

The New Geo-politics of Higher Education 2: Between Nationalism and Globalism

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Abstract

In universities and science many countries are experiencing greater government intervention, and cross-border relations are being re-normed. Until recently the global space-making activities of universities appeared to be generally compatible with national politics and policy agendas. This is no longer the case. A more strident and often nativist nationalism is evident. The United States (U.S.) government has set out to decouple from China in science and technology in order to retard that country. Many states have imposed new restrictions on inward student mobility. The near universal support for internationalisation apparent in 1990-2010 has fragmented and universities engaged in both nationalism and globalism are under pressure to choose. Explanatory factors include the ebbing of globalisation in political economy, the failure of neoliberal capitalism to deliver the promised all round prosperity, and the rise of China and a group of non-Euro-American middle powers such as India, Iran, Indonesia, South Korea and Brazil. Arguably the reduction of U.S. and Euro-American dominance at global level, plus the climate-nature emergency and the inability of states to tackle it, are both fuelling destabilisation and insecurity in Euro-American countries, and these

factors at the root of both nativism and the new emphasis on securitisation that is disrupting free academic exchange and global research collaboration.

Universities have a dual spatiality, coupling local/national embeddedness with an open mental horizon and the mobility of ideas, knowledge and persons. Free mobility has long been important in sustaining institutional identity, autonomy, and academic freedom. When it is compromised universities across the world are more politically vulnerable. Outside Euro-America there is not the same problematisation of mobility and global links, but there is again assertiveness by government in universities (e.g. India, Iran and China). More plural capacity in universities and science suggests the possibility of a more inclusive and diverse world-wide university sector but in the present conflictual setting there is no sign of this.

Keywords: Higher education; University autonomy; Academic freedom; Geo-politics; Science; Human geography; Spatiality; Globalisation; Internationalisation, Cross-border students

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Introduction

In a world of ever-emerging difference the intrinsic core of higher education has remained much the same for three thousand years, across every variation in space and time, with one exception. Through the first academies in China in the Western Zhou dynasty (1047-771 BCE), the Buddhist monasteries in Northern India such as Vikramashila and Nalanda, the Academy in Athens, the scholarly Islamic madrassas for higher learning that were attached to mosques, and the medieval European universities which began in Bologna in 1088 CE, the core of higher education has been the cultural formation of persons. The objectives of all higher education have been the socialisation and subjectification of students as autonomous graduates capable of complex activity that is conducted within prevailing norms (Biesta, 2009). The primary method of formation has been to immerse the self-forming student (Marginson, 2023) in knowledge (Ashwin, 2020), however defined. This has mostly entailed the absorption and reproduction of text, more so after printing on paper, which began in the Tang dynasty in China (618-907 CE), took the form of movable metal type in late fourteenth century Korea and mid fifteenth century Europe. Despite the ongoing transformation of many other social forms, in each successive mode of higher education the same elements – teacher, student, classroom, knowledge, texts; and later on educational assessment, selection by examination and certification, which also had their origins in China – have kept recurring.

In the various countries this intrinsic project of cultural formation has been joined to a diversity of extrinsic purposes, determined by the society and the organisational basis of higher education. In Imperial China, where governance was primary vis a vis all other sectors (Gernet, 1996), the extrinsic purpose of higher education was the preparation and selection of state officials. The preparation of students in their duty to the state is still a central purpose in China. In Buddhist India, and in Islamic Cordoba, Damascus and Cairo, the agendas were religious formation and the exercise of learned expertise for a variety of social purposes. Some Buddhist monasteries were the principal popularisers of new technologies. In the medieval European universities, the starting purpose was the preparation of clergy. Later doctors and lawyers were added, scholars were called on to provide advice and nurture young leaders, and eventually, in the twentieth century, higher education evolved to reach out across all

society and knowledge and prepare graduates in long list of occupations. Yet all these extrinsic social purposes were/are achieved by the same intrinsic cultural core of higher education with its ever recycled methods of classes, curricula, pedagogies and examinations.

The one major break in continuity was when Humboldt planned the University of Berlin in 1810. The nineteenth century German universities added inquiry, scientific research, to the intrinsic core. In the work of faculty, the formation of reflexive individuals was now coupled to an individual/collective reflexivity of knowledge. Scholarship, slowly and incompletely, moved from a received dogma to something that was evolving and open to scepticism. Yet higher education was still cultural formation: in fact the immersion in knowledge had been normatively strengthened by the Humboldtian reform. Then the German model spread. The science mission and the teaching/research nexus were built into the foundation of Johns Hopkins University in 1876, the first American research university. The idea swept rapidly through the elite university sector in the United States (Kerr, 2001/1962), and after World War II across the world, ultimately becoming institutionalised in the 'World-Class University' in the global rankings that emerged in 2003/2004. The rankings embody the norms of the leading Anglophone research universities and legitimate their assumed primacy (Hazelkorn & Mihut, 2021). It is significant that the knowledge developed in those universities, in the proxy forms of research output and recognition through citation, is the largest single determining factor of ranked position (Marginson, 2014). The questions 'which knowledge?' and 'whose knowledge?' have long determined what students learn and calibrated the social prestige of institutions and the order of higher education itself. This is now formalised in metrics.

Spatiality and autonomy of higher education

The constancy of the engagement in knowledge, whether as received wisdom, critical inquiry or regulator of prestige, helps to explain another distinguishing feature of the university. That is its dual spatiality. The institution combines (a) a place-bound materiality and identity, with (b) an open mental horizon and the mobility of ideas and persons, which can be called globality. While this dual spatiality of the university factored a tension into its foundations, a fault-line between place embeddedness and globality, mostly each has supported the other.

The Buddhist monasteries, the Islamic centres and medieval European universities evolved on one hand as situated local institutions, integral to cities, located in reach of states which intervened in them from time to time and vulnerable to geopolitics, as when the Buddhist monasteries in Northern India were destroyed at the end of the 12th century. On the other hand they were self-referential and partly disembedded institutions in which knowledge and people moved without limit. Higher education institutions shared regional languages and their knowledge was imagined in universal terms. There was much mobility between the Indian monasteries and visitors came from East and Central Asia. Scholars in Europe moved freely between institutions. The universal cast of the European universities, which paralleled the infinite claim of the Church, was formalised by a papal bull of 1233 CE which specified that anyone admitted as a teacher in Toulouse in France had the right to teach everywhere else without further examination. The privilege became widely imitated and a defining characteristic of the university. Along with the structure of legal incorporation, it grounded the partial autonomy of the European sector, the tradition on which Humboldt built. Rulers could never fully surmount the university because, in a sense, it was also somewhere else.

