The global scale in higher education and knowledge

Is 'global' higher education a friend or a foe?
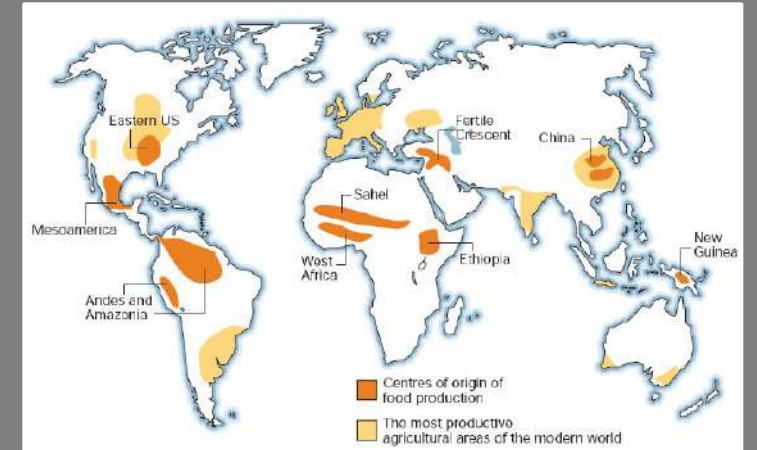
None of the above?

All of the above?

Simon Marginson
University of Oxford / 3 February 2022

The one-world continent of Pangea 250 million years ago. Tendencies in tectonic movements suggest that another super-continent is forming over the next 250 million years

Transformation 1: Worldwide radiation of agriculture in the Holocene from c. 10,000 BCE onwards
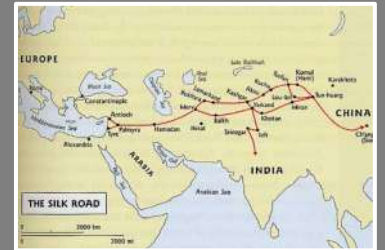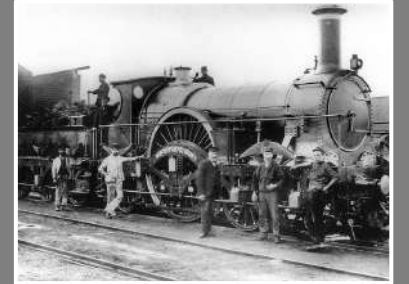
Transformation 2: Urbanisation from 8500 BCE onwards

By 2100, 75% of the world's people will live in cities
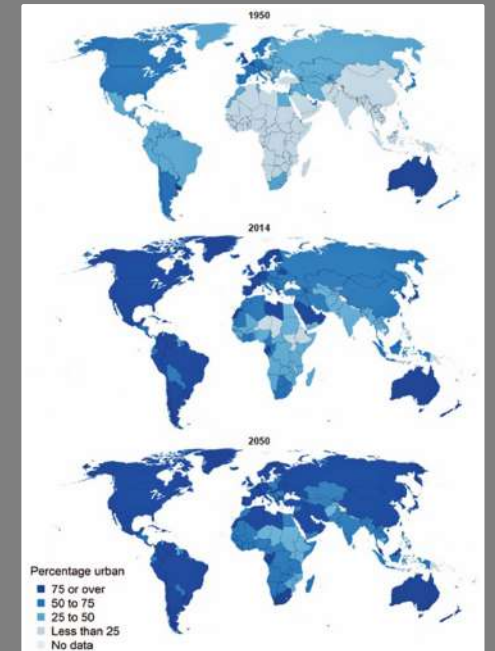
Transformation 3: The radiation of printing East and West after 9th century CE

THE SILK ROAD

F: Cities with Printing in 1500

Transformation 4: Fossil fuels and later, electrification enable rapid movement through physical space
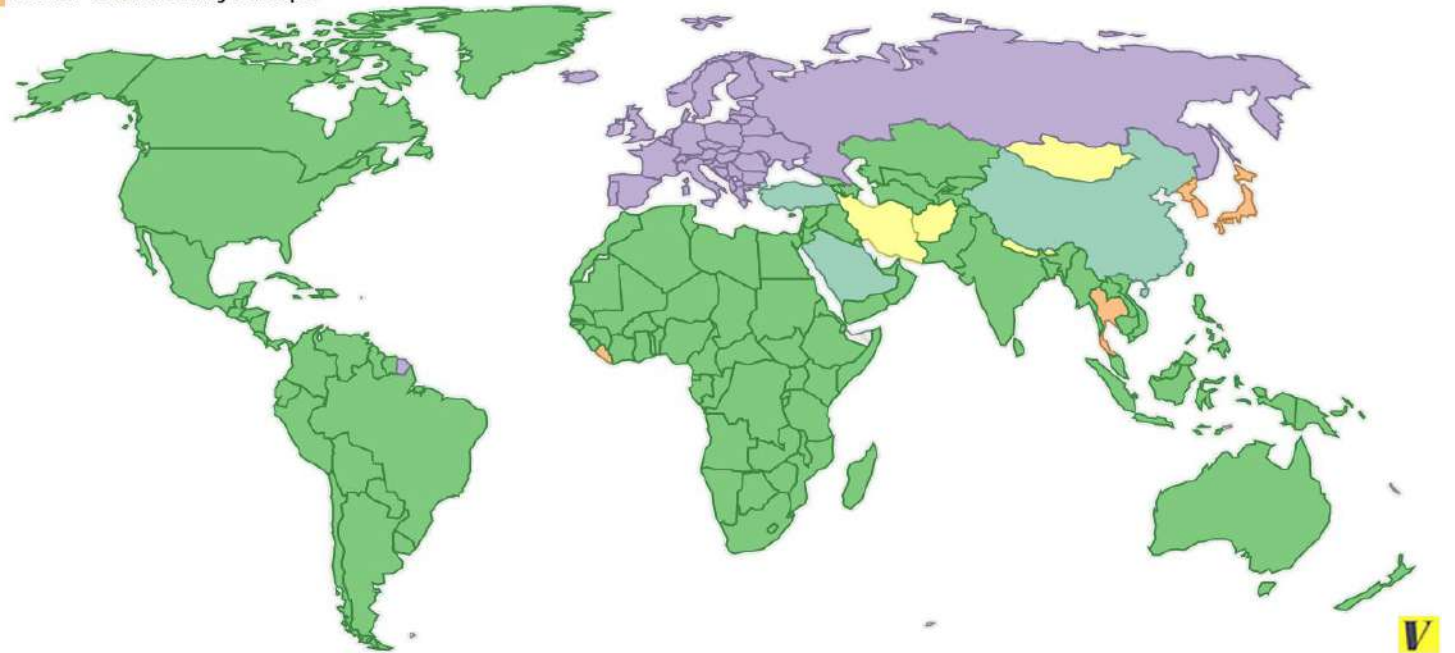
Global and colonial

