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Preface

Hans Hobelsberger

The more globalised the world becomes, the more important local identities are. The global becomes effective in the local sphere. This phenomenon, referred to since the 1990s as ‘glocalisation’, poses many challenges to people and the social structures in which they operate.

The professionals of social work, health sciences and practical theology who care for people in their social spaces face global developments in a local environment: how can they address global issues in local contexts, both in a professional and innovative way? What are the consequences for the universities and higher education institutions with their mission of education, research and transfer of knowledge and expertise?

This topic and these questions are dealt with in the conference entitled ‘Social Glocalisation and Education – Social Work, Health Sciences, and Practical Theology Perspectives on Change’. The conference was spearheaded by the International Congress of the Catholic University of North Rhine-Westphalia (KatHO NRW) and took place in Cologne, Germany from 19 to 21 September 2019. Around 160 scientists, practice partners and representatives of international partner universities of the KatHO NRW from 20 countries attended.

The International Congress was born of the desire on the part of KatHO NRW to raise awareness of higher education in a world with local and global changes related to the disciplines of social work, health sciences and practical theology. The aim of the event was to address the different scientific discourses not only of the various disciplines, but also to enter into a dynamic exchange in light of different cultural, social and legal backgrounds. KatHO NRW wanted to revisit the phenomena and consequences of glocalisation with its international partner universities and practice partners from Germany and incorporate transnational research perspectives.

A series of lectures, discussions and excursions at the International Congress focused on the local effects of globalisation while addressing the challenges of higher education in a troubled world. Various scientists and speakers from the three disciplines brought their expertise to bear and we are pleased that the majority of them have summarised their lectures and contributions for this book.

The structure of the publication is generally based on the conference programme. The first day of the congress was dedicated to the challenges of glocalisation in the context of social work, health sciences and practical theology.

The ecclesiastical-international perspectives of glocalisation were addressed in a keynote of Cardinal Peter Turkson, which was presented by the theologian Prof. Peter Schallenberg. In another keynote the theologian, philosopher and historian Prof. Heiner Bielefeldt focused on the scientific perspectives of glocalisation. The scientific panels, which were designed to address current issues from the perspective of various international scholars, focused on the main topics of migration and integration, human rights, the welfare state in the European integration process, social sustainability as well as human dignity, justice and freedom as challenges for religions.

On the second day, there was a transition to the concrete tasks of higher education and the future development of higher education in a glocal world. In addition to three lectures, which were intended to outline various international perspectives on university education in a glocalised world, scientific presentations with subsequent discussions in the form of panels on the following topics were also scheduled: Professionalisation and Academisation of Social Work, Health Sciences and Practical Theology, Social Innovations and Brain Circulation.

It is our pleasure to grant you an insight into the lectures and discussions at the International Congress with this book. We hope that it will prompt further discussions in order to advance scientific debate on the topic, as well as encourage research and international exchange.

We would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone who contributed to making this conference such a success and wish you an inspiring reading.