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Global production networks: A geographical review of a research tradition

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Abstract

This paper analyses the academic literature on global production networks (GPN) from 2000 to 2024 based on data from the Scopus database. It focuses on the uneven international landscape of authors, publications, funding sources, publishers and citations in the GPN literature compared with the firm Anglo-American hegemony prevailing in international geography in general. The article begins with an overview of the existing literature on asymmetrical power geometries in geography as a discipline, as well as the scholarly project of internationalising, worlding and decolonising geography. After that, it presents the research methodology of the current study. The results section highlights the temporal dynamics of the rise of the GPN research tradition. It reveals the multidisciplinary nature of this field of research and its solid interest in the industrial sector and the geographical dimension of the economy. It identifies the existence of a 'primary European core' and a 'secondary Asian core' rather than Anglo-American hegemony in the GPN literature, as reflected in the authors, funding sources and case study areas. It also confirms the dominance of Manchester and Singapore as leading global centres of calculation, as well as the still massive British hegemony over major publishing platforms, which is particularly strong in terms of citation-attracting ability. Meanwhile, the results reaffirm the marginalised position of most of the Global South. Finally, our study examines the uneven geography of GPN literature from authors in East Central Europe as a global semi-periphery and draws some general lessons for the geographies of science and the future possibilities of promoting the process of internationalisation, decolonisation and worlding of geographical research.

Keywords: decolonial, geographies of science, geopolitics of knowledge, Global North/Global South, global production networks, scientometrics, Scopus, worlding

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Introduction

This paper examines academic literature on global production networks, which have emerged as one of the most vibrant fields of research in Economic Geography over the last quarter-century. After earlier attempts to scrutinise the spatially fragmented production systems in the global economy along the concepts of global commodity chains (GCC) and global value chains (GVC) especially in the discipline of Economic Sociology from the mid-1990s onward, the sweeping and, at that time, seemingly unstoppable wave of globalisation after the (first) Cold War period also resulted in a new conceptual approach in the early 2000s, mainly invented by economic geographers (along with some representatives of International Political Economy) and commonly called GPN (Coe, N.M. 2021). Although the GPN concept soon became part of the international mainstream in economic

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geographical research, also firmly influencing neighbouring disciplines and co-evolving with the GCC and GVC approaches through constructively critical dialogues (Coe, N.M. and Yeung, H.W. 2015; Coe, N.M. 2021), it has a remarkable feature from the perspective of geographies of science inasmuch it has decisively been informed from the very beginning by empirical studies about East Asia and massively shaped by academic collectives in Southeast Asia – instead of North American or Western European scholars taking the lead without competitors (Yeung, H.W. 2024, 2025; Yeung, H.W. *et al.* 2025).

Considering the peculiar geography of the origins of the GPN approach, it is an intriguing question to consider how asymmetrical power geometries, a significant characteristic of contemporary global science, including the discipline of geography, have played out in the production of GPN knowledge. That is the topic of the current article, which, based on an in-depth study of scientometric data from the Scopus database, aims to scrutinise the fundamental structural patterns of the GPN literature. After a conceptual overview of the relevance, potentials and limits of such an analysis from the perspective of geographies of science and geopolitics of knowledge and discussing the major methodological features of the study, the paper will offer an overview of the temporal dynamics of the quantity of GPN publications and the citations they have attracted mainly between 2000 and 2024. This part of the study will include analysing the structure of GPN literature in terms of particular research topics, academic disciplines and document types (e.g. journal articles, books, book chapters). In the following steps, we will examine the most published authors and the most cited publications in the field, as well as the leading funding sources and publishing platforms, all from a geographical perspective. Motivated by the geographical focus of the Hungarian Geographical Bulletin and our positionality, we will also pay attention to the peculiar position of East Central Europe in those broader international power geometries. Finally, we will conclude our study by highlighting the relevance of our findings and their conceptual contribution to the international scholarly discourses on global production networks, the geographies of knowledge production, and the decolonising and worlding of geographical research.

Spatially uneven power relations in geographical knowledge production

Knowledge production has never been evenly distributed geographically but has always been characterised by spatial inequalities resulting from asymmetrical power relations in human societies. Although innovative ideas can emerge virtually anywhere, academic knowledge production is strongly reliant on specific *knowledge environments*, which include capable human beings (from scholars to students to administrative staff) and the interactions between them, adequate financial and material resources (from funding to research equipment and libraries), efficient organisational structures, clear, transparent and reasonable institutional rules and logics, open-minded scientific cultures, and a supportive social context where science and scientists enjoy social reputation and meet a general social interest in their findings (Meusburger, P. 2018).

Such resources are not equally available everywhere, but they have their unique spatialities (Mayhew, R.J. and Withers, C.W.J. 2020) and a significant share of them is concentrated in relatively few places, such as distinguished universities (Meusburger, P. and Schuch, T. 2012; Heffernan, M. *et al*. 2018) and research institutes. Some of these venues prove exceptionally efficient in accumulating, combining, stabilising and circulating knowledge – in other words, becoming *centres of calculation* (Latour, B. 1987), which play a distinctive role in the construction and dissemination of scientific and other forms of knowledge (Jöns, H. 2011). Given that the production of knowledge is inseparable from power relations (Foucault, M. 1980; Meusburger, P. 2015), the leading cen-

tres of calculation tend to be closely tied from a historical perspective to the most prestigious geopolitical and economic core regions of the world (Taylor, P.J. *et al.* 2008).

That is further reinforced by the prominent role of *trust* in the social validation of knowledge (Withers, C.W.J. 2018), i.e. what scholars, as well as society in a broader sense, accept and regard as 'relevant' new scientific findings and knowledge, and which people and institutions they consider 'trustworthy' sources of knowledge. Universities renowned for the excellent science they have produced in the past enjoy a special kind of trust capital, suggesting that they will continue to produce excellent science in the present and the future. Places with a distinguished geopolitical and economic position worldwide are commonly believed to have achieved their special status, inter alia, by producing 'better' knowledge than others (Meusburger, P. 2015). Hence, for many, they become *'truth spots'* (Gieryn, T.F. 2006, 2018) or venues where more relevant knowledge is believed to be produced than elsewhere. Consequently, if one has limited capacity to monitor new scientific findings (as everyone has), one will pay more attention to new academic contributions coming from these few 'truth spots' and centres of calculation while relatively or even totally neglecting knowledge produced in other places. Moreover, as these centres of calculation tend to concentrate the most acknowledged publishing platforms and most of their editors and editorial board members, they are actively shaping what sort of studies with what kind of epistemologies are allowed to be published in these platforms and become available for a broad international readership. In other words, the centres of calculation create *uneven writing spaces* (Paasi, A. 2015), where scholars are compelled by the structural mechanisms of global knowledge production to continuously read, cite, comment on and apply knowledge originating from those centres of calculation.

The existence of such asymmetrical power geometries in knowledge production has been a long-investigated and widely discussed phenomenon in the discipline of geography. Gutiérrez, J. and López-Nieva, P. (2001) found in their analysis that authors with US affiliations wrote approximately 38 percent of all published papers in 19 geographical journals with the highest impact factor (i.e. the highest rating from the Institute of Scientific Rating, ISI) between 1991 and 1997, whereas the share of authors with affiliations in the United Kingdom was 35 percent, the total share of US and UK authors 73 percent, and only 27 percent remained for the rest of the world. Bański, J. and Ferenc, M. (2013) investigated six geography journals with the highest ISI impact factor and found that authors with UK affiliations wrote 39.9 percent of all papers, and 34.5 percent had US affiliations. Thus, the two countries contributed a total of 74.4 percent.

In one of the most impactful studies, Müller, M. (2021) revealed in his analysis of 22 top geography journals and a total of 27,359 articles that the share of articles with author affiliation from the UK declined from 36.9 percent between 1991 and 1999 to 28.3 percent between 2009 and 2017, and from 35.8 percent to 25.4 percent with US affiliations, however, the two countries still adding up 53.7 percent, with non-Anglophone countries contributing by less than one-third and only one country outside the Global North (China) exceeding the 1 percent-threshold (2.8%). Paasi, A. (2015) revealed that US authors published 45.9 percent and British authors wrote 34.1 percent of the articles in the journal *Political Geography* between 1992 and 2002, with the corresponding values changing to 38.2 percent and 38.4 percent between 2003 and 2013 and, according to Paasi, A. (2025), 25.3 percent and 37.9 percent between 2014 and 2022. That means a total of 80.0 percent, 76.6 percent and 63.2 percent for US and UK authors for the same three periods. The analyses of journal editorial board members revealed no less remarkable imbalances (Imhof, N. and Müller, M. 2020; Müller, M. 2021). In a recent study, Governa, F. and Iacovone, C. (2025) found that 43.8 percent of the articles in 6 leading international journals

in urban research between 2018 and 2023 were published by British and US scholars (UK: 22.7%; USA: 21.1%), and, for theoretical articles especially strongly shaping what sort of 'urban theories' international scholars apply, the corresponding value was 50.8 percent (UK: 29.4%; USA: 21.4%). Economic Geography as a subfield of geography is no exception, either, as Foster, J. *et al.* (2007, p. 295) reaffirmed "[t]he overwhelmingly Anglocentric character of 'international' economic geography" in their citation patterns analysis for 1982–2006, just like Hassink, R. *et al.* (2019) did in their study of Anglo-American and non-Anglo-American economic geographies.

