

The globally-distributed European-American University: Tensions and challenges

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[Opening slide]

[Greetings and thanks]. As Hans has stated this discussion of internationalisation in higher education takes place when the worldwide landscape is shifting rapidly and geo-politics are likely to have transformative impacts in the sector. It is time to take stock and to rethink.

I sense we are in a new period. This has sent me to reflect on the previous period, from the late 1980s to 2015 or so, and the massive changes in the university world triggered by the collapse of the Soviet model, the end of the Cold War, world markets and the Internet. Prior to this meeting I read about 150 articles and chapters since 1990 on the international and global, in general and in higher education. I was struck by certain insights in geography and global sociology in the 1990s, and in the slightly later work on higher education, when globalisation and internationalisation were coming on quickly, and seemed to have open potentials, and it was vital to understand the new possibilities. Scholars in this room contributed fine papers that have stood the test of time. Inevitably, also, the literature of those days is also replete with errors of perception and overly normative propositions.

What's now happening to us, and our future trajectory, are partly shaped by our history as well as by the environment. And partly by ourselves. Universities and scholars always have scope for action and collaboration. But to act, we need to understand as well as prescribe.

[Six propositions]

Today I want to advance six propositions about global and international higher education, five explanatory and one normative:

1. We need to distinguish clearly the global scale in higher education from the national and international scale. They are not the same, or a dialectical pair, which is another kind of identity.
2. Since the mid 1990s there has been intensified internationalisation and activity in the global scale in higher education and knowledge has developed significantly, especially in networked science. Both have continued to expand, at least until very recently. Information, communications, transport and mobility have been crucial. There has been immense growth of networked collaboration, and sector relations of cooperation/competition, fostered by all of pan-national, national, institutional and individual agents. On balance this has been good for our joint and several human societies, but -
3. Global and international higher education and knowledge have fostered a Euro-American (and largely Anglo-American) world hegemony, blatantly neo-imperial in form and contents, and out of phase with the increasing multi-polarity in political

economy, where we can see the growing weight of non-Western states and economies.

4. As this suggests, and notwithstanding the 'knowledge economy' idea, our sector is partly separated from the political economy. One result is that, while they had some common roots, globalisation in higher education semi-autonomous higher education and knowledge was partly decoupled from globalisation in the economy. In fact while economic globalisation is now in reverse, and political globalisation little developed, the semi-autonomous internationalisation and globalisation of higher education and knowledge has continued to advance.
5. However, this partial autonomy of higher education and knowledge is not a constant. Self-determining autonomy is now being over-determined by geo-politics, now reshaping the global higher education space. Since 2015 or thereabouts the setting has become increasingly hostile to global and international relations.
6. That's the prognosis. The normative implication is that for as scholars, and as members of higher education institutions, the challenge is to sustain conditions of academic freedom, and collaborative cross-border relations in higher education, under more unfavourable conditions.

I'll now say something fairly brief about each.

[1. Geo-spatial definitions of 'global' and 'inter-national']

This next section will seem very basic and I apologise for that. However, at the outset it is necessary to be clear about terms, because there are differing takes on 'global', 'globalisation', 'international' and 'internationalisation'. I use these terms as geo-spatial descriptors, in the manner of geography, rather than normative terms that are designed to nudge people towards one or another kind of educational practice. I realise my usage is not dominant in international education studies, but it is widely used outside that domain.

It is helpful to distinguish between the world as a mosaic of nation-states, the Westphalian multi-lateral world of international relations; and the inter-dependent planetary sphere, the global scale, the world of ecology and in part, of scientific knowledge, which spans above, beneath and across national borders and does not necessarily require them. This is because there are imaginings and social relations in the global scale, that are not confined to national containers. Of course, the global and national scales intersect at many points, action in one is often a condition of action in the other, and so on. But the global scale and the national scale are not the same as each other. For example, the national scale is normatively centred by governments, law, policy, national finances. The global scale is affected by governments, organisations and persons, but it has no normative centre. The distinction between global and inter-national is pertinent to the evolution of higher education and knowledge since 1990, which has seen the 'thickening' of the global scale.

