

**On differentiation, profiling and excellence -  
A comparative outline regarding connections  
between university profiles and excellence  
concepts**

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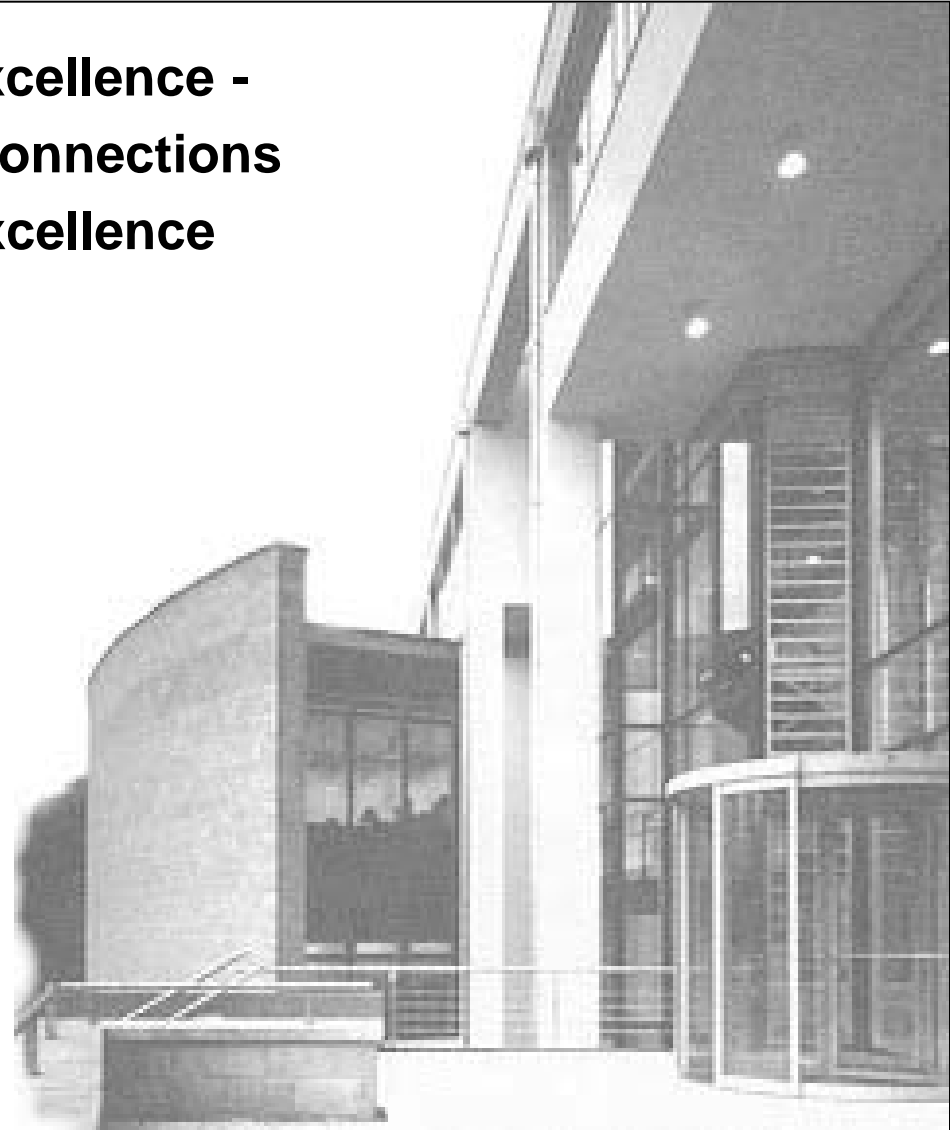
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1. INTRODUCTION
2. DIFFERENTIATION IN THE GERMAN SYSTEM
3. DIFFERENTIATION IN THE DUTCH SYSTEM
4. INSTITUTIONAL CONSEQUENCES
5. COMPARATIVE HYPOTHESES