These findings highlight massive power asymmetries in international geography, favouring the Global North over the Global South and even some parts of the Global North over others. Hence, they align with another significant body of literature suggesting that dichotomous understandings of the world as the Global North versus the Global South may be an oversimplifying binary (Solarz, M.W. 2014; Clerc, P. 2020) given that Europe is not "a homogenous powerhouse exerting dominance elsewhere in the world" (Radcliffe, S.A. 2022, p. 22.). Instead, scholars in post-communist countries in the eastern half of Europe observe complex forms of 'Western' dominance (Timár, J. 2004; Gyuris, F. 2018; 2022; Bajerski, A. 2020), and researchers in the semi-peripheral countries be they located in Eastern (Gyuris, F. *et al.* 2024), Southern or South-western Europe (Paiva, D. and Roque de Oliveira, F. 2021), have been struggling with unequal power hierarchies since the very institutionalisation of Geography as a discipline in their countries relative to what Neubert, D. (2019) calls North Atlantic academia. Several authors emphasise Anglo-American dominance in international geography, even over French, German and Italian geographies (e.g. Bajerski, A. 2011; Jöns, H. and Freytag, T. 2016; Minca, C. 2018).

These power asymmetries are not only creating unjust situations for many scholars, especially those outside the UK and the US. They also have a detrimental impact on international geography as a whole, which becomes dominated by a relatively narrow range of Anglo-American epistemologies that easily sideline or overlook alternative epistemologies and create what Ndlovu-Gatsheni, S.J. (2021) calls a 'cognitive empire'. This kind of *epistemic injustice* (Fricker, M. 2007), frequently embodied as what Jazeel, T. (2016, 2019) calls 'authoritarian theorisation', can significantly decrease mainstream international geography's capacity to recognise, understand, explain and address pressing planetary social issues of our day, especially those occurring outside the global core and being driven by different mechanisms than what are prevailing in core areas. Hence, also in line with Mignolo, W.D. (2009) arguing for 'epistemic disobedience' against the homogenising impetus of Anglo-American theories, there is a rapidly increasing body of geographical literature urging for internationalising (Schelhaas, B. *et al.* 2020), worlding (Müller, M. 2021) and decolonising geography (Esson, J. *et al.* 2017; Radcliffe, S.A. 2017, 2022; Ferretti, F. 2020), that is, providing space for theories other than those prevailing in core areas, utilising local knowledge originating from different parts of the world, and braking with colonial-modern views implying that theories developed in specific locations are less 'relevant' or 'valuable' than others. By doing so, the goal is to create a 'pluriverse', "a world where many worlds fit" (Kothari, A. *et al.* 2019, p. xxviii), i.e. a cognitive space where different epistemologies and methodologies are equally welcome to appear and interact with each other.

Such goals are not easy to achieve, however. In addition to having the abilities of "effective multilingualism" (Schelhaas, B. *et al.* 2020, p. ix) and "multi-epistemic literacy" (Radcliffe, S.A. 2022, p. 216), the scholars aiming to create a 'pluriverse' also require theories and conceptual frameworks based on empirical findings derived from the diverse realities of different locations, including those outside the global core. Studying

other places may be the most powerful engine for creating other epistemologies. Opening up the horizon of scientific research in Economic Geography, for instance, necessitates the development of theories and vocabularies based not on the actual functioning of the economy in the United States or the United Kingdom – which, due to their situatedness (cf. Haraway, D.J. 1988) are prone to failing to grasp the complex realities and their different logics elsewhere adequately – , but a meticulous empirical investigation of various sites and the development of new theories based on that, i.e. *theorising back*.

That is why the GPN literature, which incorporated from the very beginning "bringing East Asia as an equally valid empirical site and an intellectual partner inside this theory development work" (Yeung, H.W. 2025, p. 13) and has been based to a significant extent on empirical findings about the functioning of Southeast Asia's production networks, can serve as a highly relevant research object in terms of how much it is characterised by traditional UK- and US-centrism or a more diverse global geography more in line with the initiative of 'worlding' geography as a discipline. Our concrete research questions address the unequal international spaces of writing, publishing, funding and referencing, examining the entire body of Scopus-indexed GPN literature and the top authors, the most-cited publications, and their citations.

1. *Unequal spaces of writing:* Do UK and US-affiliated authors dominate the GPN literature just as they do international geography in general? Which other geographical regions (if any) have contributed significantly to the GPN literature?

2. *Unequal spaces of research funding:* Which countries provide funding for the most studies on GPN?

3. *Unequal spaces of publishing:* Which countries host the leading publishing platforms of GPN literature?

4. *Unequal spaces of referencing:* From which countries do GPN publications attract the most citations?

Methodology

Our study is based on data derived from the Scopus database of the Elsevier group, which we selected for several reasons already discussed by several scholars (cf. Bajerski, A. 2020; Kubeš, J. and Kovács, Z. 2020; Assylkhanova, A. *et al.* 2024). First, the Scopus database is the most comprehensive global bibliographic database. It has the widest coverage of international academic journals over a long period, while also incorporating an extensive data collection of other document types. We regard that as critical, given that the most well-known seminal works of the GPN literature include diverse document types, from journal articles to books, which were necessary to include in our detailed analysis. Second, the indexing scheme of the Scopus database enables a systematic and comprehensive investigation of publications by their titles, abstracts, keywords, document types and funding sources.

Third, the Scopus database provides data on author affiliations by countries and institutions. We agree with Bajerski, A. (2020) that using affiliation data for identifying a scholar's geographical attachment may be burdened with some inaccuracy in case the country of affiliation differs from the country of one's birthplace, place of studies, previous workplaces or citizenship – which makes it harder to decide whether some authors should rather be regarded as UK/US or non-UK/non-US scholars. Nevertheless, we also share Bajerski, A. (2020)'s point that the probability of such a mismatch is rather marginal for countries that do not attract foreign scholars in huge numbers, which is the case for most of the universities in the Global South and the global semi-periphery. In other words, if our study reveals a relatively high share of non-UK and non-US authors in the GPN literature, it will be justified to claim that this share is not overestimated; it may even be higher, not lower, if the study focused on different dimensions of geographical belonging.

In the first step of our analysis, we retrieved data from the Scopus database on all publications that included the term 'global produc-

tion networks' – or its singularised or capitalised version – in their title, abstract or keywords (at least one of them). A leading figure in the GPN approach, Henry Yeung reports that much of the GPN 'thinking' originated with Dicken, P. *et al.* (2001), a study based on the collaborative work of the four authors at the National University of Singapore in 1997 (Yeung, H.W. 2025). Another distinguished representative of the approach, Neil M. Coe, also claims that it emerged in the early 2000s (Coe, N.M. 2021). Therefore, we selected 2000 as the starting date of our analysis. The closing date was 2024, the last full year before we conducted our examination in April and May 2025. A total of 1,593 publications met these criteria, and we built our database from their data. While the analysis of this database formed the backbone of our study, we also scrutinised the top authors (with 10 or more publications per person), the top 15 most-cited publications and the top publishing platforms separately.

Results

A general overview of publishing patterns: The rise of a research tradition

The term 'global production networks' first appeared in the title, abstract or keywords of a publication indexed in the Scopus database in 1993, in a conference paper titled *Technological advancement and the U.S. labour force: the case of the electronics industry* by Jerry R. Sheehan at the Office of Technology Assessment in Washington, D.C. (Sheehan, J.R. 1993). The second publication, and the first journal article, was published four years later in the journal *Production and Operations Management* by Kasra Ferdows at the Georgetown University School of Business Administration, also in Washington, D.C. (Ferdows, K. 1997). Yet, the Scopus database contains only 7 relevant publications from the 1990s and another from 2000.

In line with Coe, N.M.'s (2021) and Yeung, H.W.'s (2025) recollections about the emergence of the GPN approach, a specialised scientific *conceptual framework* within the broader domain of academic studies interested in some way in global production networks as *a research object*, the trend began to shift after 2000, as the number of relevant publications increased to 5 in 2001 and 7 in 2002. The pace of growth significantly accelerated after 2003, exceeding the threshold of 10 publications per year in 2004 for the first time, followed by a shift to more than 20 publications per year in 2006. Although the numbers fluctuated between 2006 and 2012, the latter date marked the beginning of an enduring growth, reaching its peak in 2022 (136). Although the values slightly declined in 2023 and 2024 (124 in both years), this does not yet stand out from the more minor annual fluctuations typical of the previous period (*Figure 1*). Moreover, the amounts calculated for five-year periods continue to increase, from 512 publications between 2015 and 2019 to 622 between 2020 and 2024 (*Table 1*).

