

## Editorial

Much has changed at *Géotechnique* during my academic life, quite how much I was unaware of until I plotted Fig.1. This shows the changing origins of papers published by *Géotechnique* since its inception. I had to calculate the points by hand as this sort of metric is not easily downloaded from modern publishing software, especially when it did not exist for most of our lifetime, so my apologies for the sparse data. What became clear to me is the step change that seems to occur to *Géotechnique* and perhaps the wider Geotechnics world in the 1990s. What had been a more UK dominated journal than I care to remember suddenly changed, with home grown contributions and those from North America essentially falling off a cliff while the “rest of Europe” and the “rest of the World” started to dominate (my apologies for the clumsy groupings). Was this the result of the research poverty inflicted on these countries by ever more draconian governments, a maturing of the science and widening of its contributors, or simply our journal finally reaching parts previously unexplored. I suspect that the answer is rather more nuanced, as in fact the total number of papers from the UK and North America have not changed much and the cliff edge in the 1990’s and 2000’s largely corresponds to a rapidly increased number of papers published. But to what extent this is driven by greater research output internationally and to what extent the increased internationalisation is a function of the greater journal size is difficult to guess. Certainly, the rapid increase of numbers of “rest of the world” papers have been driven by Australasia and more recently China.

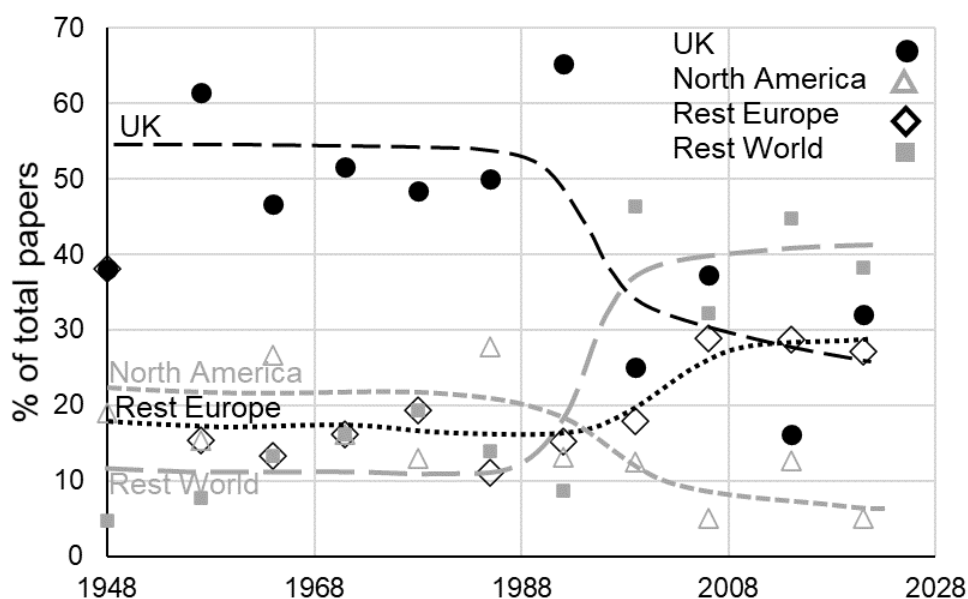


Fig.1 Changing origins of papers published by *Géotechnique*

Greater detail for the breakdown of papers published last year is given in Fig.2. It is hard to trace through the fates of a large number of papers, but to give an idea of the distribution of the papers submitted Fig.3 shows the data for 2016-2021. Bearing in mind that the current acceptance rate at *Géotechnique* is only around 20-25%, the contrast between the two diagrams is stark. The UK and the rest of Europe have much larger proportions of the published papers than submitted, while many other countries have similar proportions; probably North America

is just an aberration for this particular year. The worries are China, India and the Middle East, within which I counted Iran, which each have much larger proportions submitted compared to published. Each has a success rate of only around 6-12% and nothing like the headline 20-25%; the contrast between China and Hong Kong is particularly troubling. These statistics are saddening to those of us who have worked in these countries or with colleagues and friends from them. We might speculate that the low acceptance rate from China might be linked to the pressure applied to Chinese state funded students to publish three or more papers *before* submitting their PhD, which seems hardly a recipe for carefully considered research, but then what explains similar problems in other parts of the world?