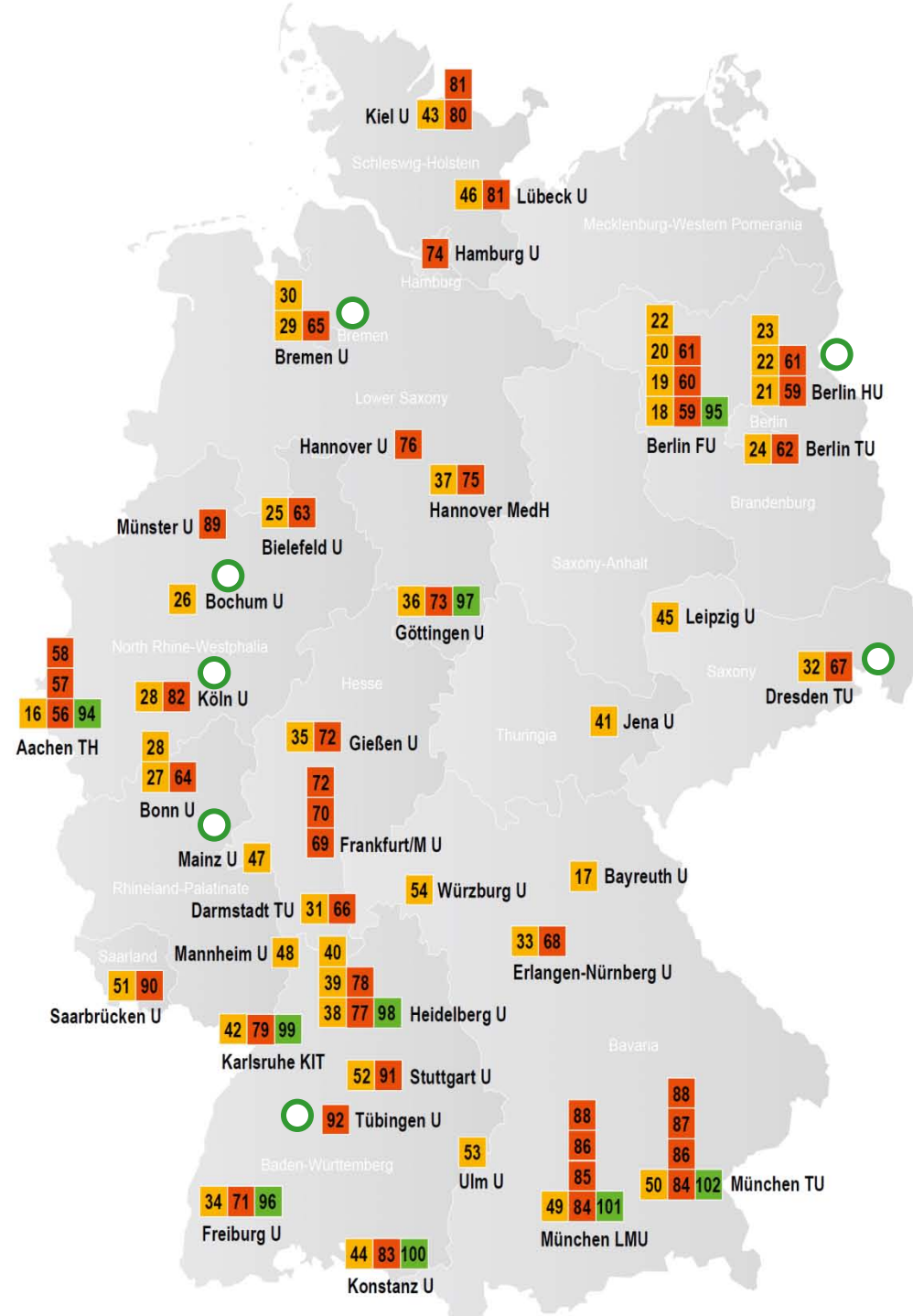
- Many HE reform processes as well as research discussions focus on **differentiation, profiling and excellence**, e.g.
  - Excellence programs
  - Quality, access and massification as well as academic drift
  - WCU discussion
  - Ranking and profiling discussion (EU: U-Map)
- Missing is a **comparative analysis on interactions** of differentiation, profiling and excellence, to be undertaken by this paper:
  - *Comparative*: Germany and Netherlands
  - *Analysis*: System differentiation description > Institutional Consequences > Interaction Hypotheses

## 2. Differentiation in Germany

- **Differentiation need** in Germany due to massification (increasing student numbers), demographic change und access questions as well as international competition in HE and the global knowledge economy.
- **Differentiation objectives** in Germany (Wissenschaftsrat 2010):
  - a flexible match of the higher education sector with the changing need of society;
  - a broader offer of study options for students;
  - an increased level of access into higher education and within higher education;
  - a positive option for universities to focus on specific strengths instead of trying to fulfill all demands of society as one institution;
  - an increase in international competitiveness for German universities and the higher education system.