Only five countries in the world have not been under Euro-American control in the last 200 years

Europe | Colonized or controlled by Europe | Partial European control or influence | European sphere of influence

Never colonized by Europe

Seeing the interdependent planet: the overview effect

"One morning I woke up and decided to look out the window to see where we were. We were flying over America and suddenly I saw snow, the first snow we ever saw from orbit. Light and powdery, it blended with the contours of the land, with the veins of the rivers. I thought autumn, snow - people are busy getting ready for winter. A few minutes later we were flying over the Atlantic, then Europe, and then Russia. I have never visited America, but I imagined that the arrival of autumn and winter is the same there as in other places, and the process of getting ready for them is the same. And then it struck me that we are all children of our Earth. It does not matter what country you look at. We are all Earth's children, and we should treat her as our mother."

- attributed to Soviet cosmonaut Aleksandr Aleksandrov, Soyuz T-9 mission, 1983

When astronauts first saw Earth from afar in the Apollo 8 mission in 1968 — the US's second manned mission to the moon — they described a cognitive shift in awareness after seeing the planet 'hanging in the void'. In 1987, the writer Frank White interviewed and studied testimony from 29 astronauts and came up with the 'overview effect' theory, arguing that the sight of earth from space transforms astronauts' perspectives on themselves and the world.
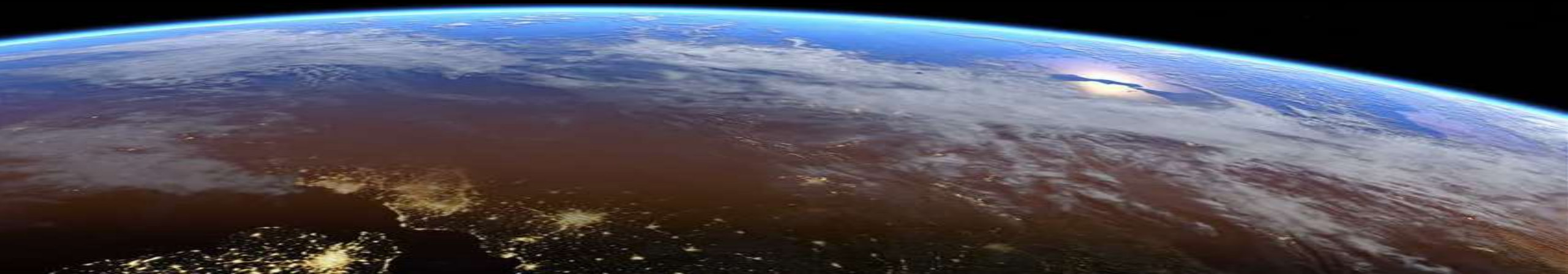
Transformation 5: The formation of the global communicative space after 1990

In *Theory of Society* Luhmann (2012) remarks that the decisive step towards world society was 'the full discovery of the globe as a closed sphere of meaningful communication' (Volume 1, p. 85)

Growth of networked global higher education since 1990

- Formation of a global science system (though with many exclusions). Global science papers grew 5.15% a year from 2000-2020 . One quarter of papers had international co-authors in 2020

- Internationally mobile students have increased from 1 million a year to more than 6 million; immense growth also in mobility of researchers and faculty

- Great growth of university partnerships and consortia, hubs, branch campuses

- World-spanning role of online education and MOOCs

- Global university rankings regulate

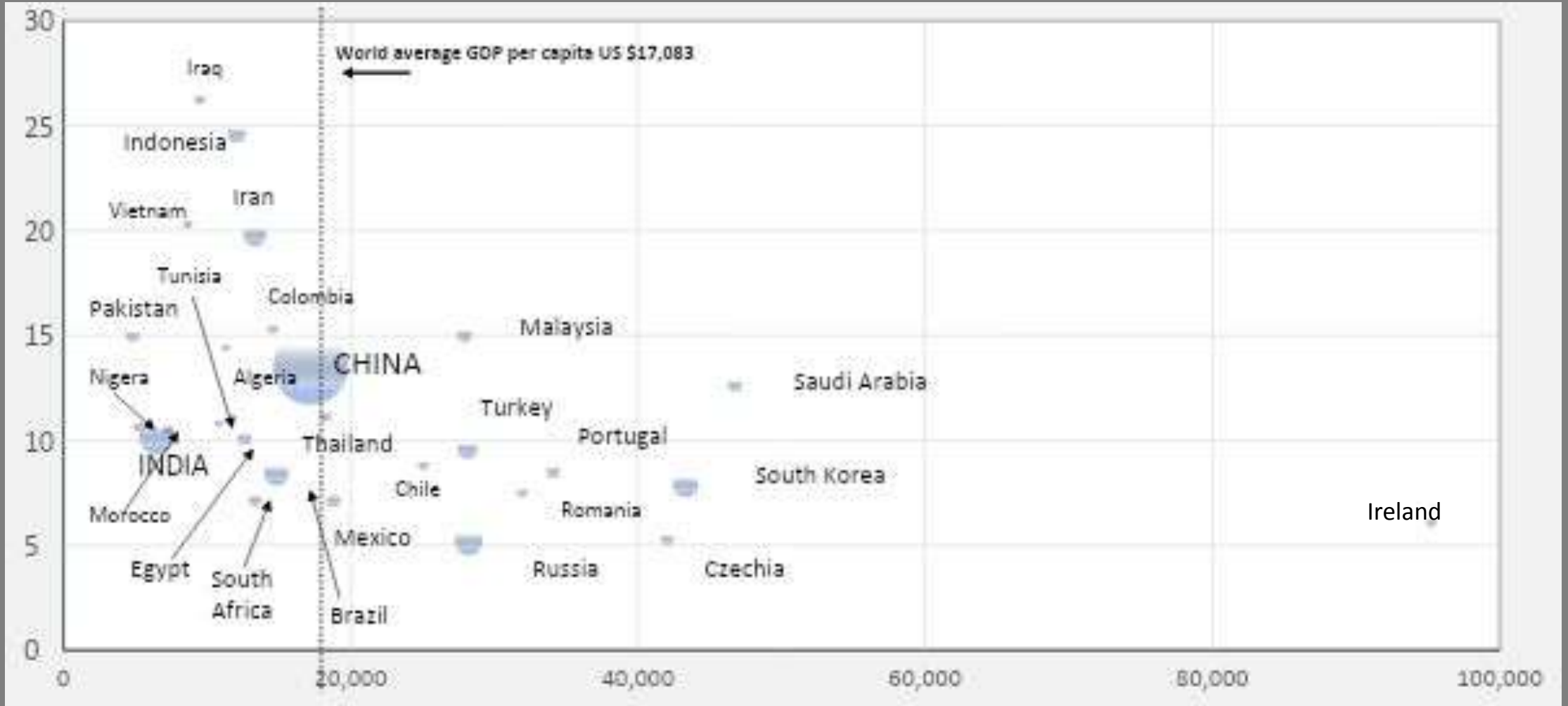The pool of global science has tripled in one generation

