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The State of Globalization of the Information Systems Discipline: A Historical Analysis

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Abstract:

This study explores the degree of globalization within the Information Systems (IS) discipline. Global scientific collaboration plays a pivotal role in crafting solutions that can address the increasingly prevalent global challenges. Conversely, we are witnessing a period where political priorities are increasingly centered on reinforcing the nation-state and resolving local problems. As the calls for localized research and a reevaluation of theoretical foundations gain momentum, the IS discipline grapples with a complex balancing act, navigating between its global aspirations and the imperative to address local realities. Employing historical and geospatial network analysis spanning the years 1979 to 2021, this research assesses the geographical patterns of research collaborations within the IS discipline. It provides an updated appraisal of Galliers and Meadows' study from two decades ago, in the face of increased geopolitical tensions and the politicization of research.

Keywords: De-globalization, Globalization of Research, Historical Analysis, Information Systems Discipline, Localization of Research, Politization of Research, Research Policy.

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1 Introduction

We are living in a time characterized by global phenomena such as pandemics, financial crises, climate change, mass migration, and poverty, which call for a unified and comprehensive global response (Gholami et al., 2016). Frequently encompassed within the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), these challenges not only need a stronger integration of both research and practice to effectively address their multifaceted nature, but also require iconoclastic thinking and bold solutions that extend beyond the confines of national, or disciplinary boundaries (Karki & Thapa, 2021).

Considering the interconnected nature of contemporary challenges, Hennemann et al. (2012) emphasize the need for scientific collaboration to evolve into a more globalized and spatially unrestrained process, guided by shared research interests and fostering the emergence of "epistemic communities" that transcend geographical boundaries. Yet, the ongoing politicization of research, driven by recent geopolitical shifts and crises, seems instead to signal a countertrend of de-globalization (Chaudhary & Sharma, 2021; Chelli & Cunliffe, 2022; Witt, 2019b). In recent years, numerous governments have taken a more active role in shaping the strategic direction of scientific endeavors, revising funding policies, imposing targeted restrictions on collaborations with certain nations, and promoting a stronger focus on research conducted within their national borders (Xu, 2021).

There are additional reasons why researchers may gravitate toward more localized research. Buchholz (2016) argues that contemporary theory must re-evaluate its foundations, which were originally crafted within Western nation-state frameworks, to meaningfully address the distinct complexities posed by transnational and global issues. Connell (2007) further underscores the difficulty of extending Western concepts—such as "society" and "power"—to a global scale, advocating for a more refined approach that integrates both localized and globalized research perspectives.

Researchers thus find themselves navigating a tension between two opposing influences and objectives. On one hand, the Information Systems (IS) discipline must engage on a global scale to effectively tackle complex societal issues to support the SDGs and secure recognition within the political discourse (Watson et al., 2021). On the other hand, it remains crucial to continue conducting localized research to amplify marginalized voices and address the existing imbalance in IS theory, which often overlooks the culturally rich heritage of non-Western countries (Davison & Díaz Andrade, 2018). Paradoxically, both approaches share the same challenge: bridging continents, cultures, and diverse worldviews to unite researchers from across the globe.

Surprisingly, there is limited knowledge regarding the geographical patterns of collaboration among researchers in IS. Saunders (2006) observes that "as businesses have become increasingly global, so too has the world of academia" (p. iii). In contrast, Martinsons (2016) argues that while the discipline has made strides toward internationalization, it is still far from establishing itself as a genuinely *global* research community. The last systematic study identified on this topic was by Galliers and Meadows (2003), which was conducted two decades ago. Over a seven-year period from 1994 to 2000, they analyzed the citations and the national composition of authorship teams in prominent IS journals. Their findings revealed that, despite the global nature of the phenomena under investigation, IS research during the examined timeframe demonstrated considerable parochialism in both the use of the literature and the composition of authorship teams. In other words, despite the rapid expansion of the global economy and the Internet in the late 1990s, our field has remained comfortably rooted in a largely localized approach to research.

The central question this article seeks to explore is whether the IS community has maintained its localized character or evolved into a more international or globalized discipline. We acknowledge that providing a precise answer is inherently challenging, particularly because the perception of what is "global" seems to be subjective, and international (or even local) solutions are frequently understood as being "globally applicable."

Indeed, evaluating the globalization of research is challenging. Beyond co-authoring articles, research collaboration takes many forms, including mentorship (often without authorship), co-organization of workshops and conferences, informal exchanges, site visits, funding arrangements, and the sharing of research infrastructure and data. However, in the absence of comprehensive data capturing all these types of relationships, we have chosen to replicate the research design used by Galliers and Meadows (2003) which centered on the analysis of authorship teams of papers published in the "Senior Scholars'

List of Premier Journals." We followed this approach not only due to practical considerations—such as minimizing the extensive manual data curation effort, as we will discuss—but also to facilitate comparison with findings published over two decades ago.

Yet, this study goes beyond offering an updated assessment of the discipline's globalization level; it also seeks to trace the historical trajectory of research collaborations' evolution over time. In studying our history, as Day (1996) notes, we might not only acknowledge our intellectual debts but also identify the drivers of critical transitions that shape the present and steer the future direction of the field.

The remainder of the article is structured as follows. Section 2 places the concept of "globalization" in a broader context and explains possible effects that seem to be closely related to it. Section 3 explains the relationship between globalization and research, subsequently transitioning to an examination of how the IS discipline has engaged with the phenomenon in Section 4. Proceeding from there, in Section 5, we explain our computational method employed for sourcing and preparing the data needed for describing the historical analysis, which we present in Section 6. In Section 7, we further clarify the distinction between international and global collaboration, followed by a discussion of the possible impact of geopolitics on IS research in Section 8. We conclude our study in Section 9, offering a reflection on our findings and an appraisal of the limitations of our study and future avenues for research.

2 Globalization in the Broader Context

The rapid growth of supranational and transnational organizations in the 20th century, along with the rise of global capitalism and the global media, have made the boundaries between different societies not only more permeable but also more susceptible to external influences and restrictions (Mithas et al., 2017; Mumford, 2006). The underlying phenomenon we call "globalization" has been a protracted, unequal, and complicated process which, as some scholars would argue (e.g., Gunn, 2003; Robertson, 2004), is much older and inherent to any form of human interconnectedness. The precise inception date and the precise definition of "globalization" thus remain contentious subjects of debate among economists, historians, political scientists, and sociologists. Without going into the details of a long discursive debate, which could easily occupy an article in itself, "globalization" in the context of business-related studies is frequently described as the process of growing interdependence among nations (Verbeke et al., 2018). Such an increase of interdependencies among (state) actors not only affects multinational corporations accustomed to navigating the complexities of global commerce but also increasingly impacts local organizations in their daily routines given the need to comply with an increasing number of transnational regulations (e.g., EU General Data Protection Regulation), trade agreements (e.g., WTO Information Technology Agreement) or international standards (e.g., ISO/IEC standards for IT services) negotiated and ratified by the nation-state they are located in (Gibson, 2007). In short, one could argue that "local" behaviors are progressively being shaped by "global" actions.

2.1 Convergence Effects of Globalization

Extending the view from businesses to society at large, the idea of a decline of the "local" toward a rise of the "global", has been described by Giddens (2002), among others, as a facet of the transition into modern forms of society. However, already before Giddens, eminent sociologists like Tönnies (1887) and Weber (1922) reasoned about modern society in the sense that it is governed to a far stronger extent by global, market-driven principles, which they termed "Gesellschaft," than traditional, local, more value-centric communities, which they denoted as "Gemeinschaft." This is why in popular discourses on globalization, similar to those on one-worldism (Clark, 2018) or cosmopolitanism (Kendall et al., 2009), a pejorative connotation is often implied, equating globalization with the loss of local values, cultural identities, linguistic diversity, and the sense of belonging. In addition, influential publications such as McLuhan's "The Gutenberg Galaxy" (1962) and Friedman's "The World is Flat" (2005) also contributed to the promulgation of the idea of modern society being a "Global Village." This worldview, largely stemming from the concurrent consumption of shared media content such as news, social media, and video streaming, amplifies the impression of convergence, shrinking, or increased cultural homogenization. Robertson (1992) thus defined globalization as "a concept that refers both to the compression of the world and the intensification of consciousness of the world as a whole" (p. 8). Along a similar line of thought, Clark (2018) in what he calls "global awareness," posits that contemporary information dissemination has led people not only to attain a fundamental comprehension of the world as a unified entity but also to develop an understanding of the interrelatedness among its constituent components. This includes recognizing how alterations in one part of the global order can reverberate and influence other parts,

especially their own (local) reality. Alongside the effects stemming from global forces and actions—particularly the ramifications of global trade—certain scholars therefore posit that the increased receptiveness to and understanding of cultures other than one's own signifies an initial marker that nearly all societies, including those conventionally categorized as developing, are in the process of a gradual convergence towards a common point (Baldwin, 2017; Hunter & Beck, 2000; Lee & Joshi, 2016; Wang & Zhang, 2012).

2.2 Divergence, Crossvergence, Transvergence, and Other Effects of Globalization

Although there is an apparent tendency for per capita incomes in emerging and developing economies to converge with those of advanced economies and for national cultures to amalgamate due to global media uptake—what Lobato (2019) would call "Netflix nations"—it is important to note that the convergence hypothesis lacks unanimous agreement among scholars. For example, Dowrick and DeLong (2003) concede that convergence phenomena manifest intermittently and selectively, discernible only "at some times and in some places" (p. 191). In many cases, the interdependence of economic activities on a global scale leads to greater income inequality within countries and a widening gap between the richest and poorest people worldwide (Horner & Hulme, 2019). Essentially, wealth is concentrated more at the top in many nations, creating a growing divergence between the rich and the less fortunate. To make matters more complex, this shift in income distribution within countries is further exacerbated by the fact that some very poor nations are not experiencing the overall income growth seen in more developed countries, which were mentioned earlier as converging economically (Thompson & Reuveny, 2009).