However, the autonomy of universities and other higher education institutions is never more than partial: it is always practised within a framework of laws, regulation, policies and mostly funding, and it can vary markedly in time and space. The state is never completely absent even from the private university sector. This is true not only in systems where the day-to-day autonomy of management, teaching, learning and research are practised in institutions that are positioned within government, as in China (Marginson, 2018b; 2022a), parts of Europe, where Humboldt defined his free university as wholly at the service of the state, and in emerging countries where higher education is seen as a key sector in nation-building. It is true not only in countries where the regime closely monitors the campuses for signs of political unrest, as in China, India, Turkey and Iran. It is also true in the United States (U.S.), though it is widely believed in that country that not only universities but society as a whole is routinely free of direct government imposition. While U.S. higher education is shaped by the rules and distributions of federal research grant programmes, and the legal and financial structure of federally-backed student loans, U.S. universities are traditionally understood as part of civil society and as independent traders in an education market

of students. Yet the 2018 China Initiative showed that the federal government can effectively discourage autonomous university dealings in China - no American university president has visited China's peak science university Tsinghua since 2018, in marked contrast with the busy academic diplomacy of the preceding 15 years¹ - and the government can openly and carelessly violate the academic freedoms and human rights of American scientists of Chinese descent (Lee & Li, 2021). How should researchers of higher education assess such political interventions? What criteria can be brought to bear?

Assessing current transformations

When higher education is being destabilised and transformed at the will of government, or market forces, and/or geopolitical shifts, there are three tests that can be applied. One test is the extent to which the extrinsic functions of higher education, where it meets its external stakeholders, are changing: such as a policy emphasis on graduate employability that alters the rules governing funding, or fosters growth in applied research for industry. For example, in 2020 the Australian government imposed on universities a requirement that they develop micro-credentials, short-course programmes, to produce 'job-ready' graduates (Australian government, 2024). This changed the prevailing expectations about the extrinsic relation between higher education and graduate labour markets. However, there was a limit to the transformation here. Micro-credentials did not replace degree programmes. They were a connection to, rather than a wholesale alteration of, the intrinsic core of higher education.

Hence the second test is whether there is interference in the intrinsic core of the universities: in the forms and practices of teaching, learning, educational (as distinct from occupational) assessment, and research. Arguably, external intervention in the intrinsic core is a more existential threat to autonomy and academic freedom. The Hungarian government's prohibition of gender-related studies in 2018, which violates the right of institutions and students to determine what is taught and learnt, is one example of such an intervention. More extreme versions are the Nazification of the German universities after 1932, and the Russian Putin regime's repression of all critical academic discussion of its 2022 invasion of Ukraine.

A third test is whether the mobile spatiality of universities is affected, its capacity not only to create and sustain epistemic and social-relational links across national boundaries but to create and work in global/regional spaces that transcend nation-states. Such spatial practices are integral not only to the universities as sinks of talent from everywhere, nodes of educational cultural exchange, and participants in global science, but also to the potency, autonomy and ultimate survival of their intrinsic core, as was the case in medieval Europe. Universities continue to gain part of their identity by transcending the national-territorial. It should be emphasised that this is not solely metaphysical or grounded in a dubious claim to singular truth. Mobile people play a great role in some universities; and 2022 saw the inclusion in Scopus of 755,894 new papers authored in more than one country (NSB, 2024).

The recent American regulation of academic relations with China, which has restricted visas for Chinese doctoral students in disciplines such as AI seen to have strategic significance for technological competition, discouraged scholars from taking joint China-U.S. posts, and problematised research partnerships between the two countries (Haupt & Lee, 2021) has reduced the mobility and autonomy of knowledge and persons. Putin's ban on the foreign relations of Russian universities and faculty – opponents of the regime are routinely charged using the description 'foreign agents' – has moved further in this direction.

There is also another lens to apply in assessing the effects of state interventions, markets and geo-politics. That is to ask which interventions, which universities, which countries and cultures, which/whose knowledge? The answers vary case by case. This is especially true of specific geo-political conflicts, which are rarely experienced as identical in the conflicting countries. Contrast the situation of universities in Palestine with that of universities in Israel after the bombing of Gaza began. Enhanced nationalism is also ambiguous. Casting off the neo-colonial yoke has one meaning in higher education; a nativist dictator who wants to snuff out all independent centres of power and all foreign dealings of universities has another meaning. The effects of large political shifts are themselves articulated by relations of power, suggesting that scholars should be wary of too readily claiming universal predicaments (and especially of generalising for the whole world on the basis of their own predicaments).

The remainder of the chapter focuses on the third of the abovementioned tests, the implications of changing politics and geo-politics (Moscovitz & Sabzalieva, 2023) for the spatiality of universities, their agency freedom and that of their people. It discusses the potential effects in the long surviving intrinsic core of higher education, and asks which interventions, which universities, which countries, which/whose knowledge?

The section after this introduction briefly reviews core concepts of space/time, scale, agency and relationality, and the intersection of the global and national in science (for fuller discussion see Marginson, 2022b; 2022d). The next section looks at the enhanced global engagement in higher education after 1990, conditioned by Pax Americana in geo-politics and combining (a) neoliberal capitalism in political economy and education policy, with (b) open networked exchange in education and science, albeit on Euro-American (Western) terms. The following section considers the part dissolution of those conditions, especially after 2018, amid the global pluralisation of capacity in universities, and the evolving relations between national governments, universities and mobility. The conclusion follows.

Space making and agency

Recent changes in the politics and geo-politics of higher education reflect not just an unusually disturbed time as something more basic: global relations, knowledge, national societies and their higher education systems are *always* changing, always becoming, never fixed and finished. 'There are always loose ends' (Massey, 2003, 5). Universities never achieve the comforting equilibrium that is imagined in various branches of social science. 'We are functioning in a world that is fundamentally characterised by objects in motion', states Arjun Appadurai (1999). It is also 'a world of structures, organisations and other stable social forms. But the apparent stabilities that we see are, under close examination, usually our devices for handling objects that are characterised by motion' (230).

