

# SOCI 210: Sociological Perspectives

## Agenda

1. Global inequality

# Inequality on a Global Scale

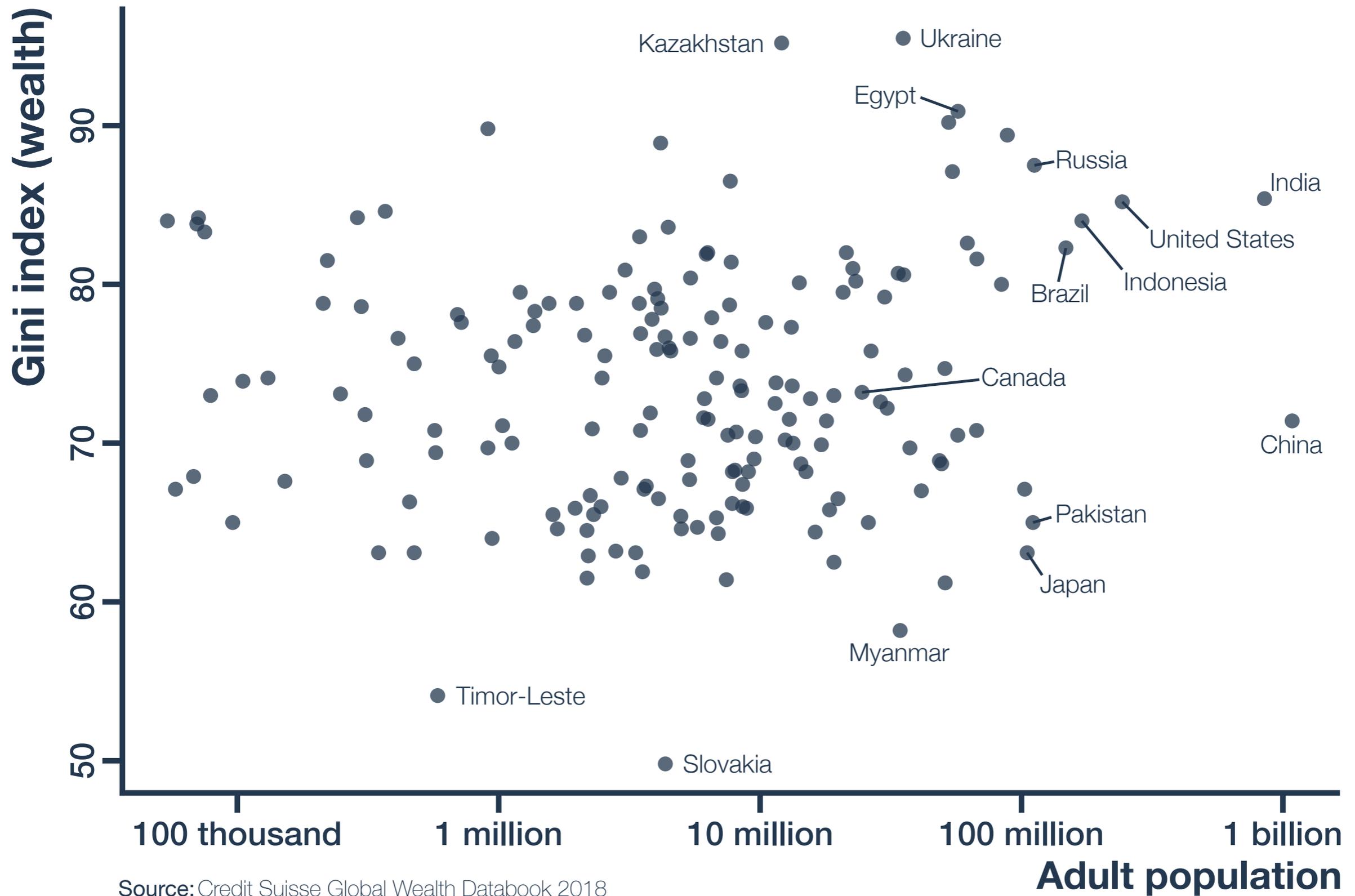
## **Sociology of inequality often takes the nation-state as its unit**

- Stratification within a particular country or province
- Effects of state-level policy on rates of poverty and inequality
- Comparison across countries