Adopting a historical-analytical perspective, Robertson (1992) contends that cultural responses to globalization may also vary among nations. He illustrates this with the cases of Meiji Japan and Peter the Great's Russia, highlighting that despite confronting a common dilemma regarding the choice of modernity's guiding influences and origins, these two states adopted markedly divergent strategies in aligning their national identities with the concept of "modernity"; one strategy that aimed at complete assimilation to Western culture and another that consciously emphasized their disparate religious and cultural heritage. Similarly, Martinsons and Ma (2009), in an investigation of sub-cultural distinctions within information ethics, posited that while globalization is making China "less different" and "less exotic" to Westerners, it will remain distinctively Chinese and only selectively adopt or adapt Western characteristics. In other words, this position can be summarized as acknowledging the fact that (some) nations are moving forward due to globalization, yet their path and ultimate destination may not inevitably align.

Attempting to reconcile the distinct views on the converging or diverging effects of globalization, Ralston et al. (1993) introduced the concept of "crossvergence," defining it as a position that lies intermediate to the values emanating from national identity and economic factors (including ideology, policies, and trends). Through cross-border migration and collaboration in particular (Kelley et al., 2006), it was found that individuals and organizations may "incorporate both national culture influences and economic ideology influences synergistically to form a unique value system that is different from the value set supported by either national culture or economic ideology" (Ralston et al., 2008, p. 12). Nonetheless, in the case of random and senseless hybridization, both independence and identity can be irreversibly damaged (Wittman & Qin, 2022). This explains the rationale behind what Gupta and Wang (2004) call the "transvergence" approach, which advocates for the reinterpretation and reapplication of Indigenous cultural norms as opposed to the mere absorption or hybridization of global influences. Its goal is to take full advantage of the inherent opportunities of both globalization and localization, ultimately culminating in the development of an authentically integrated, original, and distinct perspective.

2.3 De-Globalization

More recently, an increasing body of research has advanced the notion that the (economic) impacts of globalization appear to have reached their zenith between 2007 and 2010, and we are currently confronting a deceleration, if not a reversal, characterized by de-globalization (Hirst et al., 2009; Witt, 2019b). However, when we broaden our perspective beyond the transitory movement of goods and capital, and consider the inclusion of ideas, information, and ideologies in our contemplation of globalization (as we tried to emphasize before), it becomes apparent that the resurgence of nationalism—or "populist temptation" (Eichengreen, 2018)—transcends local boundaries. In this context, Steger (2022) offers a thought-provoking insight by asserting that even anti-globalist discourses are not immune to the effects of globalization due to the interconnectedness of global institutions, individuals, and media.

It is difficult to clearly delineate the concept of de-globalization. In a simplified interpretation, it can be described as a mindset (which may not necessarily align with concrete reality) that prioritizes strengthening the nation-state, favoring local solutions, and advocating for stricter border controls over global institutions, treaties, and unrestricted movement. Once again, this phenomenon, like globalization itself, is not an entirely novel or startling development. Classical sociologists such as the aforementioned Tönnies and Weber had to deal with the dilemma of the simultaneous presence of "nationalization" (or strengthening of the local) and "globalization" in their time.

Considering all the nuances and aspects discussed before, the distinction between what exactly can be attributed to the "global" sphere of influence (Gesellschaft) and what is rather "local" (Gemeinschaft) is becoming increasingly complex and sketchy. Thus, researchers such as Robertson (1992), prefer to theorize instead about "*the global institutionalization of the life-world*" and "*the localization of globality*."

3 Globalization and Research

To further explain the previous point, we turn our attention to the globalization of research. As underscored by Hennemann et al. (2012), a process of global institutionalization has been ongoing for several years especially in the evaluation of the output (and to a certain extent also the quality) of research through publications and institutional rankings. These global assessments, exemplified by entities like the Association for Information Systems (AIS) Research Rankings, are then filtered into national university rankings and league tables, which ultimately also permeate the universities' incentive systems on the local level. In this complex interplay, universities are compelled to either converge with global trends (e.g., positioning their ranking status as a hallmark of global academic excellence), diverge from them (e.g., consciously distancing themselves from quantitative ranking mechanisms), or adopt hybrid strategies (e.g., abstaining from active pursuit of a specific place in rankings while promoting the individual achievements of their academic personnel). This scenario inevitably leads to a paradoxical challenge that researchers must face; particularly for those in disciplines encompassing global phenomena like IS. Should a university opt to align with prevailing global trends, its researchers may encounter fewer conflicts of objectives and reduced impediments to international collaboration. However, they also become more susceptible to the dynamics inherent to the global scientific system, notably the "publish or perish" ethos (Amutuhaire, 2022) or geopolitical tensions (Witt, 2019a). Conversely, should a local university opt to diverge from the global trajectory (e.g., under the pressures exerted by national policies), researchers may face isolation and limited global visibility for their work, potentially diminishing long-term, and international career prospects. As an illustrative case, the Chinese Central Government implemented a deliberate policy shift towards the reinforcement of "Chinalisation," a term connoting the localization and prioritization of traditional Chinese values (Xu, 2021). This policy, as articulated in their 2020 revision, actively encouraged Chinese researchers to focus a part of their publishing endeavors on domestic journals (Shu et al., 2022), resulting in a decline exceeding 20% in the affiliation declarations of Chinese and U.S. authors with foreign institutions or co-authors. In the natural sciences, the number of collaborative research papers between U.S. and Chinese scholars consequently decreased from over 15,000 in 2018 to less than 12,500 in 2021 (Van Noorden, 2022).

3.1 Cross-border Research Collaboration on the Rise

Nonetheless, when assessing the overall state of research collaboration, exemplified by international authorship teams, Aksnes and Sivertsen (2023) found that the numbers have burgeoned from 5% in 1980 to a substantial 26% in 2021 across diverse research domains. However, they mention that the intensity and trajectories of such collaborations exhibit notable variations among nations. In the quest to comprehend the underlying factors contributing to this increasing trend in international research collaborations, a 2021 study conducted by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization revealed that this trend may, at least partially, be attributed to a rising global diaspora of scientists, particularly those seeking refuge from conflict-ridden homelands (UNESCO, 2021). Overall, cross-border spanning research is on the rise, yet it is evident that not all nations experience commensurate benefits from this trend or uniformly view it as a favorable objective.

3.2 Barriers and Drivers for Genuine Globalized Research

There is a difference between internationalization, where national borders are crossed, and globalization, where (potentially) the whole world is involved (Martinsons, 2016). Coleman and Dionisio (2009) emphasize that a transition of research from an international paradigm to a genuinely global one

necessitates, as a foundational step, the reappraisal of the history of a discipline and the establishment of a discourse that acknowledges the culturally contingent nature of existing theories and categorizations of disciplinary phenomena. These have historically emerged from Western, primarily European and Anglo-American, contexts over the course of several centuries (as we will see, this is particularly true for IS). Second, it is imperative to transcend not only disciplinary boundaries but also divergent epistemologies and knowledge frameworks rooted in diverse geographical and cultural contexts outside the Western sphere.

Appadurai (2006) notes several cultural distinctives or "diacritics" characterizing the current, predominant Western research ethos, encompassing a commitment to standardized knowledge production, a nuanced comprehension of systematic research procedures (e.g., paper reviews), a discerning appreciation of the shelf-life of valuable research outcomes, a keen sense of belonging to specialized communities of experts (e.g., the AIS special interest groups or chapters), and a belief in the imperative separation of moral and political interests from rigorous research pursuits. The transformation towards recognizing Western epistemologies and knowledge frameworks as relative rather than universal constructs, conceived as products of economic, political, and cultural hegemony, requires awareness of cognitive injustice within collaborative research endeavors (Wall et al., 2015). Hence, and to foster truly globalized research, Coleman and Dionisio (2009) emphasize that it is essential to recognize that every national culture holds distinct conceptions of knowledge, marked by notable variations and intrinsic limitations or controversial aspects within their respective knowledge frameworks.

4 Globalization in IS

4.1 Globalization as a Subject of IS Research

Globalization in IS has centered on two aspects mainly. The first strand of research focuses on the impact of globalization on the development and implementation of IS, especially in the context of globally active organizations (King, 2006; Kirsch, 2004). Commonly explored themes encompass the design and deployment of global IS (Akmanligil & Palvia, 2004; Reinecke & Bernstein, 2013; Tractinsky & Jarvenpaa, 1995), the management of the complexity during the rollout of such systems (Holland et al., 1999; Madapusi & D'Souza, 2005), or the alignment of global IS with evolving local or international requirements, especially concerning financial control, strategic planning, or IS sourcing (Karimi & Konsynski, 1991; Mithas et al., 2017; Rolland & Monteiro, 2002; Su, 2013). The prevailing narrative in this strand of research posits that the confluence of the Internet and global trade has created an equitable playing field, facilitating companies' expansion of their business activities and, in certain instances, capitalizing on lower wage rates to penetrate new markets through competitive pricing (Gefen & Carmel, 2008). This line of thought aligns well with Friedman's "The World is Flat" (2005) idea, wherein he contends that the convergence of personal computing and fiber-optic Internet connectivity has established a "flat-world platform," enabling even small groups and individuals to access global markets.