It is also a world of 'the co-existence of difference' (Massey, 2003, 3) in which unknowns continually appear and every uniform pattern dissolves over time. Multiplicity in all its horizontal and vertical forms, 'diversity, subordination, conflicting interests', is always emerging (Massey, 2005, 61). Globalisation, meaning worldwide convergence and integration, is typically characterised by tendencies towards both

greater uniformity or sameness (homogenisation) and growing difference (heterogenisation). In the geo-political setting that evolved after 1990, the world's diverse civilisational zones (Wu & Robertson, 2024) were pushed up against each other, highlighting their differences (Macaes, 2018), while fostering hybridity and part commonality between them. Amid the perpetual oscillation between similarity and difference (Pieterse, 2020, 235), some scholars argue that 'systematic orderings' ultimately dominate over 'open and creative events' (Marston, et al., 2005, 424). Arguably, the contrary is true: because reality is always changing, difference must have the final word. No global hegemony is complete for ever. So it is in universities and science.

In higher education the heterogeneity of agents (people, organisations, networks, states) and the different ways they imagine and practice space, are among of the drivers of diversity. For Michel Foucault (1986), Henri Lefebvre (1991) and Doreen Massey (2005), space is not an already existing empty stadium waiting to be filled. Space is *constructed* by humans as *social* space (see also Wong, 2023). That does not mean it lacks materiality. Space making combines pre-given historical-material elements like the planet, a geographical territory, a locality, and the resources, systems and social relations already existant, with the new imaginings and interpretations of agents, and with the social practices whereby they bring their visions into being, working under conditions that they inherit from the past. People's lives can be understood as individual trajectories moving through time, and those trajectories intersect, sometimes deliberately and sometimes accidentally, in space. 'If time unfolds as change then space unfolds as interaction' says Massey (2005, 61). The lattice of human connections *is* space, which is the sphere of social relations, including relations of power.

David Harvey (2005) refers to 'an actively produced field of spatial ordering that changes sometimes quickly and sometimes glacially over time' (244). Constructed social spaces vary from those that are close at hand, for example a local university-industry working party; to the global, for example the development of MOOCs, or the global science system that evolved along with the Internet. Massey (2005) emphasises that *all* kinds of space are the outcome of human imaginings and practices. She critiques ideas of space in which global space is seen as pre-given and

abstract and local place is concrete (183). Her target is a particular understanding of globalisation, one widespread in international education (e.g. Knight, 2004). In this conceptual frame global forces are seen as external, economic and dynamic while 'local place' is seen as internal, organic and fixed-residual, prone victim of those global forces. Massey is aware of the power of global capitalism but debunks ideas of globalisation as an abstract universal force. Both global space and local space are dynamic, changing, imagined and constructed. Global activities 'are utterly everyday and grounded, at the same time as they may, when linked together, go around the world' (7; see also 53).

Space making is an act of power. Not all places or persons are equally potent in national, regional or global relations. Massey's (2005) example of a strong place is London (11). Likewise, nations, institutions and people differ in their starting points and resources. Yet no higher education agent is wholly trapped by hierarchy. Agents have consciousness, reflexive inner lives, and determine the ways they respond to structural factors. 'People are not puppets of structures because they have their own emergent properties' states Margaret Archer (1995, 71). Further, once social spaces are created in which trajectories meet, various agents and agendas can enter and even the strongest agents cannot maintain total control forever. Over time every space 'escapes in part from those who make use of it' (Lefebvre, 1991, 26).

Geo-social scales

The ongoing spaces that order people's lives, and are also produced by their social practices, include geo-social scales. These include the *planetary*; *global*; *pan-national regional* (e.g. the EU); *national*; *sub-national regional* (e.g. the Bay Area in Southern China); *local* (in higher education this might be institution, academic department, or student organisation); and *individual* persons. 'Scale is a produced societal metric that differentiates space'. Scales are recognised geographical meta-spaces that vary from each other on the basis of scope and proximity, their material structures and their animating relations. The 'social ownership' of these scales is 'broad-based' (Marston & Smith, 2001, 615): they are widely recognised.

The 'planetary' refers to the world as a whole, including all of the other scales. The term also tends to decentre human society, bringing forward the interdependent

ecology that is continually produced in the interactions between inherited conditions and a myriad of human and non human agents (Chakrabarty, 2021). The 'global' refers to the human social relations that combine agents at the world level. 'Globalisation' is world making (Marginson, 2022c).

Hence scales are both spaces which agents help to create and spaces in which they act. Scales are also locations in which they are grounded, where they derive their identity. Universities have physical locations and are active in local communities, but also within national systems and in the global scale. As noted, they derive identity from both the local, and the pan-national, meaning the regional and global scales. National systems of higher education are nationally grounded, and also active in the local and global scales. Moving between scales can create opportunities. Universities and scholars leverage prestige and resources from the global scale to augment their national/local position, and vice versa. Like their medieval predecessors, universities engaged in cross-border relations often (but not always) find they have more freedom of action than in state regulated national systems, especially if they can build resources and prestige. Scholars find collaboration with cross-border colleagues can free them from managerial constraints in the shaping of research.

Individual and institutional agents often act in more than one scale simultaneously, as Friedman (2018) shows in his study of the nimble global strategies of U.S. and UK research universities, and as the state in China has done in building national science (see below). Further, by combining scales agents can create what Foucault (1986) calls 'heterotopias', spaces 'that have the curious property of being in relation with all the other sites, but in such a way as to suspect, neutralise, or invert the set of relations that they happen to designate, mirror, or reflect' (24). Examples include branch campuses in foreign countries, joint spaces that combine two national agents with the institution as an actor in its own right, and perhaps a local partner. Heterotopian strategies emerge to create new possibilities for action.

There are many misconceptions about scales. No scale is always dominant and at times causation flows from each of them. Thinking about higher education in terms of one scale alone, or assuming that one scale is necessarily always primary, means that much is hidden from view. 'Methodological nationalism', which is 'the belief that the nation/state/society is the natural social and political form of the modern world'

(Wimmer & Shiller, 2003, 301), so national elements are seen to determine all else, or global data are collected and presented only in national categories, is the focus of withering critiques (see also Dale, 2005; Shahjahan & Kezar, 2013). Nevertheless, nationally-bound thinking dominates in politics and policy and so shapes most of the research into both higher and international education. Equally problematic, however is methodological globalism, whereby, say, the world capitalist economy, or global communications networks, are seen to determine all else. Scalar pluralism is the only methodology that brings the full range of practices into view (Marginson, 2022b).

The relation between scales is often poorly understood. They are not scale-invariant, meaning they are greater or less versions of the same structure, with the global containing the regional containing the national containing the local, like identical Russian *Matryoshka* dolls that fit into each other. That image privileges scales with broader scope, as if the global always determines the national and so on (Marston, et al., 2005, 427). But the essential point here is that the different geo-social scales are heterogenous, different in kind.

