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The Possibility of Global Public Sociology

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In this paper, I revisit the debate on public sociology within the wider institutional context of higher education. Once ramifications of globalisation of higher education are taken into account, institutional constraints placed on public sociology turn out to be much larger than previously thought: a) the institutionalisation of world university rankings reinforces the dominance of professional sociology over public sociology and; b) the commercialisation and vocationalisation of higher education worldwide undermines the discipline of sociology as a whole. At the same time, however, globalisation of higher education facilitates the formation of transnational networks of sociologists examining transnational social problems, ranging from marketisation to climate change. These emerging transnational networks are likely to serve as infrastructures for sociologists to engage publics in formulation and dissemination of research on transnational social problems and thereby forge a sociology that is simultaneously global and public.

Keywords: Public Sociology; Global Sociology; Higher Education; Transnational Epistemic Networks; Globalisation

In the last decade, Michael Burawoy (2005a, 2011a) called for "public sociology" – a kind of sociology that engages with publics outside academia in a reflexive and communicative manner – first, as president of American Sociological Association (ASA) and then, as president of International Sociological Association (ISA). He travelled around the world to discuss promises and problems of public sociology with a large number of faculty and students whose intellectual and political orientations varied considerably (Blau & Smith 2006; Burawoy, 2005b, 2005c, 2008; Burawoy et al. 2004; Clawson et al. 2007).[i] In response to Burawoy's tireless efforts, an increasing number of sociologists began to take up public sociology as their collective enterprise and to transform the relationship between the discipline and its publics (Fleck & Hess 2014; Hanemaayer & Schneider 2014; Jeffries 2009; Nichlos 2011; Nyden, Hossfeld & Nyden 2011). Thus, public sociology has consolidated its place in the discipline and now offers inspirations for those who wish to practice sociology for society.

Despite its worldwide resonance and cosmopolitan character, public sociology remains peculiarly "parochial" in that its proponents which often shortcut the discussion of their institutional environment, *higher education*. As Craig Calhoun warned, the promise of public sociology cannot be fulfilled unless it is anchored in a comprehensive understanding of "the implications of the transformation of the university for the very existence and character of sociology" (2005, p. 360). To be sure, Burawoy (2005c, 2007, 2008, 2011) discussed universities in relation to market forces and state regulation but his discussion is mostly schematic. Put another way, the debate on public sociology tends to focus on how public sociology is constituted in relation to professional, policy, and critical sociologies rather than in relation to

universities, which are, in turn, constituted in relation to the economy, government, and civil society.

In this paper, I draw on the latest research on higher education to illuminate institutional parameters of public sociology. Specifically, I focus on one of the most important factors that affected higher education in the last decade – *globalisation* – and explore its implications for public sociology. To begin with, globalisation complicates the scope of "publics" that public sociologists should engage with. Burawoy envisions public sociology to be primarily "*relevant* to local or national issues, and accountable to local or national publics" (2010a, p. 16; emphasis in original), even though he once hinted at the possibility of engaging with "global" publics (Burawoy et al. 2004, p. 104). As various social problems, such as climate change, epidemics, and economic inequality, traverse national borders, the scope of concerned publics is also increasingly global (Beck, 2005, 2006). Concurrently, globalisation has transformed the institution of higher education, creating new constraints and resources for sociologists who wish to examine transnational social problems in dialogue with transnational publics (Kennedy, 2015; Saito, 2015). To understand what kind of public sociology is possible, as well as desirable, in a global world, it is crucial to examine effects of globalisation on higher education and the challenges and opportunities that this institutional transformation presents to public sociology.

Globalisation of Higher Education: Ramifications for Public Sociology

Sociologists and other social scientists began to discuss "globalisation" in the early 1990s. They examined a wide variety of topics – the economy, governance, civil society, culture and identity, to name a few – and debated whether globalisation was happening at all and, if so, what mechanisms facilitated flows of practices, discourses, and institutions around the world. In the 2000s, education researchers also began to talk about "globalisation of higher education" by building on their longstanding research on internationalization of education (Deardorff, de Wit, Heyl & Adams, 2012). This debate on globalisation of higher education, however, has been taking place among higher education researchers without much contribution from sociologists. Apart from John Meyer and his associates (Schofer & Meyer, 2005; Meyer, Ramirez, Frank & Schofer, 2008), the majority of sociologists remain focused on higher education in national, predominantly American contexts (Brint, 2002; Gumport, 2008; Stevens, Armstrong & Arum 2008).

