



*Conference Conversation Starter*

# A WEALTH OF NATIONS

# **A wealth of nations**

*Edited by Leasa Weimer*

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**EAIE Conference Conversation Starter**  
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**Edited by**  
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## Foreword

‘A wealth of nations.’ These words, especially in the context of the city of Glasgow, immediately put us in mind of Adam Smith’s seminal 18th-century economics treatise. In the hands of the European Association for International Education (EAIE), however, these words can conjure up a quite different, yet equally ‘rich’, array of ideas related to our work in the field of international higher education. Indeed, this year’s *Conference Conversation Starter* encourages all of us to think about issues of ‘wealth’ from a variety of perspectives, from some very specific questions of international higher education policy and practice to more wide-ranging notions of power and privilege, as well as global civic responsibility and long-term environmental sustainability.

Collectively, the essays in this publication urge us to pause and consider how we understand the potential that exists for our countries’ resources – material and intellectual, cultural and spiritual – to improve the human condition, and how international education can play a role in this process. Of course, the scope of our planet’s problems, from the local to the global, is immense – but so, too, are the reserves of knowledge, creativity, compassion and persistence embedded in our societies. And while the ‘rules of engagement’ in international relations are still largely dominated by the nation-state paradigm, the nation-state is not the only key player anymore. Today, higher education institutions have a crucial role to play in helping us frame the challenges of our time. They are also exceedingly well placed to guide politicians and policymakers in crafting thoughtful responses to the issues of the day – responses that are rooted in a clear understanding of the past and a deep commitment to the project of building a better future. The internationalisation of higher education rightly opens the profoundly important conversations about our collective future to a wider (global) ‘public square’, which places a premium on the work done by EAIE members the world over.

The EAIE’s Annual Conference itself clearly embodies this spirit of engagement and dialogue. We will come together in Glasgow, as we have in cities across Europe for 27 years now, to learn from one another, to develop new knowledge and new relationships, and to contribute to the enrichment of our field, our institutions and our societies. In doing so, we hope you will find the considerations of ‘a wealth of nations’ included here to be most enriching as you contemplate the work that you do, its place in the world and the ‘value’ of international education for the greater good.



**Laura E. Rumbley**  
*EAIE Publications Committee Chair*

# Introduction

— *Leasa Weimer*

*EAIE Knowledge Development Adviser*

In the 21st century, higher education and knowledge are regarded as engines for economic development, with the capacity to contribute to wealth creation for both individuals and societies. Therefore, it's not surprising that international education comes with financial imperatives, and in fact, within the higher education community, the economics of internationalisation are often discussed and debated. The discussion has become increasingly complex, as processes and activities of international engagement proliferate and the key players – policy makers, national governments, institutions and students – increase their involvement in international education endeavours. In the midst of this complexity, clarity arises as countries articulate national policies and institutions shape individual strategic approaches for collaborative and competitive internationalisation.

To provoke critical thinking and reflection on what the economics of international education look like and really mean when considered from a range of perspectives, this volume introduces a variety of essays related to the conference theme, 'A wealth of nations'. This theme can be framed in a multitude of ways, but we choose to highlight here key aspects of the interconnectedness of economies and the wealth of knowledge within Europe and beyond. There is much to consider in this vein, and much at stake, as institutions and countries navigate the globalised world of boundary-spanning partnerships and collaborations as well as cutting edge competitive practices to recruit top talent and achieve key positions in the global market. As we – a wealth of nations, institutions, knowledge and capacities – come together in Glasgow, we have the opportunity to further advance international higher education through critical dialogue and by sharing best practices, building on existing relationships and forging new partnerships.

Unique to this year's *Conference Conversation Starter*, two conference dialogue sessions are highlighted as sub-themes of this publication. The conference dialogue sessions offer participants a forum to discuss and debate timely topics with a panel of experts; one dialogue will examine Adam Smith's economics, while another will consider developments around tuition fees for international students. The third sub-theme of this publication,

‘a wealth of knowledge’, spotlights the role that knowledge plays in the discussion of power and influence (economic and otherwise) in international education. The three sub-themes are thus:

1. Adam Smith economics and international higher education (conference dialogue)
2. Tuition fees in Europe (conference dialogue)
3. A wealth of knowledge

This publication begins with two essays concerning Adam Smith’s philosophy of economics within the context of international education today. Smith wrote a seminal book, *The Wealth of Nations*, originally published in 1776. His ideas serve as a foundation for contemporary economic thought by laying the groundwork for market-oriented concepts such as laissez-faire, the ‘invisible hand’, and the notion that self-interest benefits all. In his work as a moral philosopher and political economist, he strongly believed that education was a cornerstone of economic progress. These first essays align with the conference dialogue session entitled ‘Wealth of nations: Is the work of an 18th century economist relevant to international higher education?’

