs, ensuring employment for graduates, incubating spin-offs in science and technology parks, setting up networks of business clusters, meeting the needs of the qualification market for local / regional work, and so on.

Today, the role a university plays in society is measured not only by its impact on higher education and research, but also by the extent to which it carries out what is simplistically referred to as the third mission: that is to say, the socioeconomic and cultural interaction between the university and the environment, which aims to improve the community. Therefore, universities are already involved in shaping an environment that is conducive to generating knowledge and transforming it into economic value, productivity and competitiveness. In turn, this creates jobs and wealth and helps to lay the basis of a balanced, advanced, fair and sustainable, society.

These different approaches are not only perfectly compatible; they must also be adopted simultaneously. This may be the biggest challenge of all: universities – particularly those

specializing in research – must at the same time be civic, entrepreneurial, innovative, flagship, globally competitive and both locally and globally engaged.

There may not be a single adjective to describe all the features of the representative university of the globalized world in the twenty-first century. If it has to be given a name, why not the Glocally Engaged University.

GLOBALIZATION, REGIONALIZATION AND UNIVERSITIES

The university at the heart of the knowledge region. Sybille Reichert (2006) clearly shows that universities are at the heart of the knowledge economy, and discusses the new demands that are being made to both universities and regions in terms of educating students and researchers; conducting, managing and supporting research; transferring technology and knowledge; engaging others in knowledge creation; and creating an attractive knowledge environment. Reichert describes a highly illustrative experience: “The will and commitment of a few key charismatic visionary individuals who did not shy away from the extra time and effort needed to bring different perspectives together into a common agenda was essential. Often these individuals were widely recognized visible university scientists who had been actively engaged in innovation or other civic partnerships outside academia and had developed an influential network of non-academic contacts. At two of the four cities, a rector had been among the initiators or the key initiator of the process. In the four European regions visited in the context of this study, as well as in Montreal, leaders of the knowledge development process always came from the university or public policy sector, while industry managers joined the process rather than initiated it.” This is a good example of the catalytic effect that universities – and particularly the action of their visionary and motivated teaching staff – can have and gives an idea of the kind of initiative that universities should promote.

There are numerous examples around the world of universities and university systems defining the strategic development of a region or city and its sphere of influence. To name just a few: the book *Academic Entrepreneurship in Asia. The Role and Impact of Universities in National Innovation Systems* (Poh Kam Wong, 2011); the positioning of Campus Compact, a US coalition of nearly 1200 college and university presidents in the paper (Amanda Wittman and Terah Crews, 2012); the report “Educación Superior en Iberoamérica 2010. El rol de las universidades en el desarrollo económico y tecnológico” (CINDA, 2010); the report “Universities and economic development in Africa” (CHET, 2011), the position paper “Smarter regions, Smarter Australia. Policy advice for an incoming government” (RUN, 2013), and the report “Regional Innovation Monitor. Governance, policies, and perspectives in European regions” (2011).

In fact, the development of cities and regions based in knowledge is already a subject of research in itself, with many studies showing the influence of concrete universities in enhancing regional innovation dynamisms. Edvarsson (2014) describes the influence of the University of Akureyri, in Northern Iceland; Romein et al. (2011) discuss the role of knowledge capacity in the development of the Dutch City of Delft, they particularly emphasise the role of Delft University of Technology as a main player of Delft's

knowledge capacity; Casaleiro (2011) describes the role of University of Coimbra, one of the oldest universities in Europe, which in the 21st century offers to the city a new and unique opportunity for restructuring, reconfiguration and recovery, thanks to the university, Coimbra has registered significant transformations, in its economic structure, with the growth of knowledge-intensive sectors such as health and information technology; Bathelt and Spigel (2011) study empirically the experiences of spin-off and start-up companies emerged from the universities of Waterloo and Toronto (Canada) and Columbus (Ohio, USA); from a qualitative case study of Bristol city-region, Kitagawa and Robertson (2011) show that universities are playing really a leading role in forming 'urban governance institutions' at the city-region level, but conclude, also, that there are still strong difficulties in opening the city-region as political, economic and social space; Den Heijer and Curvelo Magdaniel (2012) study the relationship between urban, corporate and university strategies required to develop knowledge cities and the relevance of the physical setting as an important resource to achieve mutual goals, using empirical data of existing comparative studies on university campuses and knowledge cities including the case study in Bogota, Colombia. And the list of concrete cases of study can continue all around the World.