For example, consider national science and global science. National science and the institutions that house it are structured by governmental regulations, policies and funding. Global science is codified by journals and the bibliometric collections, Web of Science and Scopus, structured by communicative global networks and motored by epistemic logics and desires for cross-border collaboration between colleagues. 'The sciences develop internationally, but the funding is mainly national' (Bornmann, et al., 2018, 931). National science is structured by a normative centre, the nation-state. Global science has no normative centre. 'Patterns in international collaboration in science can be considered as network effects, since there is no political institution mediating relationships at that level' aside from the European Commission (Leydesdorff and Wagner, 2008, 317). Often the same scientists are active in both global and national science, but the systems are different beasts.

The distinction between the national and global scales leads to two different kinds of cross-border relations in higher education. There are 'inter-national' relations between nations, or between organisations or other agents in two or more nations. There are also 'global' relations that pass over nations and integrate agents at planetary level. The difference is not always clearcut. Cross-border connections, as in student

mobility, science or university partnership, can feed into both international and global practices (Marginson, 2022d).

Changing geo-politics, changing scales

For two decades after 1990 the story in higher education was the coincidence of two mega-tendencies. The first tendency was the proliferation of practices in the global scale, quickened by the spread of networked communications and under conditions of U.S. liberal capitalist hegemony in political economy, culture, higher education and knowledge. Globalisation as Americanisation was sustained by Pax America, meaning that the global political hegemony was underpinned by the potential for U.S. coercion in the military sphere. This was a form of imperialism, albeit without the direct territorial rule that had characterised the guns and bible European colonial empires. In its contents the U.S. hegemony in higher education came closest to the values and practices of Euro-American countries. Above all other Anglophone countries benefitted under the American umbrella, led by the UK, itself a significant global player in the university sector. The second tendency after 1990s was the near universal roll-out of neoliberal governance and management, whereby higher education was seen as a competition between universities modelled as firms, credentialled education and research were each imagined as quasi-commodities, and academic labour became performative.

Neoliberalism did not create globalisation, but because they were coincident, and both became accompanied by widely articulated neo-liberal economic ideologies, the two mega-tendencies articulated each other. In higher education they converged in the growing primacy of economic policy in education, the idea of the global knowledge economy (Robertson, 2005), fully capitalist student mobility in the UK and Australia, and the competitive ordering of world universities on a performative basis in global ranking (Hazelkorn & Mihut, 2021).

However, despite the ideology of the knowledge economy, global developments in the university sector were more liberal than capitalist. Understanding how that worked – and that 1990s/2000s liberal capitalism in higher education was of its time rather than a permanent condition – is one of the keys to the new geo-politics. For the liberal capitalist, freedom is rooted not so much in human rights as in the freedom of property

and capital accumulation. The premise is that free capital accumulation encourages other forms of freedom to emerge (Hayek, 1960). It is now clear that this does not end well. Free capital accumulation in the neoliberal period has been followed by worsened economic inequality, social-political closure and the climate-nature emergency. Nonetheless in the 1990s/2000s many Euro-American polities, led by the U.S. and the UK, and pan-national organisations such as the World Bank and OECD, were committed to a liberal capitalist reform agenda that valorised openness and freedoms in all domains providing the freedoms are consistent with capital accumulation.

In this framework it was believed that the open liberal regime would expand the cultural influence of the Anglophone countries, for example the role of English, and Euro-American norms in politics. Cross-border engagement and people mobility were valued because they were expected to encourage free trade in world markets. Cosmopolitan social inclusion was expected to optimise market reach. The Anglophone countries wanted to open their universities to foreign students because as well as generating revenues this fostered a Euro-America-friendly business elite, enhanced national soft power, and spread Euro-American cultural influence worldwide. For their part, many in government in emerging countries supported liberal globalisation of the economy, universities and science as the privileged pathway to modernisation, despite the subordination of national-cultural agency entailed.

Hence until the 2008 recession at least, with the partial exception of the U.S during in its war on terror, most states were liberal capitalist supporters of internationalisation, meaning enhanced cross-border relations, and this readily spilled over into tendencies to global convergence. In higher education, and especially science where cross-border linkage was not marginal but integral, the norms of internationalisation held longer than in political economy, sustaining momentum until the late 2010s. Cross-border linkages were routinely treated as proxies for quality, as in international comparisons of science (for a review see Abramo & D'Angelo, 2020). Governments subsidised collaboration, though as Melin (2000) and Jeong, et al. (2011) noted at the time, collegial cooperation across borders often predated the national policies designed to encourage it. However, from the point of view of the states that housed universities and science, the commitment to internationalisation was conjunctural and not permanent. It could hold only as long as Euro-America and especially the U.S. saw

economic openness and global trade as primary in capital accumulation, and Pax America provided an imperial space in which states could focus on national-global economic goals rather than conflict and national security. Another limitation was that internationalisation was structured in Euro-American terms. For Anglophone nations, especially, internationalisation meant reaching out in hegemonic fashion across borders without needing to change anything at home. But for emerging countries the formation of international space brought with it tensions between Western culture and endogenous languages, values and agency freedom.

Globalisation in the universities

The in-principle support of states for internationalisation, plus the explosive growth of networked communications, the cheaper air travel, and state building in emerging countries, conditioned a flourishing of international and global practices in higher education, some focused on capital accumulation, more focused on national economic objectives, but many pursued with educational and epistemic goals in mind. Euro-American faculty who embraced globalisation in higher education often practised liberal openness while critiquing capitalism and some glimpsed a university world beyond national geo-politics. Educational globalism had its limits, as will be seen, but the learning/knowledge/research core of higher education was enriched, new potentials for cultural sharing were created – though under-utilised - and all else being equal, enhanced cross-border relations enlarged the autonomy of universities.

