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**Abstract**

From the 1990s onwards, economics departments in Europe have changed toward a culture of “excellence.” Strong academic hierarchies and new forms of academic organization replace “institutes” and “colleges” by fully equipped “economics departments.” This article seeks to demonstrate how and why hierarchization, discourses of excellence and organizational change takes place in European economics departments. The concept of “elitism dispositif” will be developed in order to understand these changes as a discursive as well as power-related phenomenon based on rankings, on the formation of new academic classes as well as on the construction of an elite myth. An elitism dispositif is defined as a discursive power apparatus that transforms symbolic differences among researchers, constructed by rankings, into material inequalities, based on an unequal distribution of academic capital between departments and researchers. Based on an empirical study, the article will focus on a selection of economics departments in Germany and in the UK, in order to study the emergence of an “elite class” as well as the functioning of an “excellence culture” that is

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based on discourses of power and inequality. (HRK / Abstract übernommen) Maesse, Jens, E-Mail:  
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