## **Global inequality?**

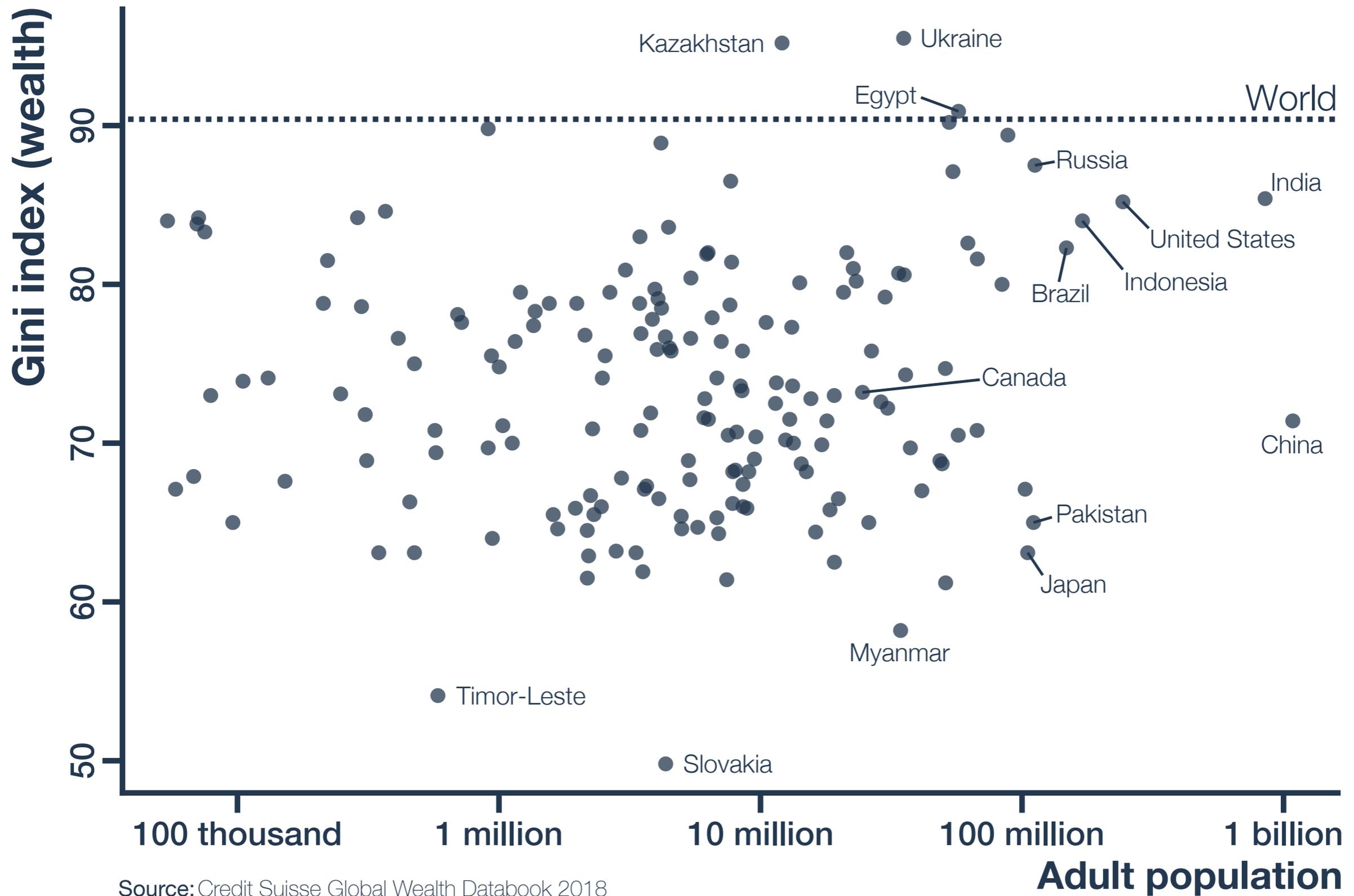
- What does inequality look like at a global scale?

