

# The Elitism-Dispositive in Economics

The Role of Research Rankings in a  
Global Discipline

# Overview

1. Perspective on “Rankings” in Higher Education Research
2. Discursive Marxism/DPEE approach
3. The forming of the Elitism-Dispositive in academia
4. The social context of the Elitism-dispositive
5. Conclusion: Rankings as power devices between academia and society

# Perspectives on “Rankings” in Higher Education Research

- **Functional-economical approaches**: Rankings reflect and display research quality and help to constitute an equilibrium market of research goods.
- **Critical realist approaches**: Rankings cannot display/reflect research quality. They are ideologies and support particular academic groups by deluding the possibility of an equilibrium market and a fair competition.
- **Constructivist approaches**: Rankings are classification tools which are used in multiple ways to construct academic realities.
- **Critical constructivist approaches**: Rankings are classification tools and power devices which construct academic realities as relations of power and dominance.

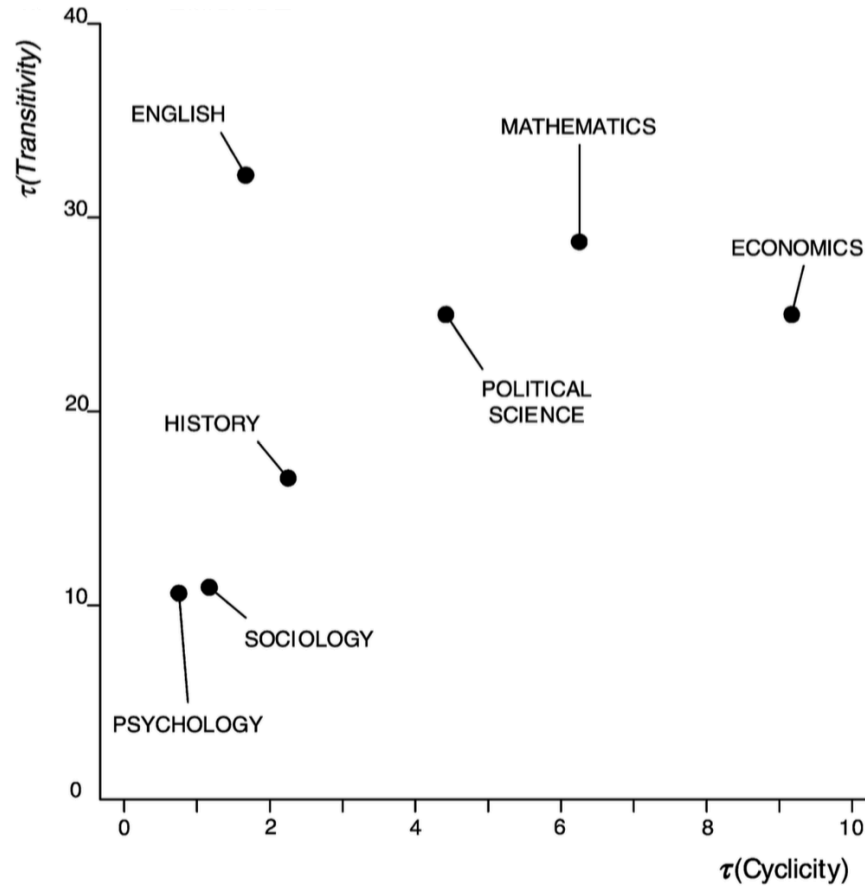
# Discursive Political Economy of Economics-Approach

First methodological Principle	Second Methodological Principle	Third Methodological Principle	Fourth Methodological Principle
Rakings are used in discourses to construct (non-)academic realities through positioning practices	Positioning practices are parts of power strategies where symbolic capital is used and converted	Power-discourses in economics take place in different social contexts, in trans-epistemic fields, between academia, media, politics and the economy.	Power-discourses are forming a “dispositive”. Rakings in economics are understood as part of an Elitism-Dispositive.

# Is Economics a “Normal” Academic Discipline?

- Merton: scientific ethos
- Stichweh: professions vs. science
- Lamont/Knorr Cetina: evaluative/epistemic cultures

# The Prestige Principle



# What is Remarkable in Economics?

Internality approaches	Externality approaches
“capitalist discipline” thesis (Lee, Pham, and Gu 2013)	“lender of last resort”-thesis (Lebaron, 2001, 2006, 2014)
“superiority”- thesis (Fourcade, Ollion, and Algan 2014)	“legitimacy and authority”-thesis (many authors from Political Economy and Economic Sociology)

# Thesis

Research assessment in economics cannot be reduced to pure inner academic debates. Research rankings – as parts of the Elitism-Dispositive – contribute to construct “academic reputation” as symbolic capital. This symbolic capital can be “exported” into the non-academic world. Here, it is used to constitute powerful political actors – “economic experts” in the media, the political world and in banks and businesses. These academic-political actors help to find political solutions for social problems (such as “Euro crisis”, “restructuration of firms”, “setting a political agenda in the media”).