All this knowledge obtained from many concrete cases feeds the economic policy of nations and supra-national structures. Ever since the "Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions. Regional Policy contributing to smart growth in Europe 2020", the European Union has been implementing a regional policy for inclusive, socially fair and sustainable growth: "It does so by creating favourable conditions for innovation, education and research so encouraging R&D and knowledge-intensive investment and moves towards higher value-added activities. It can so help meet the major challenge for Member States and regions of increasing innovation capacity and R&D in businesses and strengthening their links with universities and research centres. Regions have a central role as they are the primary institutional partner for universities, other research and education institutes and SMEs, which are key to the process of innovation, making them an indispensable part of the Europe 2020 strategy."

This European initiative has the additional value that it is a good practice applicable to all regions of the world. It is essentially correct in the sense that development is not sustainable if it is not socially and geographically harmonious. The development of Europe and all the other societies in the world must be fair; it must enable, or even encourage, all its constituent regions to develop. In this process too, universities have a central role and the example of Europe can be extrapolated to the rest of the world.

According to the NUTS2 classification (used for the RIS3-Research Innovation Smart Specialization Strategy) Europe has 278 regions that are socially and economically diverse. The mean population of these regions is 1.8 million. Despite their diversity, the population of most of these regions (175, the central part of the normal distribution) is between 0.7 and 2.7 million. In Western Europe there is one public research university and one non-research higher education institution for every 700,000 citizens. For most of

the European Union, then, regions already incorporate research, innovation and knowledge structures as fundamental components of their strategy for developing as regions of knowledge.

The numbers may vary around the world, because this ratio between population and knowledge structure is for a particular economic situation and structure. If a comprehensive research university is to be sustained, a region has to have the appropriate economic dimension. The same analysis shows that most of the 278 European regions (175), which have at least one research university, have a GDP between €13,000 and 64,000 million. The economic dimension is probably what best determines the minimum requirements for a region of knowledge to develop from its own roots.

Knowledge, engagement and higher education. The aforementioned reports and many more mainly focus on the mechanisms that allow a region to develop and compete economically in the globalized international arena. As always the key is creating knowledge and using it to train highly skilled citizens. But the sustainability of this development depends largely on the overall harmonic development of the world. So these studies somehow lack an overall perspective and concern, whereas this overall approach to knowledge is precisely what universities must have.

The main reason why knowledge and innovation are the basis of all regional development policies is international competitiveness. There is nothing wrong with this unless it turns into a zero-sum game. Increasing the competitiveness of some regions at the expense of others is not, in the final analysis, sustainable. The idea of the harmonious development of Europe should be extensible to the entire world as long as all societies, and particularly their universities, explicitly engage in the issues that are challenging the sustainability of the planet. As Tony Judt said, the world is not OK; but there is no alternative to globalization, there is no way back. We have reached the limits of our small system and need to learn how to continue developing in a sustainable way. And, again, higher education institutions are at the heart of this new challenge. Kofi Annan (1997), the former secretary-general of the United Nations, made the following very precise suggestion: “Knowledge is power. Information is liberating. Education is the premise of progress, in every society, in every family.”

There is a great deal of literature available, and falls out of the scope of this paper to make an exhaustive review. One of the most recent global references, the GUNI report (2013), analyzes the role and potential of HEIs as active players in social change and the creation of another possible world. It also identifies who the agents of knowledge creation are, describes how the creation, distribution and use of knowledge are linked to our aspirations for a better world, explains the components of a new socially responsible relation between higher education institutions, knowledge and society, and gives visibility to and critically examines the theory and practice of engagement as a key feature in the evolution of higher education. Finally, it does away with the narrow and compartmentalized approach of the “third mission” and redefines engagement as a frame that gives teaching, research and knowledge transfer a coherent sense of service to society.

