



# Planetary Futures for Higher Education:

From Neoliberal Commodification *to* Global Justice *and* Cultural Potential

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## Globalization... or Planetization?

- **Does the metaphor matter?**
- Does it matter whether we speak of globalization of higher education or planetary futures of higher education - drawing on the metaphor of planetization?
- I suggest it does. Globalization has become synonymous with the neoliberal economic paradigm which is linked to commodification - of education, of culture, of anything it can sell and make a profit.

# Globalization?

- *Globalization* is primarily a politico-economic movement of large multinational corporations purportedly contributing to trickle-down global wealth while competing for market share.
- From the perspective of many postcolonial scholars it is a *weapon of mass destruction* of cultural identity and diversity—and has been referred to as the *McDonaldization of the world*.
- From a cultural perspective globalization is largely about homogenization and standardization.
- Let's say that Globalization is represented by the one-size-fits-all model of education and culture.


**Globalization as one-size-fits-all model**





## Planetization as plurality and diversity (i.e. at least three variations)

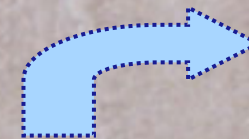
### ... or Planetization?

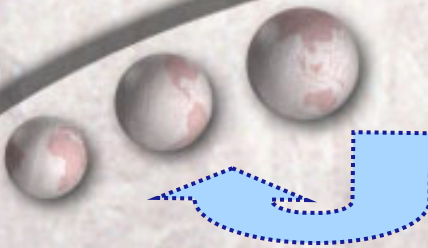
- *Planetization*, as conceived by Teilhard de Chardin may provide a counterbalance to the hegemonic and homogenizing excesses of globalization. The notion of planetization involves not domination but awareness and respect for the richness of cultural diversity.
  - In this paper I use the term planetary with a richness of meaning:
    - With reference to our *planetary ecological crisis* as a species,
    - With reference to the *emergence of planetary consciousness*, and
    - With regard to *diversity of planetary cultures*.
  - “The new planetary culture can be a shining example of unity-in-diversity, or *unitas multiplex*. It will be robustly diverse, intermixed to the core, and filled with awe at the rich lineages of our common past.”  
(Mauro Ceruti, and Telmo Pievani, 2005).
- 

## *Globalization of Higher Education?*

- When we talk about globalization (and internationalization) of higher education are we talking about homogenization and standardization?
- When we talk about globalization of higher education are we unconsciously subscribing to the neoliberal ideology of education as commodification?
- Is the slogan “education for all” equivalent to homogenization of all? Or is it appropriately facilitative of multiple values and epistemologies?

**Is the Emerging Global Model (EGM)  
a one-size-fits-all neoliberal higher  
education model?**





**Planetization of Higher Education  
involves at least Three Perspectives**

## *Planetization of Higher Education*

- Pierre Teilhard de Chardin called planetization a *mega-synthesis* in which:  
“the outcome of the world, the gates of the future ... will only open to an advance of *all together*, in a direction in which *all together* can join and find completion in a spiritual renovation of the earth”  
*The Phenomenon of Man* (1959/2002, pp. 243-245).
- This “all together” sensibility is today referred to as “social inclusion.”
- This paper examines the ideologies underlying social inclusion theory and develops an innovative theoretical model for planetary higher education futures underpinned by a nested spectrum of ideologies:
  - neoliberalism,
  - global/social justice and
  - human/cultural potential, respectively.



# **PART 1: Theoretical Explorations of Social Inclusion**

- History
- Areas of Inclusion
- Degrees of inclusion (based on a spectrum of ideologies)



## Theoretical Indications: History of Social Inclusion

- The notion of social inclusion can be dated back at least to the nineteenth century sociologist Weber and regard for the importance of social cohesion.
- In terms of more recent history, the term is more readily identified through its counterpart, *social exclusion*.
- The concept spread through Europe throughout the 1980s and 90s (e.g. UK Blair government).
- Australian usage, first in 2002 (SA). The Rudd government's Social Inclusion Board inaugurated in 2008.





## Theoretical Indications: Areas of Social Inclusion

Social inclusion can pertain to a variety of areas of social groupings. These include demographic differentiation with respect to:

- Socio-economic status
- Culture and primary language, especially refugee and migrant communities
- Indigenous communities
- Religious groups
- Geography, including those in regional, rural and/or remote areas
- Gender and sexual orientation
- Age, including youth and senior groups
- People with physical and psychological disabilities
- Unemployment
- Homelessness; and
- Incarceration.



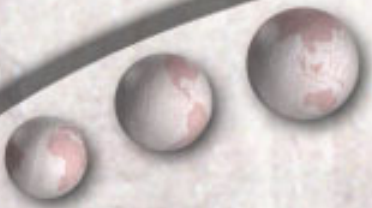
## Theoretical Indications: Degrees of Social Inclusion

The theory involves the identification of a nested spectrum of ideologies underpinning different degrees of social inclusion.