**Craig Smith** presents a riveting history of Adam Smith’s life and how he came to experience and view education and, more specifically, international education. The essay chronicles the development of his intellectual thoughts and pursuits throughout his career as a student, lecturer, professor, travelling tutor and rector. Craig Smith draws attention to Adam Smith’s aversion to the Grand Tour, the 18th-century version of international education. In doing so, his essay encourages readers to reflect on the importance of a well-managed international education experience with intentional integration, formal education and learning outcomes.

While duly noting Adam Smith’s contributions to the field of economics, **Scott G. Blair** offers a critique of Smithian economics for the 21st century. He argues that Smith’s economic philosophies, as currently applied, do not serve the modern world we live in. Blair elucidates this point by drawing attention to two areas of growing concern: climate change and human rights. He suggests that the values and ethics of internationalisation provide opportunities to be purposefully part of solutions to the world’s most pressing problems, for instance through the design of key learning outcomes and educational experiences that facilitate greater global awareness for consuming sustainably and sharing equitably.

The second sub-theme of this publication explores international student tuition fees, a topic that continues to be a relevant issue in several European countries. Growing competition for public funds, austerity measures and a competitive international student market have forced the question of ‘who pays?’ to centre stage. Three of the essays align with the conference dialogue topic on tuition fees, entitled ‘International students: Cash cows or agents for change?’

In their essay, **Daniel J. Guhr** and **Nelson Furtado** explore the Nordic Region’s unique approach to tuition fees. Known for its progressive educational policies and social systems – where, traditionally, higher education has been tuition-free, with the costs paid for by taxpayers – the region is currently wrestling with the question of who should

pay for international students. Guhr and Furtado spotlight the developments in the region over the past decade by unravelling the complex national approaches to introducing tuition fees (where this has occurred) and describing how and why some Nordic countries have remained tuition-free. Both institutional and policy-maker perspectives are offered, along with data on the numbers of international students studying across the region, providing insights into specific national contexts.

**Taina Moisander**, a student union representative, speaks from the perspective of a student movement advocating against international student tuition fees in Finland. She highlights the contours of the debate on this issue, provides details of multiple working groups and pilot programmes focused on this question over the past 15 years and explains how various tuition proposals have evolved. Although the student movement has effectively staved off previous attempts to collect fees, the current government has put forth another proposal to introduce tuition fees. Whether or not tuition fees enter the Finnish higher education system, the student movement will continue to argue that a tuition-free system upholds social equality.

**Ariane de Gayardon de Fenoyl** focuses on the emerging discussions concerning tuition fees in France, drawing attention to a recent report that advocates for international student tuition fees. de Gayardon de Fenoyl examines the tuition fee proposal in light of the current context, including the unsustainable low fee structure currently in place, the attractiveness of France as a study destination and the origin of most international students in France. As a top destination for international students, she concludes that France may have more to lose than win when introducing full-cost tuition fees for international students.

The final two essays focus on the wealth of knowledge. This sub-theme shifts the economic discussion to focus on knowledge being central to societies, and it highlights the crucial intersection between knowledge development and international education. Here, knowledge is understood as the commodity, product and/or outcome of international education that circulates through, and also circumvents, borders.

**Jane Knight** offers an alternative to the current economic narrative of internationalisation and encourages readers to think beyond the competitive discourse. She does this by presenting a conceptual model for knowledge diplomacy, but first she questions the widespread use of the ‘power paradigm’ to frame much of the current discussion – for example, international higher education programmes and initiatives are often described as instruments of ‘soft power’. Knowledge diplomacy offers a different narrative, as it expresses a more collaborative and mutually beneficial orientation toward international engagement. Knight’s conception of knowledge diplomacy brings together four dimensions – education, research, innovation and culture – as tools for building international relations.

**Angel Calderon** examines the shifting global dynamics that will impact future flows of internationally mobile students, and therefore knowledge, around the world in the next 25 to 50 years. As world economies and demographics shift, emerging economies and higher education systems grow and prosper. Calderon argues that a series of megatrends impacting higher education systems around the world will transform internationalisation.

With the aid of key data and several forecast models of the evolution of student mobility up to 2040, he depicts a different international higher education market than the one we currently know.

Overall, we hope that this volume not only informs you about various economic dimensions of the internationalisation of higher education, but also provides food for thought as you contribute to the discussions in Glasgow. These essays focus on vital questions for practitioners, faculty and institutional leaders working in the field of international education. What dimensions of an international education experience produces the best outcomes for student development? How can the internationalisation of higher education facilitate greater global awareness among future generations of students and encourage sustainable consumption and equitable sharing? Will the introduction of tuition fees in some European countries and institutions shift the economics of international higher education and affect the rates of incoming mobility of international students to the region? Will an alternative discourse to the economics narrative gain traction in both the rhetoric and practice of internationalisation? And finally, how will changing global dynamics impact international higher education in the next 25 to 50 years? There are many questions, many potential answers, and many different ways to consider the possible future role of international higher education in our extraordinarily diverse 'wealth of nations'.