The technical mode of communicative globalisation was a guarantor of openness. In a networked global system knowledge and information travel with lightning speed without regard for borders and the unit cost of each new connection becomes cheaper as the network grows (Castells, 2000). Internet mediated networks are naturally accessible to newcomers, provided they have the infrastructure unless closure is imposed from outside. By joining pre-existing networks, university researchers and national science systems could immediately connect with immense knowledge resources. Established institutions and large countries did not gate-keep in global science because researchers could freely form ties with all others in the network. After 1996 papers entering the repository of global science increased by almost 5 per cent a year. Cross-border collaboration and citation practices expanded faster than science as a whole. New papers in Scopus rose from 0.99 million in 1996 to 1.94 million in

2010, later reaching 3.34 million in 2022 (NSB, 2022; 2024). Cross-border tertiary student mobility also grew rapidly, from 1.96 million in 1997 to 3.80 million in 2010 and then 6.37 million in 2021 (UNESCO, 2024). Approximately two students in five entered systems in the Anglophone zone, many of them paying tuition fees with a profit margin. There was a larger non-commercial element in student mobility, sustained by scholarships, free entry in some countries and the Erasmus scheme in Europe. By 2010, 11 per cent of doctoral students in OECD countries were crossing national borders, rising to 22 per cent by 2021, consistent with the growing global integration in research (OECD, 2012, 374; OECD, 2023, 259).

What was striking about global higher education in this period was the fecundity of individual, institutional and sometimes national agency and the inventiveness of the space making practices, especially (though not only) in the Anglophone universities, many of which found themselves moving with fluency in the global space constructed on Euro-American terms. The global science network expanded with extraordinary rapidity and the spatial character of the natural science disciplines was transformed. Global publications established epistemic ascendancy and it became imperative for national laboratories and universities everywhere to connect effectively into the common global system, quickening national investments in science. The proportion of recognised global papers authored by scientists in two or more countries, many of them collaborating on a bottom-up basis rather top-down programming, rose from less than 2 per cent in Web of Science in 1970 to 17 per in Scopus in 2010; it later peaked at 23 per cent in 2020 (Olechnicka, et al. 2019; NSB, 2024).

In institutional strategies, while most universities as usual were cautious, mimetic and under-utilised their scope to create new space, there were also startling initiatives, like the building of the early cross-border campuses in East and Southeast Asia, New York University's multi-country first degree, global e-universities (which failed), global MOOCs (which became installed as universal mode of delivery), and the multi-country consortia of between ten and forty universities that emerged in the late 1990s and after. Through its audacious Global Schoolhouse strategy Singapore made itself into an innovation hub and catalysed the rise of the National University of Singapore and Nanyang Technological University. The Bologna accord, and the European Higher Education and Research Areas built regional systems, as more slowly did the ASEAN

countries (Chou & Ravinet, 2017). European research grants factored in a preference for integrated cross-country teams.

All these initiatives were underpinned by the imaginings that anticipated space making (Marginson, 2022d). There was the idea of global relations as an expanding cross-border network with porous borders, which appealed to many scientists. There was global space as a multilateral contest in talent and technologies, analogous to an arms race between nations, the imaginary that compelled many national policy makers. There was the global market of competing institutions or 'World-Class Universities' (Salmi 2009), which underpinned the rankings. This imaginary was shared by families that sought to access cross-border education and university leaders with ambitions to lift institutional prestige. Each narrative facilitated certain space making practices while blocking others. 'Social imaginaries circumscribe what is deemed possible or legitimate to think, act and know' (Stein, 2017, 329).

The national and global interface

A feature of the 1990 to 2015 period was the success with which certain nations mixed and matched the heterogeneous national, regional and global scales in higher education. They pursued a scalar division of labour which synergised national and regional/global practices.

Here, under the American umbrella in its phase of expansionary globalisation, the Anglophone nations seemed especially flexible and adept. The early Internet was dominated by U.S. universities and the emerging science network embodied American faculty norms, including the autonomous disciplinary cultures and bottom-up cooperation typical of American university life. The downside was that the emerging global science system was permeated with assumptions of the necessary superiority of U.S. science: it was technically open and culturally closed at the same time. There was never any question that English would be the only global language. This was comfortable terrain for U.S. universities, and they confidently leveraged their inherited resources, epistemic leadership and the nation's openness to migrants to build research co-authorships in every emerging science system. Many of those they worked with were educated in U.S. universities. In the process the American research universities became highly dependent on the research labour of graduate students

from China and India. However, the system settings, coupled with the sheer weight of the U.S. universities, ensured that they continually reproduced their national-cultural authority, especially at home. Patterns of citation show that U.S. science was heavily cited by researchers from other country systems, while researchers from only a handful of other country systems, in the Anglophone zone and Western Europe, were cited at above average rates in the U.S. (NSB, 2020). Science was a network with horizontal potentials but global relations of power were centred on a single nation. They were at least partly imperial in form.

The lesser Anglophone nations also utilised global space making to build the global effectiveness of their national universities, while augmenting national and local resources. UK universities sustained such a strong level of cross-border student demand that, as in the U.S., numbers were regulated on the supply-side by government visa policy. Income from cross-border students was first a supplement and then a substitute for public financing (Marginson, 2018a). At the same time UK universities became very effective in managing collaborative European research grants in their own interests. Before Brexit in 2016 they used grant leadership and the regime of free people movement within the EU to secure net talent flows into the UK: in the preceding decade approaching half the appointments on merit to universities in the leading Russell Group were from non-UK Europe (Highman et al., 2023).

Australian universities, abetted by a more expansive government policy on student visas than was the case in the UK, used one global space making practice to finance another. There were three decades of continuous growth in the cross-border student population, nearly all paying unsubsidised fees at levels fixed by the universities themselves. By 2019, just before the Covid-19 pandemic, 32.4 per cent of all enrolled higher education students were classified as from 'overseas' and their fees provided 27.3 per cent of revenues. By then, income from cross-border students was financing about a quarter of university research capacity. This strategy was so successful in building Australian universities' position in global science that by the end of the 2010s the proportion of Australian science papers in the high citation category had risen above the U.S. level to that of the UK (NSB, 2022), and there were seven Australian universities in the top 100 in the Shanghai Academic Ranking of World Universities (ARWU, 2023), exceptional for a country with a population of 25 million.

China pursued an effective bi-scalar strategy, a 'national/global synergy' which had spectacular results (Marginson, 2018b). International collaboration, especially into the U.S., helped to build national capability in science, taking China-based researchers to the cutting edge. National capacity building was supported by ever increasing levels of state investment. The number of nationally-collaborative papers published in China grew almost as quickly as cross-border collaborative papers (NSB, 2022). At the same time China's researchers grew their contribution to global science so strongly that by the end of the 2010s the top Chinese research universities had moved past their U.S. counterparts in physical sciences and engineering in the number of high citation papers they produced (Marginson, 2022a). In the 2023 Leiden ranking, based on papers published in 2018-2021 inclusive, ten of the first 14 universities publishing the highest number of top 5 per cent papers in those disciplines were from China and two from the U.S. The leading nine universities in maths and computing research were all from China. Tsinghua had eclipsed MIT to become the world's leading university in STEM (CWTS, 2024). This was a dramatic change from the recent past: only five years earlier, 11 of the top universities in physical sciences and engineering were from the U.S. and one from China. Science in China was less globally networked than US science, while also being less dependent on a continuing inflow of foreign talent. The main form of mobility, fostered by state funding, was the return of diasporic Chinese scientists from the West. The goal of building a robust national system via selective globalisation was achieved.

