

Varieties of Diversity Scripts

While universities have long been a bastion of training (national) elites and knowledge production, they have also been sites of deep contestations over key values and notions of the liberal script. In both liberal and non-liberal societies calls for and shifts towards democratization have promised equality and participation and (specific) scripts for diversity and gender have diffused around the world. This empirically grounded, interdisciplinary, interinstitutional, international collaborative project seeks to theorize “varieties of diversity scripts” to explore the different tensions and contestations of key promises and values of the liberal script: equality and meritocracy. Our analytical approach is based on neo-institutional theories and discursive institutionalism. We combine first a computational text analysis of university websites to map the varying notions of diversity, and second an in- depth interview and focus group based exploration of how university leaders navigate the complex relationship between the values of equality and meritocracy. More broadly, our project brings into focus the changing relationship between science, policy, and society in the liberal world order, and the resulting cultural cleavages and contestations.