With a slight delay, the annual number of citations to these publications shows a clear trend of accelerating growth, crossing the ten-unit threshold in 2002, the one-hundred-unit threshold in 2005, the one-thousand-unit threshold in 2013, and the five-thousand-unit threshold in 2025. The doubling time from 1,000 to 2,000 was 5 years, while it was only 4 years from 2,000 to 4,000. A comparison of the five consecutive five-year periods between

Table 1. The number of publications about global production networks and the number of citations of these publications for the five-year periods between 2000 and 2024

Indicator	2000–2004	2005–2009	2010–2014	2015–2019	2020–2024	*2000–2024*
Number of publications	31	155	273	512	622	*1,593*
Number of citations	112	1,595	5,035	12,529	22,943	*42,214*

Source: Authors' analysis of Scopus data.

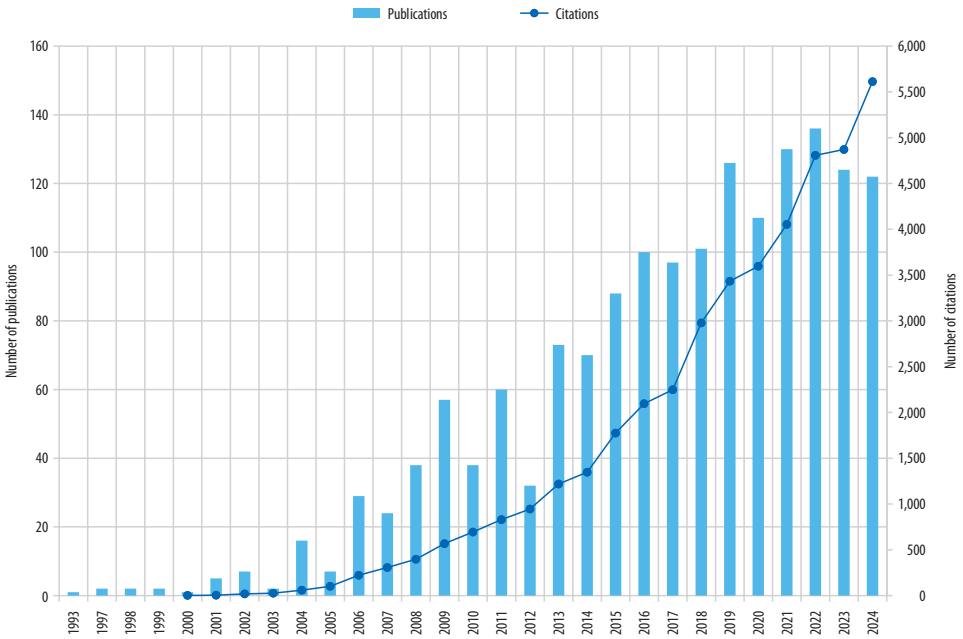

Fig. 1. The number of publications about global production networks (N = 1,600) and the number of citations of these publications (N = 42,214) between 1993 and 2024, in chronological order. *Source:* Authors' analysis of Scopus data.

2000 and 2024 reveals remarkable growth of above 14, 3.2, 2.5 and 1.8 times in chronological order. That means 54 percent of all citations of the GPN publications (22,943 out of 42,214) happened between 2020 and 2024.

As for document types, journal articles (1,128) clearly dominate the list of publications. They are followed by book chapters, with a significant lag, but still in significant quantity (220). In third place are conference papers (140), followed by book reviews (61) and books (34). Scopus also includes other document types, such as notes (13), conference reviews (8), editorials (8), errata (4), short surveys (2), and a retracted publication (1), but their total number is marginal. Although the relative share of each document type has changed to some extent throughout the five-year intervals, these changes were mainly fluctuations within a relatively narrow range rather than either massive or trend-like shifts. The values ranged from 59.4 percent to 72.5 percent for journal articles, from 12.9 percent to 16.8 percent for book chapters and from 1.5 percent to 3.2 percent for books. One can observe a trend-like decline in conference papers (from 14.2% in 2005–2009 to values between 7% and 8% after 2015) and book reviews (from 6.5% in 2000–2004 to values below 4% after 2015) (*Table 2*).

Research fields, keywords, topics

The publications can also be analysed according to the academic field of research. The Scopus database categorises 27 subject areas, and each publication is assigned to at least one of these categories. The 1,593 articles examined in our study have a total of 2,994 assignments. One-third of them (33.7%) belong to the social sciences; almost one-third of them (32.0%) to economics and business-related disciplines, namely Economics, Economet-

Table 2. The number of publications about global production networks by document type between 2000 and 2024

Publications	2000–2004		2005–2009		2010–2014		2015–2019		2020–2024		*2000–2024*	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Article	21	67.7	92	59.4	190	69.6	349	68.2	451	72.5	*1,103*	*69.2*
Book chapter	4	12.9	26	16.8	36	13.2	72	14.1	82	13.2	*220*	*13.8*
Conference paper	3	9.7	22	14.2	28	10.3	41	8.0	45	7.2	*139*	*8.7*
Review	2	6.5	7	4.5	12	4.4	20	3.9	20	3.2	*61*	*3.8*
Book	1	3.2	3	1.9	4	1.5	15	2.9	11	1.8	*34*	*2.1*
Other	0	0.0	5	3.2	3	1.1	15	2.9	13	2.1	*36*	*2.3*
Subtotal	*31*	*100.0*	*155*	*100.0*	*273*	*100.0*	*512*	*100.0*	*622*	*100.0*	*1,593*	*100.0*

Source: Authors' analysis of Scopus data.

rics and Finance (17.3%) as well as Business, Management and Accounting (14.7%); one-eighth of them (14.7%) to earth, planetary and environmental sciences, 7.1 percent to Engineering and 12.5 percent to more than a dozen of other areas, each adding up less than 3 percent of the total amount (*Figure 2*).

The keywords of publications enabled a more precise thematic analysis and a graphic representation, a word cloud, which we produced with Microsoft Power Bi. In the first step, we cleaned the database by combining keywords that differed only in (i) the use of singular or plural, (ii) the use of British or US spelling, (iii) the use of lowercase and uppercase letters, or (iv) typos. As the quantitative investigation of this adjusted database revealed, 'global production networks' is by far the most frequently occurring keyword in the 1,593 publications examined, as it appears in 60.6 percent of the publications (966) (*Figure 3*). This high occurrence is not surprising, given that we selected publications for our analysis where 'global production networks' appeared either among the publication's keywords, in its title, or in its abstract. However, this result also highlights a significant methodological detail: we were able to identify nearly 40% of the publications included in our study by extending the search for the term 'global production networks' to the titles and abstracts of the publications, in addition to their keywords.

Moving beyond 'global production networks', the list of the 50 most frequent keywords ranges from globalisation (183) to industrial policy (27). It includes several terms closely related to, or even quasi-synonymous with, global production networks, e.g. global value chains (153), production networks (117), production systems (83), supply chains (34), and global commodity chains (29). It is a remarkable sign of the central role the analysis of stakeholders and their networks play in the functioning of the global production networks that governance approach (70), strategic cou-

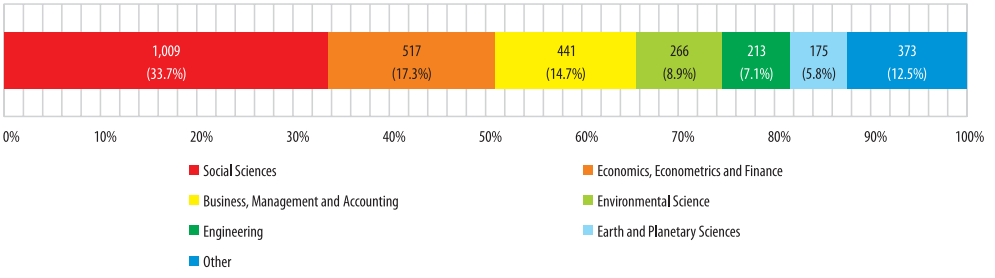

Fig. 2. The share of publications about global production networks by academic subject area (N = 2,993) between 2000 and 2024. *Source:* Authors' analysis of Scopus data.

