
Disciplinary Change and Organizational Growth in German Universities, 1995-2023

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This presentation examines disciplinary patterns and growth dynamics in Germany's public university system. Drawing on sociological neo-institutionalism, population ecology, and institutional stratification, I will analyze changes with particular focus on the humanities, natural sciences, engineering, and social sciences - in both technical (TU) and non-technical universities (NTU). While the overall disciplinary structure remains comparatively stable, several shifts emerge. First, the social sciences expand considerably, whereas the humanities decline (professoriate). Second, the natural sciences lose relative weight across all indicators at NTUs but not at TUs, while engineering declines at TUs and remains broadly stable at NTUs. Third, disciplinary growth and decline are largely decoupled from organizational growth. Among NTUs, large and old universities are more strongly oriented toward the shrinking natural sciences, whereas small and young universities embrace the growing social sciences; comparable patterns are absent among TUs. Finally, universities with excellence funding exhibit stronger profiles in the natural sciences and humanities, while domain-specific excellence funding is associated with specialization patterns in the funded domain.

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