The second strand of research focuses on the cultural and ethical implications that global IS may have on organizations and society at large (De George, 2006; Leidner, 2010; Westrup & Liu, 2008). Expanding beyond the exchange of production materials, process substitution, service relocation, and resource redistribution, this strand addresses issues such as the management and careful balancing of cultural norms, artifacts, and values in the context of an increasingly interconnected world (Avgerou, 2002; Ein-Dor et al., 1993; Hunter & Beck, 2000; Oshri et al., 2008). The focus of interest is often on the consequences of cultural imperialism and precisely this "flat-world" assumption on people's self-identity, the nature of employment, organizational structures, networking, and the governance of nation-states (Leidner, 2010; Navarra & Cornford, 2009), particularly within developing nations (Avgerou, 2008; Walsham, 2000, 2008). Engaging in a profound reflection on how technology, whether as a driver of globalization or a product of an increasingly globalized world, influences individuals, groups, and societies, these studies often portray globalization as an ambivalent phenomenon, serving as a catalyst for mutual understanding and cultural diversity, as well as a source for more inequality and further division among nations by reinforcing the dominance of developed countries (Avgerou, 2008; Leidner, 2010; Walsham, 2011).

4.2 Globalization of the IS Discipline

As mentioned before, there exists a dearth of systematic research addressing the globalization of the IS discipline. In one of the limited studies on the globalization of the IS discipline, Galliers and Meadows

(2003) state that “despite apparent recognition of increasing globalization in our field, [...] the data provide firm evidence that the IS discipline is marked by a distinct parochialism along national, or at least, regional lines” (p. 108). Licker (2011) identified significant shortcomings in the research design—particularly in studies aiming at investigating IS in a global context—and underscored the imperative for greater collaboration among a wider group of academics to effectively investigate the impacts of IS in different parts of the globe. For this reason, and to gain a more profound comprehension of the converging or diverging aspects across countries, cultures, languages, and global work practices, Harris et al. (2011) recommend an increased focus on faculty exchanges and a more deliberate integration of globalization into the IS curriculum.

More recently, several authors have begun to contend that the situation for the IS discipline may not be as dire as previously suggested. For instance, Chua et al. (2018) argued that “[…] as a relatively new discipline, IS ‘grew up’ in the global arena. It embraced Internet-based review systems that can reach reviewers globally early on, and, through its professional organization, has promoted global reach and the inclusion of academic members from around the world” (p. 445) or that “the IS discipline has grown and become more globally inclusive” (p. 446).

Indeed, if we limit globalized research collaboration to conferences, it becomes evident that there has been a significant diversification over the years. A prime example is the International Conference on Information Systems (ICIS), which, until the 2010s, focused on the established strongholds of North America, Europe, and Oceania. In recent years, however, ICIS has embraced a more inclusive approach, regularly rotating its venues among the three principal regions of the Association for Information Systems (AIS). Similar developments can be observed with the European Conference on Information Systems (ECIS) and the Americas Conference on Information Systems (AMCIS), both of which have taken significant strides to expand their geographic reach. Notably, these conferences have already been hosted on the African continent as well as in South and Central America, demonstrating a deliberate effort to engage a broader spectrum of perspectives and contributions from diverse cultural and academic backgrounds. We shall now assess whether this global exchange extends beyond conferences into the discipline's leading journals.

5 Data and Methods

To investigate whether the IS community has maintained its localized character or evolved into a more international or globalized discipline, our study uses bibliometric data spanning from 1979 to 2021. The time horizon intentionally extends to the period before the COVID-19 pandemic, which warrants its own separate and detailed analysis.

Building on the study of Galliers and Meadows (2003), who studied only four journals (ISR, MISQ, ISJ, and JSIS) from 1994 to 2000, we have widened the scope to include additional journals—EJIS, JAIS, JIT, and JMIS—and a longer timeframe. Thanks to advancements in computational methods, our study provides both broad analyses at the intercontinental and national levels, avoiding the original study’s focus on just Europe and North America, where all other regions were combined into a single “other” category. Additionally, we perform detailed geospatial network analyses to map and understand collaboration patterns among researchers worldwide.

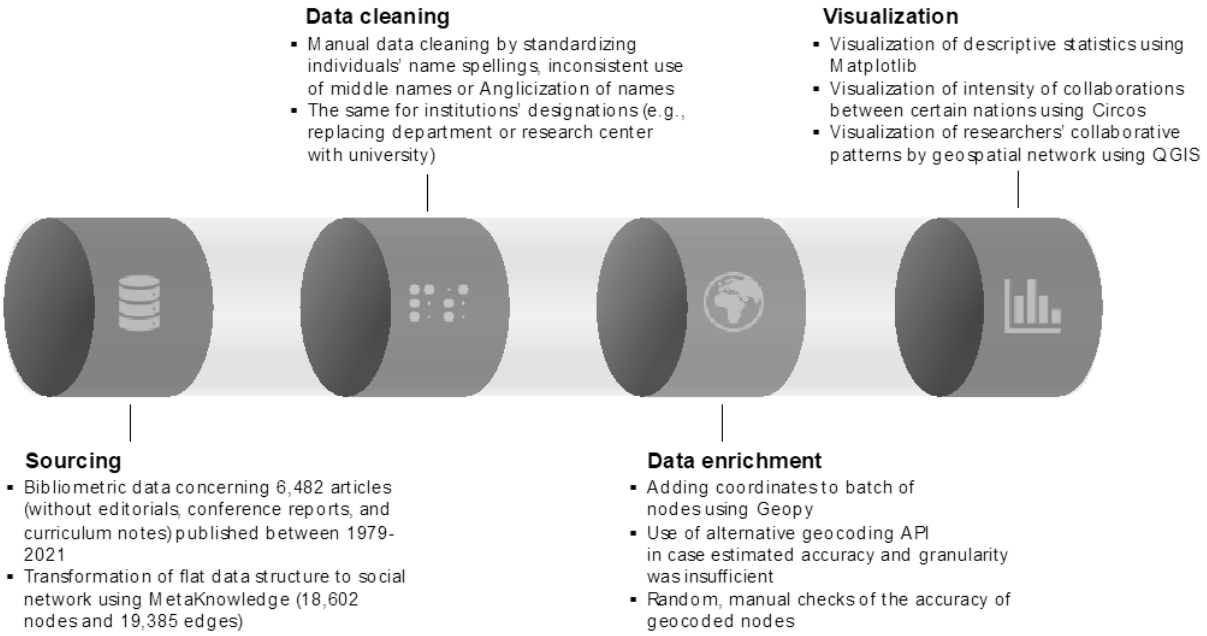

Figure 1. Data Pipeline Developed for this Study

5.1 Data Sourcing

To construct our data pipeline, as illustrated in Figure 1, we first extracted bibliometric data, including author names, affiliations, publication years, source details, and publication titles, from different sources. The initial search with the Web of Science (WoS) yielded 6,395 articles and with the EBSCO Information Services 5,058 articles, excluding editorials, conference reports, and curriculum notes. After merging the results and eliminating duplicates, we conducted additional cross-verification using the AIS eLibrary and Google Scholar, with particular attention to the earlier years, as bibliographic databases exhibited greater inconsistencies during this period. 87 articles were added, leading to a final dataset comprising 6,482 unique contributions published between 1979 and 2021. We subsequently restructured the dataset, initially in a flat-file format, into unique author-article pairs using the MetaKnowledge package (v.3.4.1) for Python (McLevey & McIlroy-Young, 2017). This transformation allowed us to construct an interconnected social network of IS researchers, enabling a comprehensive analysis of their social interactions and collaborative patterns across publications. Through this network model, we gained insights into the structural relationships, clustering, and collaborative behaviors within the IS research community.

5.2 Data Cleaning

The second step comprised a careful and time-consuming data-cleaning process. This included rectifying inconsistencies such as variations in name spellings, differing uses of middle names or anglicized names, and standardizing institutional affiliations (for instance, using the university name instead of designating departments or research centers). For simplicity, we considered only the first affiliation when authors provided multiple affiliations.

5.3 Data Enrichment

In the third step, we performed several data enrichment activities. To augment the bibliometric data with geographic information, we applied batch geocoding of all affiliations using the GeoPy package v.2.4.0 (Esmukov, 2025). If the initial geocoding produced a confidence score below 0.8 or could not pinpoint a location at the highest accuracy (i.e., street level), we used alternative geocoding APIs such as Google Maps, Bing Maps, or Nominatim to try to get more accurate results. When these efforts proved insufficient, we used the centroid method to generate coordinates based on postal codes or local areas. Researchers for whom we could not find exact coordinates were excluded, resulting in a final dataset of 18,602 nodes. It is therefore important to note that this number does not reflect the total number of active researchers during the studied period.

5.4 Data Visualization

In the fourth and final step, we generated geospatial network visualizations. This required additional data transformations to create node-edges pairs, where nodes represented researchers at specific coordinates and times, while edges indicated co-authorship relationships. We identified a total of 19,385 edges. The visualizations were created using the open-source geographical information system QGIS v.3.28 (QGIS Development Team, 2025). Using this software allowed us to efficiently process and display a substantial number of nodes and edges across designated timestamps and layers.

