

Who Shapes the Internationalization of Higher Education? Networks, Power, and the Actors Beyond Academia

ELTE PPK IPPI (Institute of Intercultural Psychology and Education)

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Agenda

1. **Internationalization:** What is it? Why beyond academia? And What do I mean by internationalization in this context?
2. **Actors vs Stakeholder Groups and Partnerships**
3. **Study Results**
4. **Implications**
5. **Closing Thoughts**

What is the Internationalization of Higher Education?

“The intentional **process of integrating an international, intercultural or global dimension into the purpose, functions and delivery of post-secondary education**, in order to enhance the quality of education and research for all students and staff, and to make a meaningful contribution to society.”

(De Wit et al., 2015, p. 29)

Why Look at Internationalization Beyond Academia?

“This new beginning will only be possible if there are **changes not only in the focus of scholarly debate**, but **also in the actions of the key people engaged in the practice** of internationalizing higher education – from policymakers and leaders to student affairs professionals and teachers.”

(de Wit, 2024, p. 11)

What do I mean by Internationalization in this Context?

“In agreement with de Wit (2024), we adopt an adaptive, context-sensitive understanding, viewing internationalisation as **a reflexive and multi-scalar process shaped by intersecting dynamics at global, regional, national, local, and individual levels.**”

(Pina-Cardona & Marinoni, 2025)

Actors vs. stakeholder groups and Partnerships

- **Actors < Stakeholder Groups**

- Internal [e.g., students, faculty, and staff]
- External [e.g., NGOs, industry, governments]

- **Partnerships/Collaborations:**

“any formal or informal working together by two or more higher education entities in pursuit of common goals.”

- These relationships can vary in:
 - **size, geographical dispersion,**
 - **resource availability,**
 - **prestige, power and influence”**

(Maringe & de Wilt, 2016, p. 301)

Stakeholder Groups and Actors Beyond Academia

- **Intergovernmental/International Organizations** (e.g., UNESCO, OECD, World Bank [global], European Commission [regional], German Academic Exchange Services (DAAD) [national])
- **NGOs & Higher Education Associations/Networks** (e.g., International Association of Universities [global], European Association of International Education [regional], American Council on Education [national])
- **Research Hubs** (e.g., Center for International Higher Education [global], Ali Mazrui Centre for Higher Education Studies [regional/national], UNESCO Chairs [national])
- **Policymakers** (e.g., Governments & related ministers...)
- **Foundations & Philanthropic Organizations** (e.g., European University Foundation, Asia FOUndation, Qatar Foundation)

CAVEAT: Some actors can play interconnected roles across stakeholder groups

Research Questions

1. How do different stakeholder groups (IGOs, NGOs, RHs, and PMs) align or diverge in their visions for internationalisation, and how do they interact with each other to advance it?
2. How does each stakeholder group's distinct roles and organisational characteristics shape collaboration patterns within and across groups involved in internationalisation?
3. How do global or regional dynamics hinder or reshape cross-sectoral stakeholder collaboration in internationalisation?

