

Abstract: American Elite Universities and Why Germany Does Not Need Them.

This presentation examines the attributes of “elite” US universities focusing on their role as social institutions replicating academic (and other) elites through their doctoral programs. These still tend to exclude women and students of color while perpetuating a closed social system by hiring one another's doctorates. The result greatly weakens higher education as a vehicle of social mobility and perpetuates a skewed competitive system expressed in part through their leading positions in international rankings. What makes some US universities “elite” derives from historically evolved legal and social circumstances very different from Germany's. The present reorganization of German higher education which aspires to create US-like elite universities seems to overlook the origin and current functioning of US elite models. Creating such institutions in Germany will only intensify the neo-liberal tendencies in the New Public Management, erode the egalitarian paradigm, and further weaken education as "Bildung."