Due to the large number of nodes and edges, we needed to reduce visual clutter caused by multiple authors from the same institution. To do this, we established data aggregation rules to improve the clarity of our visualizations. We chose not to display edge weights because the strength of the relationships was not the main focus of our analysis. Along with the geospatial network visualizations, we also created additional visualizations using Matplotlib v.3.7.1. (Hunter, 2007) and pyCirclize v.0.5.1, a Python version of the Circos library used in Genomics (Krzywinski et al., 2009).

6 A Historical Analysis of Global Collaboration in IS

Has the IS community retained its localized character, or has it become a more globalized discipline? To address this, we will first identify the key research hubs that have contributed to the scientific discourse in "leading journals" over recent years. We thus begin by plotting all identified nodes on a global map. Figure 2 reveals that researchers in less economically developed societies have made relatively little for the advancement of IS theory and that the IS research agenda potentially remains set by economically affluent nations (Davison & Díaz Andrade, 2018).

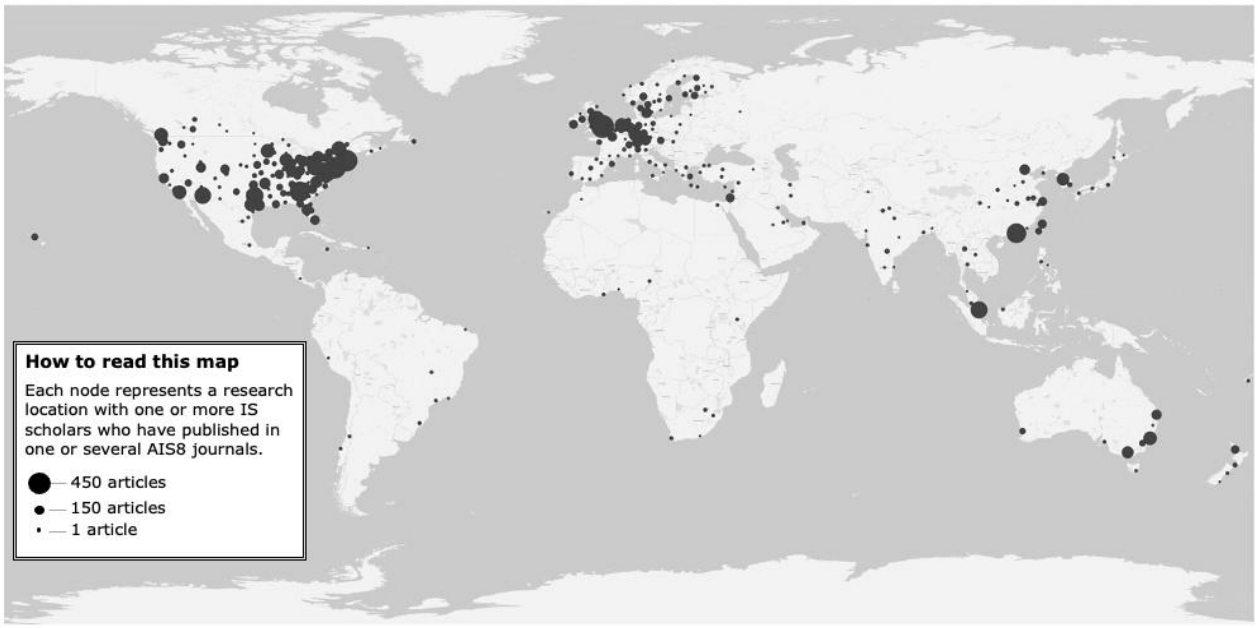

Figure 2. Geographical Dispersion of Research Activities in IS, 1979-2021 (Author's representation)

Numerous researchers have endeavored to unravel the reasons behind the underrepresentation of researchers from specific regions across the globe. Empirical investigations in other academic disciplines offer evidence of a discernible cultural and ethnic bias that may diminish the significance attributed to research originating from specific parts of the world (Asplund & Welle, 2018; Whitehead, 1980). The structural and institutional components of the review system can perpetuate the prominence of certain groups while marginalizing others (Davison, 2014; Pauleen et al., 2006). Beyond the well-documented limitations of the review system as highlighted in previous studies (Chataway & Daniels, 2020; Schroter et al., 2020), empirical data lends credence that geographical and cultural proximity (occasionally necessitating to surrender to the dominant culture), exerts a substantial impact on the emergence of global collaborative endeavors. For example, Müller (2008) underscores that pride, prejudices, misconceptions, and clichés related to divergent academic systems and *traditions* continue to hinder

cross-cultural teamwork. But also practical factors, such as language barriers, limited funding, and the reinforcement of localization attempts—driven by national funding regulations, research excellence initiatives, and local companies—may play their part in slowing down global collaboration (Hennemann et al., 2012).

6.1 Why Historical Analysis?

While a comprehensive analysis of all underlying causes of the geographical disparities presented may be unfeasible, a historical examination can yield valuable insights into the gradual shifts in collaboration patterns and the cumulative impact of events and actions over time. As advanced by Robertson (1992), the historical development of globalization—and with it also research as part of a systemic view of the world—can be divided into multiple phases. These phases are often indistinctly defined; at times, one or more pivotal events may mark the onset of a new era, while in other instances, the transition unfolds as a gradual process not attributable to any specific historical moment. Fundamentally, the precise timing of each phase's emergence is less critical than understanding the overall trajectory and possible path dependencies.

Viewed through the lens of the global institutionalization of the IS discipline, path dependency theory asserts that once institutional structures are firmly established, they become increasingly resistant to change (Mahoney, 2000; Pierson, 2000). Because such institutions often entail complex networks of rights and obligations and thus can be regarded as the "cornerstones of social order" (Streeck & Thelen, 2005), they not only explicitly constrain and regulate the behavior of insiders, but also frequently present insurmountable obstacles for those currently outside the system (Cattani et al., 2014). Taking this perspective, it stands to reason that those who have historically held the privilege of establishing these institutions may strongly collaborate and continue to exert a great influence over the way how IS theory is developed.

From the perspective of the localization of globality, institutions assume a central role in configuring the allocation of both material and political resources, thereby endowing them with substantial value while concurrently engendering significant potential for conflict (Hall & Thelen, 2009). As everywhere where resources are unequally distributed, certain actors may exhibit a reduced inclination to favor the preservation of the existing order and instead advocate for change. For instance, proponents of decolonization within the Eurocentric and North American-centric system may emphasize the importance of incorporating local knowledge and experiences from marginalized population groups into IS theory (Davison & Díaz Andrade, 2018; Masiero, 2023), with the ultimate aim of equitably redistributing influence and representation (Payton et al., 2022). Both views can coexist in parallel and determine how a research community collaborates in one specific phase of globalization, which progression within the IS research discipline we will now explain.

6.2 The Germinal Phase (1979-1983)

Our historical analysis starts with the establishment of MISQ under the editorial leadership of Gary W. Dickson from the University of Minnesota. The inaugural issue was published in March 1977, although systematic inclusion in the WoS database did not commence until 1979. As illustrated in Figure 3, the germinal phase of IS as a discipline is distinguished by the emergence of research relationships, predominantly within the North American continent but also includes isolated contributions from Australia, New Zealand, Israel, and Germany. Research activities during this period are characterized by "tribal communities" that collaborate within limited, geographically circumscribed regions (Becher & Trowler, 2001). The University of Minnesota serves as an initial nexus, facilitating connections between the eastern and western, as well as the northern and southern parts of the United States, albeit with limited success in promoting cross-border collaboration with Canadian peers, who prefer to network among themselves at that time.

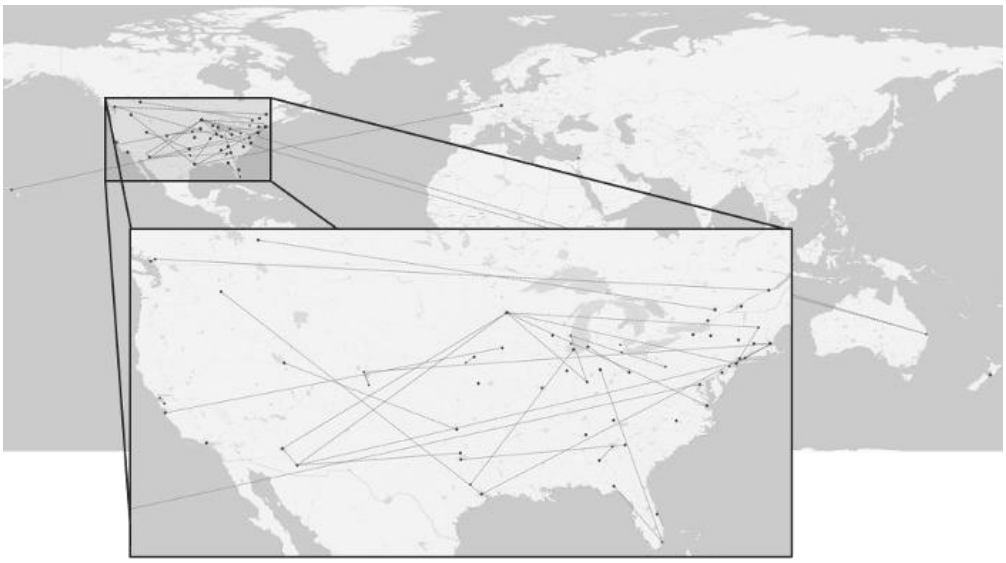

Figure 3. Geographical Dispersion of Research Activities in IS, 1979-1983

6.3 The Take-off Phase (1984-1989)

A turning point in human development is often characterized by the transition from primitive tribal societies to the establishment of kingdoms and principalities to assert territorial claims and notions of cultural identity. In the historiography of the IS discipline, the year 1984 could mark such a turning point when the inaugural issue of JMIS under the editorial leadership of Vladimir Zwass from Fairleigh Dickson University was published. This event not only expanded the discourse within IS but also marked the dissolution of the hitherto monopolistic position of MISQ as the only mouthpiece of a young discipline.