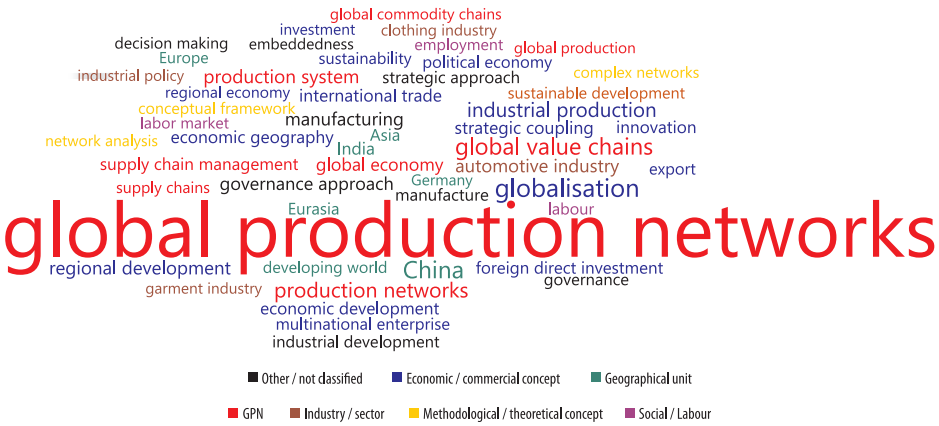

Fig. 3. The word cloud of the 50 most frequent keywords in publications about global production networks between 2000 and 2024. *Source:* Authors' analysis of Scopus data.

pling (62), strategic approach (49), multinational enterprise (46), governance (45), decision-making (35) and network analysis (30) are frequently used keywords, and concepts related to the labour market also are: labour (41), employment (36), labour market (34).

Regarding the sectoral and geographical focus of publications, it is notable that industrial production (107), manufacturing (75), automotive industry (75), industrial development (44), clothing industry (31) and garment industry (27) are among the top 50 keywords, whereas the service sector is not. China (166) is by far the most frequently mentioned geographical region among the keywords, followed by India (60), Asia (48), Eurasia (47), the developing world (40), Europe (36) and Germany (29) – which implies a more substantial research interest in Asia and Europe than in the rest of the world, including the Americas and Africa. Meanwhile, the frequent occurrence of geographical regions and outright 'spatial' terms among the keywords (e.g. regional development: 79, economic geography: 59, foreign direct investment: 51, regional economy: 33) indicates the importance of spatial/geographical approaches in the GPN literature. In addition to all this, the simultaneous occurrence of concepts related to the (e.g. corporate) microscale and the (global, international) macroscale among the most common keywords clearly reflects the fundamental conceptual feature of the GPN approach, the intention to connect and provide a complex explanation of processes taking place at the micro-, meso- and macroscales.

Geographies of authorship: European, instead of Anglo-American, dominance

The geographical distribution of publications, based on author affiliations, reveals remarkable proportions. The United Kingdom leads the list, but its share is less than one-sixth (15.4%), and the United States contributes 10.4 percent. Thus, authors with British and US affiliations make up only one-quarter (25.8%) of the total amount. The USA even fails to take second position on the list, as it is surpassed by Germany (14.2%). The combined share of Mainland China (8.1%) and Hong Kong (1.5%) amounts to 9.6 percent. More than half of the top 20 countries (11) are located in Europe. Australia (4.6%) and Singapore (3.7%) are placed in 5th and 6th positions. Japan is also represented (1.3%),

and three countries commonly classified as part of the Global South are among the top 20 (India: 2.2%, Indonesia: 1.4%, Brazil: 1.3%) (*Figure 4, Table 3*).

Taking a broader look will reveal a firm European dominance, or Eurocentrism in classical terms, as more than half (53.0%) of the publications have authors affiliated with European countries. With a significant lag, Asia holds the second position, accounting for roughly one-quarter (23.7%) of the publications. The share of North America is only 13.5 percent, whereas that of Australia and Oceania reaches 5.3 percent. Central and South America (2.6%) and Africa (2.0%) are significantly underrepresented, particularly in relation to their share of the global population. In summary, 73 sovereign countries officially recognised by the United Nations have at least one GPN publication in Scopus, which means that 120 countries (62.2%), almost two-thirds of the world's countries, do not have any (*Table 4*), and most of the countries of Africa belong to this latter group (see *Figure 4*). Fifteen countries have only one article, and ten countries have only two. Only 42 countries have five or more articles, and only 33 have at least 10 publications.

Geographies of funding: Eurocentrism and a strong China

Another geographically relevant aspect is the spatiality of funding sources. For the 1,593 publications of the GPN literature, the Scopus database includes data about the funding source in 766 cases. Since one publication may rely on funding from more than one source, whereas many publications include no information about funding, we can only draw limited conclusions from these data, exercising great caution. Nevertheless, the numbers reveal remarkable patterns, which strongly correlate with the authors' geographical distribution (*Figure 5*).

Altogether, more than half of the funding sources (56.0%) are located in Europe, where Germany (16.6%), the United Kingdom (15.3%) and the institutions and programmes of the European Union (13.1%) have the highest contribution, leaving only 11.1 percent for the rest of the continent. Asia has less representation. Although China has the single highest share among all countries in the world (25.3%), other Asian countries have much lower shares (Singapore: 3.4%, Japan: 1.4%, each other Asian country below

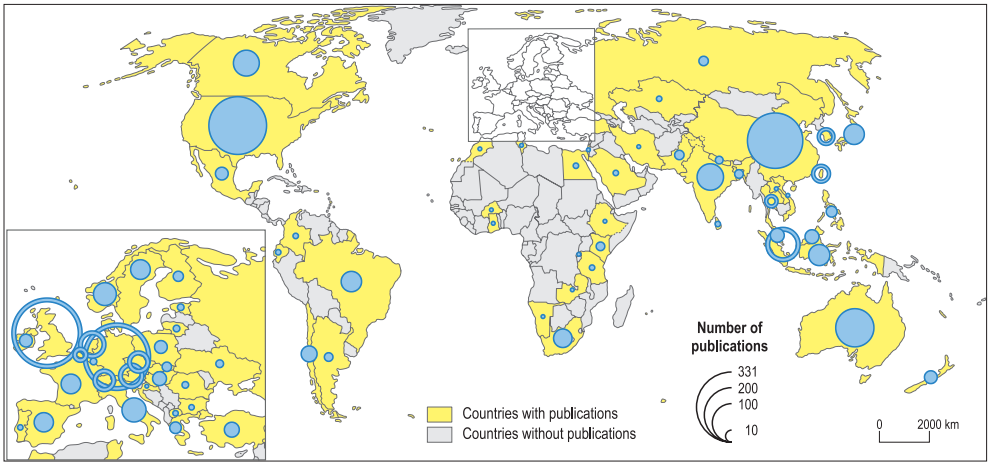

Fig. 4. The number of GPN publications by country according to author affiliations between 2000 and 2024.
Source: Authors' analysis of Scopus data.

Table 3. The top 20 countries by number of GPN publications based on author affiliations between 2000 and 2024

Country	N	%	Country	N	%
United Kingdom	331	15.4	Austria	43	2.0
Germany	305	14.2	Italy	39	1.8
United States	224	10.4	Norway	35	1.6
China*	206	9.6	Switzerland	34	1.6
Australia	98	4.6	Czechia	33	1.5
Singapore	79	3.7	Indonesia	30	1.4
Netherlands	50	2.3	Brazil	28	1.3
India	47	2.2	Japan	28	1.3
Canada	45	2.1	France	26	1.2
Denmark	44	2.1	Sweden	26	1.2

*Including Hong Kong. *Source:* Authors' analysis of Scopus data.

Table 4. The number and share of GPN publications by geographical macroregions based on author affiliations between 2000 and 2024

Macroregion	N	%
Europe	1,107	53.0
UK	*331*	*15.4*
Non-UK	*776*	*37.2*
Asia	494	23.7
North America	281	13.5
USA	*224*	*10.4*
Australia and Oceania	110	5.3
South America	54	2.6
Africa	41	2.0
Countries of the world		
represented	*73*	*37.8*
not represented	*120*	*62.2*

Source: Authors' analysis of Scopus data.

0.6%). The United States (3.5%) and North America in general (5.1%) have a low proportion. Interestingly, the share of Central and South American countries is comparable to that of North America (Brazil: 2.5%, Chile: 1.4%, Argentina: 0.1%). Only a few Asian and no African countries of the Global South appear in the list (Indonesia: 0.5%, India: 0.1%), which also includes some international institutions not assigned to a single country with marginal values (Asian Development Bank: 0.4%, World Bank Group: 0.3%, Consortium of International Agricultural Research Centers: 0.1%).

Funding sources have a diverse structure, ranging from private foundations to universities and national public institutions, but national and international (EU) government bodies are by far the most prominent. In addition to the EU, the four most important funding institutions are the National Natural Science Foundation of China (10.4%), the German Research Foundation (Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft, DFG, 8.4%), the Ministry of Science and Technology of the People's Republic of China (6.0%) and the

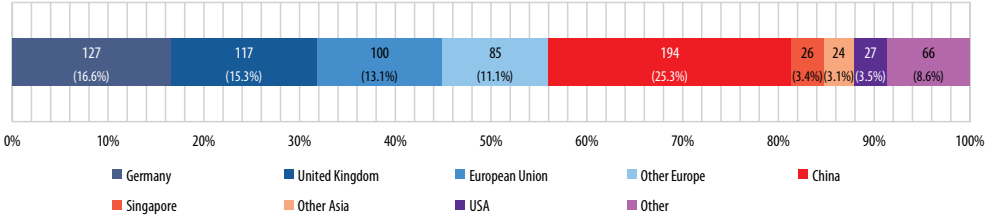

Fig. 5. The share of GPN publications by the geographical affiliation of the funding source (N = 766) between 2000 and 2024. *Source:* Authors' analysis of Scopus data.