## 2. Differentiation in Germany

- **Differentiation instruments** in Germany, 16 state policies:
  - Most important: German Excellence Initiative (GEI) 2006-2011, worth 2 Bil. Euro.
  - Several German states have established **additional excellence programs**, in order to support universities unsuccessful in the “big” GEI program. Hessen for example spent a funding volume of 150 Mio. Euro on this additional program.
  - Several **federal government initiatives** to communicate a “modernized” higher education system in Germany to the international research and student auditorium (e.g. “High Potentials / GATE Germany”).
  - In the context of **target agreements** in the states (“Länder-Zielvereinbarungen”) most of the universities are forced to agree on specific development objectives with their seat states - but with little results as most objectives are very similar for each institution; NRW: Five objectives in every target agreement (2007 to 2010) – in exchange for the basic funding of all these state universities of B€ 3.7 annually:
    - (i) Research focus topics, (ii) number of study places, (iii) gender mainstreaming, (iv) professionalization of research transfer and (v) institutional research on the success of graduates of each university on the job market.
  - **Performance-based funding** as additional incentive to increase differentiation in all German states but also with limited volume and similar indicators for all institutions.



- Graduate Schools to promote young scientists and researchers
- Clusters of Excellence to promote cutting-edge research
- Institutional Strategies to promote top-level research
- New application 2011 (First Round Selection)

Abbreviations:

- FU = Freie Universität Berlin
- HU = Humboldt University Berlin
- KIT = Karlsruhe Institute of Technology
- LMU = University of Munich
- MedH = Medical School
- TH = University of Technology
- TU = Technical University
- U = University

## 2. Differentiation in Germany

- **Differentiation outlook** in Germany (WR 2010) HE Institutions:
  - (1) Incorporate regional interaction and demographic change into their institutional strategies;
  - **(2)** increasingly align study programs and contents towards the real-life students enrolled in their teaching sector;
  - (3) work on their internal differentiation of different disciplines and focal points including the change of administrative structures as e.g. human resources; it should be taken into account that academic disciplines still pose strong (guiding) borders for differentiation concepts;
  - (4) not „over-specialize“ bachelor programs and provide for an easy changeover of bachelor graduates to masters programs (e.g. at different universities and in different but related disciplines);
  - (5) improve their access policies and options especially for professionally / vocationally trained persons e.g. by co-operations with vocational institutions;
  - (6) use options of co-operation (also university – UAS) and networks for a further profiling and division of labor approach;
  - (7) apply strong focus on the cultural aspects if academic institutions in order to enhance identity and profiles of universities.

## 2. Differentiation in Germany

- **Differentiation outlook** in Germany (WR 2010) HE Policy:
  - (1) Enable budgets and financial resources for university research in competition with non-university research to be sufficient and competitive;
  - **(2)** allow for new institutional university types as well as the further development of existing types by the use of „experimental / piloting allowances“;
  - (3) support the implementation of professional schools;
  - (4) prevent a „one-sidedness“ in the wake of the current excellence discussion by ending the under-financing of parts of the „quality spectrum“ in higher education;
  - (5) increasingly support institutional profiling and mission alternatives by establishing „moderate“ competitive programs and processes;
  - (6) motivate universities towards profiling and check motivational systems for an unwanted mainstreaming for similar objectives and subjects;
  - (7) try to prevent dysfunctional (regional) differentiation in higher education by early co-operation options and agreements;
  - (8) develop alternative models for capacity planning in higher education;
  - **(9)** support the development of new university types;
  - **(10)** work against the risk of a new dual divide between research & teaching univ..