I argue that insufficient attention to globalisation of higher education among sociologists is detrimental to the ongoing debate on public sociology because it underestimates the real extent of emerging institutional constraints. In particular, the emergence of world university rankings is likely to consolidate the dominance of professional sociology over public sociology and the increasing commercialisation and vocationalisation of higher education risks eroding the discipline of sociology as a whole.

World University Rankings: The Dominance of Professional Sociology

In sociology, world-culture theory dominates the existing sociological research on globalisation of higher education. By building on their earlier theory of world society that takes the globe as a unit of analysis, world-culture theorists argue that organisational actors wishing to be seen legitimately as "universities" are likely to cause isomorphism at the global level by adopting models and benchmarks of "best universities" that are "worldwide in character and influence" (Meyer et al. 2007: 21). Although in higher education research, world-culture theory has little purchase. Education researchers are generally more interested in how cultures, power relations, and economic interests mediate globalisation of education and how educational policies and curricula are transferred and translated across countries (Burbules & Torres 2000; Spring, 2015; Stromquist & Monkman, 2014). Specifically, leading higher education researchers subscribe, albeit to different degrees, to Pierre Bourdieu's field theory and thereby foreground the hierarchical nature of a global field of higher education by examining how status competition drives universities' strategies and actions (Marginson, 2008, 2011; Naidoo, 2003).

To understand global dynamics of status

competition among universities, higher education researchers pay close attention to world university rankings. They are critical of methodological biases in the rankings (Harvey, 2007; Pusser & Marginson 2013) but they recognize the real "disciplining" effects of these rankings on organisational decisions (Bastedo & Bowman 2011). In fact, there is "a strong belief among HE (higher education) leaders – borne out by international evidence – that rankings are influencing key stakeholders," (Hazelkorn, 2011, p. 503) including, but not limited to, students, funding agencies, foundations, and business sponsors. In other words, world university rankings performatively create a global field of higher education and structure it hierarchically.

The ascendance of world university rankings is likely to increase the dominance of professional sociology. To begin with, faculty reputation and citations figure prominently in calculation of ranking scores. For example, QS World University Rankings attribute 40 percent to "academic reputation" and 20 percent to "citations per faculty," While the World University Rankings attribute 30 percent to "research" and 30 percent to "citations." Academic Ranking of World Universities by Shanghai Jiao Tong University attributes 40 percent to "quality of staff" and 40 percent to "research output."[ii] These measures favour scholarly achievements in professional communities which help increase the importance of professional sociologists for universities that are now facing increasing pressure to compete for prestige in a global field of higher education. With world university rankings dominated by elite research universities in the United States (Marginson, 2006, p. 26), US-style professional sociology is likely to be legitimated as the best model of sociology at the global level.

This institutional trajectory of higher education poses a formidable challenge to public sociology, even though Burawoy (2005a, 2010a, 2015) argues that the third wave of public sociology has gained momentum in the United States and around the world (and public sociology already has strong presence in France, Brazil and elsewhere). Any momentum for public sociology is likely to be counteracted by the institutional trajectory that tends to reinforce the dominance of US-style professional sociology and, in turn, marginalize public sociology that does not bring prestige to universities.

Notwithstanding the disciplining effects of world university rankings, the global field of higher education is not completely integrated. According to Simon Marginson (2006, pp. 21–24), competition among universities around the world is fragmented into multiple segments in a loosely hierarchical order and truly global competition for prestige happens only in the top-tier segment consisting of elite research universities that are often labelled "world-class." By contrast, universities in lower-tier segments participate in status competition only within regional or national contexts and respond to local demand more than to world university rankings. This implies that public sociology has better prospects among universities in lower-tier segments that are not fully incorporated into global status competition and, by the same token, that the legitimacy of public sociology will remain low because top-tier universities tend to pursue professional prestige defined by world university rankings.