Number of science papers in Scopus (NSF 2022), by type of collaboration, world: 1996-2020
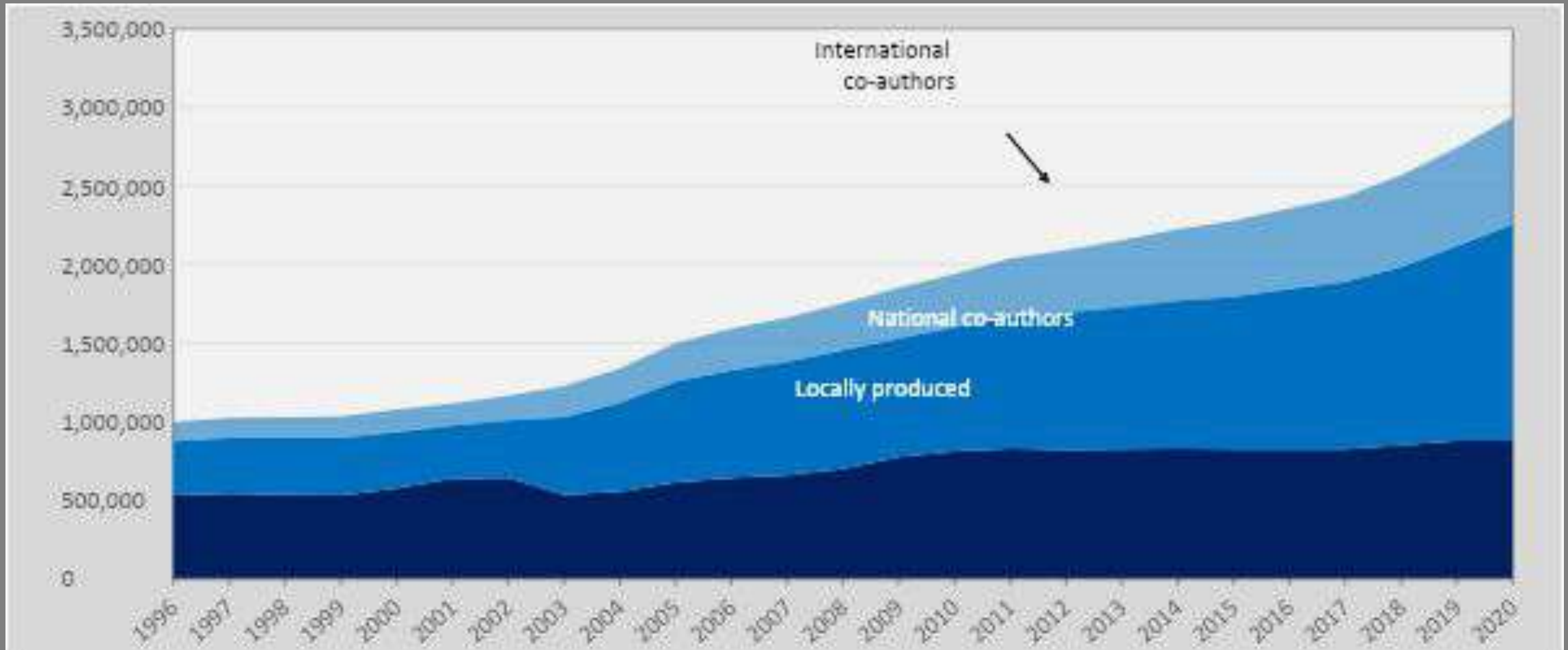
Science systems where *output grew faster* than the world average rate of 5.15% per year between 2000 and 2020, compared to world average GDP per capita PPP US $17,083 in 2020

Science systems with 5,000 papers or more in 2020. Scopus data, fractional counting (NSF 2021). Current price GDP, PPP = purchasing power parity (World Bank 2022).

