

DOCTORAL SCHOOL OF SOCIOLOGY AND COMMUNICATION SCIENCE

CORVINUS UNIVERSITY OF BUDAPEST

**BRIDGING THE DIVIDE: UNVEILING GLOBAL DISPARITIES AND LOCAL
CHALLENGES IN ACADEMIC INTERNATIONALIZATION FOR A
HOLISTIC APPROACH TO CHANGE**

ARTICLE-BASED DOCTORAL THESIS BOOKLET

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1. RESEARCH BACKGROUND AND JUSTIFICATION OF THE TOPIC

The dissertation examines the evolving landscape of scholarly research and higher education, driven by globalization and ongoing internationalization efforts. Despite these strides, significant biases persist, favoring economically affluent nations and adhering closely to Anglo-American academic norms, particularly pronounced in the social sciences. The dissertation critically examines these global disparities within the framework of academic internationalization, shedding light on how current processes inadvertently reinforce global inequalities and overlook systemic discrimination faced by peripheral regions. Moreover, the dissertation scrutinizes opaque and informal domestic academic assessment practices that hinder local higher education institutions (HEIs) from fully integrating into the international research community. These practices not only perpetuate global disparities but also exacerbate the unpredictability of career paths for early-career researchers. By addressing these issues simultaneously, the dissertation aims to contribute to a more equitable and inclusive global scholarly landscape, advocating for diverse epistemic traditions and challenging the hegemony of Western-centric academic standards.

Central to the dissertation's argument is the assertion that an inclusive and equitable approach to global knowledge production necessitates addressing both international structural distortions and regional informalities within academic culture. It advocates for a balanced perspective that values diverse epistemic traditions and challenges the hegemony of Western-centric academic standards. Moreover, the study posits that marginalized agents within domestic contexts must actively cultivate international visibility to counteract these structural inequities. By engaging critically with both the shortcomings of internal academic systems and the broader structural challenges within the international academic community, the dissertation aims to contribute to a more equitable and representative global scholarly landscape.

1.1. GLOBAL DISPARITIES

Pierre Bourdieu's seminal work on the sociology of science has profoundly influenced academic discourse, framing science as a structured game governed by internalized rules (Bourdieu, 1988; Bourdieu, 1998; Bourdieu, 2004). His framework highlights how researchers accumulate academic capital, including institutionalized, embodied, and objectified forms of knowledge and resources, predicting their academic status (Leung, 2013; Bauder, 2015). This capital, comprising degrees, publications, and reputation, perpetuates inequalities within academia (Grenfell, 2008; Astaneh & Masoumi, 2018). Bourdieu also emphasizes that academic capital extends to institutions, shaping the reputation and status of higher education institutions (HEIs) and academic publications. HEIs' capital is reflected in their scholars' collective output and prestigious awards, while journals and publishing houses accrue capital through citation counts and the prestige of their periodicals. Ranking databases and agencies affirm this hierarchical positioning, emphasizing the significance of academic capital in shaping scholarly landscapes.

Bourdieu's theory also addresses the core-periphery stratification within academia, where elite institutions coexist alongside peripheral ones, perpetuating social inequalities. Despite global efforts to expand higher education access, enrollment in elite universities remains largely unchanged (Schofer & Meyen, 2005). However, critiques of Bourdieu's theory point to its national focus, as it primarily analyzed the French academy, overlooking international complexities (Gerhards et al., 2017). Scholars have extended Bourdieu's framework to globalization, introducing concepts like transnational fields and human capital (Gerhards et al., 2017). Transnational academic capital reflects power differentials among countries, with countries like the US and UK overlapping national and international science, while countries like France and Germany maintain parallel spheres. Smaller nations prioritize international research, while economically disadvantaged countries struggle, perpetuating a center-periphery structure (Boatca, 2006). This hierarchical system, reflecting broader world-system dynamics (Wallerstein, 2004), underscores the persistence of global inequalities in academia. Demeter's (2019b) model (Figure 1) of transnational academic capital integrates both horizontal and vertical stratifications, highlighting the dominance of prestigious institutions and the disparities faced by peripheral

institutions, thus advocating for a more comprehensive analysis of global academic capital distribution.