However, shortly thereafter, the first issue of JIT was released in February 1986, with Igor Aleksander from Imperial College London serving as the editor. This occurrence signaled the inception of the initial European counterpart to the predominantly North American terrain of IS research with the University of Cambridge, at that time, becoming a stronghold against American influences from Boston, Los Angeles, Montreal, and Pittsburgh, among other places, in addition to Minneapolis (see Figure 4).

As Martinsons (2016) noted "[…] before the 1990s, many IS researchers, especially those not working in or networked to the USA, found it difficult to share their research and insights with a relevant worldwide audience" (p.4). In this regard, JIT (and later ISJ and EJIS) acted as a catalyst for increased interest in IS research across Scandinavia and other regions, including Australia, New Zealand, and South Africa.

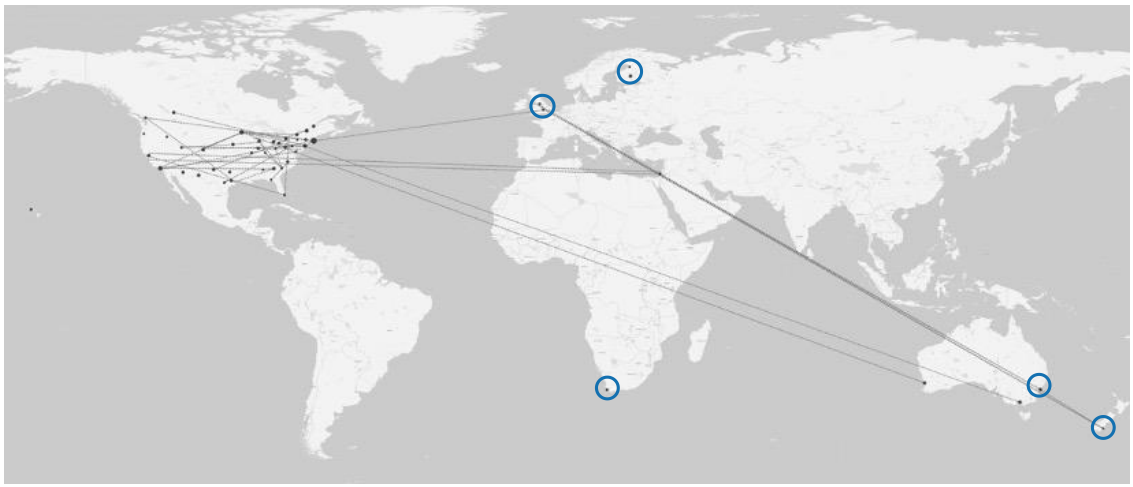

Figure 4. Geographical Dispersion of Research Activities in IS, 1984-1989

6.4 The Struggle-for-Hegemony Phase (1990-1999)

The 1990s witnessed a notable influx of new participants into the IS discipline, particularly from Europe, Oceania, and the "Asian Tigers" (i.e., Hong Kong, Singapore, South Korea, and Taiwan). During this period, three new scholarly journals were established: ISR in 1990 under the editorial leadership of E. Burton Swanson at UCLA, ISJ in 1991, co-edited by David Avison of Southampton Business School and Guy Fitzgerald from the University of Oxford, and EJIS, co-edited by Jonathan Liebenau and Steve Smithson, both from the London School of Economics (LSE). Notwithstanding the emergence of these new journals, Galliers and Meadows (2003) noted the persistence of a distinct parochialism, primarily along national or regional lines, within the IS community. Much of the discourse remained grounded in an Anglo-American perspective even though numerous researchers from non-English-speaking Europe and Asia had ventured abroad to the United States and the United Kingdom during this period.

Cattani et al. (2014) explain that in such a struggle-for-hegemony phase, the incumbents (in our case predominantly from North America), were inclined to preserve the status quo in the field. They were motivated to uphold existing norms and practices as any alterations to the competitive landscape risked destabilizing their dominant position. The inclination to produce research departing from established conventions was not random but tended to align with the social structure of the field. Core figures in the discipline were more likely to defend orthodox approaches to research production as well as to promote consensus (Benbasat & Weber, 1996), as their symbolic capital was tied to well-established forms of scholarly work. Conversely, challengers (represented mostly by Anglo-centric scholars), sought to challenge the existing order and question the taken-for-granted assumptions of the prevalent North American way of studying IS (Avgerou et al., 1999). Paradoxically, this struggle resulted in increased exchanges and collaboration between researchers from the UK, USA, and Australia, as illustrated in Figure 5.

This may be considered a side remark, but it merits mentioning that English-speaking researchers based in Europe often delineated their perspective as emblematic of the entirety of European scholars, notwithstanding the significant divergences prevalent within the European IS community at that time. As an illustration, scholars from the German-speaking IS community, who frequently possessed backgrounds more deeply rooted in engineering and computer science, encountered challenges in reconciling their way of doing research—which later became known as design science research in IS (Hevner et al., 2004)—with the predominantly social science-oriented methodology prevalent in Anglo-centric IS research.

In summary, the 1990s can be characterized as the initial phase of intensified international collaboration. However, this period was marked by protectionism and fierce competition between Europe, particularly the Anglo-centric faction, and North America (Lyytinen et al., 2007; Mettler & Sunyaev, 2023).

Figure 5. Geographical Dispersion of Research Activities in IS, 1990-1999

6.5 The Establishment and Integration Phase (2000-2009)

The 2000s witnessed a further increase in research activity from Europe, North America, Oceania, and parts of Asia. During this period, two new journals were inaugurated: JAIS in 2000, edited by Phillip Ein-Dor of Tel Aviv University, and the JSIS in 2003, co-edited by Robert Galliers of Bentley College and LSE, in collaboration with Sirkka Jarvenpaa from the University of Texas.

While the majority of research collaborations continued to revolve around the triad of Australia, Europe, and the United States, there emerged a burgeoning exchange with scholars from the "Four Asian Tigers", which in turn also strengthened collaboration among themselves (see Figure 6). Similar to its neighboring disciplines (Sassmannshausen & Volkmann, 2018), the period was equally marked by a notable institutionalization of research, exemplified by the establishment of the Senior Scholars' List of Premier Journals in 2007, colloquially referred to as "the basket." Though perhaps unintentionally, this list subsequently served as a "universal benchmark of performance" (Martinsons, 2016) for various institutionalized metrics within academia, including tenure evaluation, eligibility for editorial board appointments, and scholarly rankings. As the institutionalization of an increased emphasis on "rigorous" research gained greater traction, the establishment of MISQ Executive in 2002 can be considered another important event, as it definitively sealed the creeping decay of practice involvement in that it relocated practice-based research from MISQ to this new publication venue. This, in turn, precipitated a crisis of purpose that reached its zenith in the form of the well-known "rigor versus relevance" debate (Benbasat & Zmud, 1999; Straub & Ang, 2011).

Despite these transformative developments, this period can be viewed as a "shakeout" wherein numerous emerging national research communities found their path into the IS discipline, albeit often requiring substantial adaptation, in an increasingly flat-world research landscape. This is why much of the discourse remained anchored in an Anglo-American perspective until the late 2000s (Galliers et al., 2008).

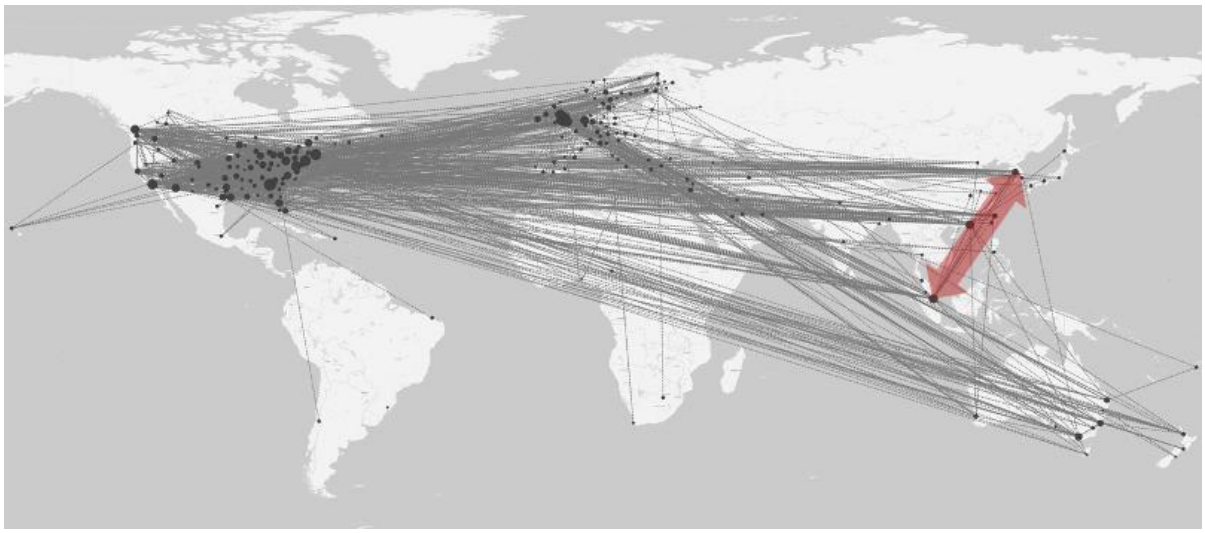

Figure 6. Geographical Dispersion of Research Activities in IS, 2000-2009

6.6 The Post-parochial Phase (2010-2021)

The years leading up to the pandemic in the 2010s were marked by enhanced collaboration both within established Anglo-American alliances and across emerging research hotspots in Asia, Oceania, and Continental Europe (see Figure 7). This period equally witnessed the inclusion of more researchers from South America, although only hesitantly and modestly. One could therefore characterize this as a post-parochial phase that has brought to light new preachers as well as new congregations and denominations.

