

# Persistent inequalities in higher education: Historical perspectives

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# Starting point: persistent inequality in higher education

- no evidence on mass HE decreasing inequality, with the exception of **Sweden** and **the Netherlands** – according to Yossi, S. & Blossfeld, H.P. (eds.) (1993) Persistent Inequality: Changing Educational Attainment in Thirteen Countries. Boulder: Westview Press.
- HPS study:** increasing access to higher education (mass & universal HE) does not in itself increase equality
- Sociology of education supports these notions

# Main question

- ❏ **How has inequality changed over time?**
- ❏ **Perspectives to inequality:** 1) absence of equality of opportunities; 2) as disadvantage (Maximally Maintained Inequality)
- ❏ Starting point: the role of HE has always been a problematic matter because universities are & have been potential channels for upward social mobility (=> threat to elite) & reproduction of existing social structures

# Main concepts

- **University: 1) institution of higher learning & 2) organisation** (many tensions: teachers ↔ students; teaching ↔ research ↔ third mission; academics ↔ administrators; disciplines; relationship with the **Prince** (or state), **the City** (or society) and **the Pope** (or academic community) => **dynamic organisation & institution**
- **Higher education institutions (HEIs 1960s=>)** concept including all tertiary level institutions



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# Medieval Europe, 13th century



# Why universities emerged & were established?



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# How universities emerged?

- ❏ First universities were never established but developed organically: **studia particulare** ↔ **studia generale** => universitas 14th century
- ❏ **Basic problem:** what to do with growing numbers of foreign (university) teachers and students?
- ❏ **Basic challenges:** How to organise the relationship with the **City (Society)** (prices of food, accomodation, law & order) & with territorial rulers (Prince)
- ❏ **Basic solution:** license to operate from **Pope** (theological authority) or from a **Prince**, or both
- ❏ **Resources:** student fees (paid by Church & students) + grants from Prince



# University as a federation of scholarly communities

- 1) **Corporative character:** "priviledged corporate associations of masters and students with their statutes, seals, administrative machinery and degree procedures". (Cobban 1988)
- 2) **Organisational autonomy** in relation to Catholic Church & cities (**Society**) and Kings (**State**)
- 3) **Academic character** with a unique value basis aiming for a better understanding of the world & education of students



# Beliefs & values of Europe's universities (1)

- 1) ***the belief in the dignity of man***, who, even in his fallen state, was capable of impressive mental and spiritual growth (***education***)
- 2) ***the belief in an ordered universe open to rational understanding*** (***research***)
- 3) ***the belief in the prospect of man's mastery of his environment through his intellect and his mounting knowledge and experience*** (***utility***)



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# Beliefs & values of Europe's universities (2)

4) *culture in which **questioning and analytical approach** to both classical and contemporary material was encouraged (**critical thinking**)* (Cobban 1988, 11-14)

5) **Publicity of research & open debates**  
(Rüegg, 2004, 32-34)

These beliefs & values laid the fundamental intellectual basis for all European universities



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# Universitas & University

- **Universitas** = several types of corporate bodies such as craft guilds & municipal councils (*11-13th centuries*)  
=> **only universities** (*14th / 15th centuries*)
- **Universitas in universities** = the communities (or guilds) of masters, or students, or masters and students combined => **different from other modes of corporations**
- **Traditional Faculties: Theology, Law** (Roman & Canonic law), **Medicine, Artes Liberales / Humanities** (trivium +quadrium)



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# Two 'archtypes' of universities

- ❖ **Bologna** (1088?) as the **University of Students**; organised the relationships between the city of Bologna & hired professors. **Nations** of students as a self-governance model. Adult law students.
- ❖ **Paris** (1215?) as the **University of Masters**: administration of university taken care of by Masters; colleges, nations of students & masters as organisational units in faculties. Academics & students were members of the Catholic Church ⇔ canon law
- ❖ Many combinations of these ideal types in European universities ⇔ medieval idea of **re-formation**

# The Essence of university: schola



Olaus Magnus (1555) in Nuorteva 1997



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# Ideal types of medieval students