Growth p.a.(%) science papers

World average GDP per capita US $17,083

Iraq

Indonesia

Iran

Vietnam

Tunisia

Colombia

Pakistan

Malaysia

Nigera

Algeria

CHINA

Saudi Arabia

Turkey

Thailand

Portugal

INDIA

South Korea

Chile

Morocco

Romania

Ireland

Mexico

Egypt

South Africa

Russia

Czechia

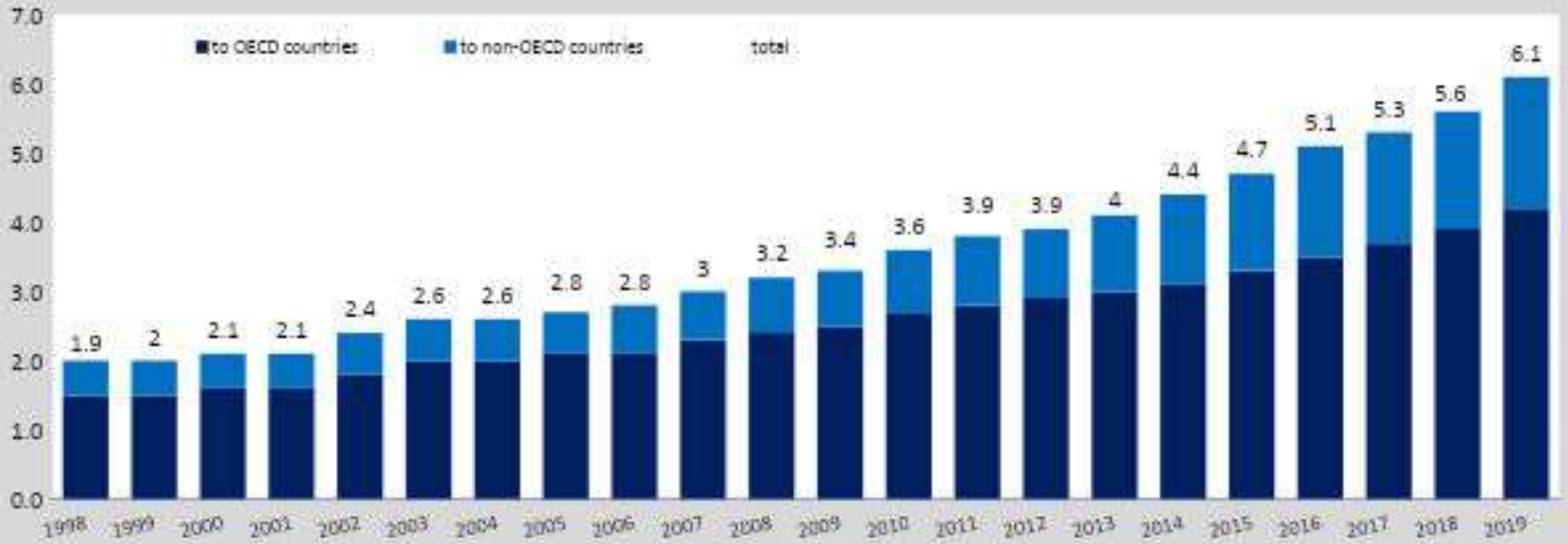Brazil

GDP per capita PPP in US dollars 2020

# Mobile students grew 5.5% per annum between 1998-2019
International or foreign students in tertiary education, world (millions) – UNESCO data

Higher education and knowledge are multi-scalar
Activity takes place in intersecting geo-cognitive scales

- **The world and everything in it (e.g. *tianxia*)**

- **World-making global scale (e.g. Internet)**

- **Pan-national region (e.g. EU, SE Asia)**

- **National scale (e.g.** Mexico**)**

- **Sub-national region (e.g. Northern Italy)**

- **The city (e.g. Buenos Aires, New York)**

- **Local-institutional (e.g. Tohoku University)**

- **Local-academic (e.g. disciplines, faculty)**

- **Individual (e.g. PhD student)**
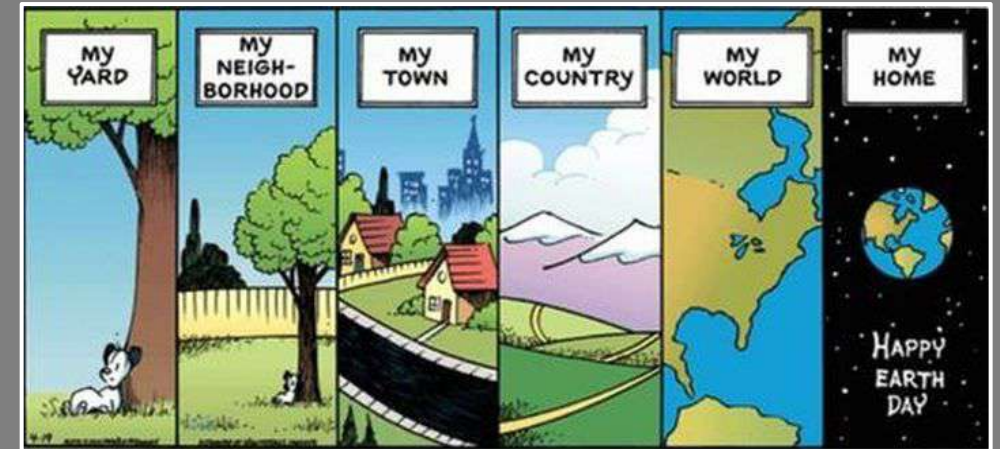
Simon Marginson and Gary Rhoades (2002). Beyond national states, markets, and systems of higher education: A glonacal agency heuristic. *Higher Education*, 43 (3), pp. 281-309

global   *national*

local
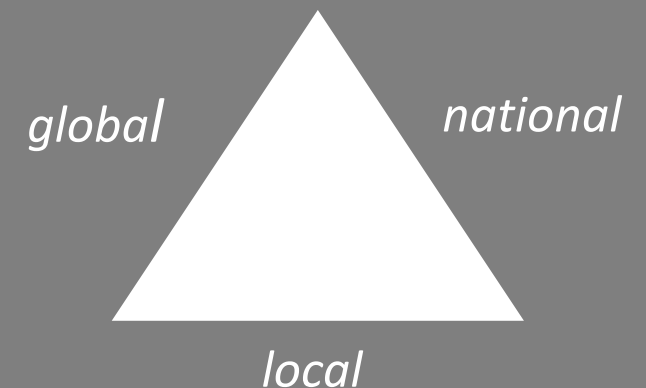
Relations of power in global higher education

- **Normalisation of the neoliberal market model of higher education**

- **A racialised hierarchy in which Anglo-American higher education is the 'whitest of the white', as in the colonial period**

- **Exclusion of all non-English language and indigenous knowledge from the codified global pool**