# Global inequality



Source: Credit Suisse Global Wealth Databook 2018

# Global inequality



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# Global inequality

## First takeaway

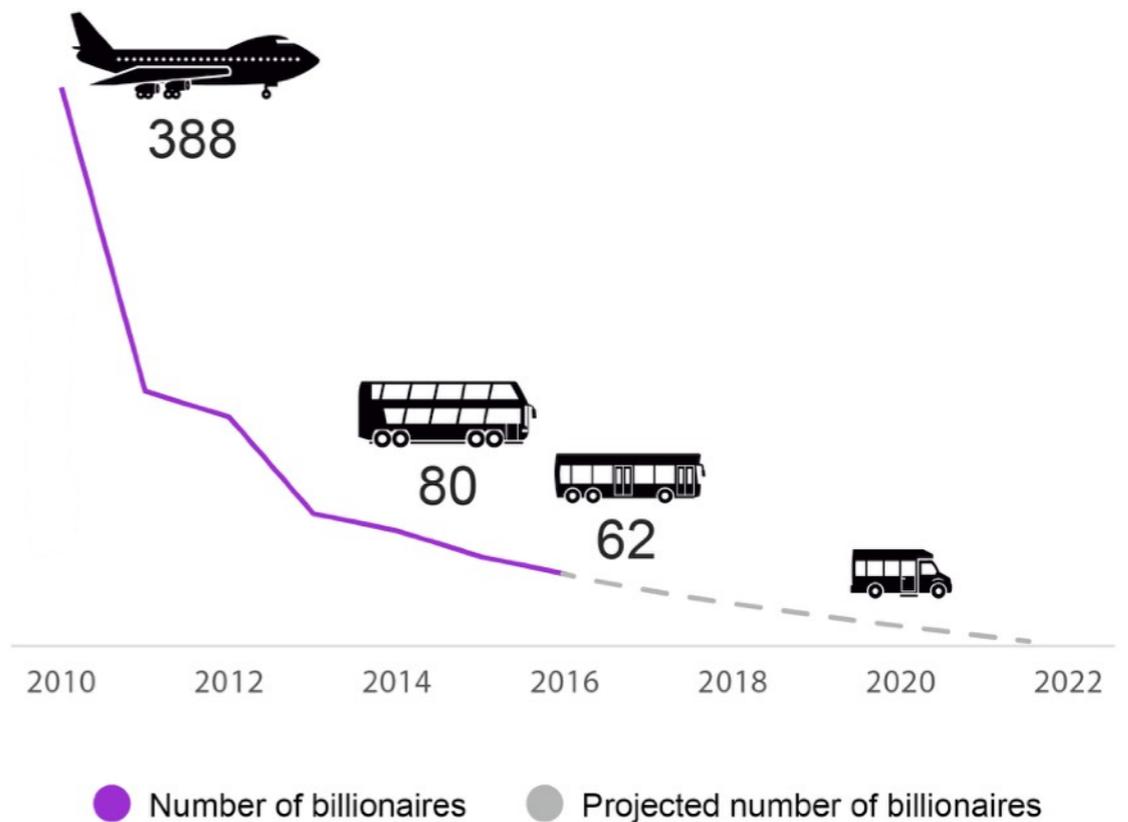
- ∴ Global inequality is severe and getting worse
- ∴ The wealthy are getting (much) wealthier
- ∴ The poor are getting (much) poorer
- ∴ Exacerbated by COVID-19, during which the richest 10 people have doubled their wealth

(Oxfam 2022; c.f. [Klein 2015](#))

## Second takeaway

- ∴ The difference between the national frame and the global frame is not just one of scale
- ∴ Inequality has a distinct character in a global context

Billionaires who own the same wealth as half the world  
And what transport they would fit on



Oxfam press release, 18th Jan 2016



Today (~11)

# Globalization

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## Globalization:

the process of national boundaries becoming less relevant as they become more “porous”

### Money and goods

- ∴ “Globalization” often refers just to the globalization of trade
- ∴ Trend since industrial revolution toward cross-national trade independent of state influence
- ∴ Explosive growth in second half of 20<sup>th</sup> century  
Formal international agreements (NAFTA, EU, ...).  
Rise of multinational and transnational corporations.
- ∴ Corporations become “location-less”

### Information

- ∴ Global communication (especially the Internet) has made it easier to interact across national boundaries
- ∴ Harder for government to prevent international communication

### People

- ∴ Globalization traditionally meant fewer barriers for migration from country to country
- ∴ In recent years, there has been a strong backlash and restrictions on many borders

### Environment

- ∴ Scale of global economy affects shared environment in meaningful, lasting ways
- ∴ “Externalities” ignore national boundaries