Commercialisation and Vocationalisation of Higher Education: The Decline of Sociology as a Whole

While world university rankings vis-à-vis global status competition reinforce the dominance of US-style professional sociology over public sociology, the next ramification of globalisation of higher education – commercialisation and vocationalisation – risks undermining the discipline of sociology as a whole. As critically-minded social scientists observed, economic globalisation, driven by neoliberalism, has far outpaced responses from governments and civil societies, worsening economic inequalities and causing other social problems around the world (Harvey, 2005; Sassen, 2014; Stiglitz, 2002). Burawoy similarly criticizes global capitalism for the latest wave of "marketization" that has been "sweeping the world, destroying the ramparts laboriously erected to defend society against the first and second waves of the previous two centuries" (2007, p. 356). At the same time, he points to the growth of counter-movements against global capitalism and takes this as a chance for

sociologists to engage with concerned publics and promote public sociology (Burawoy, 2015).

But marketisation has also undermined the very institutional base of public sociology by changing the nature of higher education itself. To begin with, universities, especially in the field of applied sciences, engineering and business, have strengthened their partnerships with the private sector and become more entrepreneurial in their objectives and operations, as evinced by the research on "academic capitalism" (Slaughter & Leslie, 1997) and the "triple helix" of university-industry-government collaboration (Etzkowitz & Leydesdorff, 2000). This growing interpenetration between universities and the private sector has legitimated "market" as an institutional logic of higher education alongside the traditional logic of "public good" (Gumport, 2002; Slaughter & Rhoades 2004). Governments, too, supported this shift toward the production of knowledge as a private good by providing a large amount of funding for university-industry collaborations that benefit the private sector more than the public (Slaughter & Rhoades 2000). Concurrently, university administrators invoke more and more discourses and practices from the world of business to justify organisational objectives and strategies (Gürüz,, 2011, chap.. 3).

Moreover, higher education has become a tradable commodity in a global market since education was included in the 1995 General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS) (Altbach & Knight, 2007). To be sure, cross-border trading of people and services related to education had existed long before, but the GATS and other trade agreements stabilized and consolidated these flows by creating a global education market (Verger, 2010). As Jane Knight (2006, pp. 23–27) documents, a wide range of cross-border trade of education is happening today: branch campus, franchise, twinning, double/joint degree, online/distance learning, acquisition/merger, study centre, networks and so on. Such cross-border trade is promoted not only by non-profit universities but also by an increasing number of for-profit universities and education providers (e.g. Kaplan) that consider higher education as a commodity.[iii] Thus, if public sociology is necessarily tied with critique of marketisation as proposed by Burawoy, it will be directly confronted and contradicted by its very institutional base that is increasingly driven by profit motive and market principles.

Coterminous with the commercialisation of higher education is the vocationalisation of curricular contents. As Joel Spring (2015) argues, education is now seen as an important means to train students for a global labour market. This vocationalisation of higher education is pronounced in the United States of America: over the last few decades, the main growth area for universities has been professional schools and research centres, not arts and sciences departments (Calhoun, 2010, p. 240) and student enrolments shifted sharply to occupational programs or "practical arts" (Brint 2002). Perhaps reflecting the trend, QS World University Rankings also attribute 10 percent to "employer reputation." In other words, higher education organisations are now moving away from traditional arts and sciences and thereby decreasing the degree of decoupling between university education (credentials) and actual skills (role training) that students will acquire.