- 1) **Scholaris simplex** (~50% of all): 14-16-years old boys; studied 1-2 years
- 2) students aiming for ***baccalarium artium*** (~20-40% of all). Both of these groups studied in humanities (*artes*), in Paris studies lasted about 7 years
- 3) **Baccalarius studying for Magister** (10-20%), studies took 2-3 years; could act as professors; 19-21 years old men. **Groups 1-3 belonged to medieval 'middle class'**.
- 4) **Noble men** studying law, esp. in southern universities
- 5) **Students aiming for degrees** (MA, Dr.), 20-30 years old, normally in law & theology faculties, smallest group

# Medieval universities by 1500

**Year 1500:**

76 universities established;

66 functional;

58 without interruptions

(History of European Universities 1992)



# Why universities did not develop in other civilizations?

- **Confucian model** of higher learning: civil servant exams, emperor as the highest degree-awarding authority, **Buddhist schools** separated from society
- **Islamic culture:** Koran schools at mosques, individual teachers/degrees, no collegial bodies
- **European culture:** nature, human beings, theology objects of **critical research**; universities as corporative entities



# Universities in the emerging territorial states, 16th century =>

the strengthening of territorial states with more powerful kings made universities more important for the states:

- 1) need for (the training of) **civil & military officials**;
- 2) need for **social cohesion** through religion (& control the training of priests):
- 3) educate the defenders of the **ideological basis**, 'right religion'; **Reformation**: Protestants vs. Catholics

=> The universities were connected more tightly to the interests of the states. The Kingdom Sweden as an illuminating example of this European development



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# The Expansion of the Kingdom of Sweden



# Sweden: Universities in the service of the King & Lutheran Church, 17<sup>th</sup> century

- Context: **Sweden as the Superpower** in the Baltic region (1630s-1720)
  - => Need for unified & efficient administration because of a) need to reform inefficient (medieval) administration; b) small population & big land area of relatively poor kingdom
  - => more resources for the endless wars of and for the kingdom
- Opened career paths in military and civil service to King
  - ⇔ **Lower nobility** benefited; **clergy** grew important estate because of its importance for royal propaganda

# The State and the university

- Swedish universities were aimed to **train civil servants for the King & clergy for the Lutheran Church**
- 1) to defend the 'right Christian Belief' = **political & dynastic issue**
- 2) to **strengthen society** & value basis: Lutheran Church took care of the local administration (=>1870s)
- Channel for upward **social mobility** both for lower Nobility & priests as individuals & as an estate

In Europe: the development of national (systems of) higher education were rooted in the political interests of territorial Rulers (the State), lower nobility & territorial churches