Economic and Social Research Council in the UK (5.1%).

Top authors: European and Asian dominance

Data from the Scopus database enables the analysis of the most prolific authors. The ten scholars with the most first-authored publications about global production networks are presented in *Table 5.* The list is heterogeneous in both geographical and disciplinary terms; however, 7 out of the 10 scholars primarily identify themselves as geographers, according to their official personal profiles on the websites of their universities or research institutes. They mainly apply the GPN approach in the style of the Manchester and Singapore schools. The other three authors represent the disciplines of Development Studies, Economics, and, in one case, Engineering/Management, which is, however, the author who leads the list – with most of his works not applying Economic Geography's GPN approach but investigating global production networks from the perspective of product technology and management.

According to their affiliation data in Scopus, 7 out of 10 authors published at least some of their relevant works while working in Europe, particularly in Germany (3), the UK (2), and, remarkably, Czechia (2). Three scholars published on GPN while affiliated with either Singapore or Hong Kong-based universities. In contrast, the US and Australia appear in just one case, and a single university in Chile represents the rest of the world. Gender relations are severely unbalanced, with eight male scholars and only two female scholars in the fourth and shared eighth places.

Table 5. The top 10 GPN authors according to first-authored publications between 2000 and 2024

Name *(Discipline)*	Affiliation(s)*	Number of first-authored publications
Schuh, Günther *(Engineering, Management)*	Fraunhofer Institute for Production Technology (IPT) (Aachen, Germany)	24
Coe, Neil M. *(Geography)*	University of Manchester (UK) National University of Singapore (Singapore)	22
Yeung, Henry W.C. *(Geography)*	National University of Singapore (Singapore)	21
Yang, Chun *(Geography)*	University of Hong Kong (China) The Chinese University of Hong Kong (China) Hong Kong Baptist University (China)	14
Athukorala, Prema-chandra *(Economics)*	Australian National University (Canberra, Australia)	10
Blažek, Jiří *(Geography)*	Charles University (Prague, Czechia)	10
Scholvin, Sören *(Geography)*	University of Hannover (Germany) Universidad Católica del Norte (Antofagasta, Chile)	10
Pavlínek, Petr *(Geography)*	University of Nebraska (Omaha, USA) Charles University (Prague, Czechia)	9
Barrientos, Stephanie *(Development Studies)*	University of Sussex (Brighton, UK) University of Manchester (UK)	9
Franz, Martin *(Geography)*	University of Marburg (Germany) University of Osnabrück (Germany)	8

*As given in Scopus-indexed GPN publications between 2000 and 2024, in chronological order. *Source:* Authors' analysis of Scopus data.

Most-cited publications: Manchester and Singapore as ultimate centres of calculation

In addition to the top authors, the most referenced publications can also be analysed using Scopus data. A closer examination of these publications is justified by the highly unequal distribution of citations for GPN publications. In fact, 284 GPN publications (17.8%) did not attract any Scopus-indexed citations until the end of 2024; 145 publications (9.1%) received only one citation, and 222 (13.9%) received only two citations. Meanwhile, less than half of the publications, 683 (42.9%), were cited at least ten times, while 198 (12.4%) were cited at least fifty times. Even among the 50 most-cited publications, with a minimum of 141 citations, a select group of highly influential works stands out (*Figure 6*). The top 15 publications, which account for only 1 percent of the entire body of literature, garnered 41 percent of all citations (17,461).

As *Table 6* indicates, the most cited publication was an early ground-breaking seminal work on the GPN approach, *Global production networks and the analysis of economic development* in the journal *Review of International Political Economy* in 2002 (1,673 citations until 2024), written by Jeffrey Henderson, Peter Dicken, Martin Hess, Neil Coe and Henry Yeung as pioneers of the new approach (Henderson, J. *et al.* 2002). In addition, the following two studies reached the imaginary podium, almost in a tie: *'Globalizing' regional development: A global production networks perspective*, an article the same authors published in the *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* just two years later, in 2004 (1,170 citations) (Coe, N.M. *et al.* 2004); and *Global production networks: Realizing the potential* in the 2008 volume of the *Journal of Economic Geography* by Neil Coe, Peter Dicken and Martin Hess (1,114 citations) (Coe, N.M. *et al.* 2008). Not surprisingly, most of the top-cited publications were writ-

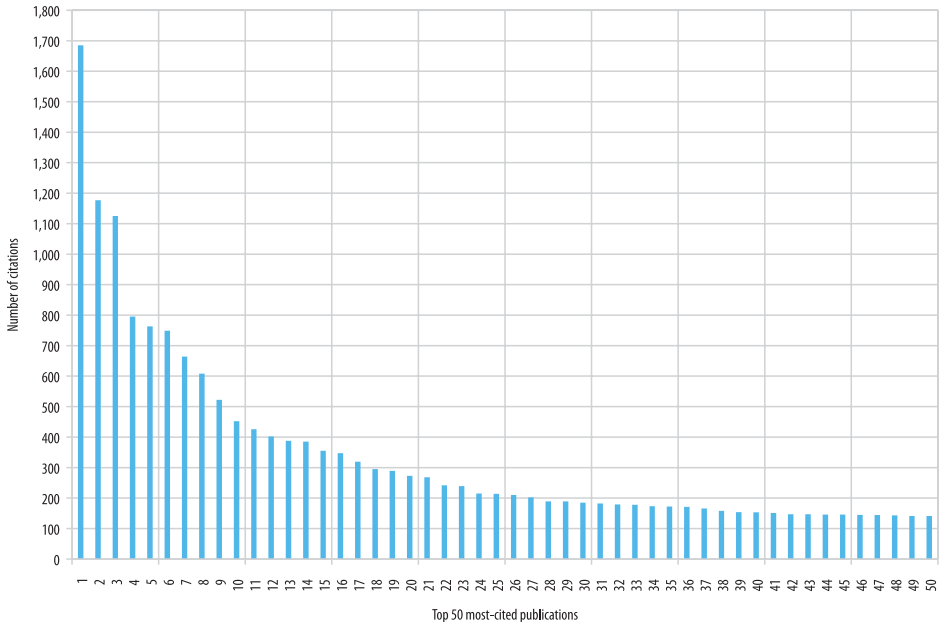

Fig. 6. The number of citations for the top 50 most-cited publications about global production networks between 2000 and 2024. *Source:* Authors' analysis of Scopus data.

Table 6. The top 15 GPN publications by number of citations between 2000 and 2024

Rank	Publication	2000–2004	2005–2009	2010–2014	2015–2019	2020–2024	*2000–2024*
1	Global production networks and the analysis of economic development (Henderson, J. *et al.* 2002)	25	245	377	549	477	*1,673*
2	'Globalizing' regional development: A global production networks perspective (Coe, N.M. *et al.* 2004)	0	180	302	365	323	*1,170*
3	Global production networks: Realizing the potential (Coe, N.M. *et al.* 2008)	0	26	318	451	319	*1,114*
4	'Spatial' relationships? Towards a reconceptualization of embeddedness (Hess, M. 2004)	4	117	197	238	231	*787*
5	Global production networks, knowledge diffusion, and local capability formation (Ernst, D. and Kim, L. 2002)	10	107	235	226	179	*757*
6	Global Production Networks: Theorizing Economic Development in an Interconnected World (Coe, N.M. and Yeung, H.W. 2015)	0	0	0	249	488	*737*
7	Economic and social upgrading in global production networks: A new paradigm for a changing world (Barrientos, S. *et al.* 2011)	0	0	41	255	362	*658*
8	The transport geography of logistics and freight distribution (Hesse, M. and Rodrigue, J.-P. 2004)	2	76	137	211	175	*601*
9	Toward a dynamic theory of global production networks (Yeung, H.W. and Coe, N.M. 2015)	0	1	0	217	289	*507*
10	Global production networks and the extractive sector: Governing resource-based development (Bridge, G. 2008)	0	9	90	156	194	*449*
11	Political contestation in global production networks (Levy, D.L. 2008)	0	20	107	171	124	*422*
12	Regional development and the competitive dynamics of global production networks: An East Asian perspective (Yeung, H.W. 2009)	0	3	107	158	115	*383*
13	Constrained agency? Re-evaluating the geographies of labour (Coe, N.M. and Jordhus-Lier, D.C. 2011)	0	0	49	141	192	*382*
14	Global value chains: A review of the multi-disciplinary literature (Kano, L. *et al.* 2020)	0	0	0	0	380	*380*
15	Beyond strategic coupling: Reassessing the firm-region nexus in global production networks (MacKinnon, D. 2012)	0	0	32	153	166	*351*
	Total of top 15 publications	*41*	*784*	*1,992*	*3,540*	*4,014*	*10,371*
	Relative to all citations for GPN literature, %	*36.6*	*49.2*	*39.6*	*28.3*	*17.5*	*24.6*

Source: Authors' analysis of Scopus data.

ten or co-authored by leading representatives of the GPN approach.