What stands out in these examples of synergistic national/global strategy is that despite the potential tensions between national policy, and global activity beyond national control, 'scientific nationalism' and 'scientific globalism' (Haupt & Lee, 2021) appeared compatible. As matters developed it became apparent that this happy match could not be guaranteed.

Global hegemony in higher education

The most transformative developments, global science and commercial education export, had opposing implications for the intrinsic core of higher education. Global science shifted attention from the commercialisable research that had been the growing focus of policy, exemplified by the Mode1/Mode 2 discourse (Gibbons, et al., 1994), to basic knowledge creation, enriching the academic heartland. It reinforced

the mysterious universality of the university, lifted the status of star faculty, and encouraged national governments to increase their investments in the infrastructure of university science. In contrast, by commodifying degrees the commercial market in cross-border education weakened the emphasis on the intrinsic socialisation and subjectification functions of higher education, and emphasised the social status of individual universities in the market, rather than knowledge per se, as the regulator of commodity value. Yet the two developments worked similarly in terms of geo-political power. They each normalised the global scale in unabashedly Euro-American and Anglophone terms. Each development was neo-imperial, in continuity with the colonial era.

In commercial cross-border education, high international student fees secured a flow of financial transfers from emerging countries into Anglophone universities, with the market dynamic continually reproducing their peak position. The patterns of both student and faculty mobility were associated with brain drain from emerging countries. In global science, with English the sole language, the prestige journals and the bibliometric data bases excluded not only all endogenous (indigenous) knowledge, and Mandarin Chinese with the largest number of speakers, but recognised cross-border languages like Spanish and Arabic (Marginson & Xu, 2023). Euro-American scholars dominated the journal editing and peer regulation roles that regulated science. China's spectacular rise was achieved within an epistemic order that was Western not Sinic. Global rankings, which rested on the bibliometric data, reproduced the leadership of U.S. and to a lesser extent UK universities while structured the preferences of non-white families for 'global whiteness' in cross-border education (Shahjahan & Edwards, 2022). In the Anglophone countries the use of English as the single global language enabled English speaking agents to move seamlessly between national and global practices. Elsewhere internationalisation, which was primarily Anglophone internationalisation, fostered linguistic dislocation and a continuing crisis of educational identity (Yang, 2014).

Castells (2001) notes that the network form 'allows metropolitan concentration and global networking to proceed simultaneously' (225); and like the global political economy, as global higher education evolved it fostered distributed agency. From the mid 1990s onwards there was accelerating growth in science in many countries, as

there was in participation in tertiary education (Cantwell, et al., 2018). But the growth of diverse capacity was in tension with the neo-imperial framework in which higher education was defined and practised.

Renorming cross-border relations

After 2010 in Western political economy the long tide to globalisation turned. The growth of cross-border trade levelled off and protectionism spread and increased. The growth of global supply chains and offshoring began to reverse and the economic role of multinationals declined slightly (The Economist, 2022). In some countries, including parts of the U.S., there was strident opposition to economically open borders and cultural cosmopolitanism (Rodrick, 2018). Nation-bound thinking was enhanced, often metamorphosing into populist nativism and opposition to inward people mobility, attitudes which reshaped polities in the UK and much of Europe. There were signs of more assertive nationalism in Russia, China and India. The temper of international relations became more strident and conflictual. Multilateralism in the World Trade Organisation and United Nations system weakened. In the Russian invasion of Ukraine in 2022, war returned to Europe and the Middle East was destabilised by the 2023 war in Gaza. Meanwhile, by 2018 it was apparent the U.S. government was determined to contain the growth of China's economy, political influence and technological capability, and saw a 'decoupling' of technological and scientific links (Inkster, 2020) as one way to do so. Universities and scientific research became a new theatre of geo-political conflict. It took time for all these political changes to trigger pressure on the cross-border space-making practices of universities, but by the end of the 2010s this was apparent in many nations.

The U.S. shift to a more nationally defensive and less expansive kind of global space-making, which took shape in the 2016-2020 Trump presidency but had bi-partisan political support, signified the abandonment of the Fukuyama's (1992) ideal of a single Americanising global space and the universally inclusive form of hegemonic globalisation. While the U.S. retained the option of military coercion it lost confidence in the exercise of global hegemony through the economy and culture, including education and science. The pivot to militarisation and securitisation relocated global relations into domains where the US could maximise its control, and where it could

orchestrate the discourse, especially within the Euro-American countries in the West. The continuing claim to U.S. global primacy was now joined to a new willingness to divide the world between pro-Euro-American and anti-Euro-American blocs, and a return (perhaps comforting?) to the simple bipolarity and anti-communism of the Cold War era. Unlike the Soviet Union, however, China remained committed to open trading, people mobility, and cooperation in science, though the Chinese government tightened internal political control and emphasised 'Chinese characteristics' both at home and abroad.

What then is driving the U.S. retreat from expansive globalisation and the augmented nationalism in many parts of the world? The common answer is that the promise of 1990s globalisation, that of accumulation and brighter futures all round, has failed except for some of the mega-rich. Other national elites see diminishing benefits from economic globalisation, and many voters in neoliberal polities have experienced declining living standards and narrowing prospects, and so are vulnerable to the right-wing populist politics of othering migrants and cosmopolitan liberal elites. However, these are symptoms rather than causes.

Arguably, two factors underly the destabilisation of Euro-American polities and their global agendas. First, the pluralisation of power in political economy. The rise of China is unmistakable and several large middle powers have emerged outside the West, such as India, Iran, Indonesia, South Korea and Brazil, as well as Japan and Russia. Political economy matters. Imperial spaces are more loosely coupled than nation-states and more vulnerable to fragmentation when their conditions of possibility are changed. Pluralisation means that in the erstwhile imperial power in the U.S. extracts less in extra rents through dominance in capital accumulation and technology. Elsewhere in Euro-American the rise of non Euro-America disturbs the long sense of superiority engendered by five centuries of colonialism.

