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China ‘goes out’ in a centre–periphery world: Incentivizing international publications in the humanities and social sciences / Xin Xu

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Abstract

The current expansion of English language publishing by scholars from China is supported by national and university policies, including monetary and career incentives to publish in English. These incentives, which extend to work in the humanities and social sciences (HSS, the focus of this paper) as well as the sciences and technologies, are situated in evolving strategies of internationalization.

China has moved from an internationalization strategy simply based on learning from the West, to a ‘going out’ strategy designed to both lift domestic research capacity and advance China’s influence in the world. However, the ‘going out’ strategy nonetheless embodies ambiguities and dilemmas. The world of academic knowledge is not a level playing field but more closely approximates the centre–periphery dynamic described in world systems theory. This study explores the influence of publication incentives in the context of a centre–periphery world. It draws on analysis of 172 institutional incentive documents and interviews with 75 HSS academics, university senior

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administrators, and journal editors. The study identifies practices within China's HSS that reproduce centre–periphery relationships. By focusing on international publications, Chinese universities run the risk of downplaying Chinese-language publications and adopting standards and norms from global centres to assess domestic knowledge production. These could result in creating knowledge from and about China primarily in Western terms without adding a distinctive Chinese strand to the global conversation. Nonetheless, the study also identifies alternative dynamics that challenge the existing power hierarchies in global HSS, highlighting indigenous knowledge and the need to pluralize global knowledge production. (HRK / Abstract übernommen)