['Globalisation' and 'internationalisation']

From this follows the process distinction. Globalisation is the tendency to worldwide integration and convergence. This is a function of both materiality (the ecology is material, the Internet is material) and imagining. Globalisation can occur in every and any sector of activity – it is not confined to the economy, nor is it intrinsically neo-liberal, capitalist or Western. In practice, world markets have played a key role in fostering global relations

though arguably, global communications have been as important since 1990. And higher education and, especially, knowledge are among the most globalising human activities.

Correspondingly, internationalisation, in this framework, is simply the strengthening of cross-border activities, connections and relations. No more than that.

Globalisation is not necessarily more competitive while internationalisation is more cooperative, as was argued around 2000 by educators looking for defence against rampant global markets. It may be so in particular moments and sectors. But global ecology is not intrinsically competitive. All relations are possible, in either scale. World Wars I and II were inter-national conflicts, though they also remade the global space. Internationalisation is not necessarily a 'response to globalisation'. Much of it occurs without globalisation. These practices are heterogeneous, spatiality distinct. They have differing political-cultural potentials. Internationalisation practices are nationally nested and variant, global practices are often partly disembedded, though there are any different versions of globalisation. Still, all else equal, international connections multiply in a globalising setting; and the repetition and institutionalisation of these connections can foster global awareness, and systems. Yet not all international activity builds the space of global activity. The global scale is constructed by ideas, ideologies, materialities, infrastructures specific to that scale.

Globalisation is not external to higher education while internationalisation is internal. Worldwide relations, and nation-states, each impact higher education from outside. At the same time, universities and researchers are 'inner' agents of both internationalisation and globalisation, though to a varying extent, depending on self-position and positioning. I am sorry, I told you it was basic. But it is needed, to clarify the rest of the paper.

[2. Expansion of international and global in post-1990 higher education]

After 1990 there was a tremendous expansion in international connections and infrastructures in higher education, bi-lateral and multilateral: in cross-border people and programme mobility, co-authored research, agreements and partnerships, policy transfers and adaptations. Internationalisation has been vigorously pursued and broadly supported by most governments and universities. We have also seen distinctively global developments. The most important are the global science system, resting on a single bibliometric pool of knowledge, and the global ordering of research universities via comparison and ranking. There are also online learning platforms such as MOOCs, and university consortia.

I said 'after 1990' but the full impact of global communications hit higher education later. There's a few years at the turn of the century when everything in higher education seems to lurch, disembedded from its accustomed locations. Odora-Hoppers uses the image of globalisation as a giant tumbler. Everything is then reworked and re-embedded again. But the changes have continued to accumulate, especially in science and in global rankings.

[Mobile students increased by 5.5% per annum 1998-2019]

Consider the growth of international connectedness in the last three decades. International student mobility has expanded by five and a half a percent per annum since 1998. Student mobility shows every sign of returning to its growth path once the pandemic no longer

impacts travel, though in future it will be increasingly affected by geo-politics, as it was after 9/11, and perhaps by climate change mitigation, as Robin Shields will discuss.

[Almost a quarter of doctoral students are mobile but it varies by national science system]

The most internationalised component of student mobility is doctoral mobility. In 2019 almost one quarter of all doctoral students travelled into the country of research training. Yet this proportion varied markedly within OECD. Among the large research systems, UK and France were highly internationalised while Germany and South Korea were not. There is of course great variation in the proportion of first degree and Masters students who are inwardly and outwardly mobile. This points to the nationally nested character of the supply of international opportunities and of focused aspirations for mobility. Academic mobility, which is likely to have grown as much as student mobility, seems more broadly spread.

[Number of science papers in Scopus (NSF 2022), by type of collaboration, world: 1996-2020]

There has been a parallel expansion in international connectedness in research. Between 2000 and 2020 the proportion of all papers in Scopus that had international co-authors rose from 13 to 23 per cent. In some universities in Europe and the Anglophone world the international proportion of papers exceeds two thirds, at Harvard it exceeds 50 per cent. In research the trends to absolute and relative growth of internationalisation are common to all countries, though the level of internationalisation varies. The common trends point to the institutionalised, more global character of networked collaboration in research.