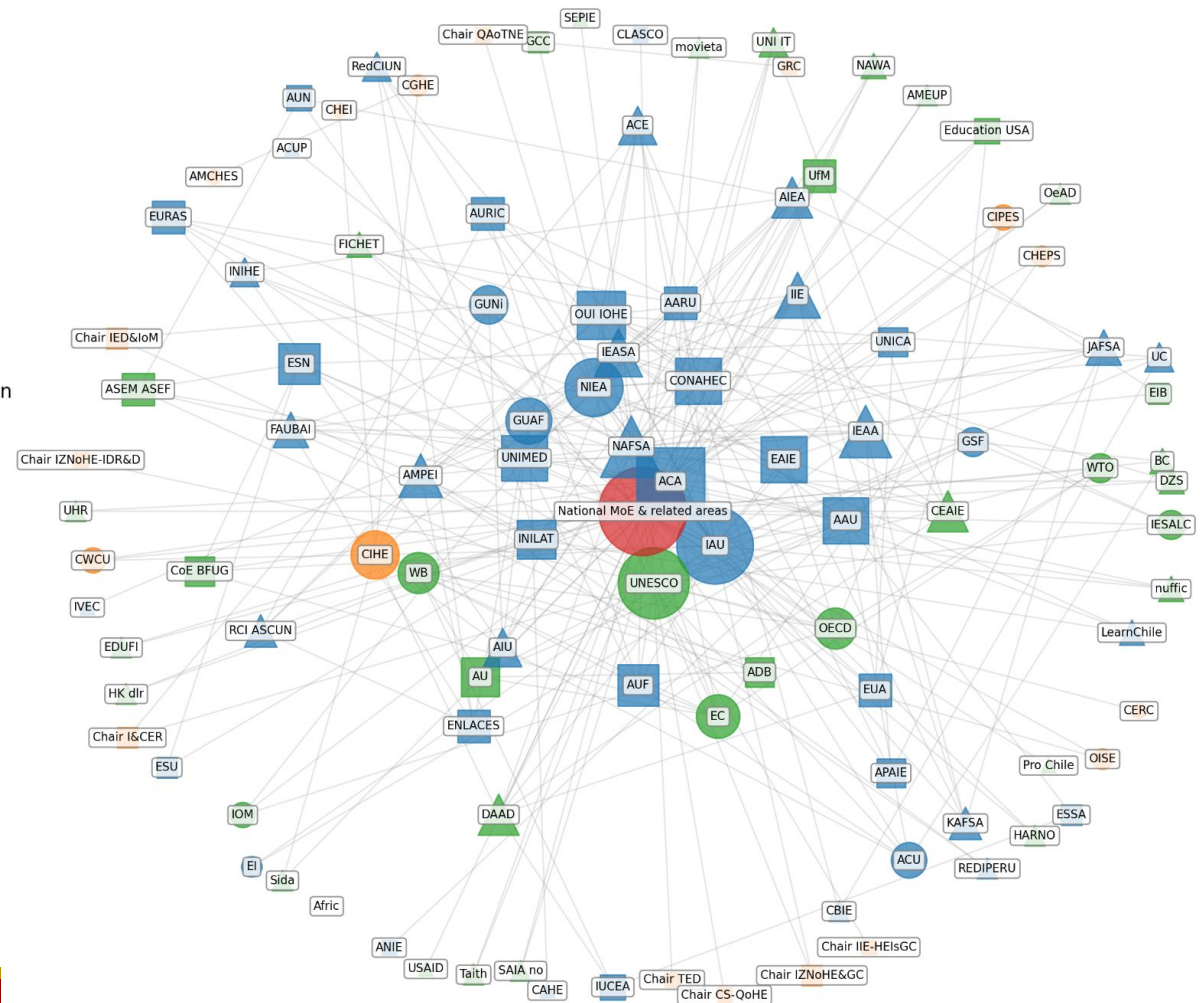
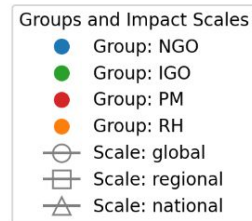
(Pina-Cardona & Marinoni, 2025)

(Pina-Cardona & Marinoni, 2025)



Figure 2. Full actor network visualisation showing individual actor connections based on centrality

Network Structure of Global Higher Education Internationalisation
(Shape = Impact Scale, Color = Group, Label = Abbreviation)



(Pina-Cardona & Marinoni, 2025)

Figure 3. Network structure showing connections within and between stakeholder groups