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# Number of students

## rounded-off percentages of the age-group

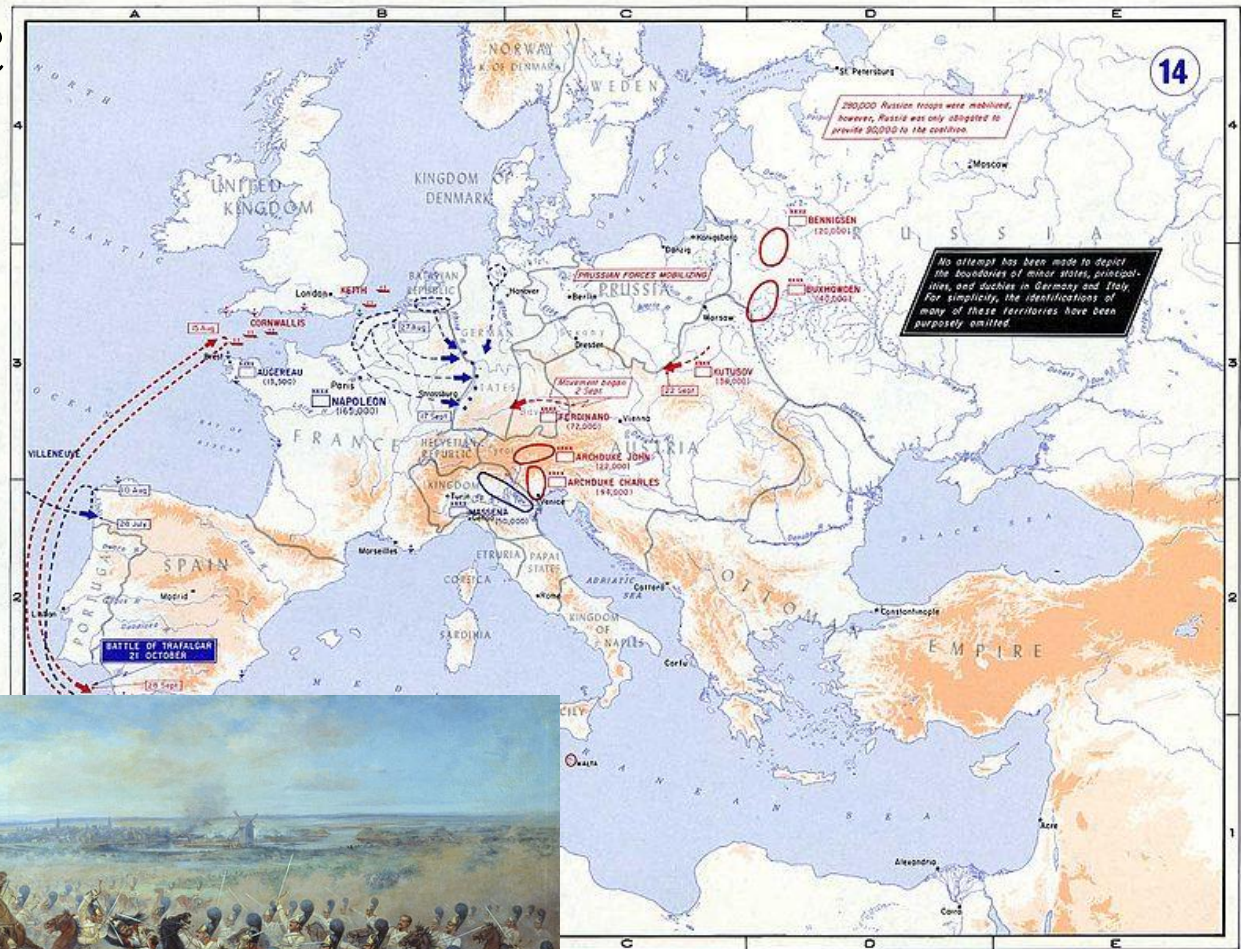
Country / region	1575-1600	1700	1750	1800
England	2,7	1,5		
German empire	1,2	2,2	1,7	0,9
Dutch republic	0,2	0,7	0,7	0,6
Coimbra (Portugal)	1,4	2,4	3,3	1,2
France				1,2
Finland (Sweden)				0,9

# Socio-economic background of students (%)

Father's occupation	Finland 1760s	Finland ~1800	Germany ~1800	England ~1800	France ~1800
Nobility / Landowners	6	9	18	31	3-4
Learned professions	38 (clergy)	33	40	32 clergy 21 prof.	65-77
Econ. up.-middle class	7	14	7	6 business	2-9
Lower middle class	10	21	21	-	10-25
Lower/working	9	15	1	-	1-5
Unknown/other	28	9	13	10	

Germany = selected universities; France = 4 provincial law faculties; UK = Cambridge

# Napoleonic Wars (1803-15)



(FIER)



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# French & Napoleon revolutions

- Revolutionary & Napoleonic wars in Europe (1790-1815) challenged all **medieval institutions**, incl. universities: **mainly teaching institutions** for priests and lawyers corrupted by nepotism especially in Germany ⇔ **scientific research** was increasingly conducted in science academics
  - **How to solve these problems?**
  - The number of universities declined: **143 universities (in 1798) => 83 universities (1815)** (France: -24; Germany: -18; Spain: -15) (1850: 98 uni; 1939: 200 uni.)
- => Two new traditions introduced to European universities: French & Humboldt systems of HE**



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# French –Napoleonic- ideal type on the relationship with State (1790s =>)

- **Specialist institutions**, subjected to severe discipline, strictly organized & controlled by the state (e.g. *École Normale supérieure, École Polytechnique etc.*)
- Produced **the elite & civil servants for the state**
- **‘scholarly desert’ outside of Paris** because of professionalization & centralization & separation of teaching from research (=>1870s); research was allowed only in great teaching universities (Sorbonne) & Science Academies (Charle 2004)
- Egalitarian objectives => French republican tradition