Second, the multiplication of rising temperatures and sea levels, extreme weather events, and problems of food and water mean that nowhere can the climate-nature emergency be ignored. Yet neither national action nor multilateral discussion can effectively address it. The climate-nature emergency is driven by the liberal capitalist model of accumulation, advocated above all in the U.S., and is impossible to address without abandoning that model. This is not going to happen in the U.S. in the near

future. Few understand that it needs to happen. The resulting anxiety and sense of broken future feeds into cynical detachment from states and politics, and a flight to unrealisable certainties via nostalgia, old identities and the closing out of the world. This is not a favourable setting for space making in global higher education.

Both the partial breakdown of the imperial order and the destabilisation of national politics in many countries have quickened the nation-state in two ways: external assertion in the global space, and internal control over the national population and the inward movement of people (and sometimes ideas) across the border. In both cases the goal is security and in the Anglophone world, though less so as yet in Europe, this might have eclipsed the neo-liberal idea of prosperity as the primary rationale of government. In some countries the drive for control is associated with either the blanket repression of university autonomy and academic freedom as in Russia, or episodic violations as in India or Florida. China allocates substantial resources to the monitoring and control of online communications and visual surveillance of the population on and off campus. The politics of refugee movement have sharply problematised migration in many countries, and most nations seem to have become more sensitive about all border control with continual impact on student and faculty mobility.

Decoupling and partial closures

In research the shift to a more plural world is unmistakable. The last two decades have seen an extraordinary flourishing of many non-Western systems in science, despite the exclusion of non-Western knowledge from the authoritative bibliometric repositories. Between 2003 and 2022 the annual output of papers in China grew by 13.0 per cent a year, from 88,585 to 898,949 (output in the U.S., an established and thus slower growing science system, moved from 336,491 to 457,335 over the same time period). Science papers in India increased by 11.4 per cent a year to 207,390 and the country became the world's third largest producer, moving past UK, Germany and Japan in volume though not yet in high citation work. South Korea's papers grew by 6.4 per cent to 76,936 in 2022, Brazil's by 7.3 per cent to 67,031, Iran's by 15.6 per cent to 60,940; and Turkey's by 7.5 per cent to 52,658 (NSB, 2024).

On the face of it, the flourishing of diverse university capacity ought to strengthen networked relations all round and by doing so establish a richer common system in which the old imperial order is opened up, with more diverse languages and the inclusion of worldwide fields of knowledge. Significant constituencies in universities advocate intercultural learning and global citizenship. But the primarily Anglophone and mostly U.S. university hierarchy continues to control the definition of value in science, the protocols of research and the map of disciplines, while systemic relations have been partly fractured and the global scale in universities has weakened. These changes are apparent in the two primary global domains: the free movement of networked knowledge and the cross-border mobility of persons.

In science the main change has been driven by global geo-politics rather than nativist politics at national level. The U.S./China accord in higher education and science took root in the 1980s, paralleling the entry of U.S. companies into China's economy, and was marked by generous American support for Chinese universities via academic visits, benchmarking, the doctoral education of Chinese students in U.S. universities, and research collaboration. Over the next three decades higher education in China moved from apprentice to master. It was closely influenced by U.S. models, including the tiered system of institutional types, the executive university presidency, and the disciplinary structure of organisation. However, U.S./China engagement in the economy and higher education was not followed by the transformation of the political system in China on Euro-American lines as many in the U.S. hoped. China was more successful in its objectives. It retained political independence, built national power, and in universities and science achieved a national system comparable to that of the U.S. The Gross Tertiary Enrolment ratio moved from 2 per cent in 1990 to 72 per cent in 2022, approaching the U.S. level of 88 per cent (UNESCO, 2024), and scientific output exceeded the U.S. level in 2018 (NSB, 2024). The belated realisation of this outcome, plus disillusionment with the economic globalisation seen to have facilitated China's unwelcome rise, triggered the strategic reversal of U.S. engagement in China and the turn to decoupling.

The 2018 U.S. China initiative led to a fall in joint China-U.S. science papers, from 62,904 in Scopus in 2020 to 58,546 in 2022, reversing decades of growth (NSB, 2024). U.S.-China cooperation remained much the largest in global science, and a full

decoupling seems unrealistic, but a survey by Lee and Li (2021) finds that 20 per cent of American scientists of Chinese descent, and 12 per cent of other American scientists, broke ties with collaborators in China as a result of the China Initiative. The U.S. has put pressure on other Western countries and the EU to weaken their research ties with China. American arguments point to the routine relations between Chinese universities and the party-state. The EU does not go all the way with this, but now others China, describing it as 'a partner for cooperation, an economic competitor and a systemic rival' (European Union, 2023). Few nations have imposed outright bans on links to China but collaboration is increasingly hedged with additional layers of regulation, defined as risk-management. For example, the Australian government now requires all China-Australia university partnerships to be specifically approved by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, reducing university autonomy, and in 2022 'Australia's top research universities received funding for an average of five projects involving Chinese partners in 2022, down from 14 in 2019' (Ross, 2023) although in terms of co-publication China was Australia's largest collaborative partner country (NSB, 2024).

The growing disruptions to cross-border student mobility are equally significant. Here the change-inducing factors have been on one hand particular geo-political conflicts, on the other nativist resistance to incoming students. Geo-politics has triggered temporary bans on student movement from the Arab world to the U.S., outward movements from universities in Russia and Ukraine, and as noted earlier, selective restrictions affecting Chinese doctoral students who want to enter the U.S. The annual growth of aggregate student movement from China into higher education in the U.S. and UK has slowed since the pandemic, though whether geo-political tensions have been causal is unclear. Meanwhile China continues to expand its own international student intake, using scholarships to augment the flow of students from Africa, Pakistan and Southeast Asia where it is building foreign policy ties.

The impact of nativism on incoming mobility has been wider. For example, both public figures and universities in the Netherlands have called for a ceiling on incoming cross-border students, and in Denmark in 2021 local-national sensibilities triggered a reduction in student numbers. In each country there are concerns about the displacement of national language, given the growth of English language courses

pitched to the market in cross-border higher education (Tange & Jaeger, 2021). Episodic opposition to migration has been a recurring feature of the English language polities. In 2023 all of UK, Australia and Canada announced unprecedented policies to contain incoming student growth. The stated reasons varied – in the UK pressure on public services from student dependents, in Australia and Canada housing shortages – but underlying these were nativist sensitivities about labour market competition.