Thus, even if sociologists retain their most immediate and enduring publics – students – in absolute numbers, the vocationalisation of curricular contents is likely to decrease the percentage of sociology majors in the population of college students vis-à-vis the sociology's relative significance in higher education. In the short run, policy sociologists may increase the size of their publics if undergraduate majors and professional schools in public policy continue to expand. Similarly, the size of publics for public sociologists may increase if sociological research and teaching become more vocationally oriented toward "social entrepreneurship" consisting of diagnoses of and solutions to social problems. In the long run, however, the future of sociology as a discipline does not look bright: undergraduate and graduate programs in public policy (already dominated by economists) and social entrepreneurship are likely to start producing their own PhDs and therefore compete with policy and public sociologies, respectively. Even if "[i]n many places sociologists can survive only by identifying themselves to corporate agendas or bureaucratic

programmes they don't believe in" (Burawoy, 2011b, p. 144), the niche for the entire discipline of sociology itself can shrink due to the centrifugal dynamics created by the vocationalisation of higher education.

Intimations of Global Public Sociology

These two aspects of globalisation of higher education – world university rankings and commercialisation and vocationalisation – reveal the real magnitude of institutional constraints facing public sociology worldwide. Nonetheless, globalisation also offers institutional resources for promoting public sociology, especially what might be called "global public sociology."

The contemporary world is confronted by an increasing number of transnational social problems: to name but a few, climate change, armed conflicts and terrorism, economic inequality, migration and xenophobia, and illegal trafficking of humans, drugs, and weapons. To address these problems, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) have begun to forge "transnational advocacy networks" (Keck & Sikkink, 1998) and mobilize "transnational social movements" (Smith, Chatfield & Pagnucco, 1997; Tarrow, 2005). These transnational networks and movements of NGOs point to the emergence of "global civil society" (Guidry, Kennedy & Zald, 2000), accompanied by transnational public spheres in which citizens of multiple nationalities participate. In fact, civil societies of different scales – not only global or transnational but also national – are growing due to the proliferation of NGOs as legitimate actors in world polity (Boli & Thomas 1999).

This worldwide trend has the potential to energise not only public sociology but also the entire discipline because civil societies constitute the primary object of sociological research as well as the primary audience for sociologists (Burawoy, 2005a, 2015). The comprehensive understanding of transnational social problems vis-à-vis responses from civil societies requires transnational collaborations among sociologists (and other scientists in relevant disciplines) in multiple countries whose governments and populations are part and parcel of the problems. In this regard, globalisation of higher education has begun to institutionalise transnational collaborations among faculty and students through various forms of partnerships across national borders: visiting professorship, funding for collaboration with faculty at different universities and short- and long-term faculty exchanges between partnered universities and branch campuses of the same universities, among other arrangements. These partnerships are promoted particularly in countries that aspire to become "educational hubs," such as Malaysia, Singapore and the United Arab Emirates (Olds, 2007; Shields & Edwards, 2010). Importantly, these growing cross-border flows of higher education are not framed exclusively in the language of profit and prestige but continue to uphold the *moral* language that values international educational exchange as a public good (Deardorff, de Wit, Heyl, & Adams, 2012).

Sociology's Performative Relationship with Transnational Social Problems

When sociologists study transnational social problems that civil-society actors are grappling with, they cannot remain "neutral observers" or, to be worse, act as "legislators" (Bauman, 1992) who invoke "truths" about transnational social problems to "enlighten" civil-society actors. Instead, sociologists are deeply implicated in the very objects of their research through *performativity* permeating the discipline to the core (Law, 2008). Professional sociologists may think they simply describe and explain the world, but they cannot but indirectly participate in policymaking, for example, by providing policy sociologists and policymakers with ontologies of actors and causal forces as well as justifications for certain government interventions (Callon & Latour 1981). Here, Burawoy is right to question Arthur Stinchcombe's professional-sociological demand that sociologists should first strive for producing "truths" about the world before they proceed to engage with publics: "But that's just the sort of truth that cannot be conjured up within the academy but calls for an intense engagement with the world beyond" (Burawoy. 2007, p. 248). To phrase it differently, if Leon Trotsky – a model sociologist for both Stinchcombe and Burawoy

– indeed made a "correct prediction" about the Russian Revolution that would be due primarily to his performative involvement. Trotsky was in the position to shape the course of the revolution by taking actions together with others based on his understanding of the situation.