Anglo-American globalisation
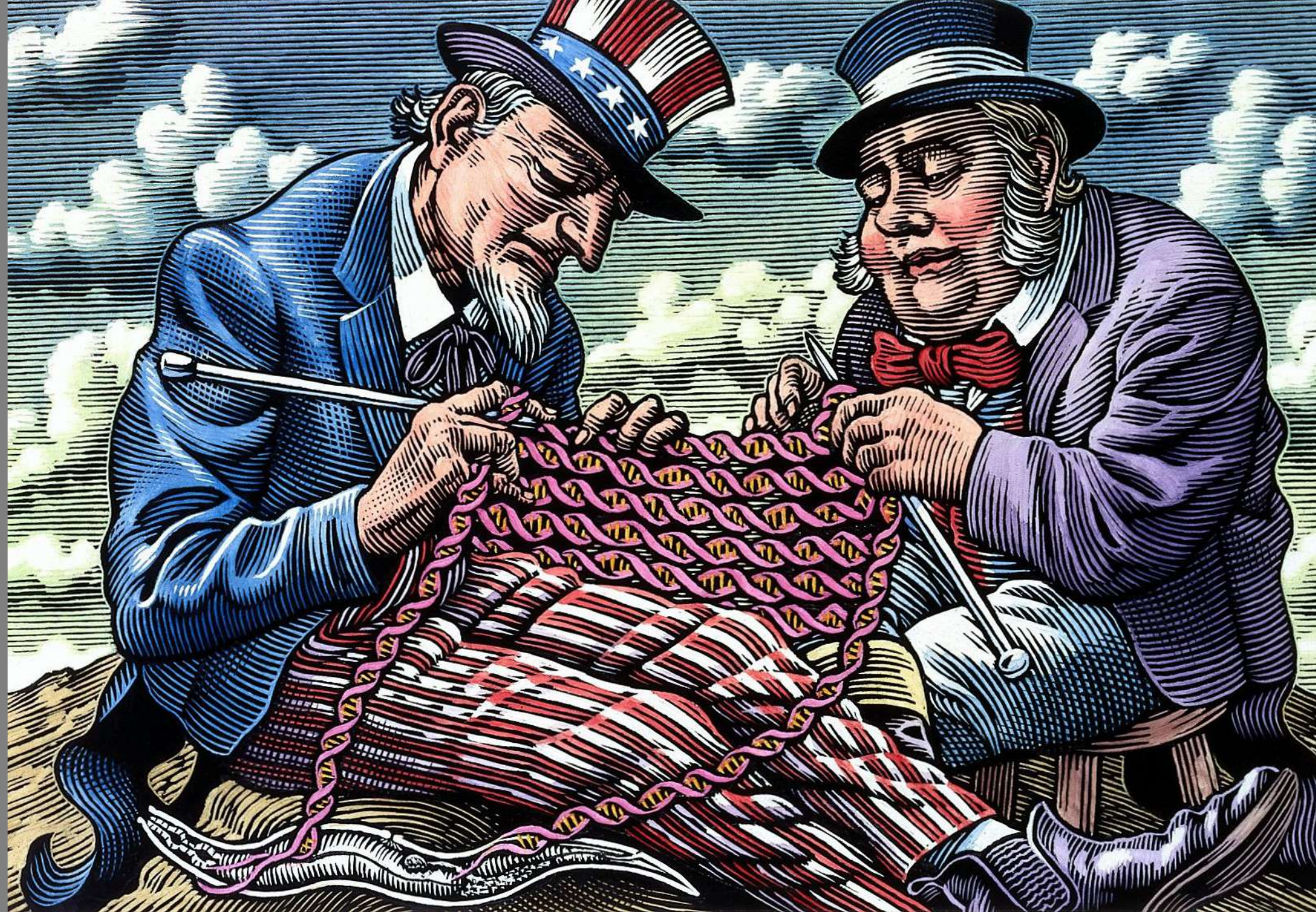
'Whiteness as futurity': Why the United States and the UK are so attractive to international students and families

- The United States and the UK have magnetic, centralising force in global student flows. In these countries total numbers are determined by visa supply not student demand. They could readily double incoming students
- English is the first language of 5% of people but dominant in global finance, science, technology, and much popular culture. Yet English-language education is available in many countries
- The US is wealthy and provides many career opportunities but is not as economically superior as it was, and the UK is neither very wealthy nor easy for migration. Yet they retain dominance in global student flows. Why?
- Shahjahan and Edwards (2021) argue that the globalisation of international education reproduces the racialised cultural hegemony of the US and UK, the 'whitest of the white'. International students and families across the world invest in 'whiteness as futurity'. The compelling desire for proxy whiteness through American or British education, continuing the colonial era relation, animates non-white families everywhere, though 'whiteness as futurity' entrenches the advantage of all white people over all non-white people


Shahjahan, R.A., Edwards, K.T. (2021) Whiteness as futurity and globalization of higher education. *Higher Education* . https://doi.org/10.1007/s10734-021-00702-x

Conflicting understandings of 'the global'

1. Teleological (explaining phenomena in terms of the purpose they are said to serve, rather than what they are and what causes them to be)

   - the global is necessarily neo-imperial, in continuity with the colonial project, *OR*

   - the global is essentially flat, open and democratising, as in the ideal network

2. Critical realist (explaining phenomena in terms of what they are)

   - the global is neither intrinsically colonial nor intrinsically democratic. It currently includes both kinds of practices

   - in many respects global higher education and knowledge are dominated by neo-liberal Anglo-American models and practices, e.g. the closed character of global science, global ranking, government quasi-markets in many countries

   - nevertheless the potentials of activity in the global scale are open

Lefebvre on space making

- In *The Production of Space* (1991), which in its 1974 French original pre-dates the Internet, Henri Lefebvre seeks to 'analyse not things in space but space itself, with a view to uncovering the social relationships embedded in it' (p. 89). He starts from a three-way distinction between space as physical-material (nature), space as mental-imaginative, and space as social relations (pp. 11, 27).