[Internationalisation of higher education as a ‘social imaginary’]

Before I move to globalisation, let me make one more point about internationalisation. The vast growth of mobility, research networking, university agreements, consortia, recognition and quality assurance protocols, benchmarking, branch campuses and online delivery has fostered, and is sustained by, internationalisation as a ‘social imaginary’ in Charles Taylor’s sense, a set of norms, ideas, narratives, images and behaviours. This imaginary is shared within national systems and across borders. In it internationalisation is always good, and invokes tolerance and liberal cosmopolitanism, perhaps also global citizenship, and intercultural learning. At the same time nation-state politics and policy, the Westphalian structure, are undisturbed. Several colleagues here have made distinguished contributions to this social imaginary. It has many adherents. However, unlike the social imaginary of modernity, or that of neo-liberalism, it is not widely shared outside higher education.

[Formation of *global* higher education as a ‘space of possibles’]

Some but not all of the internationalisation activity in higher education and knowledge has contributed to the creation of a distinctive global scale. As I see it, global activity is constituted by three kinds of process, in ascending order of global convergence and integration: extensive and repeated global connections, which start to take on a systemic form; cross border global diffusion between countries and between institutions, through the isomorphism discussed in institutional theory; and the formation of autonomous global systems. The line between intensified connections and global integration is not easy to draw, but cross-border connections are less embedded than is, say, the global research system. Visitor and migration protocols that welcome foreigners are easily reversed.

[Formation and rapid growth of global science system]

The global science system and bibliometrics are the most important global development. Government funding and institutional infrastructure are essential conditions of global science, but they do not control it. Studies by Caroline Wagner and Loet Leydesdorff find that the global network has an autonomous trajectory, that it is primarily bottom up, constituted by scientists themselves and positioned orthogonally to nation science systems. Measures of network betweenness suggest it has become more open to new entrants over time. The network structure encourages scientists in emerging systems. Established countries and institutions do not create absolute barriers. However, as I am sure you know, recognised global science by no means includes all knowledge. I will return to this.

[Science systems where *output grew slower* than world average of 5.15% per year]

Nevertheless, the dynamism of global science should be emphasised. Science is no longer a monopoly of North America, Europe and its settler states, Russia and Japan. The established science countries have been joined by

[Science systems where *output grew faster* than world average of 5.15% per year]

a plethora of new science systems, some relatively large, and many with per capita incomes below the world average. Not only is China the largest global science producer, India is third, ahead of Germany, UK and Japan. Globalisation has been profoundly transformative.

[3. Global and international higher education constitute a blatant Euro (Anglo)-American hegemony]

Yet in some respects, globalisation in higher education has not been transformative enough. International and global higher education stubbornly remain a Euro-American hegemony and primarily an Anglo-American hegemony. It is a neo-imperial sector.

[16th century globalisation]

There is continuity here. Arguably, there have been two primary globalisations and both have been imperial. The first wave, beginning in the 16th century and based on maritime transport and military power, combined globalisation with a brutal colonisation.

[Late 19th century and late 20th century globalisation]

The second wave began about 1870, was dramatically interrupted by World War I, the protectionism of the interwar years, the Depression, fascism and World War II, and resumed in the 1980s. In the 19th century it was carried by shipping and the expansion of open trade, buoyed by the spread of industry and rail, fuelled by migration, at an historic highpoint, and networked by the telegraph. Global time, the first synchronous global system, was established. Globalisation was also joined to the peaking of colonialism and Anglo-European imperialism. In 1910, 90 per cent of the world was Euro-American controlled. Great Britain was dominant and the US was the rising power.