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# The Humboldt *Idea* of University: relationship with state

- **Knowledge** is a unified indivisible entity
- Unity of **teaching & learning** => *research seminars*
- Attitude of mind for scholarship (*wissenschaft*)
- Pursuit of truth in **solitude & freedom** (*einsamheit & freiheit*) included both students & professors
- **Freedom of teaching & learning** (*Lehr- & Lernfreiheit*); Privatdozent as a dynamic career path, professors as mandarins
- **Bildung –wissenschaft –national culture**, bases for modern state (*Kulturstaat*)

# The Impact of mythical 'Humboldt Model'

## ■ Why a myth?

- 'Humboldt model' was 'invented' in 1906
- never realised as a model, but revolutionised the thinking about university ↔ German research universities
- USA: graduate schools => research universities
- Japan: one interpretation of the Humboldt university model ↔ It is a **political model**: it can be used for different purposes (like Worlds Class Uni)
- It was recognised as a success story making its imitation easy



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# Number of students -university enrolments per age cohort (20-24-yrs)

Country / region	1870	1890	1900	1910
England	0,4	0,7	0,8	1,3
Germany	0,5	0,6	-	0,9
Netherlands	0,2	0,7	0,7	1,1
Portugal	1,4	0,3	0,3	0,2
France	0,5	0,9	1,2	1,7
Finland	0,4	1.1	1,2	1,2

Source Ringer 2004



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# Socio-economic background of students (%)

Father's occupation	Finland 1850s	Finland ~1900	Germany 1910s	England ~1900	France ~1900
Nobility / Landowners	3	3	-	12	-
Learned professions	35	31	30	16 clergy	38
Econ. up.-middle class	29	24	36	37 profess.	20
Lower middle class	29	29		27 business	36
Lower/working	2	8	35	5	6
Unknown/other	1	5		3	-

France = Ecole Normale; UK = Oxford

# Changes in the 19th century

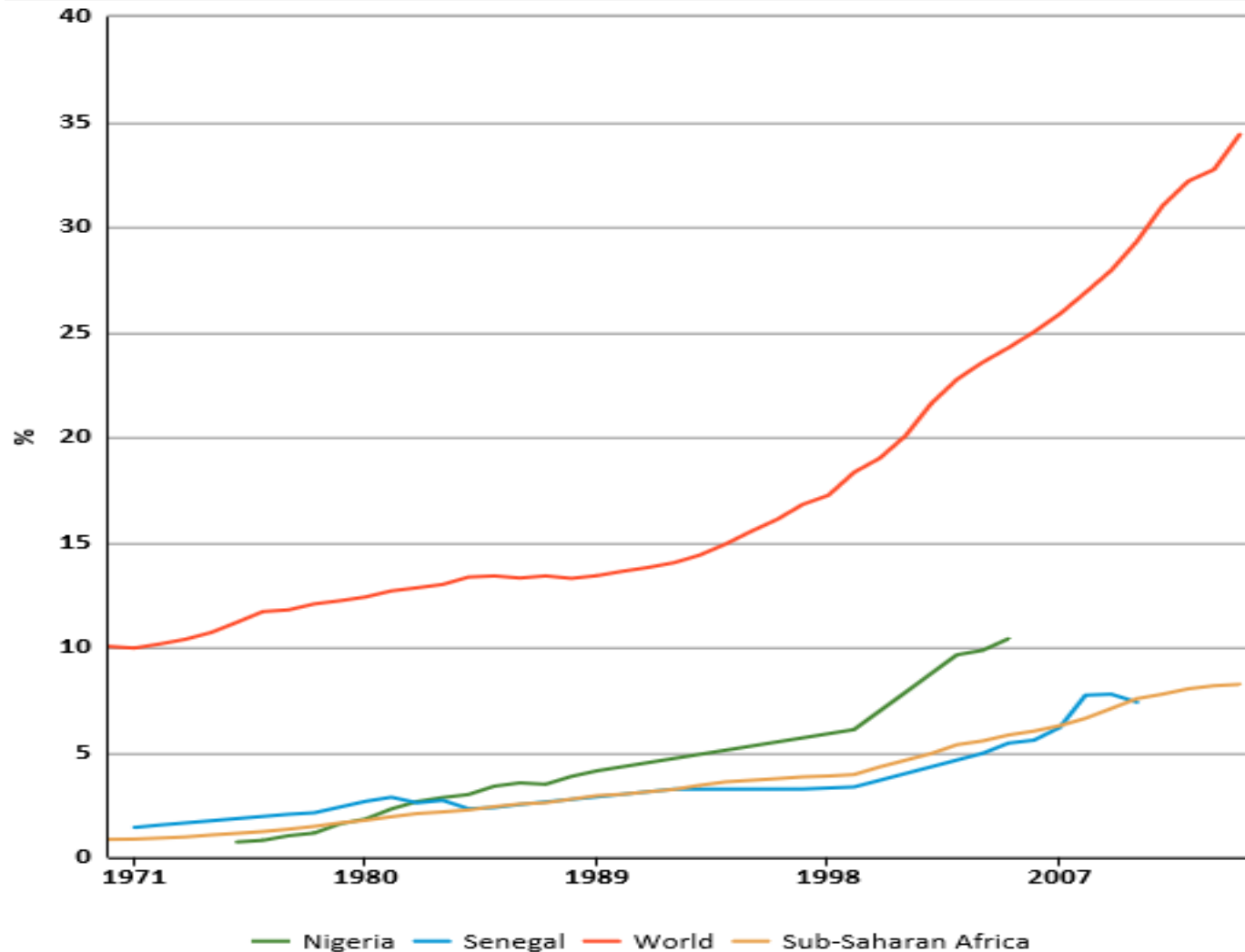
- **Institutional:** university autonomy & faculty – discipline –chair system; academic careers
- **Professionalization:** degrees & careers tied together with state bureaucracy, disciplinary communities: journals & conferences
- **Mental:** Impetus for combined research & teaching activities; scientific communities
- School systems tied with HE: Gymnasium/Abitur