- Lefebvre also notes that social relations in space are 'a means of control, and hence of domination, of power' (p. 26). 'The dominant form of space, that of the centres of wealth and power, endeavours to mould the spaces it dominates (i.e. peripheral spaces), and it seeks, often by violent means, to reduce the obstacles and resistance it encounters there' (p. 49). These efforts are never fully successful. It proves impossible to wholly 'eliminate the autonomy of the space that has been created (p. 26).
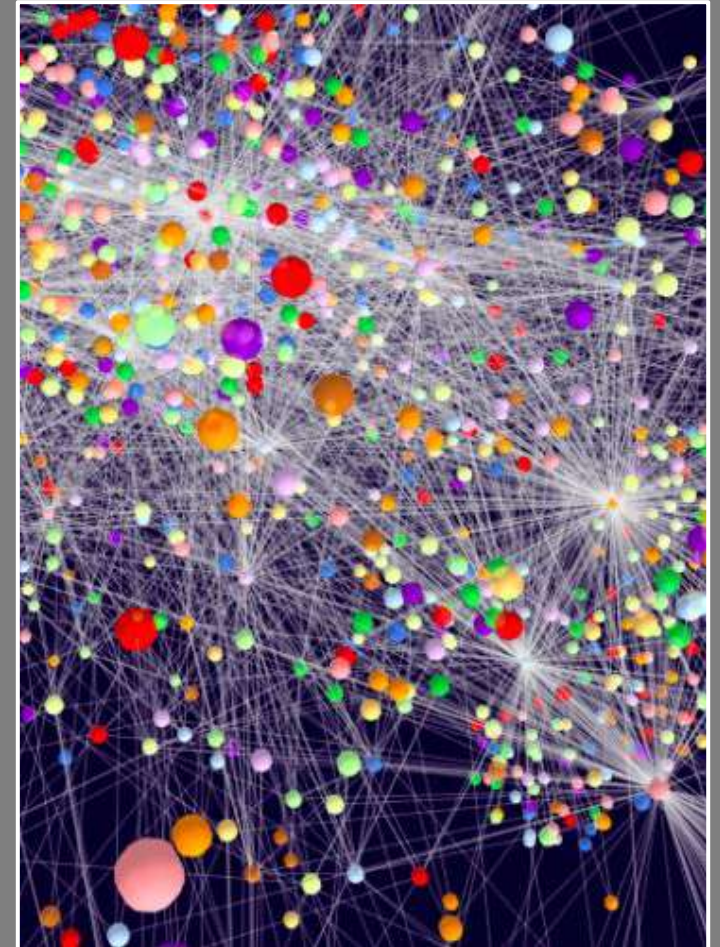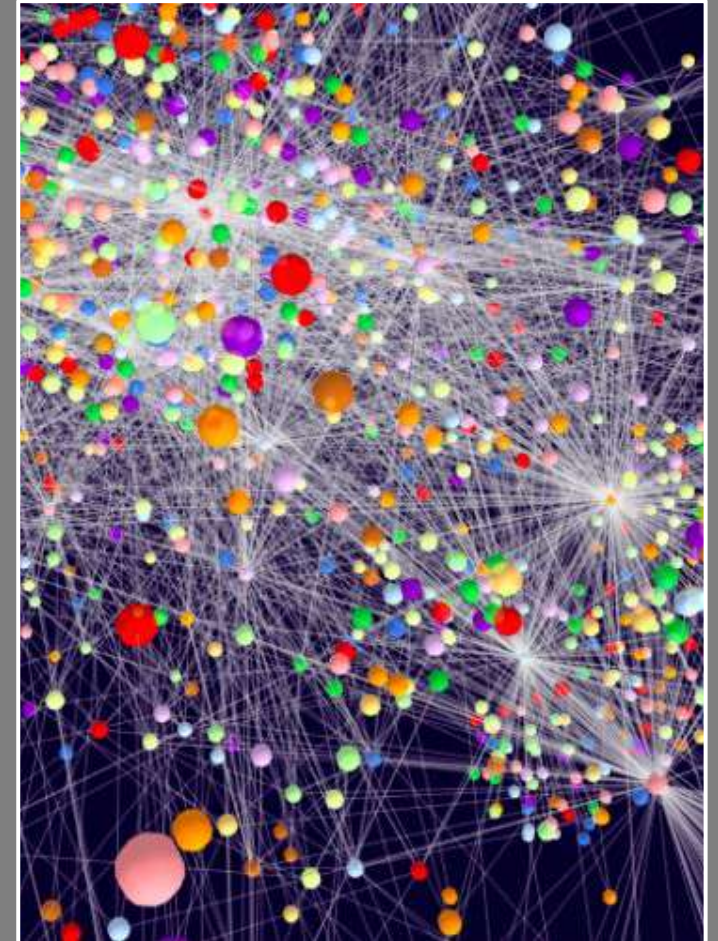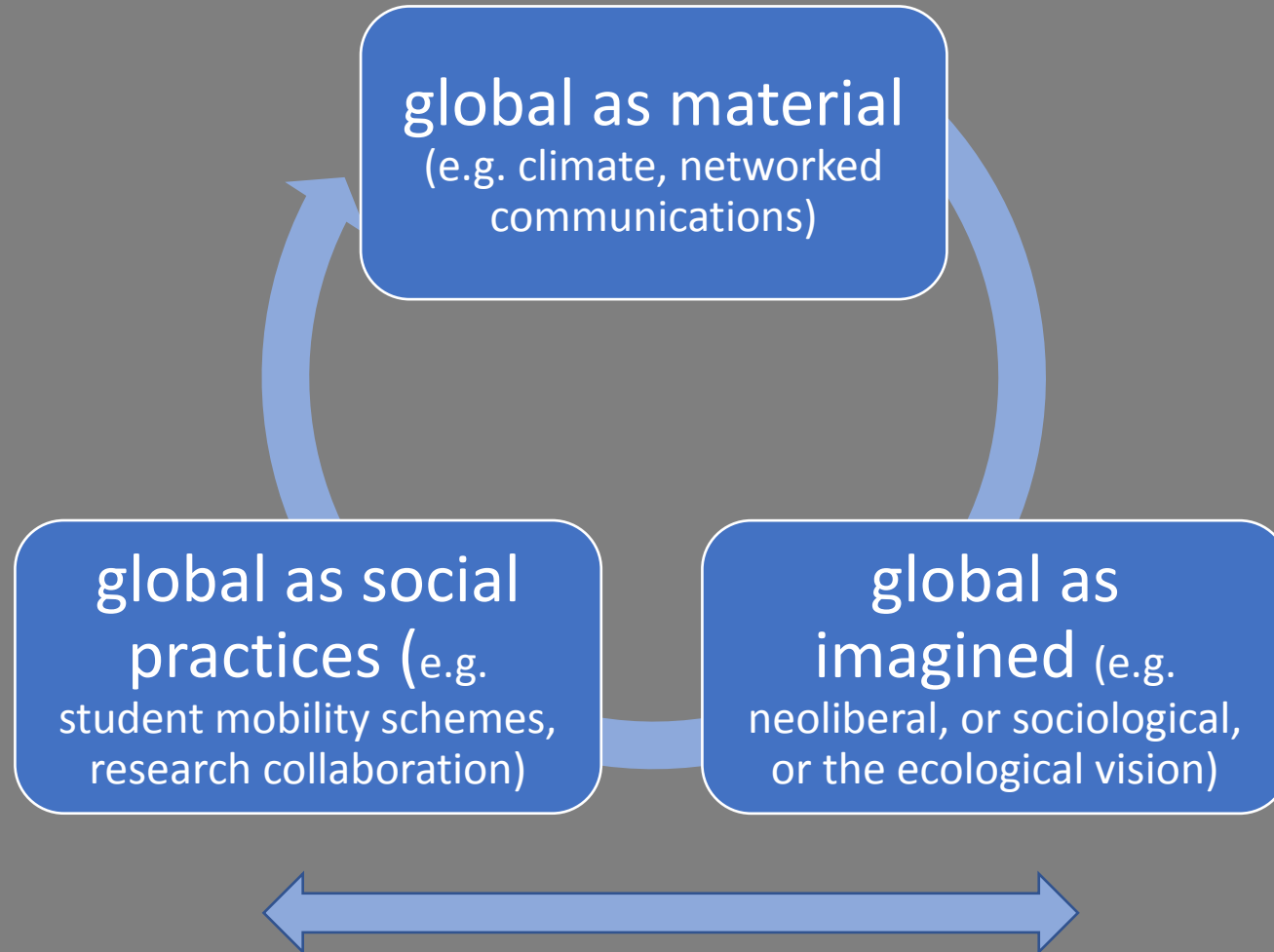
1 + 1 + 1
Geo-cognitive scales like 'global', 'national' or 'local' combine three elements that intersect