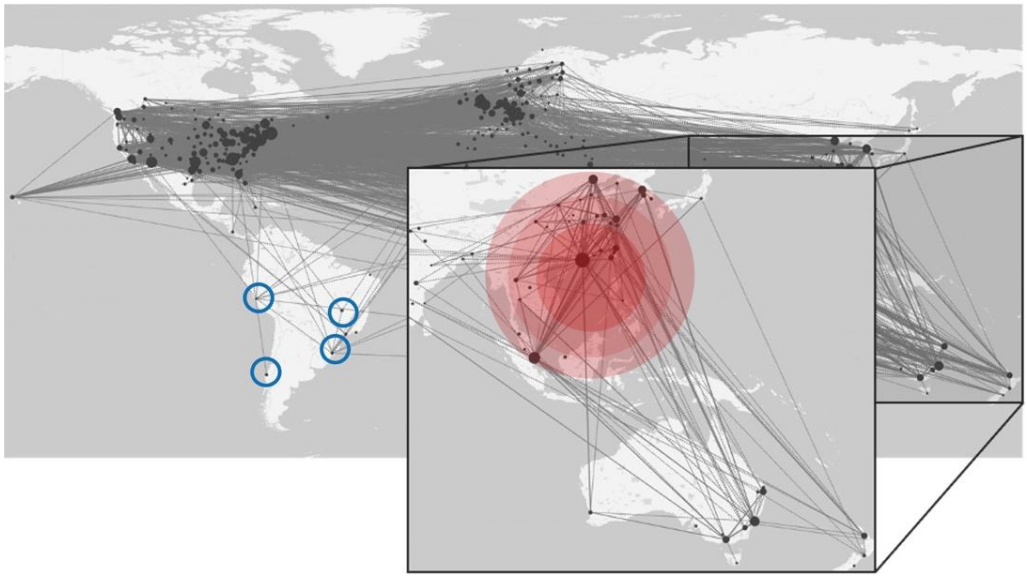

Figure 7. Geographical Dispersion of Research Activities in IS, 2010-2021

However, despite the IS discipline's expanded global outreach and cautious opening up to new topics and worldviews, there might be indications that suggest a growing inclination toward the localization of globality (Fitzgerald et al., 2021). As we will discuss further, it is plausible that global collaboration in IS research may have reached its peak just before COVID-19. However, determining the present state of collaboration remains challenging, especially given the significant publication time lag—often exceeding three years—between initial research collaboration and final publication in a leading journal.

The exact causes for this shift toward more localized research remain uncertain. A possible explanation could be that geopolitical shifts and crises, which have notably induced global instability in recent times, have prompted a desire to return to familiar, more localized research. Marginson (2022) posits that certain nations, notably China, have started to embrace a dual strategy in which they actively push forward global scientific endeavors while concurrently upholding a degree of autonomy from the global system. This approach is predicated on the distinction that global science lacks a normative center, in contrast to the national science system, which is subject to governance by the state. They have strategically invested in localized research and expanded collaboration within the Asian region, not merely to generate knowledge for its own sake but to enhance national competitive advantages, prosperity, security, and survival.

Another possible explanation lies in the emergence of a counter-narrative marked by an increasing number of researchers advocating for more diversity—in all possible forms and kinds (Marabelli et al., 2023). This counter-narrative challenges the dominant monocultural paradigm, wherein Euro-American scholars hold sway and shape the perceptions of what is valuable research. Among other things, this results in an increased emphasis on indigenous and less "one-size fits all" or "flat world" kind of thinking, which could lead to a return to localized research collaborations.

7 International or Global Research Collaboration?

Our analysis thus far has examined the trajectory of globalization within the IS discipline, which commenced with a distinct local focus and has progressively become more interconnected, though it has yet to achieve a comprehensive representation of all global regions. A comparable trend has been documented in other research domains (Aksnes & Sivertsen, 2023; Gómez-Espés et al., 2024), where cross-border scientific collaboration has experienced substantial growth over the years. However, the question remains as to whether the research collaboration in IS remains "international" or is truly "global." We have therefore carried out additional descriptive statistical analyses based on the data collected.

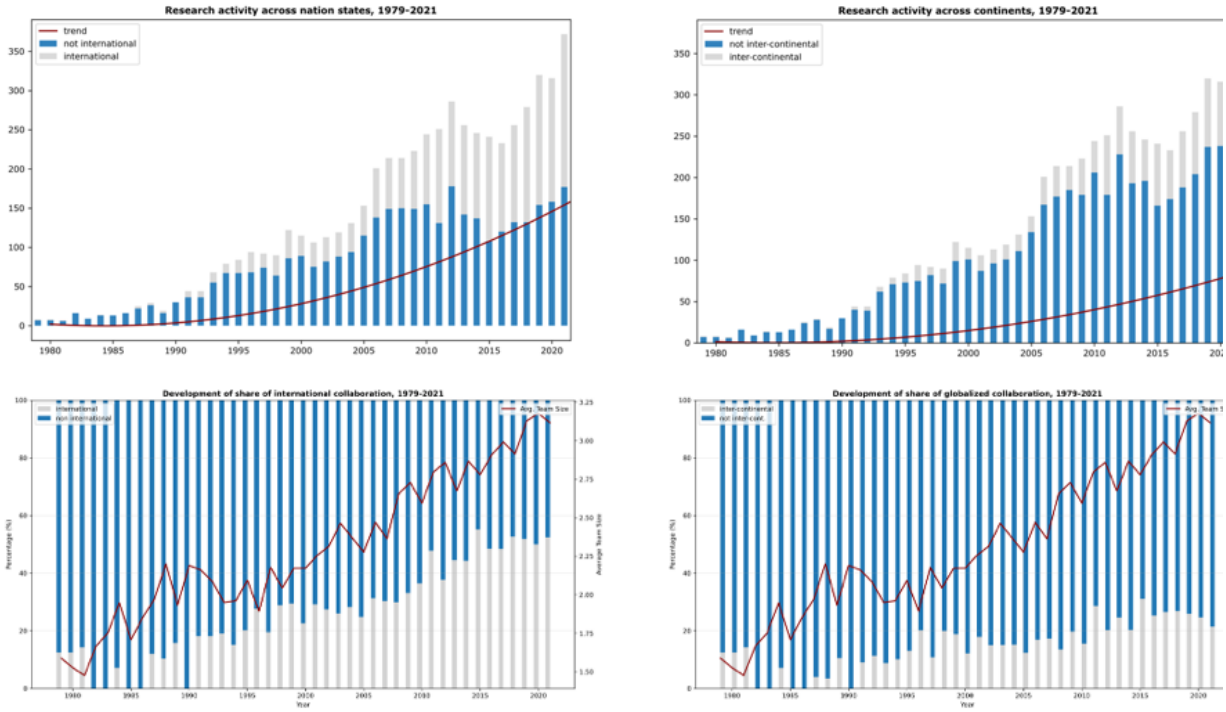

Figure 8. Development of Research Activity Across Nation-states and Continents, 1979-2021

7.1 The Evolution of International Collaboration in IS

Let us first examine how international collaboration evolved which, in this paper, we define as the collaboration of author teams originating from two or more distinct countries (single-authored papers were not considered for this analysis).

In the upper left quadrant of Figure 8, a steady increase in international collaboration over time is evident. Notably, the rapid expansion of publications and the establishment of new journals, particularly during the post-parochial phase (2010-2021), have significantly boosted cross-border research activity. The proportion of internationally co-authored papers rose markedly, from 7.9% during the germinal phase (1979-1983) to 47.5% in the post-parochial phase (2010-2021).

This increase can, in part, be attributed to the consistent growth in the size of authorship teams (Gallivan & Ahuja, 2015). As can be seen in the lower left quadrant of Figure 8, the average team size evolved over time, starting at 1.6 authors per paper during the germinal phase (1979-1983). It gradually increased to 1.94 in the take-off phase (1984-1989) and 2.07 in the struggle-for-hegemony phase (1990-1999). This upward trend persisted, reaching 2.41 in the establishment and integration phase (2000-2009) and peaking at 2.90 authors per paper in the post-parochial phase (2010-2021).

Although both metrics—internationalization of research and team size—show upward trends, the former has experienced significantly greater growth (in relative terms) than the latter. This may suggest that the field has become more internationally oriented, not only through larger teams but also through a geographical expansion of research collaborations. A pivotal period is around 2011-2015, when international collaboration accelerated markedly, exceeding 40% and continuing to climb, while team size maintained its steady upward trend. This indicates that the internationalization of research has been driven by factors beyond simple team expansion, potentially reflecting broader changes in how research projects in IS are set up and conducted.

7.2 The Evolution of Global Collaboration in IS

As previously noted, it is crucial to differentiate between “international” and “global.” For this paper, we define “global” as authorship teams composed of members from two or more distinct continents.