[The internet began in 1989 as an American (US) system]

After the 1980s, globalisation was again carried by trade and investment flows, plus cheaper transport, and global communications. More so than in the late 19th century, the Anglo-American powers were dominant in culture, language, education and science. The Internet began in 1989 in the US universities and its early dissemination in higher education,

fortunately in some respects, embodied American faculty norms of unregulated civil cooperation and exchange. The Internet now reaches more than 60 per cent of the world. But remarkably, Anglo-American institutions, disciplines, organisational norms and models are still almost as dominant in higher education as they were in 1990.

['This definition is only based on and thus suitable for Western experience']

In the West we have long been too complacent about this. The critique of orthodox Western internationalisation has always been there. The problem has been our indifference to it, and the consequent shut out of the global South and the rising East Asian powers. For non-Western societies, the imperative to internationalise higher education in our terms triggers major dilemmas, cultural disembedding and a profound subtraction of agency:

[The lure and complacency of global English-speaking Whiteness]

But to repeat the point, it is less Western hegemony than Anglophone. International connections, global diffusion and global systems all continually reproduce Anglo-American control. This is institutionalised in global subjectivity. For example, the US and the UK enjoy a power of attraction in international education that no other nations come close to. The US is a large wealthy country that provides many career opportunities for graduates, but is not as economically superior as it was - and for its part, the UK is neither very wealthy nor welcoming of migrants. Yet both recruit as many international students as they wish. Numbers are supply not demand driven. Why?

In a powerful article published last year, Riyad Shahjahan and Kirsten Edwards argue that international educational flows are pulled towards relations of domination inherited from colonialism. International students and families across the world invest in 'whiteness as futurity'. The US and UK are the 'whitest of the white'. The desire for proxy whiteness animates non-white families even while it entrenches their collective disadvantage.

[Does the West have all the answers? Global science excludes non-Western (and non-English) knowledge]

The global research system is more hegemonic and more unjust. More than 95% of the publications in Scopus and Web of Science are in English. Latin, French, German and Russian are no longer global languages of science. Chinese, Arabic and Spanish have not become global languages of science, despite their demographic presence and the number of their scholars. Endogenous (that is, indigenous) knowledge is wholly excluded. Papers published in non-English language are not translated into global English for all to read, as they could be and should be. The shutout is complete. The rising East Asian systems do increasingly well at global science but must do so by being good in Western terms.

[The global hierarchy we had to have?]

The global science pool is ordered in terms of abstract value (e.g. journal and citation metrics) which enables the calibration of a hierarchy of science countries and science universities. Here the exclusive dominance of English, which rests on two centuries of imperial power, helps to sustain the performance and prestige of the leading Anglo-American universities. In turn they provide the template for the ideal university, the Global Research University or 'World-Class University' used as the template for global

rankings. They are of surpassing excellence, on the basis of a standard that they control. In turn they legitimate the definition of scientific knowledge that underpins their success.

[Bibliometrics in global rankings]

Global ranking, and global publication and bibliometrics, form a circular system that closes global knowledge and tightly orders universities and countries on a vertical basis. The global rankings that emerged in 2003-2004 have stabilised Western and Anglo-American dominance in higher education. Ranking also helps to perpetuate colonial relations in the sector: it confirms, in apparently objective fashion, the attractions of global Whiteness.

Global scientific capacity has become more widely distributed in the last two decades. Educational participation has risen markedly in most countries. The emerging multi-polar political economy, even in higher education and research, seems to be out of synch with the self-reproducing hierarchy in higher education. How is this possible? I think it points to something fundamental about global higher education, its relative autonomy.

[4. Globalisation in higher education and knowledge are partly decoupled from globalisation in economy and politics]

The dominant reading of globalisation in higher education and knowledge is that it is a function or subset of the globalisation of the political economy. In the global knowledge economy, imaginary, knowledge is the key factor of production, science shapes the national competitive position, and world market formation augments the demand for mobile graduate labour, etc. It's all simple, and most of us seem to believe in it. I am sure this narrative is material, in that it conditions governments to expand higher education and fund science budgets. However, it is an ideology, not an explanation, and is rather vacuous.