In fact, not only does the discipline of sociology but the entire institution of higher education have such a performative character, i.e. the power to transform the world through a plethora of its research and educational activities. Given the performative character of higher education, what responsibilities do universities bear to the world? Here, I agree with Burawoy that the university "should be viewed as a *critical public sphere* in which there is indeed discussion among academics about the nature of the university and its place in society" and as "the centre of organizing public discussion about the direction of society" (Burawoy, 2011a, pp. 40–41; emphasis in original).[iv] Universities have this responsibility for public engagement for the most mundane reason: publics are their most important material base. As Craig Calhoun asks, "Now, what does the discussion of who pays for research tell us about who *should* benefit from university-based research? First and foremost, the answer must be 'the public.' The public pays the biggest part of the costs directly through government transfers, and significantly more in indirect ways such as tax exemptions" (Calhoun. 2006, p. 30). Thus, so long as sociologists are based in universities, they cannot but practice public sociology, albeit in relation to different publics and to different degrees: professional and critical sociologists, at least, teach students who are their immediate publics, whereas policy and public sociologists interact with their students, as well as with publics outside universities, policymakers and civil-society actors, respectively.

Importantly, this public engagement is necessarily *critical*, as Burawoy speaks of the university as a "critical public sphere," consistent with his claim that "the focus of critical sociology should shift its emphasis from a critique of professional sociology to the infusion of critical perspectives into public sociology" (Burawoy, 2005c, p. 381). However, critical public sociology needs to be firmly grounded in the pragmatic sociology of critique advocated by Luc Boltanski and his colleagues (Boltanski, 2011; Boltanski & Thévenot 1991). From this pragmatic perspective, publics are regarded as already endowed with competences to critique existing institutions on their own terms. The task for sociologists is therefore not to superimpose their theoretical knowledge on publics, à la the Frankfurt-school type of critique of capitalism, but to help publics become more reflexive and make their critiques more effective (Saito, 2011).

Put another way, sociologists participate in the construction and politics of transnational social problems by helping to "modify the representation the public has of itself *fast enough* so that we can be sure that the greatest number of *objections* have been made to this representation" (Latour, 2000, p. 120; emphasis in original). Through these dialogues with sociologists, emerging transnational publics can become more reflexive of their own practices vis-à-vis transnational social problems in which they are entangled. However, if sociologists indeed succeed in transforming the publics' self-understandings and practices, it will not be because they possess superior knowledge: sociological and ordinary languages are simply two different ways of making sense of the world. Instead, it will be because sociologists have their cognitive authority institutionalized in universities. Thus, the ultimate goal of reflexivity is not simply "to move sociology to a higher scientific plane" (Burawoy 2010a, p. 4)" but also to make sociologists aware of their own performativity, so that they can generate, jointly with publics, critical thoughts and actions capable of transforming the increasingly global world.

From the Sociology of Transnational Social Problems to Global Public Sociology

The emergence of transnational social problems vis-à-vis transnational publics is coterminous with the possibility of *global public sociology*. As Burawoy argues, the increasing public concern about transnational social problems, combined with the growing institutionalization of transnational collaborations among sociologists, creates the possibility of global sociology: "the common challenges we face in defending society, the very grounds for sociology but also of

humanity" help sociologists forge a universality "from the connections among particular sociologies, a universality held together, despite division and inequality" (Burawoy, 2008, p. 443). But what exactly is a global sociology, and how can it be forged? Although Burawoy has so far separated his discussion of global sociology from public sociology, they are in fact two sides of the same question: What should sociology – especially a public one – in a global world look like (Burawoy, 2015, p. 29)?

While Burawoy extensively discussed "global sociology" as ISA president, he actually vacillated between singular and plural conceptions of global sociology. On the one hand, he suggests, "Global *sociology* has to be built on a dialogue among particularisms, especially particularisms evoked by social movements, but not only social movements" (Burawoy 2015: 28; emphasis added). On the other hand, he argues that "global *sociologies* are laboriously constituted from below out of particular national sociologies. This depends on… building multiple connections among such national sociologies" (Burawoy 2010a: 25; emphasis added).