## Globalization and inequality

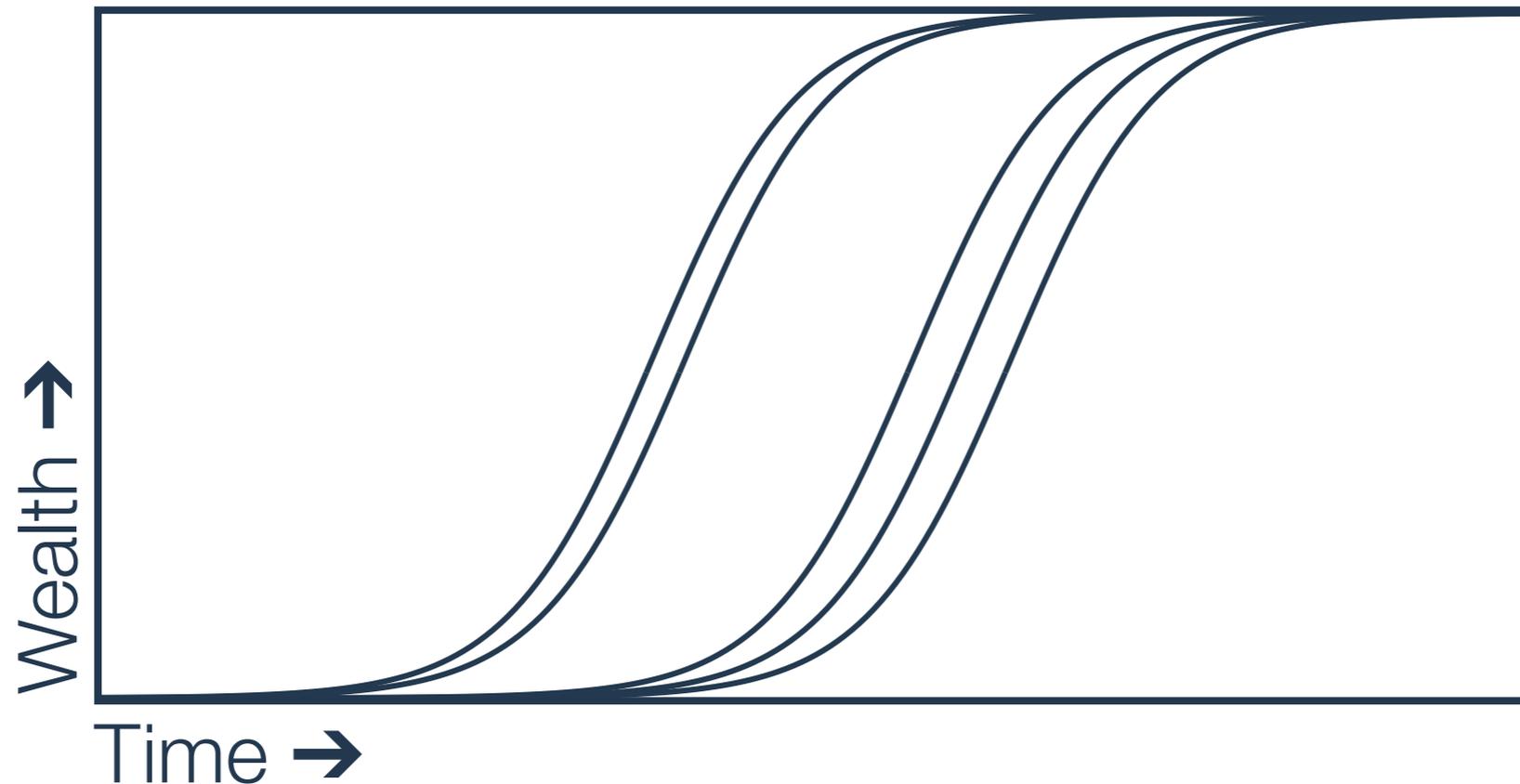
- Globalization is not neutral toward inequality
- **Trade**
  - The history of colonialism is one of globalized trade reinforcing wealth disparity
- **Information**
  - Those with the means to exploit globalized media have greater influence (marketing campaigns, political influence, etc.)
- **People**
  - Migration is highly imbalanced, and state policies are designed to maintain power differences
- **Environment**
  - The immediate and long-term negative effects of environmental transformation hit the poor hardest

# Theories of Global Inequality

# Theories of global inequality

## Modernization theory

- Nation-states are all on a path toward full modernization/industrialization
- Inequality exists because some countries are “ahead” of others
- Over time, the world will equalize as contrasts diminish
- Ignores inter-dependence of nations



# Theories of global inequality

## Dependency theory

- **Wealthy nations keep poor nations dependent**  
Manufacturing: raw materials extracted, finished goods sold  
Finance: World Bank and IMF use debt to maintain relationship
- **Relationship between wealthy and poor nations maintains inequality by design**
- **Built on global colonial history**