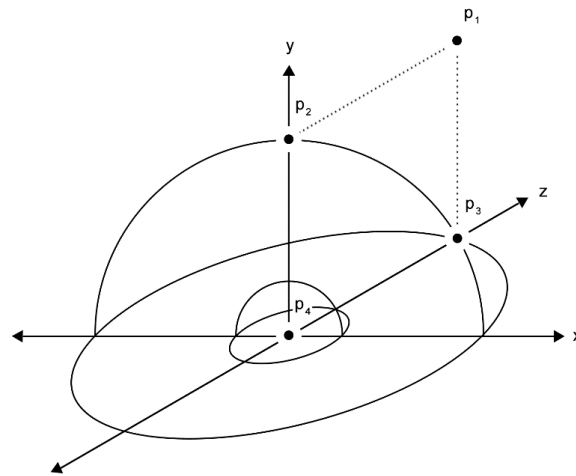


Figure 1. Demeter's (2019b) model of transnational academic capital¹

This integrative framework underscores the intricate interplay between global power dynamics and societal hierarchies in shaping the distribution of academic capital on a transnational scale.

The landscape of academic excellence in communication and media studies (CMS) reflects a complex relationship between systemic dynamics and individual merit. Research shows that scholars from Western regions or elite universities disproportionately attain top positions, editorial roles, and publication outputs (Burris, 2004; Cowan & Rossello, 2018; Demeter & Tóth, 2020; Goyanes & de-Marcos, 2020). This highlights both horizontal and vertical inequalities, with Western-educated scholars dominating leadership roles and elite credentials from institutions like Ivy League or Russell Group universities holding significant sway (Clauset et al., 2015). Access to elite education, influenced by social status and race, perpetuates systemic biases in career prospects (Bourdieu, 1996). Elite journals, indexed in prestigious international databases, favor Western scholars and methodologies, marginalizing those from non-Western regions or non-elite

¹ Where π_{xz} is the plane of geopolitical stratification (Wallerstein's World-systems theory) and \bar{y} is the vector of social stratification (Bourdieuian field theory). Consequently, p_1 is a peripheral, capital-poor, p_2 is a central, capital-rich, p_3 is a peripheral, capital-rich, while p_4 is a central, capital-poor agent within global academic knowledge production.

institutions (Istratii & Hirmer, 2020). The "publish or perish" paradigm remains central globally, where professional success hinges on publications in esteemed peer-reviewed journals (Erren et al., 2016; Zdeněk, 2017). Economic, political, geographic, and cultural factors contribute to a division between countries with prominent publications and "Matthew countries" lacking visibility (Zanotto et al., 2016).

The dominance of the United States in CMS can be traced to historical factors, with the received history often overlooking contributions from the global South (Pooley & Park, 2013). Repressive political regimes in many global South regions hindered CMS development, creating an "academic gap" between Western and Eastern conceptions of the discipline (Kornai, 1992; Lauk, 2015). Notwithstanding, studies on publication patterns reveal American dominance in journals, influenced by journal ownership and the English language requirement (Delgado & Repiso, 2013). Language plays a pivotal role, as all SSCI journals in CMS publish exclusively in English, posing challenges for non-native English-speaking authors (Günther & Domahidi, 2017). Editorial boards (EBs) serve as gatekeepers, influencing the content that informs theory development, research, and practice (Metz et al., 2016). Studies reveal a predominant presence of Western regions in the EBs of major journals, limiting the publication of peripheral research (Murphy & Zhu, 2012).

This core-periphery structure in academic excellence also perpetuates epistemic hierarchies, marginalizing non-core perspectives (Demeter, 2019a). Efforts to decentralize knowledge production are essential for achieving a more inclusive academic system. Peripheral scholars must advocate for equitable representation and challenge existing power dynamics.

1.2. LOCAL CHALLENGES

Over the past three decades, research has extensively examined scientific excellence and academic careers in Western contexts, covering broad disciplines (Diamond et al., 2014) and focusing on social sciences (Main et al., 2019). These studies explore academic career progression, knowledge production, and research excellence (Shmatko et al., 2020).