In fact, the ongoing debate on global sociology reenacts the longstanding discussion of unity and multiplicity of sociology within an international community of sociologists. Margaret Archer (1991), for example, argued for both ontological and epistemological unity of sociology: ontologically, there is "One World" – and this is progressively the case due to globalisation – and epistemologically, there is "One Discipline" because sociologists share common humanity, manifesting in the human ability for reasoning. The task of what Archer called "international sociology," then, is to specify "how global mechanisms combine with regional circumstances, in non-uniform fashion, to shape different new trajectories" (Archer, 1991,:p. 139). In line with Archer's position, Piotr Sztompka (2010) also argued that there are two types of sociologies, world and local, on the epistemological dimension. Furthermore, these sociologies aim to understand two different domains on the ontological dimension, what is universal and particular in human societies, respectively. Sztompka, therefore, concluded that "[u]niformity of world sociology and uniqueness of local sociologies are two mutually enriching sides of the same sociological enterprise" (2010, p. 27), though he expects that the scope of world sociology will grow because globalisation expands the domain of what is universal. Figure 1 summarizes the positions taken by the two former ISA presidents: Archer is located in the upper-left cell because she advocates one sociology for one world, whereas Sztompka is located in both the upper-left and lower-right cells because he believes in one sociology for one global world and many sociologies for many local worlds (that are not yet globalized).

Figure 1 also helps clarify critical responses from sociologists in the "South" and "non-Western" countries who advocate "indigenous sociologies" (Akiwowo, 1986, 1999) and "alternative sociologies" (Alatas, 2006; Burawoy, Chang, & Hsieh, 2010). Those who argue for indigenous sociologies are mostly located in the lower-right cell because they

Figure 1: Different Positions on Global Sociology

		Ontology	
		One world	Many worlds
Epistemology	One sociology	Archer; Sztompka	Imperialism
	Many sociologies	Hegemonic struggle	Sztompka; majority of indigenous and alternative sociologies

believe that local languages and concepts are best suited to study local realities. While some of the alternative-sociology advocates are located similarly in the lower-right cell, others are in the lower-left cell. Take, for example, two of the most prominent advocates for alternative sociologies, Raewyn Connell (2007) and Gurminder Bhambra (2014). Connell draws on little-known native theorists in the South to challenge the dominance of "northern" social theories constructed based on historical experiences in North America and Western Europe. She does not fall into the upper-right cell because her goal is not to reverse the direction of imperialism but to engage Western sociology in transformative dialogue with non-Western sociologies (see Qi, 2014 for a similar attempt in the Chinese context). Bhambra also aims to move the debate on global sociology from imperialism to hegemonic struggles by mobilizing connections among sociologies in various parts of the world – already forged by legacies of colonialism and imperialism – in order to critically reconstruct existing sociological concepts and theories (see Go, 2013 for postcolonial challenges to Western sociology).

These debates show that "global sociology" is shorthand to describe the growing network connecting multiple sociologies and multiple worlds. It is, therefore, problematic to prematurely posit the existence of one world on the ontological dimension when globalisation has not yet created a single unified world. To be sure, capitalism and its associated mechanisms, such as marketisation and commodification that Burawoy presents as "common challenges" to sociologists worldwide, come close to being truly global (Mann, 1997). However, they are still considerably "lumpy" and far from being a unified whole (Cooper, 2000). Indeed, the existence of multiple worlds can be supported by the tradition of critical realism that Archer herself subscribes to: if social reality is concept-dependent and causal mechanisms of the social world are spatio-temporarily heterogeneous (Collier, 1994), it follows that different parts of what is called "the earth" can be ontologically different worlds consisting of locally specific causal mechanisms and actors using locally specific languages, concepts, and other materials. Here, Bruno Latour (2005) forcefully articulates the challenge posed by the "pluriverse," the coexistence of multiple worlds on the ontological dimension, as follows: "Can we make an *assembly* out of all the various *assemblages* in which we are already enmeshed?" (p. 27; emphasis in original). To translate this into Burawoy's language: Can we make a global sociology out of heterogeneous sociologies practiced by people in different countries and regions who cannot be assumed to inhabit the same world?

