



# Barycenter representation of book publishing internationalization in the Social Sciences and Humanities



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## ABSTRACT

This paper introduces a novel application in bibliometrics of the barycenter method. Using places of publication barycenters, we measure internationalization of book publishing in the Social Sciences and Humanities. Based on 2002–2011 data for Flanders, Belgium, we demonstrate how the geographic center of weight of book publishing is different for the Social Sciences than for the Humanities. Whereas the latter still rely predominantly on domestic Flemish and continental European publishers, the former are firmly Anglo-Saxon oriented. The Humanities, however, show a more pronounced evolution toward further internationalization. For the already largely internationally oriented Social Sciences, in most recent years, the share of British publishers has grown. The barycenter method proves to be a valuable tool in the representation of research internationalization of book publications. This is especially the case when applied non-Anglophone countries.

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## 1. Introduction

In recent years scientometric research has seen an increasing use of spatial/geographic information for studying publication patterns and the development of science. One of the many applications of this information is measuring patterns of research internationalization. GIS-technology or other state-of-the-art visualization techniques are increasingly used as analysis and presentation tools (Wang, Ma, Li, Zhang, & Ma, 2013). In this paper, we propose a novel application of the barycenter method for representing internationalization of book publishing in the Social Sciences and Humanities (SSH).

Bibliometric studies have shown that research in the SSH is becoming more international. The rise of quantitative methods and the use of information technology have facilitated communication and comparison of research results with geographically distant colleagues (Melin, 2000; Borgman, 2009). In line with this, there is evidence of increasing international research collaboration as reflected by co-authorships (Benavent-Pérez, Gorraiz, & Gumpenberger, 2012; Newman, 2004; Kyvik, 2003; Leydesdorff, Park, & Wagner, 2013). Not surprisingly, scholars also seek to maximize the international visibility and impact of their research through more frequent use of English as publication language (Engels, Ossenblok, & Spruyt, 2012; Ossenblok, Engels, & Sivertsen, 2012). For their part, the leading citation indexes are expanding their coverage to include a larger share

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of the worldwide scholarly literature (Sivertsen & Larsen, 2012), thereby further facilitating the international exchange of research results.

Internationalization studies in bibliometrics have until now been foremost based on the journal and proceedings literature. The limited availability of sufficient and reliable bibliographic information on book publications (monographs, edited books and book chapters) has longtime prevented their inclusion in bibliometric studies (Hicks, 2004). There is, however, much to suggest that the publication of books by academic researchers is also part of the process of research internationalization. For one thing, over the last couple of decades, the scholarly book publishing trade has become far more globalized and competitive. Many European and North American publishers have expanded their radius of operations, both geographically and content-wise. To counter declining sales of scholarly monographs they have sought out new markets by extending their sales and marketing efforts overseas, and have put more effort in proactive commissioning by contracting the leading scholarly authors, often working in other countries (Thompson, 2005). For their part, scholars are increasingly aware of the symbolic and material rewards that come with publishing with a prestigious international publisher. They are conscious of differentiating aspects of 'publisher quality': the degree of specialization, the editorial process (esp. peer review), market position and marketing prowess, presence in major libraries and bibliographic databases, etc. (Giménez-Toledo & Román-Román, 2009; Giménez-Toledo, Tejada-Artigas, & Manana-Rodríguez, 2013; Goodson, Dillman, & Hira, 1999). Research on the outcomes of the British Research Assessment Exercise (RAE) has indeed shown the substantial benefits for research performance assessment scores of publishing with a first-rate academic publisher (Allen & Heath, 2013). Similarly, for acquiring tenure at (American) university humanities' departments, the esteem of a candidate's book publisher is explicitly or implicitly used as an assessment criterion (Cronin & La Barre, 2004).

In this article, it is our hypothesis that the parallel process of research internationalization in the SSH and the globalization of the academic book publishing trade has caused changes in the spatial dimension of book publishing by academic scholars. We show this for Flanders, Belgium, using a basic but fundamental indicator: the places of publication barycenters of book publications (monographs, edited books and book chapters).

## 2. Material and method

### 2.1. VABB-SHW book data

The bibliographic data used for our study is registered in the Flemish Academic Bibliographic Database for the Social Sciences and Humanities ('Vlaams Academisch Bibliografisch Bestand voor de Sociale en Humane Wetenschappen' or VABB-SHW) (see <http://www.ecoom.be/en/vabb>). The VABB-SHW was constructed in 2008–2010 in view of retrospectively collecting bibliographic information from the year 2000 onwards on all peer reviewed academic publications by authors affiliated with at least one of the five universities in Flanders, Belgium. It thus acts as a complement to data previously obtained solely from the Web of Science (WoS) and is used to calculate part of each university's share in the University Research Fund ('Bijzonder Onderzoeksfonds' or BOF), some 120 million euro yearly granted by the Flemish government to finance basic research. The VABB-SHW contains comprehensive data on almost all SSH publications by scholars working at Flemish universities, but only the peer reviewed publications are taken into account for distribution of the University Research Fund. Peer review procedures of publishers are evaluated by the Authoritative Panel ('Gezaghebbend Panel', or GP), an independent body of academic experts entrusted by the Flemish government to safeguard scientific standards for the VABB-SHW (Engels et al., 2012; Verleysen, Ghesquière, & Engels, 2014). In the present article, we have no intent to measure the effect of the Flemish funding model on internationalization. As the non-WoS publication output of the SSH has been used for the funding model starting in 2010 only, at any rate there is insufficient data to reliably analyze the possible influence of the current funding system.

Our analysis is based on 4098 peer reviewed book publications from the period 2002–2011 registered in the VABB-SHW database. In total, the publications originate from 115 publishers (cfr. Supplementary online material 1 (hereafter SOM1)). The distribution of publications over publishers is highly rightly skewed (min = 1, max = 961, avg = 40.54, SD = 109.05) but does not follow a Lotka or Poisson distribution (Kolmogorov–Smirnov goodness of fit  $p < 0.01$  in both cases). All 4098 monographs, edited books and book chapters were published in either Flanders, the rest of continental Europe, the United Kingdom or the United States. Together, the four aggregated locations account for over 99.5% of all peer reviewed book publications registered in the VABB-SHW. Based on author affiliation(s), they are assigned to one or more SSH disciplines (Engels et al., 2012). The total comprises 319 monographs, 585 edited books and 3194 book chapters. Since the VABB-SHW collects publications by scholars affiliated with a Flemish university, not all chapters that appeared in the edited books are included. Equally, a number of the included chapters have been published in non-included book titles edited by scholars without a Flemish academic affiliation. For our study, all places of publication of books were identified as available in the VABB-SHW database. In the online supplementary data attached to the electronic version of this article (SOM2) the number of publications per place of publication is available. For 8% of all records, the data contained more than one place of publication. Here, the first one mentioned was used. Missing places of publication were searched for and added. All places of publication were labeled as belonging to either 1° Flanders, 2° the rest of continental Europe (defined as the EU-27 except the United Kingdom plus its acceding or candidate members Croatia, Iceland, Montenegro, Serbia, the FYR of Macedonia and Turkey; plus Albania, Belarus, Moldavia, Norway and Switzerland), 3° the United Kingdom or 4° the USA.

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