- Materiality both pre-given and created. In the global scale there is a global ecology. We create global communications. In the national scale, nations claim territory as their materiality

- Imagining and interpreting where there are many possibilities. We imagine a single world, thereby creating a global space of action, and we do so through many different lenses (Americanising global, or Indian global; economic global, or cultural global, etc). Similarly, the nation is an 'imagined community' as Benedict Anderson states

- Social practices: The activities of agents provide content in the global space (global science, international education, online programmes, university partnerships, rankings etc) and shape that space in terms of relations of power, inclusions/exclusions
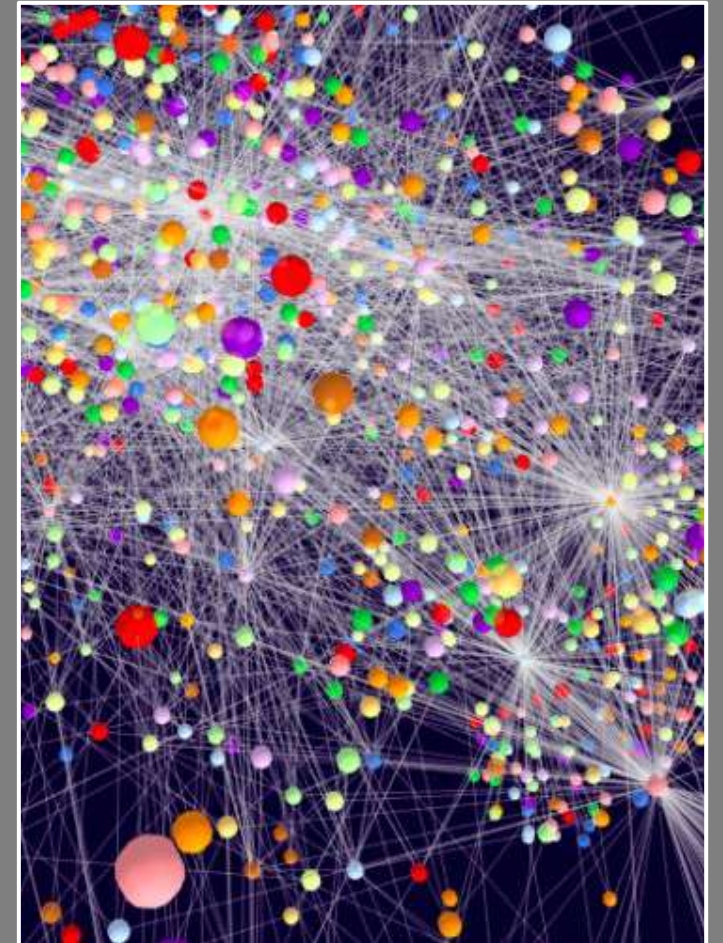
Global as material + global as imagined + global as social practices

global as material (e.g. climate, networked communications)

global as imagined (e.g. neoliberal, or sociological, or the ecological vision)

global as social practices (e.g. student mobility schemes, research collaboration)

Global social practices:
global higher education is made in three different ways

- Global systems based in world-spanning linkages and relationships, e.g. the Internet, global science, global university rankings

- Cross-border connections, e.g. student and faculty mobility, research partnerships, university agreements

- Global diffusion of policies, ideas and models, e.g. neo-liberal competition regimes, the spread of the model of the comprehensive science-oriented 'multiversity'

Imagining and interpreting the global: Different lenses

- **different disciplinary lenses**

- **different national or cultural lenses**

- different relational ethics*

- methodological nationalism or globalism

* Some relational standpoints are solely self-centred (the global space is for my benefit), others embrace self and 'other', some lenses value the whole of the human and natural world

Lenses that limit what we can think and see in the global: methodological globalism, methodological nationalism


- Methodological globalism sees the global scale as *necessarily* dominant in relation to the national and local scales – e.g. the idea that global forces are sweeping away the nation-state, or are determining of national higher education systems

- Methodological nationalism believes 'the nation/state/society is the natural social and political form of the modern world' (Wimmer & Schiller 2002, p. 301). Shahjahan and Kezar (2013) discuss the 'national container' that blocks awareness in higher education studies. Through this lens global phenomena can be perceived only within the national scale, as if they are functions or outgrowths of the nation. Powerful, formative practices such as international education, faculty mobility and scientific cooperation (even global ecology!) are pushed to the edge of vision or slip from sight
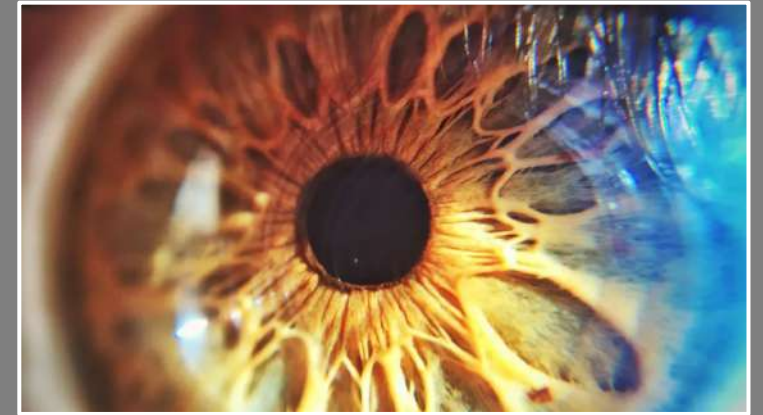
Relations of power in the global space: how these limiting lenses are deployed in shaping higher education