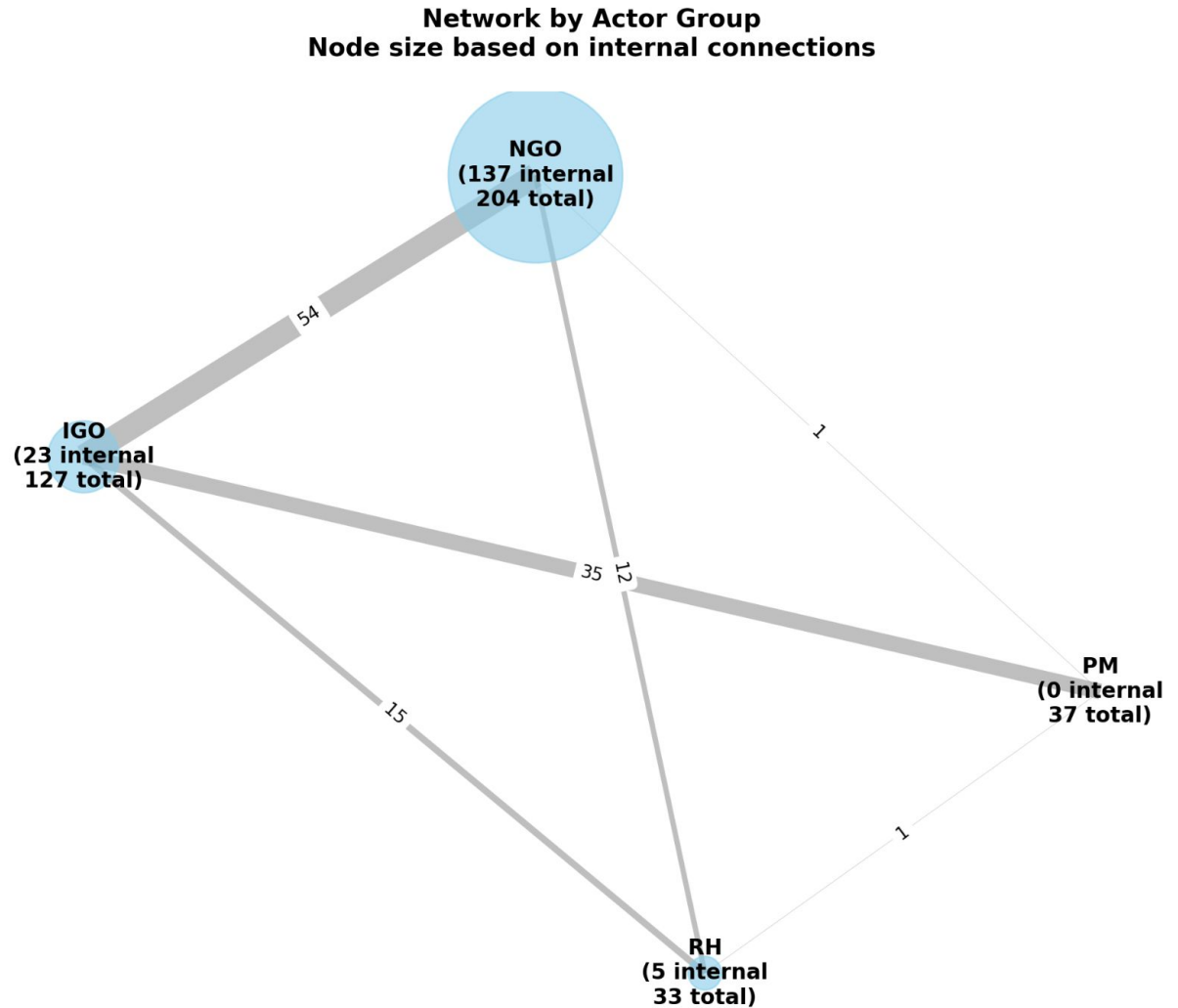
NGO = Non-governmental organizations & Higher Education Association/Networks

IGO = Intergovernmental/international organizations

PM = Policymakers (Ministers of education & related areas)

RH = Research hubs (centers and UNESCO Chairs)

(Pina-Cardona & Marinoni, 2025)



Geographic priorities for Internationalization

- **Globally**, the majority of HEIs (**59%**) have **geographic priorities** for internationalization.
- **Regional differences**: in Sub-Saharan Africa, less than half of HEIs have geographic priorities (44%), in Asia & Pacific half of HEIs have them, while in all other regions the majority of HEIs have them with the highest percentage in North America (65%).
- **Europe** stands out as the **most important region** for internationalization, with **75%** of respondents considering it “very important”, followed by **North America (43%)**, **LATAM (38%)**, **Asia & Pacific (32%)**, **Sub Saharan Africa** and **North Africa & the Middle East (18%)**.

(Marinoni & Pina-Cardona, 2024, pp. 99-100)