The temporal dimension has an evident influence on the results, as studies published earlier had more time to attract citations in the time frame we examined. Nonetheless, if we scrutinise how many citations each publication received within any five-year period,

there will be no change in the leader's position, and all three publications presented before will remain among the top 5. In addition to them, the newly emerging works will be *Global Production Networks: Theorizing Economic Development in an Interconnected World*, the 2015 seminal book by Neil Coe and Henry Yeung with Oxford University Press (Coe, N.M. and Yeung, H.W. 2015), going up to the second position, and a review article from 2020, *Global value chains: A review of the multi-disciplinary literature*, published by Liena Kano, Eric Tsang and Henry Yeung in the *Journal of International Business Studies* (Kano, L. *et al.* 2020). The latter publication set the record for receiving the most citations in a single year, with 144 in 2024.

In the next step of our study, we examined the geographical affiliation of the authorship of the 15 most-cited publications. Since the number of co-authors per publication varies over a broad range, we considered each publication as one unit, which we divided equally among the co-authors. Hence, if the publication was written by five co-authors, each co-author's country of affiliation was counted as 0.2 units. For a single-authored article, the author's affiliation was counted as one unit. Finally, the subtotal for the 15 publications was 15 units.

The results reveal remarkable geographical disparities, which can be interpreted from different perspectives. On the one hand, roughly half (49.8%) of the affiliations are in Europe, followed by Asia with a significant lag (30.2%), and North America only takes the third position (20.0%). That suggests a massive European dominance. On the other hand, the combined share of the United Kingdom (34.2%) and the United States (17.8%) accounts for 52.0 percent, which is more than half of the entire sample, and Singapore contributes an additional 26.9 percent. Consequently, these three countries significantly dominate the authorship of the top 15 publications, accounting for a share of 78.1 percent. Only 15.6 percent remains for the rest of Europe (Germany: 10.0%, Norway: 3.3%, Switzerland: 2.2%), and 3.3 percent for Asian countries, excluding Singapore (South Korea: 3.3%). Africa, Central and South America, as well as Australia and Oceania, are absolutely missing from the list (*Figure 7*). In fact, two institutions, the University of Manchester (27.6%) and the National University of Singapore (26.9%), as two powerful international centres of the GPN approach, account for more than half of the top 15 affiliations (54.4%).

However, the authorship of the publications citing these top 15 publications has a significantly different geographical distribution from that of the top 15 publications themselves. The first authors of the 10,371 citing publications have a total of 10,788 geographical affiliations (in terms of country). There, the share of the United Kingdom decreases to 20.2 percent and that of the United States to 11.0 percent. Meanwhile, the rest of Europe has a share of 35.0 percent, with Germany reaching 9.1 percent and each other country falling short of 3.5 percent. The contribution of Asia increases to 20.7 percent,

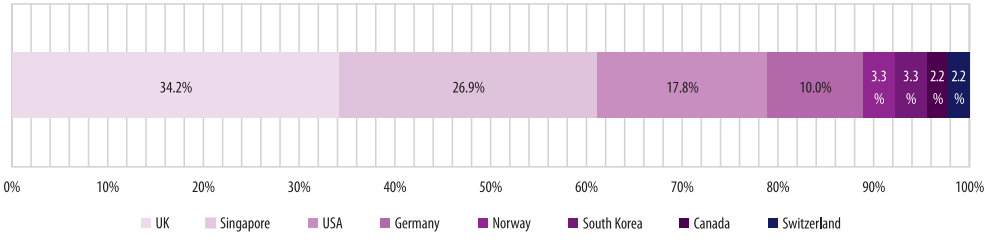

Fig. 7. The geographical affiliation of the authors of the 15 most-cited GPN publications between 2000 and 2024 (the authorship of co-authored publications is equally divided between the co-authors).
Source: Authors' analysis of Scopus data.

with only 3.7 percent coming from Singapore, and Australia and Oceania add up to another 5.0 percent. Yet, Central and South America (3.4%) and Africa (1.6%) remain massively marginalised (*Figure 8*).

Leading publishing platforms: British hegemony reloaded

To scrutinise the publishing spaces of the GPN literature, we first examined journals that had published at least two articles on the topic. This list included 138 journals from 18 countries, which hosted 914 publications, i.e. 57.4 percent of the entire GPN literature indexed in Scopus. The United Kingdom (45.7%) leads the list far ahead of everyone else and, together with the USA (13.5%), accounts for 59.2 percent of the total volume. The closest competitors are the Netherlands (8.9%), Switzerland (8.6%), Germany (8.5%) and China (including Hong Kong) (5.5%). All other countries have a rate below 2.5 percent, and the Global South has a combined share of only 2.7 percent (India: 2.3%, Brazil: 0.2%, South Africa: 0.2%) (*Figure 9*).

Switching the focus to the journals that published at least ten GPN articles between 2000 and 2024 reveals an even higher degree of geographical concentration. These 22 journals still account for 28.1 percent of the total number of publications, which translates to 447 publications. More than half, 59.3 percent, of the 447 publications were published in journals based in the UK. US journals accounted for 15.0 percent, the rest of Europe for 20.8 percent, and China for 4.9 percent (*Figure 10, Table 7*).

Results about East Central Europe: A global semi-periphery makes itself visible through knowledge brokers in the global core?

In addition to revealing the major patterns of the international GPN literature, we were also interested in the related bibliometric landscapes in East Central Europe (ECE). ECE has been defined in manifold ways during the history of geography (Jobbitt, S. and Győri, R. 2020), and the imaginations of the entire central and eastern parts of Europe are dynamically changing in time and may have different meanings from the perspective of people in different places (Nováček, A. *et al.* 2025). In this study, we defined the region as Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Czechia, Slovakia, Hungary and Romania. The Scopus database includes 68 publications with at least one co-author from this region, out of which 57 publications have a first author from ECE. These numbers equal 4.3 percent and 3.6 percent of the entire international GPN literature in Scopus. That means a moderate share relative to the United Kingdom, Germany and some other globally leading countries in this strand of research. The position of ECE is even weaker in terms of funding, as its share of the global funding sources, as

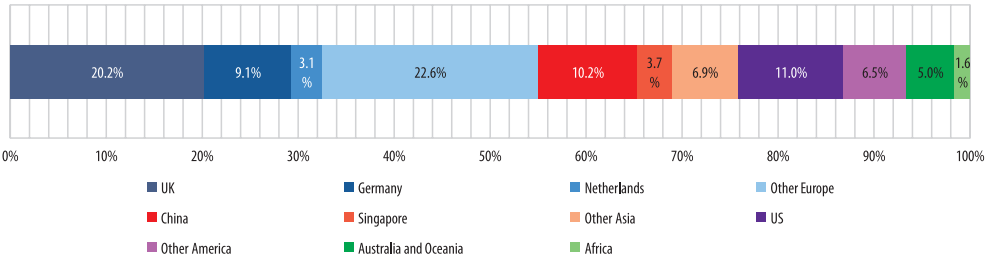

Fig. 8. The share of publications citing the 15 most-cited GPN publications by the geographical affiliation of their first authors (N = 10,788) between 2000 and 2024. *Source:* Authors' analysis of Scopus data.

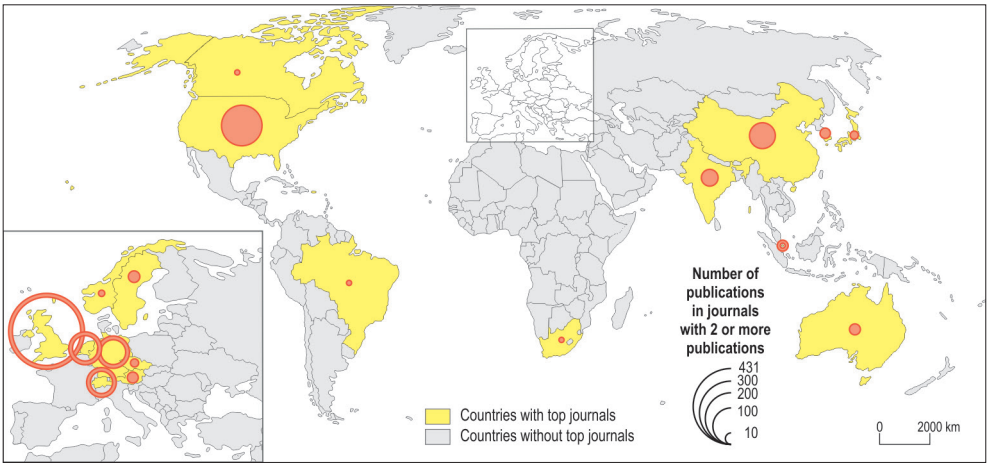

Fig. 9. Unequal publishing spaces: The number of publications in journals with at least two GPN publications by country (N = 914) between 2000 and 2024. *Source:* Authors' analysis of Scopus data.