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# Expansion of higher education after WWI



# Expansion of higher education, 1950s =>

- after the WWII HE was the main channel for upward social mobility (Piketty)
- **Crucial element:** the social role of higher education changed from the reproduction of elite to the production of qualified labour force (Trow 1974)
- This changes universities, HE systems and societies
- Crucial matter: the number of students from the age cohort **elite** (1-5%) - **mass** (~15%) – **universal** (50%>)



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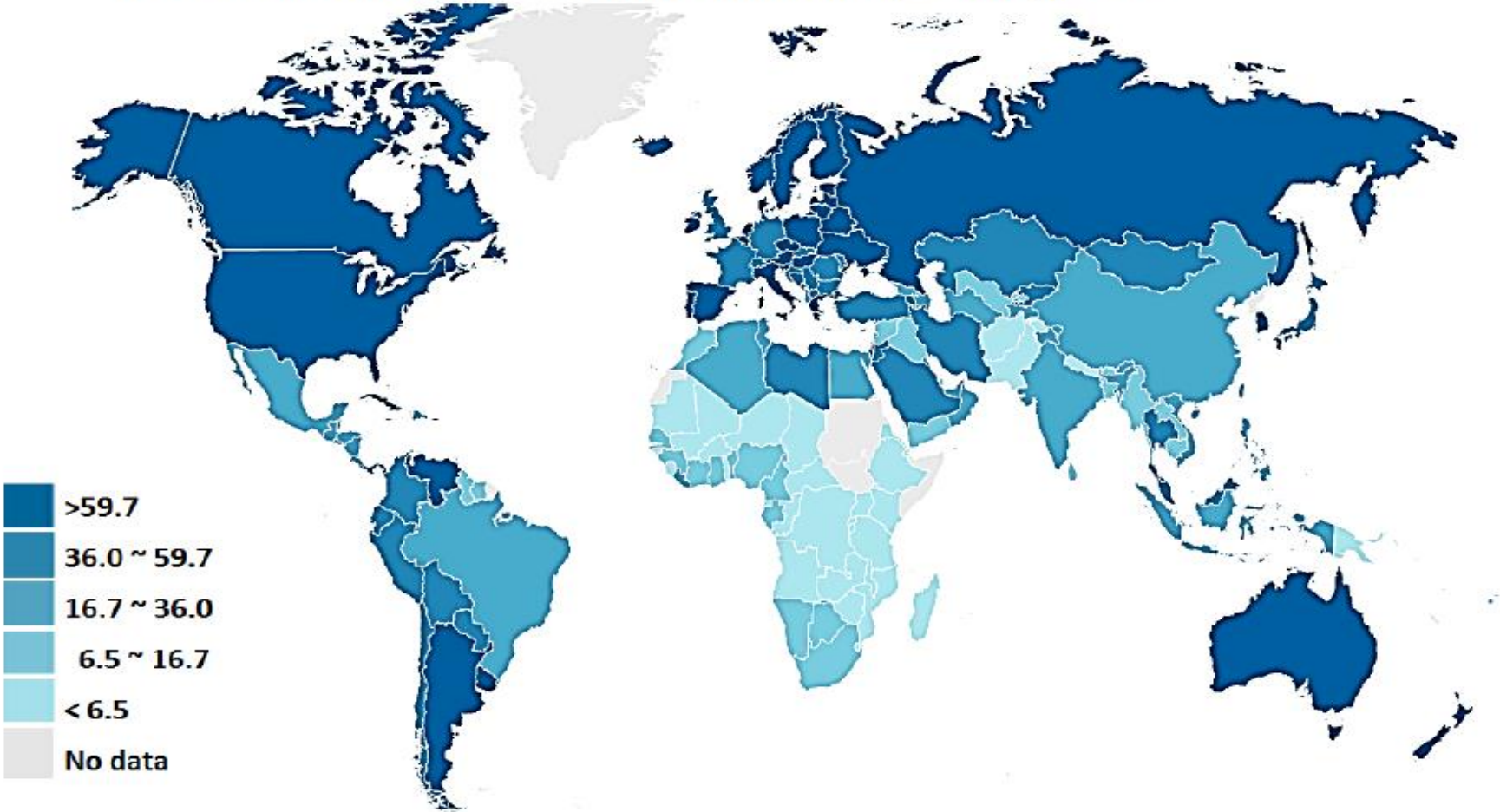
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# HE in industrial societies

- Access in elite system a **priviledge**, in mass HE a **right**, in universal HE an **obligation**
- education was one of the main instruments in the making of welfare societies**: creating equal educational opportunities in order to make societies more equal (instrument & goal / Nordic countries)
- Part of policies & processes of making welfare states  
=> equality issue & economic issue (expenses of HE)
- => ***stratification of HE systems? / HPS***

### Gross enrolment ratio for tertiary education by country, 2011



# On the US model: strong civil society & market forces

- **Liberal tradition** ⇔ private universities established by religious communities & philanthropic associations ⇔ university governance: Boards of trustees
- Expansion has strengthened institutional stratification
- System's dynamic fuelled by a) **liberal arts tradition** (formation of students); b) **competition** (market forces as unifying social force) ⇔ **academic drift**; c) **strong stratification** of the system based on institutional status & reputation ⇔ **tenure track** / academic freedom