[Economic globalisation is partly in reverse, global politics embryonic . . . global science and mobility are still growing]

Historically, internationalisation and globalisation in higher education are partly decoupled from globalisation in the political economy. The expansion of world trade, offshoring and financial flows from the 1980s onwards, global communications and cultural flows in the 1990s, and the neoliberal policy emphasis on global markets, all affected higher education. But when the globalisation of the world economy began to stall after the Western financial crisis in 2008-2011, when nativist politics began to surge, when the US turned against engagement with China and against the open trading regime after 2016, when the tech industry was fragmented by geo-politics, internationalisation and globalisation in higher education continued. Some student flows were affected. Demand for some globally mobile business graduates levelled off. But science and communications kept expanding.

I want to underline this point. It shows that internationalisation and globalisation in higher education are neither a subset of neo-liberal economic globalisation, nor necessarily a response to it. 'Global competition state' policy is nationally not globally driven, it continues regardless of the extent of global economic integration. The economy and higher education intersect, but the relation is more complex than has been suggested, and the striking point is that higher education and knowledge have partly autonomous global trajectories. Our sector has continued to foster global social and cultural integration, to our credit and potentially, to the benefit of the world; notwithstanding the Anglo-American hegemony, and the fracturing

of the global economy and the multilateral political space. However, there is limit to the extent to which, in this respect, higher education can remain insulated.

[5. The growing impact of geo-politics]

Nothing stays the same. The autonomy of higher education and knowledge, its partial separation from political economy, is not a constant. It is historical contextual. It also varies by country, and by institution. I think we can generalise though. Geo-politics likely to end the era of normative internationalisation and continuing globalisation in higher education.

Brexit has trumped cooperation in Europe. The US determination to retain global supremacy has triggered securitisation in science and technology. This is trumping collaboration between China and the West, including US-China co-publication, which in 2020 was overwhelmingly the most important nation-to-nation collaboration in world science. US securitisation plays out in visa restrictions, suspicion towards faculty with joint appointments in China and the US, and attacks on faculty who return to China through the 1000 talents programme. Brain drain from China is OK, brain circulation is not. Russia, after two decades of struggling to kick-start internationalisation, has now junked it. Its catastrophic assertion of militarism and shut down of freedoms inside its universities have taken it outside cross-border relations, perhaps for decades. Nativist politics, intrinsically in tension with international connections and globalisation, have gained major influence in the US, UK, India, Russia, Brazil and parts of Europe. China is on a different track but seems more aggressively nationalist than before, and may become more self-sufficient in higher education. At the least, traffic between Chinese and Western universities will diminish.

[Fall in Australia-China research collaboration]

We don't yet have Web of Science and Scopus data which capture the effects of the US-China imbroglio in science. We do have early data from Australia. All partnerships between Australian and Chinese universities must now be approved by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. A direct government control has been imposed, shattering autonomy. In 'Discovery' grants awarded by the Australian Research Council, the main awards for basic science, China has slipped from 2nd most important partner after the US in 2019, to 11th in 2022.

[6. The challenge for those committed to internationalisation and an open and diverse global space]

As I stated at the outset, the challenge is to maintain openness in international connections and the global space. We have seen enough closure. Here, while populism is a threat, the larger problem is the return of the Cold War state. I have been surprised at the relative silence of most faculty in the face of the rise of national securitisation. Internationalisation as a social imaginary is being radically replaced. Security politics, with its core assumption that unregulated relations between persons cannot be trusted, is also radically at odds with academic freedom. Securitisation is likely to grow over time. The history of McCarthyism in the US in the 1950s shows how deadly it can be for creativity. It seems crucial to identify the threats to global openness, and defend and advance conditions of partial institutional autonomy, a fuller academic freedom, and collaborative cross-border relations in education, research and scholarship, with all countries, institutions and persons – and if necessary to do so despite the policy, and against the will, of national governments.

If we fail at this, much of what has been achieved in the last three decades through the largely self-regulating cross-border activities of institutions and persons, in the advance of internationalisation and the creation of the global domain - for example the autonomous and honest scientific collaboration on global problems like climate, food, water and cities – as at serious risk.