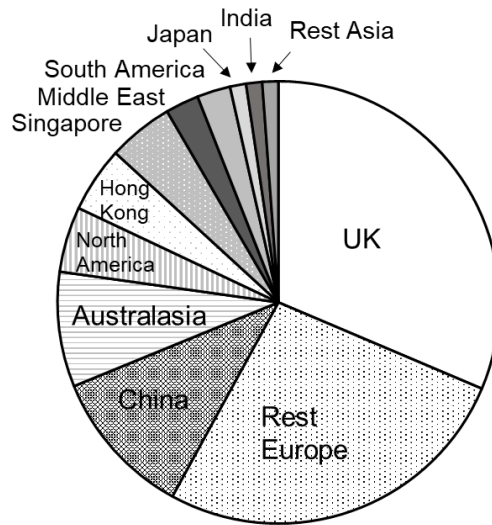


Fig.2 Origins of papers published by Géotechnique in 2021

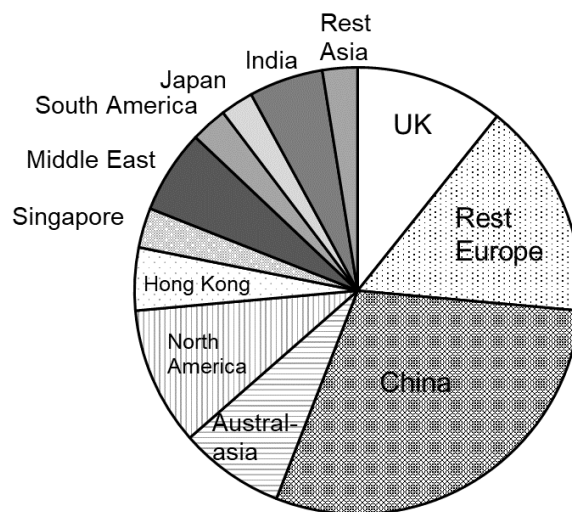


Fig.3 Origins of papers submitted to Géotechnique in 2016-2021

As a proud ex-Hong Konger I am only too aware of the closed shop image that we can project from our Western based journals unless we take care. One thing we can do to help is to encourage and ensure better involvement in the decision-making processes; I feel deeply uncomfortable with high rejection rates for some parts of the world while not doing our best to help with participation in the journal reviewing and assessment and it is our aim to widen participation globally as much as we can.

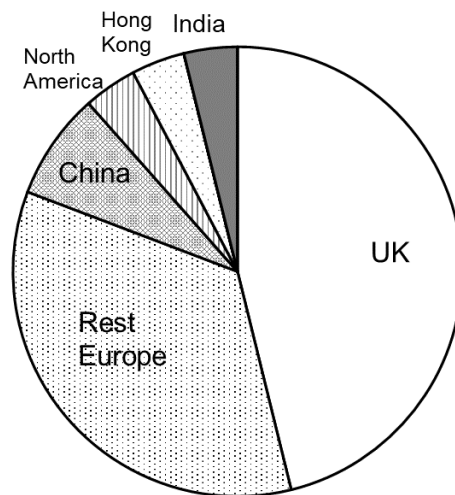


Fig.4 Residence of Géotechnique Advisory Panel members in 2022

Around 20 years ago, when I was first on the Géotechnique Advisory Panel (the GAP), we had endless debates about whether we could have one or two extra members from the closer parts of continental Europe, since it had now become cheaper to travel on EasyJet from Barcelona than from the further flung parts of the UK. Corresponding members were introduced to try to improve international reach, but with less impact on the journal than perhaps was hoped.

Figure 4 indicates that the current GAP now has a high proportion of European members, and an even higher proportion of UK based members, although to be fair few of us are actually from the UK by origin nowadays. However, we still have far too few truly international colleagues, especially from China, India and the Middle East. Our aim at the GAP is to increase the rest of the world membership while decreasing the rest of Europe and UK participation. My experience of GAP as a then mid-career academic was that I learnt a huge amount, especially from the more senior colleagues around the table at 1 Great George Street, or OGGs to the cognoscenti! In my view a key role of the GAP is to provide both training in review processes and an awareness of the latest research for its members. After two years of online university meetings with screens full of blank icons and silent participants, I am personally yet to be convinced that we can achieve that via the dreaded Zoom/Teams/Skype. Despite the protestations and cajoling from our publishers to go online only, our aim at GAP, for the time being, is therefore to maintain a quorum with tea and biscuits and lively discussions at OGGs while bringing in a wider participation from further afield. This will have to be with hybrid meetings to avoid bankrupting the journal and causing excessive emissions and we have agreed that the optimum to achieve these conflicting aims is 40% UK based, 30% rest of Europe and 30% rest of the World and we will work towards that; we expect the UK members to attend

most meetings, European members the majority of meetings and international members just one per year. We will re-evaluate this when we can see clearly the future working patterns of the world, but in the meantime I would welcome comments from ex-GAP and others about this strategy.

Matthew Coop

University College London