This overall vision reveals that the current global crisis is not only financial and economic but also social. The interdependence of all areas of human activity on the global scale defines the whole world as a global community. There is a common identity and a shared destiny, and citizens have begun to question the contract with the state (which is perceived as no longer being plenipotentary) and highlight the need for executive, democratic, worldwide governance structures. It is increasingly evident that unsustainability is, at least a twofold problem: injustice around the globe (particularly the basic needs of health and education), and the large-scale effects on the global ecosystem, particularly the environment and climate issues, availability of water and energy, etc.

Once again, knowledge is perceived as the key to all these issues, and higher education institutions have a central role not only in creating and spreading this knowledge, but also in analyzing the major changes and proposing the action that needs to be taken.

As part of their engagement with these global issues, universities need to understand that they are fundamental to the process of creating knowledge but that they do not have the monopoly; they should recognize (and work with) the institutions involved in knowledge creation outside the sphere of higher education in all fields. There are many interesting and successful examples of universities cooperating with civil society (for instance, the Living Knowledge Network of Science Shops, the Community-Campus Partnership for Health, and Campus Compact). Essentially, the barriers that prevent scholarly knowledge from reaching the community need to be broken down. This is a challenge that universities must rise to. In short, universities must go back to their original task of educating good citizens (as the Campus Compact motto says: “Educating citizens. Building communities”).

Like many other organizations today, universities are under intense pressure. Many focus merely on survival, and attempt to respond to the massive increase in demand, the decreasing role of the state and the increasing role of the market, the diversification of providers, the multiplicity of funding sources, the challenges of internationalization and cross-border education, the need to internalize the processes of quality assurance and how these processes are related to accreditation processes, the emergence of rankings and their effect on public policies, and so on. This may explain why universities are not as involved as they should be in facing global issues.

Ultimately, the correct attitude is to be fully engaged. Universities need to be key institutions at the regional level. They must seek to develop immediate society through teaching, research, and knowledge transfer, and involve themselves in establishing regional strategy in conjunction with the local authorities, social agents and civic representatives. But they must also aspire to being globally engaged institutions that educate open-minded, critical and aware citizens, and through their research activity help to define global lines of action leading to a fair and sustainable world.

This is precisely what the 6th GUNI Report on Higher Education in the World will deal with: the mechanisms that will enable universities to have both local impact and a leading role in global issues.

BUILDING BLOCKS OF A GLOCALLY ENGAGED UNIVERSITY

John Goddard and Paul Vallance (2011) identify the obstacles and challenges encountered by civic leaders when working with universities and those encountered by university leaders when working with external institutions. But other issues also need to be taken into account in a university's external relations and in its internal culture and policies. Essentially, universities need to take into account a set of fundamental components, or building blocks of their global and local engagement, like the following:

1. Explicit shared mission

The major asset of a university is the brains of its academic staff, who must do their job within the framework of what is well known worldwide as academic freedom. Academic freedom guarantees that "Institutions of higher education are conducted for the common good and not to further the interest of either the individual teacher or the institution as a whole (the common good depends upon the free search for truth and its free exposition)". The quote is taken from the 1940 Statement of Principles on Academic Freedom and Tenure of the American Association of University Professors.

This means that the first basic element in the definition of any kind of university engagement is that the governance system must enable academia to take part in defining the university's mission. The overall commitment of universities should be explicit in their mission and vision, and understood and accepted by the academic staff.

2. Engaged leadership and engaged academia

As Goddard and Vallance pointed out, the role of leadership is fundamental if bridges are to be built between university and civil society. Leadership has to be proactive on both sides. However, the intrinsic characteristics of the academic community (its diversity, organizational structures, jargon, etc.) constitute obstacles and challenges to civic leaders and require universities to set up an internal strategy to promote, measure and recognize the participation of teaching staff in the social role of universities. Even though the engagement of university leaders is a must, it is clearly insufficient if it is not assumed by academia personally.

