Preface

It is difficult to imagine that this book could have been compiled ten or more years ago. With 29 chapters drawn from around the world, the volume has required extensive interactivity by editors and contributors. Before the Internet age, the whole enterprise would not only have been much more protracted, but also much more frustrating. Globalization, whatever its demerits, has aided global scholarship in ways unimaginable only a few years ago.

In one important sense the notion of time and space compression underpins almost every element of this book. But it does so only by being perceived as a platform for allowing wider imaginings and strategies for higher education institutions and systems. Moreover, although policy internationalization, competition and mimicry testify to the increasing importance of social networks globally – both as coordinating arrangements and as power arenas – it is how these networks are shaped by particular standards, norms and models that remains important; this continues to generate significant forms of difference as well as convergence for higher education systems.

The book is constructed as three parts: Generic; Case Studies; and Governance. Each part has an introduction to the chapters that follow. It is not necessary here to say very much about the chapters – except that the editors have sought to avoid a heavy bias in favour of western perspectives. The case studies in Part II in particular are designed to cover a diversity of interpretations and systems. The aim is not to conflate 'globalization' with 'westernization', although clearly considerable worldwide influence stems from the university systems of North America, the UK, Australia and Continental Europe. As the book highlights, however, alternatives to western forms of tertiary education are emerging globally, not least in the 'Confucian' countries of East Asia, where attitudes to family and private investment in higher education – and the role of the state – demonstrate key differences with Anglo-American traditions.

The changes taking place in global higher education can readily appear awesome, whether surveyed from high above or examined close at hand. Nevertheless, the book seeks to avoid grand generalizations based on excited enthusiasm for the speed of globalization processes in higher education. Clearly these processes have induced considerable change, but many of the chapters indicate quite forcibly that universities remain local and nationally regulated entities as well as becoming worldwide and informally shaped organizations. The university continues to occupy a multi-dimensional space where all the three planes of global, national and local operate – what Simon Marginson describes as 'glonacality'. Although this multi-level ranging by universities is not new, important accelerations in global perspectives, identities and strategies are apparent as well, and these are explored throughout the following chapters.

In their various ways the chapters examine and seek to explain the current epoch-changing eddies affecting our universities and in relation to which universities are important causal agents. They provide a diversity of terrains and a plurality of percep-

tions that highlight the continuing durability of universities and their enhanced cultural, political and economic centrality to contemporary nations in the current wave of globalization.

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