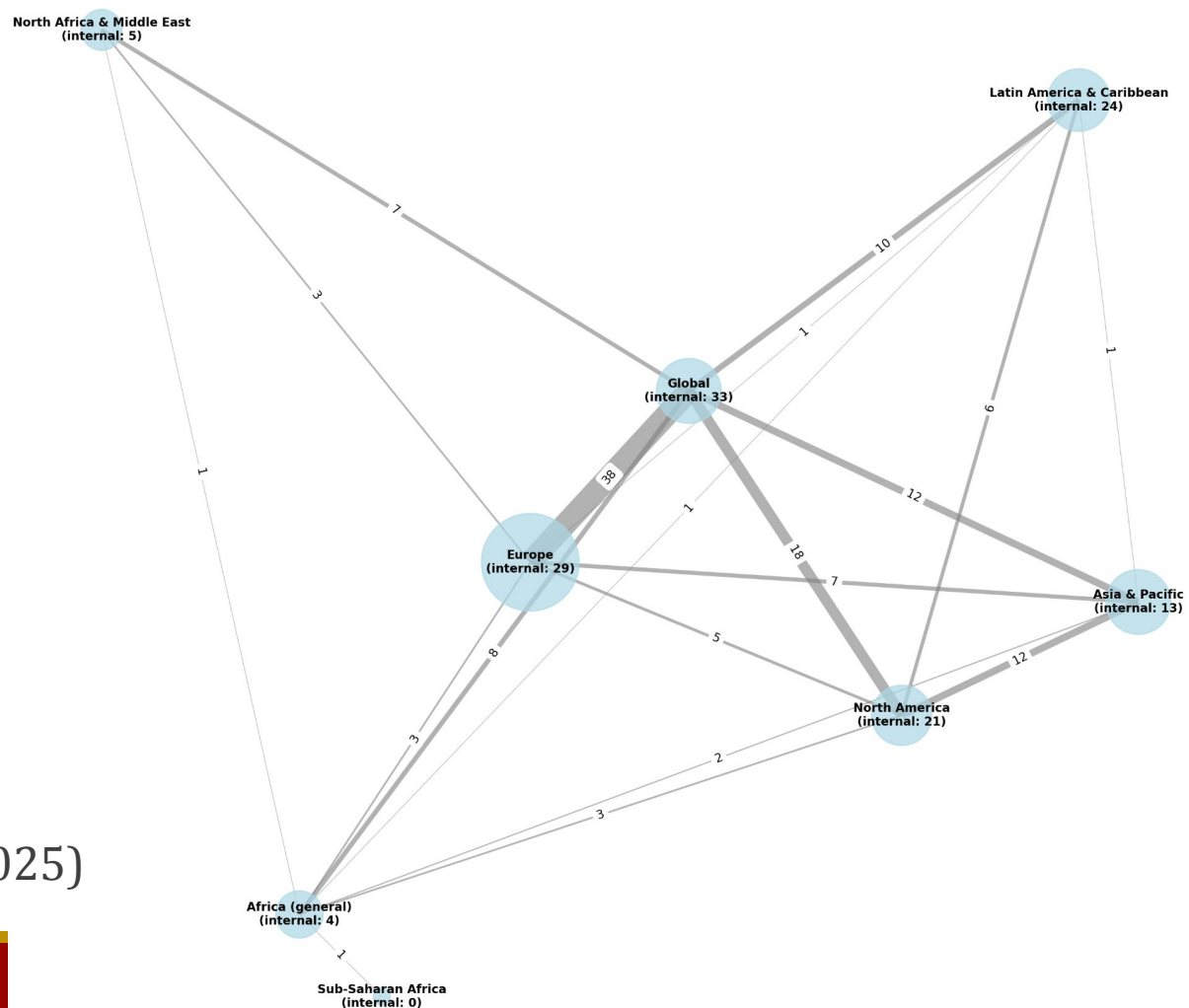
Geographic priorities for Internationalization (II)

Table 21

Rows: geographical level of importance for internationalization (only “very important” %) Columns: regions of respondents	Asia & Pacific	Europe	Latin America & the Caribbean	Sub-Saharan Africa	North Africa & the Middle East	North America
Asia & Pacific	71%	28%	17%	37%	33%	71%
Europe	55%	90%	69%	63%	79%	39%
Latin America & the Caribbean	19%	17%	75%	16%	18%	43%
Sub-Saharan Africa	19%	17%	4%	58%	33%	43%
North Africa & the Middle East	23%	18%	6%	26%	44%	29%
North America	48%	34%	56%	37%	49%	21%

(Marinoni & Pina-Cardona, 2024, pp. 99-100)

Figure 4. Intra- and Cross-Regional Network Analysis



(Pina-Cardona & Marinoni, 2025)

Strategic Behaviours and Power Dynamics across Sectors, Regions, and Cultures

Different Stakeholder group have different impact on the internationalization of higher education. However, we must think about:

Who has power?

- Who controls funding?
- Who needs whom?
- Who forms alliances?
- Who makes decisions?

And Why?

(Teferra, 2008, 2019)

Closing Thoughts

Should traditional forms of inter-institutional and cross-sectoral collaboration be treated as “gold standards”?

Can you think of non-traditional forms of collaboration that could lead to better or similar outcomes?

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