The second element, then, should be an institutional strategy that allows individual members of the teaching staff to contribute to the university's social responsibility in a variety of ways above and beyond their regular teaching and research activity. The overall activity of the teaching staff should be measurable in an agreed procedure and, thus, acknowledgeable, in such a way that the so-called third mission of the university can be promoted collectively and recognized individually.

Ellen Hazelkorn (2012) states that “Because academic norms and values can be a road-block to diversity, new forms of academic credentialism and assessment that recognize the diversity of research outputs and impacts as part of the ‘continuum’ of scholarship should be adopted”. She cites as an example a Research and Academic Staff Commitment Agreement (Grau, 2006) modeled on the concept of the knowledge triangle (see Figure 1 below).

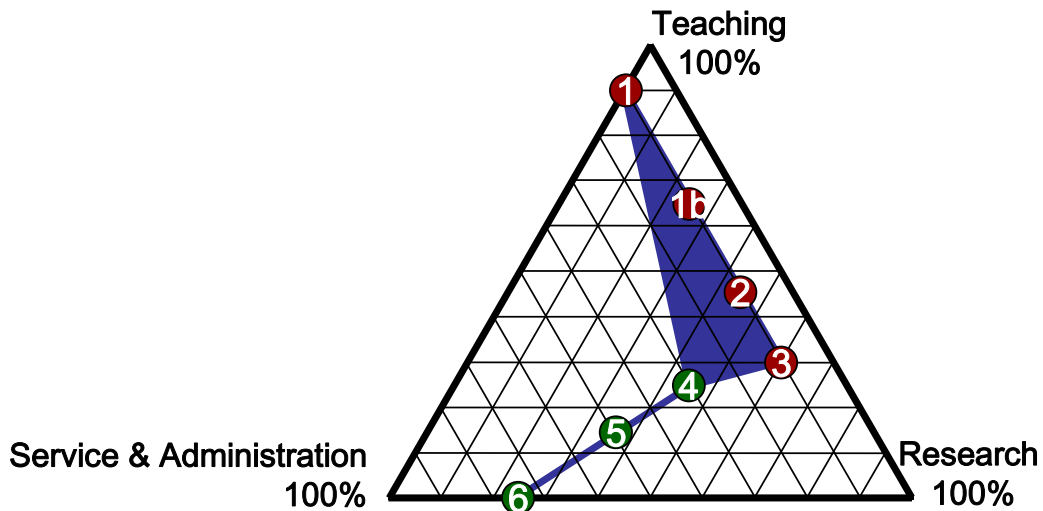


Figure 1. Example of flexibility in task assignments

Here, the commitment of the research and academic (R&A) staff is considered as a whole, but flexibility is key to achieving individual and collective goals. Universities require R&A staff with different profiles and their dedication to the three basic university activities should not necessarily be the same at a given moment in time or at given moments in a particular person’s career. The numbers in the figure indicate different profiles (from a complete teacher [1] to an intensive researcher [3] and even the rector [6]). The coloured zone defines a possible “zone of existence”, i.e. which defines the limits of the possible distribution of tasks. Evidently, such an approach needs an internal culture of accountability and a system by which academic activity can be measured.

3. Strategic positioning

The university has an overall impact on society through a practically infinite set of collective and individual activities. These activities are usually classified as teaching, research, knowledge transfer, service to society, etc., and strategic goals are set for each of them. The main difficulty for complex institutions such as universities lies in the coherence and the coordination of what is conceived sectorially but which has a global effect, full of synergies. The following diagram illustrates one possible way of organizing the strategic positioning of the university with respect to its impact on society and its region of influence.