# A Nordic counterforce: equality and cooperation with state & society

- Nordic welfare state: 1) strong emphasis of **equality** (no tuition fees); 2 **social trust** (fair taxation); evaluation as development rather than ranking; 3) **beneficial state**
- Interplay between state (main funder & regulator) + expected contribution to civil society + cooperation with business & industry
- Institutional autonomy & academic freedom & equal educational opportunities guaranteed (legislation)
- => **Horizontal differentiation rather than vertical stratification**

# Discussion: Society and HEIs

- **Mass education or universal HE** have not solved the problems of equal educational opportunities > more stratified systems serving different SE groups (class)
- **Neo-liberal ideas** of an efficient, business-like HEIs emphasize strong management, strategic thinking, academic workforce as a resource; YET Universities serve mainly **society** (critical research, public debate) and **state** (administration, social work, teaching, legislation, law-enforcement, military) and ... **business needs**

# Why persistent inequalities?

- Tentative answers:
- Structures & objectives of society: elites try to limit access to elite (MMI hypothesis) + professions support selection to their fields (disciplinary differences)
- => educational structures before & below HE play a crucial role in selection to HE
- => social policies ↔ welfare regimes ↔ state interventions play a role
- HEIs may play an important role in the reproduction of societies' social structures

# Thank you for your attention!



Photo: JV



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