- o The narrowest interpretation pertains to the **neoliberal** notion of *social inclusion as equitable access*
- o A broader interpretation regards the **social justice** idea of *social inclusion as engaged participation*
- o The widest interpretation involves the **human potential** lens of *social inclusion as empowered success*.

**Figure 1:**  
**Spectrum of Ideologies**  
**Underlying Social Inclusion**  
**Theory and Policy**



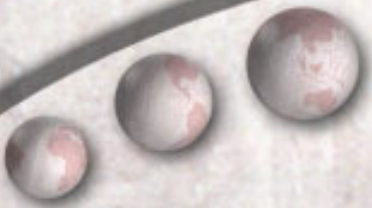


## **Neoliberal** Notion of Inclusion as **Equitable Access**


- The narrowest interpretation of Social Inclusion pertains to the neoliberal notion of social inclusion as equitable access.
- In the last decade or so neoliberal economic theory (economic rationalism) has been the underlying ideology of educational policy.
- *Types of Theories* informing neoliberal educational policy include:
  - Free-market economics
  - Human capital theory
  - Social capital theory
- *Types of Key Phrases* found in neoliberal policy documents include:
  - 'work first'
  - 'economic growth'
  - 'skills shortage'
  - 'social capital'

**Neoliberalism: a one-size-fits-all model**





## *Social Justice* Notion of Inclusion as *Engaged Participation*

- A broader interpretation regards the social justice idea of *social inclusion as engaged participation*.
  - Counter-balancing the neoliberal policies there has been a rise in the importance of social justice in education: e.g. human rights, egalitarianism of opportunity, human dignity, and fairness for all.
  - *Types of Theories* that inform socially just educational policy include:
    - Critical pedagogy
    - Partnership theory
    - Feminist theories
  - *Types of Key Phrases* found in social justice policy documents include:
    - ‘social responsibility’
    - ‘participation’
    - ‘engagement’
    - ‘capability’
- 



Human potential ideologies  
celebrate diversity

*Human Potential* Notion of Inclusion as

### *Empowered Success*

- The widest interpretation involves the human potential lens of *social inclusion as empowered success*.
- Human potential ideologies go beyond mere justice and human rights and seek to maximise the potential of each human being and cultural group. Employing models of possibility instead of models of deficiency, human potential approaches centre on *social inclusion as empowerment*.
- *Types of Theories* that inform human potential oriented policy include:
  - Empowerment
  - Pedagogies of hope
  - Postcolonial theories
- *Types of Key Phrases* in human potential based documents include:
  - 'social transformation'
  - 'raising aspirations'
  - 'cultural diversity'
  - 'lifelong learning'



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## **PART 2: Policy Indications for Social Inclusion in Higher Education**



## Policy Indications

- The term “Social Inclusion” is in increasing usage in Australian policy
- It appears to be replacing terms such as “access and equity”
- Linguistic shift - from “poverty”, “disadvantage”, “deprivation” and “exclusion” to more positive framing of “inclusion”
- Is this the start of a directional shift from models of *deficiency* to human potential models of *possibility*?
- While the language is shifting is practice following suit?  
What are the gaps?