The answer depends on whether and how actors that sociologists study – corporations, governments, NGOs, ordinary citizens, and so on – will forge a common world. Here, the existence of a common world cannot be assumed by globalisation (Archer, 1991; Sztompka 2010), "marketization" (Burawoy, 2008, 2015), or "colonialism and imperialism" (Bhambra, 2014). As Latour (2004) puts it, "A common world is not something we come to recognize, as though it had always been here (and we had not until now noticed it). A common world, if there is going to be one, is something we will have to build, tooth and nail, together" (p. 455). Take, for example, different groups of scientists studying climate change, a problem that is often seen as truly global. When these groups use different mediations (e.g. instruments, laboratories, and facilities), they literally produce different globes: a single globe can finally emerge only if they come to adopt the same mediations and succeed, through a huge amount of work, in producing "immutable mobiles" that persuade people inside and outside a scientific community to accept the existence of an ecologically threatened, common world. Given continuous disagreement among stakeholders, however, humans have yet to inhabit a common world threatened by climate change or any other transnational social problems.

Nonetheless, more and more civil-society actors now mobilize transnational networks and movements to address a variety of transnational social problems: a single world facing "common challenges" has begun to emerge at a slow pace and on a small scale, though there is no teleological guarantee for its full development. Here again, sociologists cannot be independent observers but only active participants in the construction of a common world. This performative

involvement of sociologists points to the possibility of global public sociology.

Conclusion

In this paper, I have revisited the debate on public sociology within the wider institutional context of higher education. In light of the research on globalisation of higher education, the institutional constraints placed on public sociology appear to be more serious than previously thought. First, the institutionalisation of world university rankings reinforces the dominance of professional sociology over public sociology by creating status competition based on academic prestige. Second, the commercialisation of higher education internally counteracts public sociology critical of capitalism, while the vocationalisation undermines the discipline of sociology as a whole by undermining its enrolment base. At the same time, however, globalisation of higher education facilitates the formation of transnational networks of sociologists examining transnational social problems. These emerging transnational networks are likely to serve as infrastructures for forging a sociology that is simultaneously global and public, so long as sociologists engage publics in formulation and dissemination of research on transnational social problems.

I hope that the focus on *institutional* context of higher education will advance the ongoing debates on public and global sociologies. While most of the debates have so far taken place at the *epistemological* level, the institutional perspective can help to demarcate growing transnational flows, networks and infrastructures that enable a certain form of global public sociology to emerge. Moreover, with a comprehensive understanding of the institutional possibility of global public sociology, sociologists can begin to transform their own practices and organisations to become more efficacious in engaging with publics, i.e. translate their greater epistemological reflexivity into greater institutional performativity.

Endnotes

[i] For a comprehensive list of conferences and symposiums where Burawoy discussed public sociology, see http://burawoy.berkeley.edu/PS.htm (accessed 30 January 2015).

[ii] For methodologies of these three world university rankings, see http://www.topuniversities.com/university-rankings-articles/world-university-rankings/qs-world-university-rankings-methodology; http://www.timeshighereducation.co.uk/world-university-rankings/2014-15/world-ranking/methodology; and http://www.universityrankings.ch/methodology/shanghai_jiao_tong (retrieved 4 February 2015).

[iii] Nonetheless, the commercialisation of higher education has been uneven across different types and locations of universities. The university-industry partnership, for example, is found predominantly at leading research universities. The partnership is less developed outside North America and Western Europe (Välimaa, 2014) and still weak in developing countries (Maldonado-Maldonado, 2014). Moreover, despite the growing cross-border trade based on the GATS, the higher-education sector is considerably less globalized than financial and pharmaceutical sectors (King, 2004, p. 48), and the movement toward commodification of higher education affects "different types of universities, both within as well as across national boundaries" very differently (Naidoo, 2003, p. 256).

[iv] Similarly, Gerard Delanty (2001) argues that "the central task of the university in the twenty-first century is to become a key actor in the public sphere and thereby enhance the democratization of knowledge" (p. 9).

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