The neo-liberal project in higher education and knowledge selectively uses both methodological nationalism and methodological globalism

- Methodological globalism justifies the one-way cross-border strategies of Anglo-American countries and institutions – their internationalisation is always good, conferring the 'right' to intervene anywhere anytime

- Methodological nationalism provides Anglo-American countries and institutions with the 'right' to provide contents of global knowledge and higher education, without regard for the plurality of world knowledge, or an obligation to engage with the other on the basis of mutual respect

- The alternative lens is 'methodological pluralism' – recognition of and engagement with the diversity of vision, values and practices in a process of mutual learning and the identification of common ground
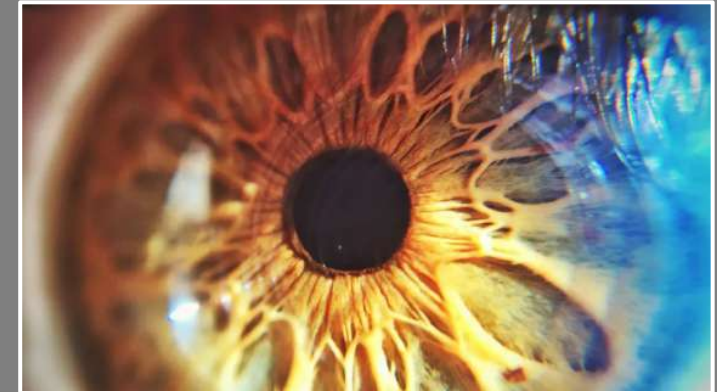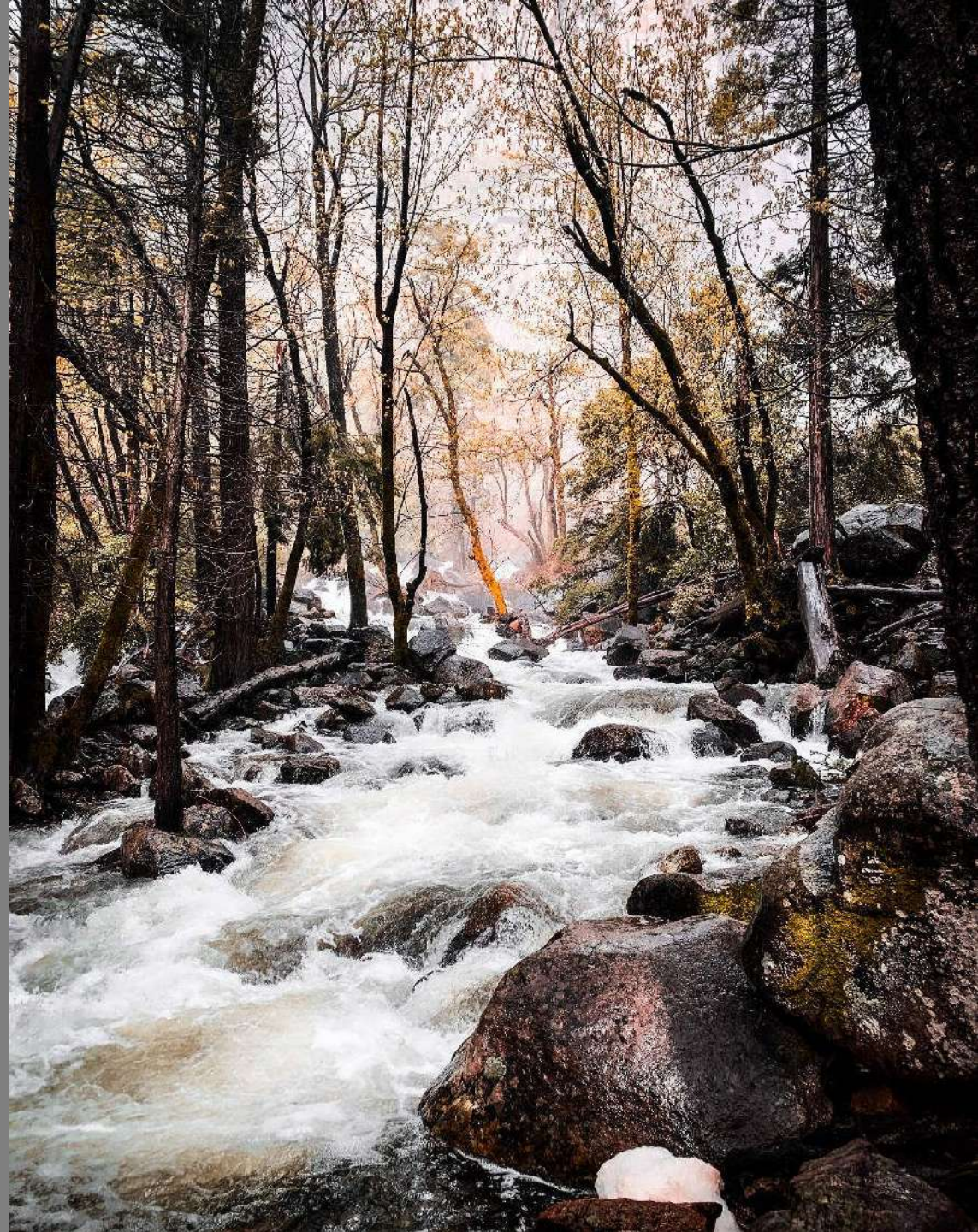
'Space is the sphere of the possibility of the existence of plurality, of the co-existence of difference'

  – Doreen Massey

'All things are in flux,
like a river . . .
Everything flows'

~ Attributed to Heraclitus of Ephesus
  (544-484 BCE)

'People are not puppets of structures because they have their own emergent properties'

- Margaret Archer