Research on Central and Eastern European (CEE) contexts, increasingly recognized as essential (Dobbins & Knill, 2009; Warren et al., 2020), highlights the impact of Soviet-era constraints, such

as language policies limiting international engagement (Demeter, 2018) and the inaccessibility of Western scholarship (Dobbins, 2011). CEE scholars often published in regional journals, isolating their work (Berend, 2009). The European higher education policy, driven by the Lisbon Strategy, emphasizes global competitiveness (Antonowicz et al., 2017), but chronic underfunding hampers research excellence and mobility (Kwiek, 2012). Despite adopting Western research performance indicators (Dobbins, 2011), CEE countries still lag behind in funding and publication excellence (Dobos et al., 2020). Hungary, for instance, mandates international publication for tenured professors but faces enforcement challenges (Sasvári & Urbanovics, 2019). Critics argue that focusing solely on international standards may marginalize local research, yet objective criteria are necessary to avoid subjectivity and nepotism. Addressing these systemic challenges is crucial for fostering sustainable research ecosystems and integrating CEE institutions into the global academic landscape (Kwiek, 2012).

1.3. BEYOND EITHER/OR PERSPECTIVES

Considering the global disparities and local challenges, my dissertation critiques two main issues: 1) internationalization processes that perpetuate global disparities and marginalize peripheral regions, and 2) non-transparent domestic academic assessments that hinder integration into the international research community and obstruct the career paths of young researchers. To address these issues, I argue for a balanced approach that counters both international structural distortions and regional informalities. Disadvantaged regions must gain international visibility to ensure their critical voices are heard and to demonstrate their capability to produce high-quality research.

Therefore, my dissertation emphasizes the necessity of gaining international visibility to challenge power structures. By producing high-quality research and gaining recognition, we ensure our critical voices are not overlooked. Thus, criticism of global inequalities and self-critical renewal are not contradictory but interrelated, driving actual change.

1.4. INTERSECTING FACTORS: GENDER AND ALTMETRICS

The dissertation primarily focuses on exploring geographical disparities in scholarly communication and academic impact. Central to this investigation are two additional, yet critical facets: gender, which interacts significantly with scholars' geographical affiliations as part of their academic capital, and altmetrics, novel tools for assessing academic impact outside of traditional citation-based metrics.

Gender disparities affect publication rates (Fox, 2005), citation counts (Lariviere et al., 2013), and career advancement (van den Besselaar & Sandström, 2017). Contributing factors include household roles (Fox, 2005), career interruptions (Cameron et al., 2016), resource allocation (Duch et al., 2012), peer review (Borsuk et al., 2009), collaborations (Jaidi et al., 2018), networking (Abramo et al., 2013), stereotypes (Eagly et al., 2020), academic rank (van den Besselaar & Sandström, 2017), and work climate (Bronstein & Farnsworth, 1998). Geographic, institutional, and disciplinary contexts also play a role (Paswan & Singh, 2020; Elsevier, 2017, 2024).

Studies on citation rates for female-authored publications show mixed results, with some indicating lower (Lariviere et al., 2013), higher (Thelwall, 2020a, b; Frandsen et al., 2020), or equal rates (Elsevier, 2017;) compared to male-authored publications. Gender-diverse teams generate more innovative ideas (Yang et al., 2022) and enhance equity in peer review (Murray et al., 2019), leading to better scientific outcomes (Nielsen et al., 2017). Geographic, institutional, and economic contexts further influence gender disparities (Kalaitzi et al., 2019).

Altmetrics, which include clicks, downloads, views, shares, and mentions, offer real-time assessments of research visibility and audience engagement, capturing the hidden impact of research and providing a more gender-balanced view (Bar-Ilan & van der Weijden, 2015). Studies indicate a positive correlation between altmetrics and future citations, especially for Mendeley reader counts (Thelwall, 2018). Tweets can forecast citation rates (Eysenbach, 2011), and early usage metrics can predict long-term citations (Breitzman, 2021). Integrating altmetrics with traditional impact measures provides a comprehensive understanding of research impact (Torres-Salinas et al., 2024). Promoting the online visibility of underrepresented scientists, particularly women, could mitigate citation gaps and enhance scholarly recognition (Vásárhelyi & Horvát, 2023). Understanding the intersection of gender and altmetrics is critical for inclusive practices in

scholarly communication, revealing how multiple identity dimensions shape the reception of research in diverse contexts.