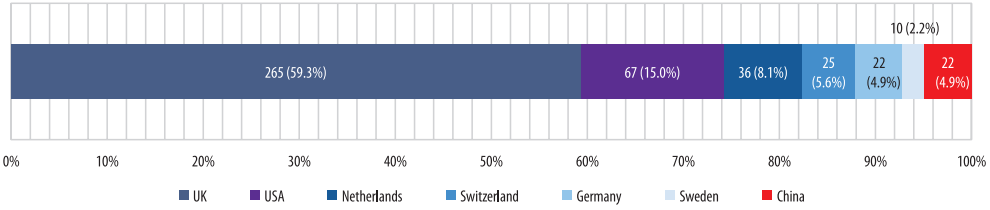

Fig. 10. The share of publications in journals with at least ten GPN publications by country (N = 447) between 2000 and 2024. *Source:* Authors' analysis of Scopus data.

indicated in the Scopus database for GPN publications, is only 2.5 percent. This is reflected in the fact that 15 publications were funded by grant agencies in Czechia and three in Hungary. However, given that ECE accounts for only 1.1 percent of the world's population, the region is overrepresented relative to most other parts of the globe.

To gain a more sophisticated understanding of the GPN literature in ECE, we focused on the 57 first-authored publications, as the other 10 articles (adding up only less than 15 percent of the broader sample) mainly included only one ECE scholar out of several co-authors, who, in most cases, was neither a first, last, nor corresponding author. Also, where the first author of a GPN publication was from ECE, most of the co-authors (in most cases, all of them) were also from ECE. As institutions in the region run several Scopus-indexed journals that publish articles in one of the local languages, the 57-unit sample includes some publications written in Czech (3; 5.3%), Hungarian (2; 3.5%) and Slovakian (1; 1.8%). Still, Scopus-indexed GPN publications from ECE were predominantly published in the English language (51; 89.5%), meaning they are accessible to an international readership with English proficiency, at least in terms of language.

Table 7. The number of GPN publications in journals with at least ten GPN publications between 2000 and 2024

Journal	Country	Number of publications
Geoforum	UK	45
Journal of Economic Geography	UK	43
Procedia CIRP	Netherlands	36
Global Networks	UK	33
Economic Geography	USA	30
Environment and Planning A	UK	30
Regional Studies	UK	29
ZWF Zeitschrift für Wirtschaftlichen Fabrikbetrieb	Germany	22
Review of International Political Economy	UK	18
Cambridge Journal of Regions, Economy and Society	UK	15
European Planning Studies	UK	15
Competition and Change	USA	14
Extractive Industries and Society	UK	13
Progress in Human Geography	UK	13
Sustainability	Switzerland	13
Dili Xuebao – Acta Geographica Sinica	China	12
Economic Geography (MDPI)	Switzerland	12
Growth and Change	USA	12
European Urban and Regional Studies	UK	11
Geography Compass	USA	11
Geografiska Annaler, Series B: Human Geography	Sweden	10
Progress in Geography	China	10

Source: Authors' analysis of Scopus data.

While the first publication, *Tendencies in the development of logistics services providers* from Gheorghe Caraiani in Bucharest, dates back to 2008 (Caraiani, G. 2008), only zero to three relevant publications appeared per year between 2009 and 2015. The take-off was the second half of the 2010s. Since 2016, the number of new publications per year has ranged between four and seven, except in 2020, when only two publications were released.

Within ECE, the geographical distribution of GPN publications is highly unequal. According to the first author's affiliation, more than half of them (52.6%) were published in Czechia, with Hungary and Poland tied for second place (15.8%) with a significant gap. Lithuania (7.0%), Romania and Slovakia (each at 3.5%), and Estonia (1.8%) are also represented in the list, while the other ECE countries are not (*Table 8*). In fact, this high degree of geographical concentration becomes even more remarkable considering that almost half of the relevant literature originates within ECE from academic institutions in Prague (49.1%), predominantly the Geography Section in Charles University, with all other towns lying below 10 percent, and only Debrecen (on second place with 8.8%), Cracow, Vilnius, Budapest and Warsaw exceeding 5 percent.

Even more than on the global scale, a small number of scholars made a decisive contribution to GPN literature in ECE. Among the 32 scholars who were the first authors of at least one GPN publication in Scopus, only 6 scholars were first authors of more than one publication, and 5 of those 6 scholars have an affiliation in Czechia: four in Prague (Jiří Blážek, Petr Pavlínek, Jan Jarolímek and Jana Vlčková), one in Ostrava (Jan Ženka). The exceptional case is Ernő Molnár from the University of Debrecen, Hungary, who stands in third place with 5 publications. Jiří Blážek and Petr Pavlínek, who also belong to the top 10 most prolific GPN authors globally (see *Table 5*), were the first authors

Table 8. The number of GPN publications from first authors in East Central Europe by country and the citations they received between 2008 and 2024

Country of first author	Number of publications	%	Citations received	%
Czechia	30	52.6	823	76.8
Prague	*28*	*49.1*	*759*	*70.8*
Pavlínek, P. and Blážek, J.	*19*	*33.3*	*729*	*68.0*
Poland	9	15.8	145	13.5
Hungary	9	15.8	65	6.1
Lithuania	4	7.0	19	1.8
Estonia	1	1.8	12	1.1
Slovakia	2	3.5	5	0.5
Romania	2	3.5	3	0.3
Total	*57*	*100.0*	*1,072*	*100.0*

Source: Authors' analysis of Scopus data.

of one-third (33.3%) of all GPN publications from ECE, and each of them had at least as many publications of that kind as the entire national scholarly collective in any ECE country but Czechia. In this sense, personal networks with global centres of academic knowledge production seem crucial, as Petr Pavlínek is also affiliated with the University of Nebraska in Omaha, US, and most of the other Czech scholars on the list are working in the same department with him in Prague.

The high degree of thematic concentration is also remarkable. Among the 15 most-cited publications, eight explicitly addressed the automotive industry, the backbone of the region's economy (Pavlínek, P. and Ženka, J. 2011; Pavlínek, P. 2016, 2017, 2018, 2022, 2023; Pavlínek, P. and Žižalová, P. 2016; Molnár, E. *et al.* 2020), five regional competitiveness and innovation more generally (Blažek, J. 2012; Ženka, J. *et al.* 2014; Blažek, J. and Csank, P. 2016; Dzwigol, H. *et al.* 2016; Grodzicki, M.J. and Geodecki, T. 2016), and only two publications focused on either theoretical-conceptual issues of GPN typology (Blažek, J. 2016) or urban economic geography from a GPN perspective (Molnár, E. *et al.* 2018). (The latter appears to have emerged as a research tradition especially in Hungary, cf. Nagy, E. *et al.* 2021.)

If the GPN publication space in ECE is uneven, the landscape of citations is even more. The 57 Scopus-indexed GPN publications with an ECE first author attracted 1,072 citations in Scopus. 76.8 percent of them were received by publications with a first author from Czechia, 70.8 percent in Prague, and 68.0 percent by the first-authored publications of Petr Pavlínek (48.6%) and Jiří Blážek (19.4%). Relative to these numbers, even the shares of Poland (13.5%) and Hungary (6.1%) seem marginal, with any other ECE country failing to achieve a share of 2 percent (see *Table 8*).

The publishing spaces for ECE authors in GPN are especially asymmetrical and they reflect a firm Anglophone dominance. The 57 publications were published in 42 academic journals and three books with international publishing houses. Only 41.4 percent of those publishing platforms are located in ECE. Instead, the United Kingdom (25.9%) and the United States (15.5%) take the lead before Czechia (12.1%), Hungary (10.3%) and Poland (8.6%). Non-Anglophone 'Western' countries (Germany, Switzerland, the Netherlands and Norway) are also represented, with a combined share of 15.5 percent, and one study was published in India. The two leading publishing platforms, *European Planning Studies* and *Journal of Economic Geography*, with four

publications each, are affiliated with the UK. Among the eight platforms where at least two publications were published, three are located in the UK (*European Planning Studies, Journal of Economic Geography, European Urban and Regional Studies*), 1–1 in Czechia (*Geografie-Sbornik CGS*), the US (*Economic Geography*), Germany (*ZFW – Advances in Economic Geography*), Estonia (*Halduskultuur*) and Hungary (*Területi Statisztika*); thus, only three of them are in the ECE region (*Table 9*). Finally, an astonishing 50.8 percent of all citations that GPN publications with a first author in ECE received were attracted by publications on British platforms, and 23.8 percent on US platforms – with another 11.0 percent of the rest also going to 'Western' platforms.

