

Panel 1: Transnational education: critical perspectives under the 'new geopolitics' paradigm.

Convenor: Lee Rensimer

Panellists:

- Lee Rensimer, UCL
- Jingran Yu, Xiamen University
- Miguel Lim, University of Manchester
- Wanwei Nie, UCL

Transnational higher education (TNE) has long faced critique as an extractive and short-termist practice of the revenue-seeking neoliberal university. Yet, these perspectives ignore the broader utility of TNE as tools of epistemic, neocolonial and geopolitical power, particularly between national governments in an increasingly multiplex world. While approaches and scope vary by institution and national governments, the global patterns of TNE distribution and the direction of flows (of institutions, practices and knowledge) maps a relatively consistent asymmetry between higher- and lower-income countries and between former and contemporary relations of coloniality. In this pattern, TNE is quite clearly implicated not only in neocolonial practices of extraction, but in upholding international influence (i.e. soft power) and forms of cultural and epistemic domination.

Following Buckner and Stein's (2020, p. 161) critical reconsideration of internationalisation, which finds a "striking absence of engagement with political, historical, or geopolitical dimensions of international relationships and knowledge production," this panel calls for a critical examination of the geopolitical logics of TNE, past and present. To achieve this, it offers particular attention to (1) the geopolitical agency of higher education institutions and actors within TNE which complicates reductive binaries in TNE (e.g. home/exporting countries, host/importing countries), (2) multiscalar approaches which trace, nuance, or problematise political and economic logics from bi-national agreements down to localised spaces and interactions, and (3) new actors, new models and new logics which potentially disrupt and de-centre dominant practices across the global TNE landscape.