2. METHODOLOGIES AND FINDINGS OF THE STUDIES

In Article 1 (Chapter 1.1 of the Dissertation), we explore the complex pathways of scientific career advancement in Hungary, uncovering the significant challenges encountered by early-career researchers as they embark on their academic journey. The chapter provides several key contributions to academic assessment and reform. It analyzes domestic academic assessment processes, contrasting non-transparent and informal practices with Spain's ANECA and Poland's IDUB, highlighting how the former hinder international integration and competitiveness. The chapter argues that critiquing global academic inequalities while advocating for self-critical domestic reforms are complementary approaches necessary for substantive change. It proposes balanced reforms to enhance international visibility and competitiveness, using Spain and Poland as benchmarks for effective quality assurance. The chapter introduces performance-based research funding systems (PRFS) and explores their potential application in Hungary, addressing resistance within the academic community. It highlights the challenges faced by early-career researchers in Hungary and recommends mentorship, standardized doctoral programs, and supportive institutional frameworks. Strategic recommendations for Hungarian higher education institutions are provided, emphasizing collaborations, improved research infrastructure, and alignment with international standards. Finally, the chapter calls for self-critical renewal within domestic academic systems to challenge global hegemonies and ensure diverse voices are valued in international academia. A balanced approach is needed, where disadvantaged actors actively seek international visibility while simultaneously advocating for reform within domestic academic evaluation systems.

In Article 2 (Chapter 1.2 of the Dissertation), our scope expands to address the broader implications of internationalization deficits and resulting global inequities within academia, contextualized against university rankings and research assessment systems. Our findings indicate a significant underrepresentation of Hungarian scholars in international, indexed publications essential for

global assessments and rankings. Specifically, we observed that 96% of publications across various Social Sciences and Humanities (SSH) fields in Hungary are absent from Scopus, severely limiting international visibility and impact. Even within this small proportion that is visible, international citations remain minimal, contrary to assumptions that Hungarian research is inherently unpublishable in Anglo-Saxon outlets. Our research highlights that successful Hungarian researchers and their counterparts in neighboring countries demonstrate the capability to achieve substantial visibility in Scopus, suggesting that the low international output of Hungarian research is primarily due to domestic factors that inhibit international visibility (Sasvári et al., 2021), rather than inherent publishing limitations.

Article 2 (Chapter 1.2 of the Dissertation), contributes to scholarly discourse by proposing policy recommendations to integrate standardized global publication databases into research assessments, advocating for transparency and fairness in academic evaluations. It underscores the systemic challenges faced by Central and Eastern European (CEE) regions in global knowledge production, urging critical reflection and reform in assessment practices. Through empirical analysis involving 365 Hungarian social scientists across national (MTMT), global (Scopus), and Google Scholar databases, the chapter offers insights into Hungary's international visibility and impact. Comparative analysis with neighboring countries reveals disparities in publication patterns, signaling areas where Hungary's research visibility can be enhanced. Furthermore, the chapter explores discrepancies between national and global databases, highlighting the underrepresentation of Hungarian research in international assessments due to reliance on national datasets.

Together, Articles 1 and 2 (Chapters 1.1 and 1.2 of the Dissertation) serve as an exploration of the structural and systemic dynamics underpinning contemporary academia in Hungary and the broader CEE region. It underscores the imperativeness of addressing disparities and championing greater equity and diversity in academic scholarship through targeted interventions and strategic initiatives. Drawing upon the insights gleaned from Chapter 1, as well as related complementary findings of ours, and with the explicit aim of serving Central and Eastern European (CEE) and Hungarian scholars, in the dissertation, recommendations are proposed from a bottom-up organizing perspective.