As illustrated in the upper right quadrant of Figure 8, globalized research activities within the IS field—spanning multiple continents—are evolving at a considerably slower rate. Specifically, the percentage of inter-continental papers has risen from 7.9% during the germinal phase (1979-1983) to 25.08% in the post-parochial phase (2010-2021).

When contrasting the growth of inter-continental authorship teams with that of team size, the increase in average team size is more pronounced. As depicted in the lower right quadrant of Figure 8, the publication of papers stemming from inter-continental authorship teams experiences frequent fluctuations, with notable spikes and periodic plateaus. Of particular interest is, again, the period between 2011 and 2015, during which globalized research reached new heights (exceeding 25%), while average team size continued its steady upward trajectory. After this initial surge in global research collaboration up to 2015, it appears that the trend may have peaked. The underlying causes for this plateau remain unclear. Whether this trend reversal is permanent or temporary equally remains uncertain.

8 Unity in Adversity: Has Geopolitics Played a Role in IS?

One possible explanation for this plateau could be that research is becoming increasingly "politicized" (Kendziorra et al., 2023), with economic and domestic policies potentially influencing not only the direction of research but also the collaborative partnerships formed in the process. Though often disavowed, politics can wield significant influence over research (Ringgenberg et al., 2023). It may even determine researchers' ability to participate in a globalized discourse (Xu, 2021).

Two competing theoretical frameworks, namely *liberalism* and *realism*, have tried to explain the politics of globalization and its potential reversal (Witt, 2019b). Liberalism attributes the decline of globalization to *domestic political pressures*, aligning with prevalent public discourse. A recent illustrative example has been the studies focusing on analyzing contact tracing strategies employed to mitigate the spread of COVID-19, characterized by a pronounced national focus due to the varying policies implemented across countries (e.g., Riemer et al., 2020; Rowe et al., 2020; Wang & Li, 2024). In contrast, realism attributes this transition from globalized collaboration to a more localized approach to geopolitical factors. A looming geopolitical conflict that has intensified over the years is what Allison et al. (2021) refer to as the "Great Tech Rivalry" between China and the United States, which may also have implications for research collaboration among IS scholars from these nations.

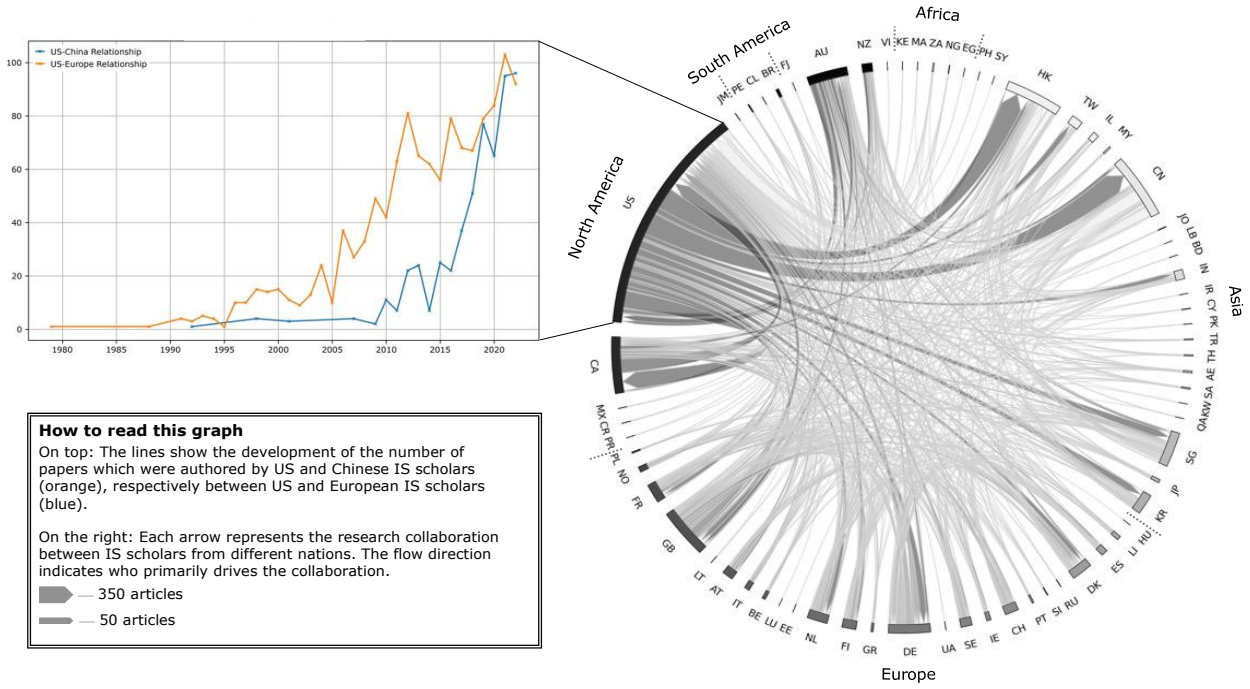

Figure 9. Social Connections Among IS Scholars and Development of the Relationship Between US, Chinese, and European Colleagues

As for now, the escalating tensions between the U.S. and China appear to be having a first impact on research across various fields, largely due to its characterization as a theater of geostrategic competition (Tang, 2022). In IS, this influence has not yet been as pronounced (see Figure 9). On the contrary, due to the widespread presence of Chinese researchers around the globe, significant collaborations continue to thrive between colleagues in the U.S. and China, particularly before the pandemic which aligns with the time horizon of our data and the publication time lag of leading journals.

Nonetheless, the impetus for collaboration is increasingly emanating from American researchers, while their Chinese counterparts exhibit a broader range of international collaborations, particularly with peers from other Asian regions, as previously noted. Furthermore, China's recent shift in research evaluation policies has the potential to alter the research landscape, as it aims to curb the progressive globalization and integration efforts of local researchers into the global IS community by stipulating that at least one-third of a scholar's "representative" works must be published in national journals (Shu et al., 2022; Xu, 2021). This could introduce distortions, particularly since specific research may be deliberately tailored for either the local or global market, despite the fundamental principle that research should be universally driven by the pursuit of knowledge, devoid of political influences.

Despite the early recognition of the significance of the political dimension for IS (Clarke, 1988; Robey & Markus, 1998), the discipline is still at a relatively early stage of reflection on how it can actively contribute to and critically evaluate the impact of policies that exert influence on the utilization of IS or emanate from the implementation of IS (King & Kraemer, 2019). It is crucial to recognize that many research topics within IS—beyond the SDGs we mention at the beginning of this paper—inherently possess a political dimension that affects people, businesses, and society on a global scale (Niederman et al., 2017). It is therefore imperative for IS researchers, as it is currently gaining traction in adjacent fields (Chelli & Cunliffe, 2022), to reflect more deeply enduring ramifications of escalating trends in the interplay between localization and globalization and how this affects the selection of theoretical frameworks and research methodologies, the ethical principles governing the research conduct, as well as the narratives employed to achieve favorable outcomes.

9 Conclusion

Through a historical analysis of social connections and collaboration patterns, we have demonstrated that the dispersion of the IS discipline, as in many other fields, adheres to a customary trajectory (Becher & Trowler, 2001; Robertson, 2004). It has progressively internationalized itself, having transitioned from a germinal phase to a subsequent stage characterized by struggle and cultural conflicts, leading to the dispersal of initial centers of influence and associated cultures as well as to a broader participation from scholars across the globe.

Even in the face of geopolitical tensions, this pattern has remained largely unaffected. Yet, the ongoing trend toward increased global research collaboration appears to have plateaued. The regions that have yet to be integrated into the global exchange of ideas—notably South America, Africa, and significant parts of Asia—are the primary victims of the slowdown in collaborative efforts. We thus conclude that IS still cannot be characterized as a truly "global research discipline," however, as a much more international and less "parochial" community than at the time of Galliers' and Meadows' (2003) investigation on the state of the discipline.

9.1 Implications

Of course, we recognize that studying globalization exclusively through the lens of research collaboration for publication purposes is subject to various limitations. But before we outline them, let us first address the infamous question: "So what?"

There are compelling arguments both for and against greater global representation of IS scholars in its leading journals. One argument against it is the assertion that researchers should prioritize the acquisition of knowledge as the highest standard. If researchers from certain regions are unable, due to various reasons, to achieve "sufficient" knowledge gain, then articles from these scholars may not warrant publication in top-tier journals. It could be argued that localized research, by its very nature, may not effectively capture the attention of the target audience of top-tier journals, as such papers often lack the broader relevance expected by readers seeking more generalized findings. In this context, one might contend that even high-quality localized research may not align well with the objectives of these journals. As a result, researchers focusing on topics relevant to the local context might find it more strategic to seek

out publication outlets that cater to context-specific issues, offering more appropriate platforms for disseminating their work.

On the other hand, one could certainly debate what qualifies as "sufficient" knowledge gain, and whether a contextualized perspective offers as meaningful a "contribution" to the broader academic community as context-free theories, which often carry implicit assumptions primarily relevant to Western countries. We will leave this contentious issue for others to address.

Regardless of whether publications in top-tier journals are evaluated solely on the principle of "knowledge gain" or also judged by additional criteria such as "diversity"—which can likewise contribute to the advancement of knowledge—it is essential to explore why so few researchers from South America, Africa, and certain regions of Asia engage in the scientific discourse. Given that many of the most pronounced global challenges manifest most acutely in these underrepresented regions, it is not only unfortunate but also of paramount importance to rapidly integrate scholars from those locations, both for the advancement of the IS discipline and for its credibility in providing solutions to global challenges.