The new spatiality in universities

In this context, 'internationalisation' has ceased to be normed as a universal good. In governmental circles almost everywhere the cross-border links of universities are now ambiguous, suggesting the need for caution, control and sometimes the prohibition of activity. This is particularly the case in regimes like Russia where as noted, faculty with foreign ties, which only recently were valued, are now routinely suspected; but to a lesser extent it is true of Euro-American university dealings with China, and the regulation of inward student movement in most countries. Once legitimated, national securitisation in universities and science tends to spread everywhere with no retarding factors in sight, though it is incompatible with decision-making based on intellectual criteria or human rights.

Rather than the national and global scales operating in synergy, the growing assertion of nation-state agendas has rendered the national and global scales as zero-sum. The eclipse of global convergence constitutes a qualitative increase in the causal power of agentic action in the national scale in higher education, and a weakening of agency potentials in the global. It is now clear that much of the prior momentum for university globalisation was imperial, being shaped by American policy and habits that have now flipped around. It is ironic that the weakening of U.S. imperialism in general and in universities has been a primary factor in the birth of the new geo-politics, yet the turn to decoupling and securitisation have been U.S. led, and while transforming the global and to some extent national spaces for all other players. During its long slow decline the hegemonic authority is by no means exhausted.

In sum, the new global/national spatiality of universities and science is threefold. There are changes in both the domain of imagining and interpretation, and the domain of

practices. First, governments can now more freely impose a single scalar identity, a national identity, on universities and science, either selectively and episodically as in the U.S. in relation to relations with China, or comprehensively as in Russia. Everywhere the sector is expected to fall in line. The nuances of partial university autonomy are readily brushed aside. It has become more difficult in practical terms for universities to sustain plural commitments and mix and match activities across the national, regional and global scales. The result is selective and spasmodic closure of what was nominally an open global university space. 'The closed geographical imagination of openness, just as much as that of closure, is itself irretrievably unstable' (Massey, 2005, 175). For example, through the China Initiative, American scientists active in China have been told to position national loyalties above global disciplinary ties. Before Brexit, UK universities routinely identified as European. They no longer do so.

Many in government and some in universities have abandoned the idea of a shared one world space. In the new era methodological nationalism is less likely to be challenged, while methodological globalism is diminished. The old imperial pairing, methodological globalism with a national centre, has faded, replaced by the solely national projects of the nation or its alliances, in a Hobbesian world perceived as irretrievably divided and endemically hostile.

Second, in the Euro-American countries, previous strategies designed to secure open inclusive globalisation while colonising the one-world space are losing importance. It is less crucial to maintain a single system of combined communications; and while as yet few in government would argue against the principle of a global pool of knowledge and scientific cooperation in a single networked system, many states are now prepared to selectively impair the communications and nation-to-nation links in research that are integral to that global system. Soft power objectives recede and hard power becomes more important. Open doors cease to be the norm in international education: security concerns were never entirely absent in migration regulation but now become primary. Others are not friends, they are dangers.

Third, more positively, the global space continues to be worked, especially in science, but its national champions are often found outside the West. Emerging countries still see benefits for themselves in research collaboration (Chinchilla-Rodriguez, et al.

2018), connecting to the one-world pool of science so as to build the capability of universities, government and industry. China maintains an open door to cooperation in universities and science, as does India and the other middle powers. Many Euro-American countries will continue to work the global scale, even while unsure of how to relate to China. The pluralisation of capacity in universities and science is now matched by a post-imperial pluralisation in the locus of globalisation. Amid all the geopolitical fractures and the dislocations triggered by nativism, this may even hasten the development of a more inclusive global knowledge system.

Conclusions

Geo-politics and more autarkic nationalism have led to a post-internationalisation climate in universities that was unthinkable a few years before. Many university leaders, faculty and students continue in cross-border activities but the signs of change are unmistakable. Violations of the free movement of persons and ideas are increasing and affect electoral democracies as well as one party states and other non-contested polities. Internationalisation of universities is still positive in some official quarters but it is no longer uniformly so.

The old tendencies to cross-border convergence in universities and science were fostered under conditions of Euro-American and especially U.S. hegemony, underwritten by the imperial American order that emerged from the Cold War. This was why the worldwide growth of universities and especially global science were closely affected by U.S. models, practices and links. Those conditions will not return. It is likely that in a worldwide setting in which capacity in higher education is becoming more plural, more diverse approaches higher education and knowledge will emerge in future (Marginson & Xu, 2023). At best there could be steps towards in a global order based on cooperation, rather than hierarchical competition as in the global university rankings, and mutual respect, and a relation with nature that breaks from the liberal capitalist mode of economic accumulation (Yang, et al., 2022). This in turn would create more favourable conditions for collectively tackling the existential planetary challenge, the climate-nature emergency. Here universities worldwide are potentially crucial, institutions, because of their capacity in science and scope to inculcate new social values.

One sign of change would be if the present widespread adherence to the QS and Times Higher global university rankings starts to break down (Shahjahan, et al., 2017). This is possible, but it would be unwise to end this review of the spatiality of universities on a solely positive note. The deconstruction of the present global hegemony in universities everywhere has a long way to run and in science has scarcely begun. At present there are few signs of the emergence of a more inclusive global university order and significant signs of retreat from cross-border imagining and engagement in the nations clamping down on university systems. A partial university retreat from the global is likely to enlarge the space for populism that is pitched against science and intellectualism, and nativism that stigmatises difference. This in turn could precipitate a downward spiral in university autonomy as in Germany in 1933.

It is always hard to see the present clearly. The meaning of what happens now will be determined by what follows. Given that the agentic mobility of persons and knowledge is crucial to university autonomy, and free research and scholarship, the present tendencies in geopolitics and more assertive nation-states do not bode well and must be resisted. When push comes to shove universities can rarely operate wholly outside nation-states, but it has become crucial that they take their scope for autonomous agency as far as possible. By providing active social leadership in relation to the climate-nature emergency they could help to meet the most urgent and compelling challenge of the time while also building support.

Notes

1 Statement in a speech at Tsinghua University by President Wang Xiqing, 28 October 2023. It is interesting that in contrast with the American universities' general suspension of top-level academic diplomacy, the then President of Harvard University, Claudine Gay, invited the President of China's Peking University to attend her inauguration. Gay was later forced to resign from the Harvard post after a year in office, on 2 January 2024, following right-wing political pressure in the U.S. Congress, in the public sphere, and from key Harvard donors.

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