In Article 3 (Chapter 2.1 of the Dissertation), we examine the unequal distribution of scholarly impact in Communication Studies, focusing on disparities among scholars from different regions. Building on existing research highlighting geopolitical inequalities in citation patterns (Demeter, 2017, 2019b; Lauf, 2005), this study underscores significant differences in citation rates among scholars from the United States, Western Europe, and Eastern Europe. Our findings confirm that U.S. scholars are consistently the most highly cited, followed by their counterparts in Western and Eastern Europe, reflecting a pronounced Americanization of the field discussed in prior literature (Chakravartty et al., 2018; Demeter et al., 2022a, 2022b). While disparities in impact are evident across these regions, our analysis reveals more comparable citation impacts within Western and Eastern Europe, with countries like Romania, Hungary, Ukraine, Spain, and Italy showing similar median citation values. Notably, Ukraine stands out with notably high citation values among Eastern European countries, suggesting unique regional dynamics. Introducing novel metrics such as views received by articles indexed in SCOPUS, our study provides insights into scholarly visibility less influenced by traditional academic filters or journal prestige. This approach reveals that while Eastern European and Spanish scholars receive significant views on their research, these views do not always translate into citations at rates comparable to American or Western European scholars, indicating potential biases in citation practices favoring Western scholarship. Future research should further explore these dynamics across diverse regions and disciplines to deepen our understanding of global scholarly communication practices and their implications for knowledge dissemination and evaluation.

Article 3 (Chapter 2.1 of the Dissertation), contributes to understanding geopolitical biases in scholarly impact within communication studies, analyzing scholars from 11 countries across three regions to highlight significant disparities in citation-based impact. It integrates altmetrics like views per document and citations per view (based on SCOPUS view counts) alongside traditional citation metrics, offering a detailed view of scholarly impact less prone to biases. Furthermore, the chapter innovates by using SCOPUS data to empirically demonstrate geographical disparities in citation and view counts, underscoring the need for policies promoting diversity and equity in scholarly communication practices.

Article 4 (Chapter 2.2 of the Dissertation), scrutinizes gender bias and geographical disparities in health-related research, offering implications for theory, practice, and policy in academia. This

study significantly contributes to the discourse on gender and geographical biases within health-related disciplines, addressing gaps in existing literature focused predominantly on other scientific domains (Lariviere et al., 2013; Tahamtan et al., 2016). Our research provides a detailed understanding of these biases by examining multiple facets of scholarly production and impact that have not been comprehensively explored before. Firstly, we highlight systematic gender inequalities in productivity across health sciences, with male scholars overrepresented, particularly in fields linked to health policy and public health, consistent with previous studies (Frandsen et al., 2020; van Arensbergen et al., 2012). While health-social sciences exhibit a more balanced gender representation, they still lean towards male dominance, reflecting broader trends in soft versus hard disciplines (Sebo et al., 2020). Secondly, our study introduces novel scientometric indices—citations per view and views per document—to assess scholarly impact and visibility. Our analysis reveals that despite similar visibility, female scholars in health sciences receive significantly fewer citations compared to their male counterparts, indicating a clear gender bias in citation practices. This discrepancy suggests that gendered patterns in scholarly impact are not merely a function of visibility but reflect deeper biases within academic citation cultures. One possible explanation, following an argumentation by Zhang & Sivertsen (2021), is that female researchers more frequently prioritize research aimed at societal progress, a pursuit that is typically undervalued within academic citation practices, resulting in fewer citations despite comparable levels of article views. In contrast, male researchers often focus on research geared towards scientific advancement, which aligns more closely with traditional academic values and thus tends to receive higher citation counts. Additionally, our investigation into geographical differences reveals that scholars from North America and Western Europe tend to have higher citation impact indices than their counterparts from Asia and South America, mirroring patterns observed in gender disparities. However, the views per document indices show Asian scholars receiving higher visibility, suggesting complex interactions between geography and scholarly impact. Overall, our study highlights the need for continued efforts to address gender and geographical biases in citation practices within health sciences, emphasizing the importance of citational justice and equitable recognition of scholarly contributions across diverse contexts and disciplines.

Overall, Articles 3 and 4 (Chapters 2.1 and 2.2 of the Dissertation) collectively highlights the need for greater inclusivity, diversity, and equity in academic research and publication practices, and together, provided a foundation for further research and action aimed at promoting diversity and

inclusion in academia. Additionally, our findings emphasize the intertwined nature of internationalization and 'Westernization' in academic research, prompting reflection on the balance between scientific globalism and nationalism.

Drawing upon the insights gleaned from these studies, as well as related complementary findings of ours, in the dissertation, recommendations are proposed.