Conclusions and discussion

The last quarter-century has witnessed the rise of a new research tradition, which focuses on global production networks. It is unclear whether the number of publications is still increasing or has roughly reached its peak; however, the number of citations continues to grow dynamically and at an accelerating rate. This research field has evolved into a truly multidisciplinary domain, where social and economic sciences predominate, and earth and environmental sciences are also represented, with Geography playing a particularly critical role. Some of the literature focusing on global production networks is not directly related to the GPN approach of the Manchester and Singapore schools in the narrow sense; however, most of the literature relies on this approach. The major focus in the literature lies in the international operations and strategies of companies, along with their implications for global and regional economic development and employment. There is a marked interest in the industrial sector (especially in the automotive industry) and the spatial dimension.

The GPN literature has a peculiar geography. Whether we examine the authors of publications (either all of them or the most prolific ones), the authors of citations to top publications, the geographical background of the funding sources of publications, or the geographical case studies appearing in the keywords of publications, no British or US hegemony can be confirmed. Instead, there is European dominance – including the UK, which does not hold an outstanding share, as Germany also has a large weight

Table 9. The number of GPN publications from first authors in East Central Europe by country of the publishing platform and the citations they received between 2008 and 2024

Country of publishing platform	Number of publications	%	Citations received	%
UK	15	26.3	545	50.8
USA	9	15.8	255	23.8
Hungary	6	10.5	51	4.8
Czechia	6	10.5	47	4.4
Poland	5	8.8	32	3.0
Switzerland	3	5.3	60	5.6
Germany	3	5.3	11	1.0
Romania	3	5.3	3	0.3
Netherlands	2	3.5	43	4.0
Estonia	2	3.5	12	1.1
Lithuania	1	1.8	7	0.7
Norway	1	1.8	4	0.4
India	1	1.8	2	0.2
Total	*57*	*100.0*	*1,072*	*100.0*

Source: Authors' analysis of Scopus data.

and, in relation to their population, several other continental European countries also do. This 'primary European core' of knowledge production on GPN is complemented by a 'secondary East and Southeast Asian core' (where 'primary' and 'secondary' refer to quantitative shares).

It is not necessarily easy to compare these results directly with previous literature findings that applied to the discipline of Geography as a whole. Namely, the methodologies of those studies differ somewhat from one another (e.g. whether they work from the same bibliometric database, examine all publications in the given database or only highlighted ones, and, in the latter case, how many publications they select and along which principles). Nevertheless, it is clear that all previous studies gave similar results with all methods, and there was no significant difference between them. They all confirmed a strong combined British and US hegemony in international geography. The same does not apply to the GPN literature. That is a significant difference.

The background of this difference is twofold. First and foremost, the GPN literature prominently features East and Southeast Asia. That is definitely a big step forward towards 'internationalising', 'worlding' and 'decolonising' Geography as a discipline, making it less spatially 'inclusive' than it currently is. Second, the 'primary European core' in the academic landscape of GPN literature is not a euphemism for the UK, but it includes large parts of continental Europe. That is another, and not insignificant, step towards decreasing Anglo-American hegemony in Geography and, thus, 'internationalising' the discipline; continental European scholars certainly feel the positive difference it makes. However, we should be very clear that it does not automatically help the rest of the world and the 'worlding' of scientific research. The fact that America does not have a particularly high share of GPN literature primarily means that the weight of the USA (or North America, including Canada) is smaller in this research tradition than in the whole of academic Geography. However, Central and South America are roughly equally marginalised in the GPN literature as in international geographical publications in general, and Africa is completely so.

Another significant finding is that citation landscapes are extremely uneven in the GPN literature, just as they are in other fields of research. Here, British and US hegemony is starting to return, with Singapore emerging as a 'third pole'. Authors (co-)affiliated with Manchester and Singapore attracted more than half of all citations. These are two distinguished centres of calculation (and truth spots) for GPN.

Yet, the global landscape of publishing platforms clearly outlines the same British (and not much US) hegemony in the GPN literature as in the field of Geography. Moreover, the higher we go in the perceived hierarchy of globally leading publishing platforms, the stronger the British hegemony becomes. There is a particularly uneven global publishing landscape that exhibits great inertia, changes slowly, and is not easily altered due to structural reasons. In other words, even if a new and popular research tradition, such as GPN, emerges where a massive British and US hegemony does not apply, its leading publications will be released by the leading publishing platforms, which are still predominantly British (and North American).

The characteristics of the GPN literature in East Central Europe, a small semi-peripheral region from a global perspective, reflect similar processes. The share of the region is moderate compared to the leading global, or even continental European, centres, and researchers in ECE may obviously regard this as a 'disadvantage' or 'injustice'. Yet, relative to its population size, the representation of ECE is better than the global average, indicating that it remains somewhat privileged compared to many other regions. (Even if some people in ECE may not notice that partly because everyone's own difficulties hurt the most and because others may be so marginalised that their disadvantages remain invisible to others.) ECE's semi-peripheral situation is

also reflected by the temporal lag that the first Scopus-indexed GPN publication was released in the region in 2008 (compared to 1993 in the global domain and the emergence of the GPN approach in 2001–2002), and the research tradition gained momentum here after 2015, almost a decade later than globally. In thematic terms, the main focus of GPN literature in ECE is similar to the global patterns, with the automotive industry and the link between GPN and regional development taking the lead in the most-cited publications.

Within ECE, huge geographical inequalities apply. Czechia accounts for more than half of the GPN publications, Hungary and Poland lag far behind, each other country is below 7 percent, and many countries have no GPN publications in Scopus. Moreover, at a lower geographical scale, Prague accounts for almost half of the publications (a few traditionally important Hungarian and Polish university towns and scientific centres still appear, all with a large lag), of which two authors make up a third of all GPN publications – one of them is also affiliated with the University of Nebraska in Omaha, US, and most of his departmental colleagues in Prague also significantly contribute to ECE literature on GPN. This case highlights the significant role of key international individuals and demonstrates that a scholar's direct, personal, and formalised connection to the global centre from such a semi-peripheral region can have a profound impact, even on a broader scientific community. In line with the global trends, the number of citations received is even more concentrated in ECE than the number of publications.

The strong dependence on the global academic core is also evident in the fact that, although several Scopus-indexed journals exist in ECE, roughly two-fifths of the publications from ECE authors are published on British and US platforms, which is the same as the combined total for ECE-located platforms. The UK leads the list, significantly ahead of Czechia and Hungary. Finally, publications from ECE authors released on British and US publishing platforms receive around three-quarters of all citations, whereas publications in ECE platforms receive only one-ninth of them. That means not only top authors, but scholars in general from ECE can make themselves truly visible through publishing on a few globally leading, predominantly British and sometimes US platforms.

Our research results can also draw conclusions that go beyond the GPN literature. Our analysis, a case study based on the geographies of science approach, sheds light on three general phenomena.

1. The worlding of geography is a *process.* Once it gets started in a specific domain, it will most likely not make all other places and their scholarly achievements equally visible at the same time and at the same pace. Rather, some will 'get inside the circle' sooner (such as, in the concrete case, continental Europe, especially its western part, and certain places in East and Southeast Asia). In contrast, others (e.g. Central and South America and Africa) will still remain outside for an indefinite time. Consequently, when we are examining the worlding of geography as a process, we must not only look at how much the former hegemon's share is decreasing but also who else is 'becoming visible' and who is not (yet).

2. Even if authorship becomes more internationalised in an academic domain, the uneven geometries of the international publishing space will not automatically diminish. The geography of powerful publishing platforms may remain as unequal as before, creating a bottleneck in global science where previous hegemonies may remain largely unchanged for a very long time. This results not just from the path dependence and inertia of the physical infrastructure of existing publishing platforms, where setting up numerous new journals at high academic standards is impossible within a short timeframe. It also follows from the unequal geographies of attention, trust, and power – because authors outside the UK and the US also cite publications from these two countries' platforms more frequently. For example, many more people cite an ECE author's work if it was published in a UK or US journal.

3. More research would be needed to investigate the mechanisms of the evolution of academic attention, trust, and power in the GPN literature using case studies and cultural anthropological methods. This research should also scrutinise the individual academic careers of specific researchers and the functioning of their scholarly collectives to identify the strategies that other researchers and scientific collectives could also apply to make their results more visible.

What is the lesson from that? On the one hand, from an analytical point of view, it is worth being aware of the patterns our study revealed, understanding how the relevant mechanisms work, and recognising the underlying processes. On the other hand, if we are motivated to change the world, to make it a better, fairer place, then we should strive to 'look out' from the core of the global publication space. Let us read, use and reference more materials *published* outside the global core to engage more deeply with alternative scholarly communities, their epistemologies and findings. And let us publish more articles on those platforms – this is what this study also aims to contribute to.

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