

Symposia Abstract Book - Main Abstract Book with Submissions and Programme (All Symposia)

Imagining the New Geopolitics of International Higher Education (0171)

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Rationale Text: Events and trends of recent years are prompting critical transformations to the geopolitical landscape, with 2020 surely to be remembered as a watershed moment for global politics. From mounting backlashes to multilateralism and free trade, a resurgence of populism and nationalism, climate related emergencies and growing demands for reparative social justice, we are entering an altered geopolitical environment accompanied by a new set of challenges with societal implications of uncharted scope. Against this backdrop, this symposium explores how the ‘new’ geopolitics intersect with international higher education. Relying on a critical geopolitics lens, this discussion aims to elucidate and explain how political actors spatialize international politics and represent it as a ‘world’ characterized by particular types of places and times (Tuathail 1999). Geopolitical shifts are occurring parallel to the increasing internationalisation of higher education characterised by the expansion of international student recruitment, regional alliances, academic mobility schemes, and international branch campuses. There has also been an intensification of the interconnectedness between higher education institutions and national systems, characterised by a sharpening of trans-border cooperation and competition and heightened nexus between higher education and global forces. This symposium explores how international higher education practices are being shaped by shifting political dynamics at the global level in different world regions. Through an investigation of the new geopolitics of international higher education, the presentations uncover the power dynamics at play when global politics come into conflict with policy and practice in international and internationalising higher education. Rooting the study of international higher education in prevailing geopolitical currents, the presentations underscore how both global forces and national/local forces with global impact act as catalysts for transformation in this sphere. Through this lens, we aim to advance a reflection on the tensions arising between global, national, and local interests. Anchoring its developments in the global political arena, the discussion on new geopolitics of international higher education further lends weight to the importance of moving beyond ‘methodological nationalism’ in the study of higher education (Shahjahan and Kezar, 2013). We also draw on the established field of the geopolitics of knowledge (Mignolo, 2003), which examines epistemic power and legitimation of particular forms of westernised knowledges. The symposium offers a space to imagine new horizons of possibilities (Barnett, 2017) and more specifically, new ‘decolonial horizons of possibilit[ies]’ (Stein, 2019 p.144) that question the control of knowledge and the conditions in which it is produced (Shahjahan, 2016; Walker & Martinez-Vargas, 2020).

Linked Submissions:

Thinking from the Borders: Colonialism and Latin American Universities (0328)

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Research Domain: International contexts and perspectives (ICP)

Paper Abstract: Latin American universities are subject to old and new forms of colonialism. While old forms of colonialism are based on a matrix of race and labour divisions emerged during colonial times, currently new forms of colonialism attached to prestige and international rankings pervade higher education systems and their universities in Latin America. By means of both a bibliometric and a thematic analysis, this paper examines the scholarly work on new and old ways of colonialism in universities in the region. The paper argues that Latin American universities have developed both local and global-oriented mechanisms based on border thinking so as to mitigate these colonial forces. These mechanisms are helping to develop a border thinking so as to transform universities.

Affect, Methodological Nationalism and Global HE (0363)

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Research Domain: International contexts and perspectives (ICP)

Paper Abstract: Drawing on affect theories, this conceptual article aims to undermine the legitimacy of the “nation-state”; construct pervading globalisation of higher education (HE). Based on three real-life examples in/about South Asian HE, we demonstrate how the “nation-state” comes into being (becomes “sticky”) through the experienced and imagined encounters among: a) individuals (a Bengali Muslim’s faculty mobility narratives), b) national policy (India’s recent “Internationalization at Home” (IaH) efforts), and c) transnational actors (commercial rankers responses to India’s performance in university rankings). An affect lens illuminates how methodological nationalism is perpetuated as the nation-state becomes a naturalised container for (potential) encounters in the enactments of HE globalisation.

Regional Universities: A New Normality of Higher Education? (0567)

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Research Domain: International contexts and perspectives (ICP)

Paper Abstract: <p style="text-align:justify">The proposed article is devoted to a comparative analysis of a specific trend in higher education, which, in scholarly literature, is referred to as regionalism or regionalization. This trend, on one hand, has a long history, either of student and faculty staff exchange between neighbouring countries or of collaborative transnational research projects conducted by two or more universities. On the other hand, regionalization is also considered to be a trend with new and distinctive features, which are each demonstrated through the four different types of 'regional' universities currently in existence: European University Institute (EUI), the SCO Network University, BRICS Network University and the University of Central Asia (UCA). Through analysis of their regional mission objectives and key policy implementations, we can identify various contradictions between dominant visions of the modern university, oriented through their national, regional or global mission priorities, and identify core features of new regionalism in higher education.