Integrating bottom-up and top-down approaches enables academia to collaboratively foster a more inclusive, equitable, and globally competitive landscape. Embracing both individual initiative and institutional support is vital for driving meaningful and lasting change, ensuring academia embraces diverse voices and perspectives, enriching global scholarly discourse. Importantly, this dissertation underscores the necessity of gaining international visibility to challenge existing power structures. Without putting ourselves on the map and demonstrating our ability to produce quality research, our critical voices risk being drowned out.

3. CONTRIBUTIONS OF THE DISSERTATION

The dissertation presents a multifaceted analysis of academic assessment practices, geopolitical biases, and gender disparities in scholarly impact, offering a series of critical contributions².

² At the same time, I wish to highlight the dissertation's resonance with communication science and emphasize its aptness for inclusion within a doctoral program dedicated to communication research. Three essential facets distinctly illustrate its seamless integration within this academic domain. Firstly, it addresses timely and pertinent topics intrinsic to the field, notably by dissecting local challenges within the production of social scientific knowledge. This emphasis aligns closely with the thematic focus of the program, reinforcing its relevance within the scholarly landscape. Secondly, the dissertation's interdisciplinary approach, exemplified through meticulous comparative analyses, mirrors both the ethos of the program and the broader field's commitment to embracing diverse perspectives and methodologies. This characteristic resonates with the evolving nature of communication research, as evidenced by scholarly discourse. Lastly, the dissertation's spotlight on global disparities in academic research and advocacy for effective science communication seamlessly align with the program's overarching objectives of knowledge dissemination and societal impact. Essentially, the dissertation's topical relevance, interdisciplinary approach, and focus on science communication underscore its potential to make significant contributions to ongoing scholarly endeavors within the field.

Comparative Analysis of Domestic Academic Assessment Processes: The dissertation critiques domestic academic assessment practices, contrasting them with Spain's ANECA and Poland's IDUB, highlighting how non-transparent processes impede international integration and career predictability. Article 1 (Chapter 1.1) emphasizes the need for reform to align with international standards, enhancing global visibility of local institutions.

Interconnected Critique of Global and Domestic Academic Systems: The dissertation argues that addressing global academic inequalities and advocating for domestic reforms are complementary. Article 1 (Chapter 1.1) proposes balanced reforms to improve both domestic assessment practices and global academic integration.

Geopolitical Biases in Scholarly Impact: The dissertation examines how geographic location affects scholarly impact, particularly in communication studies, revealing disparities in citation metrics and US dominance. Article 3 (Chapter 2.1) integrates critical sociological frameworks and altmetrics to offer a less biased view of scholarly impact, emphasizing inclusive citation practices.

Database Discrepancies: Article 2 (Chapter 1.2) analyzes the publication and citation indices of 365 Hungarian social scientists across MTMT, Scopus, and Google Scholar, highlighting the underrepresentation of Hungarian research in international academia.

Gender Inequalities in Scholarly Impact: The dissertation identifies gender imbalances in scholarly productivity, particularly in health policy. Article 4 (Chapter 2.2) examines citation patterns to reveal disparities between male and female scholars, advocating for gender-sensitive evaluation criteria and citational justice.

De-Westernization of CMS: The dissertation contributes to the de-Westernization discussion in communication research, highlighting the dominance of US-based scholarship and advocating for practices that elevate non-Western contributions.

Novel Altmetrics as Methodological Innovations: Introducing novel altmetrics (Scopus view counts) alongside traditional citation metrics, the dissertation expands critical scientometrics' toolkit.

Policy and Practice Implications for Enhancing Research Visibility: The dissertation offers strategic policy recommendations to enhance the international visibility and competitiveness of

Central and Eastern European research. Article 2 (Chapter 1.2) provides empirical insights into Hungarian social scientists' publication patterns, calling for standardized global databases and transparent academic evaluation systems to address systemic challenges.

Overall, the dissertation emphasizes the necessity of self-critical renewal within domestic academic systems to challenge global hegemonies and ensure diverse voices and perspectives are recognized and valued in international academia. By proposing concrete reforms, introducing novel methodological tools, and providing empirical evidence, the dissertation contributes to ongoing debates on enhancing the visibility, impact, and equity of scholarly work in a global context.

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