## Theory into Practice:

### What are the gaps?

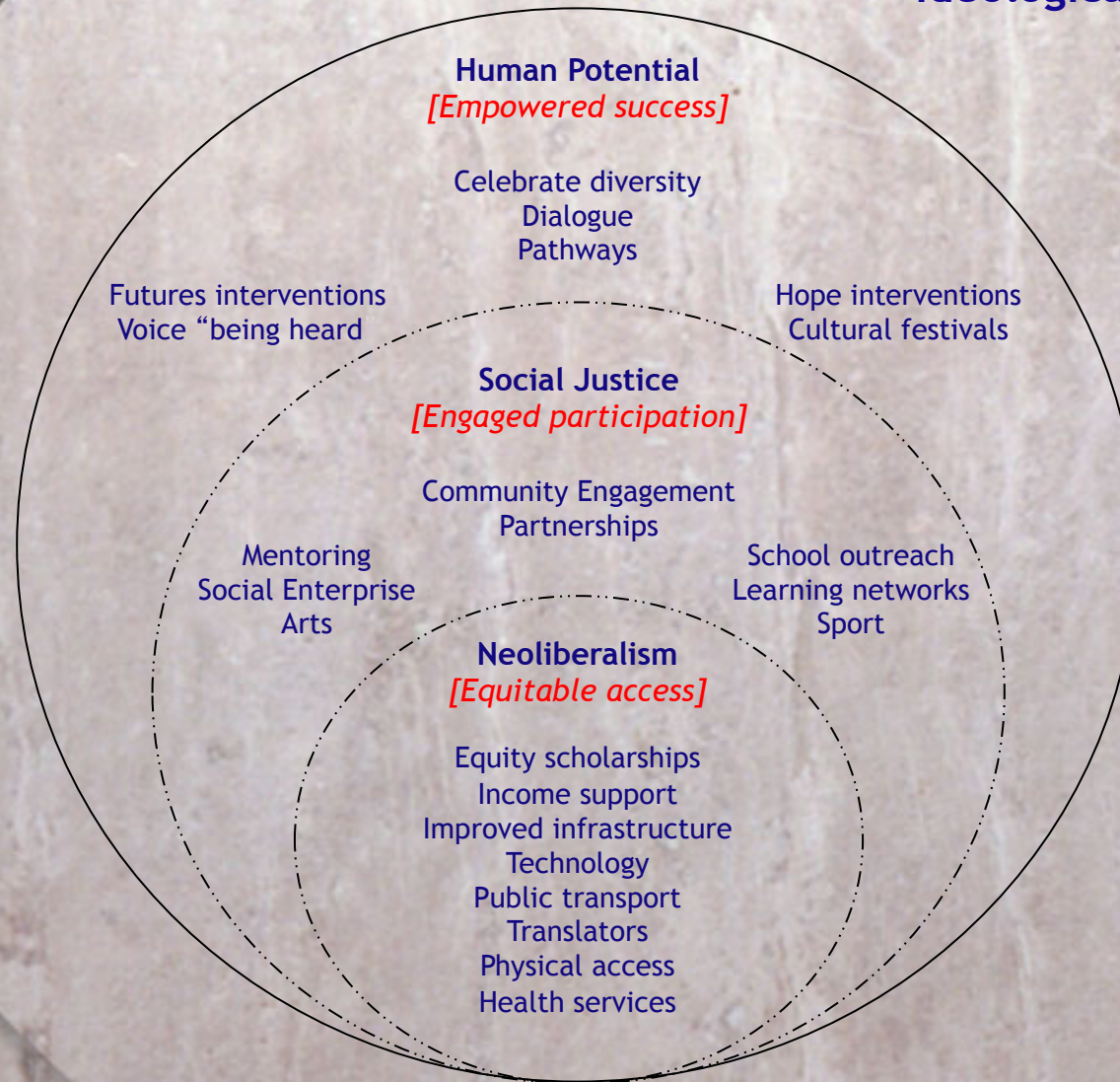
- Social inclusion is a contested term and some say that the rhetoric is largely a rebranding of old values and policies and is not being taken seriously by either the community sector or government bureaucracy.
- Main policy focus is on: disadvantaged geographic areas, indigenous Australians, and those living with homelessness, joblessness, disability, health and/or mental health issues.
- Gaps remain in relation to such groupings as culture, language, religion, age, incarceration status, gender and sexual orientation.
- Finally, critical questions can be raised regarding the danger of inclusion as inferring *assimilation*, especially with regard to indigenous students.





**PART 3: Practice Indications:  
Social Inclusion Interventions**

**Figure 2:**  
**Social Inclusion Interventions**  
**Nested within**  
**Ideological Underpinnings**



## Neoliberal Interventions:

>> Towards *Equitable Access*

- Equity scholarships
- Income support
- Improved regional infrastructures
- Physical/architectural modifications
- Teaching and translation assistance
- Counselling and health services

**Neoliberal Access: Inclusion in the One**

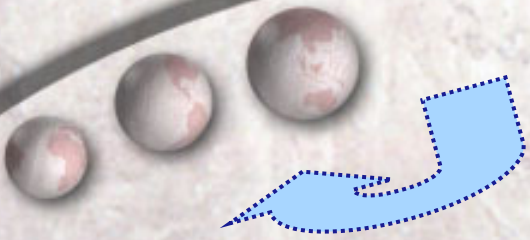




## Social Justice Interventions:

>> Towards *Engaged Participation*

- Partnerships
- Social enterprise
- Mentoring
- Sport
- School outreach
- The Arts



Interventions of possibility,  
empowerment and hope for all

## Human and Cultural Potential Interventions: >> Towards *Empowered Success*

- Pathways
- Voice “being heard”
- Dialogue
- Futures education
- Pedagogies of hope
- Cultural festivals





## Further Research Recommended ...

- Further research could take account of broader international research.
- A more comprehensive analysis of Australian universities could ascertain the initiatives that are being undertaken to ensure that social inclusion of under-represented groups becomes a reality.
- The social inclusion and university-community engagement literature points to the need for more integrated and holistic approaches.
- Further work on post-formal and ecological approaches could add richer dimensions to the research.





## Planetary Futures for Higher Education "Unity in Diversity"

### ... and Concluding Reflections

- Respect for cultural diversity (deep pluralism) is central to providing a *holistic* approach to the challenges for higher education globally in ensuring empowerment of underrepresented groups.
- Social inclusion interventions are not just about equitable *access*. To ensure engaged *participation* and empowered *success* interventions must legitimate and empower diverse epistemologies.

**One Planet for All**  
**(but not one EGM for all)**







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