To attain the status of a global research discipline equipped to effectively tackle global problems, we believe that efforts must be undertaken that go beyond mere academic exchanges (Harris et al., 2011), which, while undeniably enriching, may fall short in terms of long-term impact. Often, such exchanges are viewed as a form of "development aid," and cultural exposure remains limited, especially when instruction is conducted in one's native language using Western teaching materials. Thus, several factors militate against a true understanding of globalization in this context: the transience of the visits, the controlled environments, the use of English (or other European language) as the primary language of instruction, and the limited interaction with "ordinary people" and local institutions. Instead, we argue that alternative instruments of a more enduring nature are indispensable, including the financing and development of collaborative research infrastructures, worldwide training programs, and coordinated strategies for longitudinal field data collection that transcend local contexts. Without these measures, we foresee limited substantive progress in becoming truly global.

9.2 Limitations and Future Research

Like any research, our study is subject to specific limitations that warrant consideration. As has been emphasized on multiple occasions, research collaborations encompass far more than the co-authorship of publications. Focusing solely on the tangible outputs of these collaborations—the published articles—risks overlooking the critical socio-cultural dynamics that shape and define working in a globalized research environment. These interactions manifest in diverse relational forms, whether among equal peers, between mentors and mentees, or even as friendships, each with its challenges, including financial, linguistic, philosophical, and sometimes even ideological.

A promising future direction for research that may better capture the social-cultural elements of research could involve examining the impact of specific collaborative formats such as one-time events (e.g., doctoral consortia, mid-career workshops) or long-term engagements (e.g., mentorships, friendships) on the personal and professional trajectories of IS scholars. Such an inquiry would inevitably require a selective focus and thus lend itself to a qualitative approach, capturing the nuanced, deeply personal "histories" that emerge from collaborative research experiences.

Second, the focus on the Senior Scholars' List for conducting the analysis is constantly debated. He et al. (2011) note that co-authorship only represents one of several "explicit products" of scientific collaboration. While it is undeniable that avenues for global collaboration extend beyond the act of co-authoring publications, encompassing activities like joint investments in research infrastructures and exchange programs (as we mentioned before), these manifestations are often intangible and, eventually, culminate in collaborative publications at some point. But not all research should, nor can, be published in top-tier journals. Often, more specialized journals that prioritize context-specific insights and regional distinctions are better suited for certain types of studies.

To develop a more comprehensive understanding of collaboration patterns among IS researchers, future studies could therefore expand the limited set of journals used in this study by incorporating a broader range of specialized IS journals (e.g., with a specific regional focus or distinct understanding of knowledge gain). This would allow for an assessment of whether the geographical gaps illustrated in Figure 2 are persistent or simply a reflection of our decision to replicate Galliers and Meadows' (2003) work, which concentrated on top-tier journals.

Furthermore, a more in-depth analysis of the topics dominating top-tier journals—investigating whether these areas disproportionately attract Western scholars or inadvertently create barriers for researchers from underrepresented regions in IS—could further enrich our study and offer insights into potential biases in our findings. It could be that underrepresentation on the global research map may not stem from a systematic exclusion or lack of interest; rather, as a field inherently driven by technological advancement, IS research often flourishes where innovation is most accessible. In this light, geographical disparities may reflect the broader interplay between technology and locality, underscoring how access to innovation shapes academic participation and representation.

Third, bibliometric analyses not only provide limited explanations of IS scholars' backgrounds but also offer only a partial understanding of their "perceived" national identities. In other words, the institutional affiliation and geographic location where one works say little about where one "feels home." Many scholars, especially those from developing countries, may pursue opportunities abroad at various stages in their careers. Such mobility does, however, not imply an automatic or complete assimilation into the local culture. While some may indeed develop strong affinities with their new environments, this experience is far from universal. Conversely, a researcher trained internationally who returns to their country of origin for an academic position may not necessarily conform to local research norms; they may continue to engage with the intellectual traditions of their foreign alma mater to varying extents. To better understand how globalization and geopolitical zeitgeist influence the lived experiences and professional realities of IS scholars, personal narrative research could offer valuable insights (Haden & Hoffman, 2013).

This brings us to the last point. Our findings only reflect the situation before the COVID-19 pandemic. Given the inherent lag between research collaborations and their eventual publication, our insights offer only a limited view of the current state of globalization within the discipline in the post-pandemic era. The pandemic, as we have all experienced, has brought profound changes—both positive and negative. In light of this, it may be valuable to revisit and analyze the trajectory of globalization within the field in a few years to assess its advancement or retreat during the pandemic years.

Nevertheless, we believe that our analysis offers valuable insights for contemplating the trajectory of the IS discipline. Indeed, it prompts questions regarding our collective aspirations: Should we allocate more research to the examination of localized contexts and manifestations of digitalization to enhance our comprehension of the overarching phenomenon? Alternatively, should our collective endeavor prioritize the comprehensive exploration of the overarching phenomenon through genuine global collaboration? Is it feasible to adeptly pursue both pathways simultaneously, or does the inherent structure and resources of our discipline necessitate prioritization of one of these paths? These questions represent additional avenues for future research emerging from this study, and we encourage the reader to engage them in thoughtful reflection.

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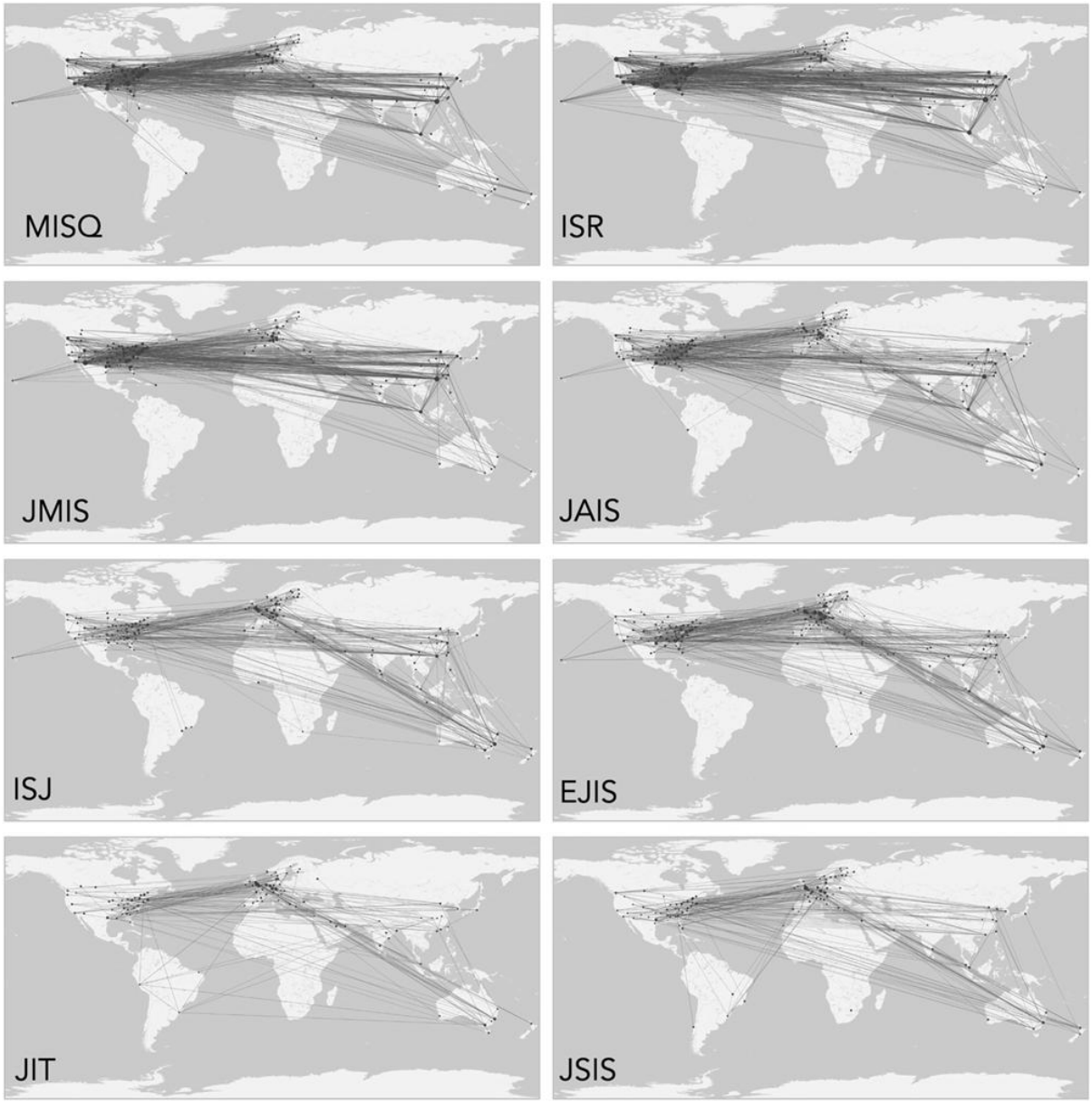
Appendix: Geospatial Social Networks of Research Collaboration per Journal



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Tobias Mettler is a Full Professor of Information Management at the Swiss Graduate Institute of Public Administration (IDHEAP) of the University of Lausanne, Switzerland. His research focuses on the digital transformation of governments and society, with particular attention to critical issues such as data governance, privacy, demographic change, and the well-being of citizens. He has been widely recognized with several accolades for the interdisciplinary nature and societal impact of his research. His research has appeared, in journals such as *Government Information Quarterly, Information Polity, Information Systems Journal, Journal of Information Technology, and the European Journal of Information Systems*, among others.