### 3. Differentiation in Netherlands

- Since the 1980s a clear desire to establish a more diversified system in response to massification and labour market demands
- Overall strategy: differentiation and diversity will be strengthened through institutional profiling and more autonomy will lead to more institutional profiling. More autonomy being part of establishing a more market driven system (more competition-based)
- In general, trying to create diversity, profiling and excellence by means of legislation, financial incentives and communication

### 3. Differentiation in Netherlands

- Educational policies:
  - Maintaining the binary divide of universities and UAS, mandate prescribed by law
  - „Relaxed“ regulations: more autonomy, room for experiments, discussion about „opening up“ the system
  - Limited number of financial incentives to encourage differentiation: exception is the Sirius programme
  - Extensive use of „dialogue“: ministry and institutions talk to each other by responding to each other's strategic plans („mutual influence“) – strategic planning (profiling?) taken seriously
  - Growing awareness of profiling because of increased emphasis on accountability, benchmarking and transparency

### 3. Differentiation in Netherlands

- Research policies
  - UAS: intensifying practice oriented research – stronger regional embedding
  - Enhance quality through peer-driven quality assessment schemes
  - Create specialised and strong research units by allocating competitive-based funding to a limited number of CoE
  - Link innovation and commercialisation to excellence in research
  - “Focus and mass”: selectivity, competition-driven and encouraging collaboration (e.g. PPP) amongst others by the government making strategic choices for research areas to be (extra) funded. However, the bulk of research is still funded by a basic operational public grant

### 3. Differentiation in Netherlands

- Where do the Dutch stand?

The 13 universities and 41 UAS offer a variety of degree programmes: a 2-year Associate Degree, 4-year Bachelors, 3-years Bachelors, 1 and 2 year masters, PhD-degrees, university college degrees, honours programmes, top/research masters

However,

“the question of whether or not the system has sufficient variation to successfully cope with the growing and increasingly diverse student intake and to realise the desired improvement in quality, must however be answered with ‘**NO**’”

*(Veerman committee 2010)*

- Isomorphism?

## 4. Institutional Consequences

- **Institutional implementation and success: World Rankings in HE**
  - Dutch universities are represented with a constant number of 12 universities in the **ARWU ranking**, 2 among them reaching the Top 100 of the Shanghai listing (Leiden University and Utrecht University).
  - German universities have gone from 40 to 39 Top 500 universities worldwide. There are five German universities in the Top 100 of the ARWU ranking, in 2010 and 2005.
  - The whole German higher education system lost 108 rankings positions points in the ARWU ranking (on average -2.8 ranking points per university), contradicting in a way the objectives of the GEI in increasing especially the international visibility.
  - Relative to country population also the ‘success’ of the Dutch higher education system is obvious: Whereas Germany has **one university among the top 500 according to the ARWU ranking per 2.1 million inhabitants**, the Netherlands has one university among the world leading universities **per 1.4 million inhabitants**.
  - Compared to the US, UK, France or Japan, the Dutch higher education system is successful regarding the ARWU ranking positions: All mentioned countries besides France lost a number of universities positioned in the ARWU ranking between 2005 and 2010. Besides China, therefore the Netherlands remained the most successful higher education system in this (dynamic) ARWU ranking perspective.

## ■ THE Ranking Comparison

2010 Ranking Position	Germany	Netherlands
43	U. Göttingen	
61	U. Munich	
83	U. Heidelberg	
101	TU Munich	
114		Eindhoven U. T.
124		Leiden U.
132	U. Freiburg	
139		VU Amsterdam
143		Utrecht U.
144		Wageningen UR
151		Delft U. T.
159		U. Rotterdam
165		U. Amsterdam
168	U. Würzburg	
170		U. Groningen
172	U. Frankfurt	
173	U. Bielefeld	
178	HU Berlin	
178	U. Bonn	
182	RWTH Aachen	
185		U. Twente
186	U. Konstanz	
187	KIT Karlsruhe	
189	U. Tübingen	

## 5. Comparative Hypotheses

- I. Germany (“latecomer”) with targeted/narrow approach in the GEI → not yet visible in institutions/rankings, maybe 2020?
- II. Formal (and not content) diversity in the German GEI compared to an open, content-wise diverse Dutch approach.
- III. The Dutch success could be related to the policy initiatives before the millennium (“time lag”). German target agreements have not really contributed to institutional profiling processes.

## 5. Comparative Hypotheses

- IV. Dutch strategy as a “framework for individual and creative excellence” versus the German approach of “top-down research management and steering”.
- V. In both cases fears for an “over-steering” and “over-administration” of the higher education system (especially research) with diminishing block grant research (academic freedom?).
- VI. Dutch universities, in a very internationally oriented economy, find international funding sources (EU); German HE has a less strong need to become internationally competitive and may also be hindered by 16 different state regulations in HE.

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