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Title: Colonising the Future: Mega-Trade Deals, Education Services and Global Higher Education Markets

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Highlights

- Education futures are open, risky and uncertain
- Social actors offer narrations of futures so as to limit openness
- When education futures are claimed by economic actors seeking to expand capitalist markets, there are competing projects around whose future this is
- Trade agreements involving education highlight claims and contestation over education futures

Abstract

This paper explores a less well-examined aspect of time in relation to higher education and the academy; that of ‘time-future’. The paper takes the case of education trade strategies being pursued by governments and allied agencies, and explores the multiple ways in which time-future is mobilised. Drawing on trade documents, government statistics, and related reports, the paper points to two time-future dynamics at work. The first dynamic focuses on the ways in which the future is imagined by strategic actors, and legitimating through creating equivalences between education trade, economic growth and prosperity. The second dynamic explores the ways in which the current round of global and regional trade negotiations colonise the future as a political resource. I reflect on how time-future is a key resource and modality of power to be claimed and cognitively shaped so as to reorient actor’s expectations towards the rhythms and demands of capitalism, and away from the temporal orders of the academy. However, efforts to commodify higher education, on the one hand, and colonise higher education futures exclusively to serve the interests of economic investors, on the other, continue to be contested. As a result, a new temporal order is yet to become common-sense, and an existing order is yet to die.

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