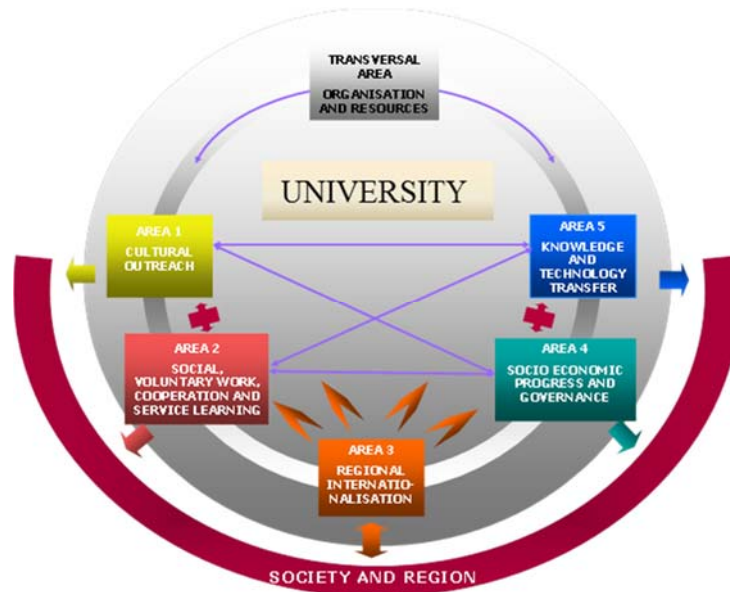


Figure 2. Example of strategic organization of the University's Third Mission

The example shows the direct impact on immediate society and does not cover all possible elements of social responsibility, which also affects teaching and research policies (particularly curricula, sustainable development and the culture of entrepreneurship and innovation, etc.). Nevertheless, it identifies several vectors that need to be taken into account at the regional level should a university wish to engage with the development of immediate society:

- The university as the catalyst/neutral point of the region's cultural network.
- The university's engagement with international cooperation to development and local social work through volunteering and/or service learning.
- The university as the driving force for the internationalization of the region through teaching and research, sending students abroad and attracting foreign talent.
- The university's active participation in regional decision making, particularly by setting strategic regional objectives and instruments, and actively promoting collaboration with socio-economic agents (unions, employers' associations, civic entities, etc.).
- The economic effect of the increase in competitiveness of regionally based companies by means of the research-transfer chain of knowledge-innovation. This vector also covers the role of the university as the nucleus of all the knowledge structures in the

region: namely, research institutes, technological centers, science & technology parks, research hospitals, etc.

4. Measurement and monitoring

“You can’t improve what you can’t measure.” This has already become a commonplace, but it is intrinsically true. The idea has been stated in many different ways, probably most completely by H. James Harrington: “Measurement is the first step that leads to control and eventually to improvement. If you can’t measure something, you can’t understand it. If you can’t understand it, you can’t control it. If you can’t control it, you can’t improve it.” Whereas research impact has been normalized in many scientific areas and dominates the measurement of the outputs of research activity of universities and other knowledge institutions, the impact of teaching is much more elusive and the impact on society of the overall activity of a university even more so. Despite all the difficulties, universities and the knowledge community have to make the effort to monitor the evolution of their impact on society and, even more importantly, communicate to the general public and to the authorities consistently and regularly. Moreover, following what is called the “Hawthorne effect”, the secondary but no less important effect of a regular measurement culture is that it favours the involvement of the whole university community because of the positive feeling produced by the fact that all activities can be valued and recognized.

In this respect, initiatives such as the European Commission’s “European Indicators and Ranking Methodology for University Third Mission (E3M)”, summarized in the “Green Paper. Fostering and Measuring ‘Third Mission’ in Higher Education Institutions” should be encouraged because they attempt to conceptualize and systematize a set of indicators that enable “third mission” activities to be measured.

CONCLUSIONS

On the occasion of the 25th anniversary of the assassination of Ignacio Ellacuría, rector of the Universidad Iberoamericana del Salvador in 1989, Michael McCarthy published an interesting article in the *New York Times*. It finished with an inspiring last paragraph: “As the future of higher education remains so uncertain, and as the financial pressures of running universities increase, I find great courage in those schools that strive to be driven by something more than the market economy. Father Ellacuría championed the vision of a university that would be an ‘inescapable social force’ for good. That is no less important in 2014 than it was in 1989. I still believe that an education not grounded in justice is a farce and that we desperately need wise, courageous, even heroic academic leaders to realize the highest purposes of education.”

This vision of a university as an “inescapable social force for good” makes engagement compatible with the immediate needs of our local societies and the global challenges of the world, of our global society. This is the real challenge of many universities all over the world that may be able to take on the responsibility of being a glocal university.

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