# Structure

1. The forming of the Elitism-Dispositive
2. The trans-epistemic field as political-economic context of the Elitism-Dispositive
3. The discursive exchanges between the sub-worlds of the trans-epistemic fields

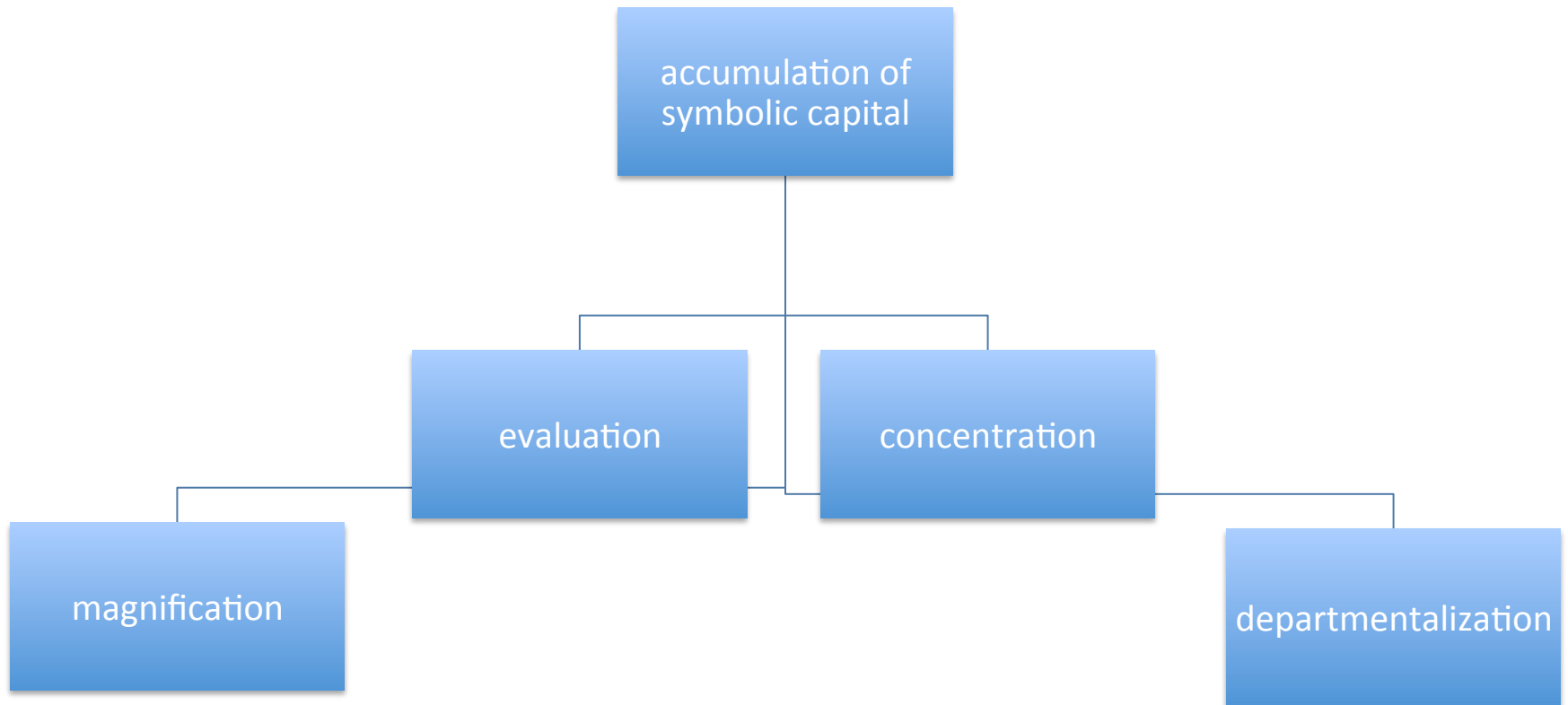
# The History of Elitism

- Starting in the 1970s from US departments
  - Journals replace books
  - English as lingua franca
  - Rankings create excellence myths
  - Model based, positivist scientific philosophy rules out cultural and social approaches in economics
  - Global hierarchies
  - National academic cultures and fields are rearticulated in terms of a *glocal* discursive space
- Global trends and local adaption strategies starting in the 1980s in UK, 1990s in Germany, France, Italy

# Forming the Elitism-Dispositive: From Symbolic Classifications to Institutionalized Classes

Evaluation	<b>Discourses of classification:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Rankings of journals and publications (HB-Ranking (Ger) Diamond list (UK))</li><li>- Symbolic hierarchies of journals and publications</li><li>- Quality evaluation and research assessment policy</li></ul>
Magnification	Material resources I (Oxford): <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Large departments</li><li>- Critical mass of professors (25 to 30)</li><li>- From “professors” to “academic locations” as main references</li></ul>
Concentration	Material resources II: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Clustering of funds, positions, money, connections etc.</li><li>- Material hierarchies</li></ul>
Departmentalization	Organizational change (Mannheim, Warwick): <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- TOP-Journal productivity</li><li>- Graduate schools: learning to publish</li><li>- Centres of accumulation</li><li>- Profitable networks</li></ul>

# Academic Capital Accumulation Regime



# Academic class society (Ger): publication behaviour

	Mega departments (5)	Big departments (16)	Middle departments (33)	Small departments (34)
share of all professors	21,5%	32,5%	30%	14%
occurence in HB-25-Ranking	100%	93,75%	21%	0%
occurence of HB-25-Faculties in HB-100-Ranking	26%	40%/(21%)	8%/(21%)	0%/(21%)
average HB publication productivity per professor	High (2-3 PperP)	Middle (2 PperP)	Low (1-2 PperP)	no

# Academic class society (UK): research funds

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Elite class	Near-elite class	Middle class	Working class
LSE UCL Warwick Oxford Essex	Nottingham Bristol Queen Mary Cambridge Manchester Southampton Royall Holloway Exeter	Kent Leicester Birkbeck Surrey Surrey Sheffield York Birmingham East Anglia Sussex City Brunel Loughborough	London Metropolitan Kingston Manchester Metropolitan

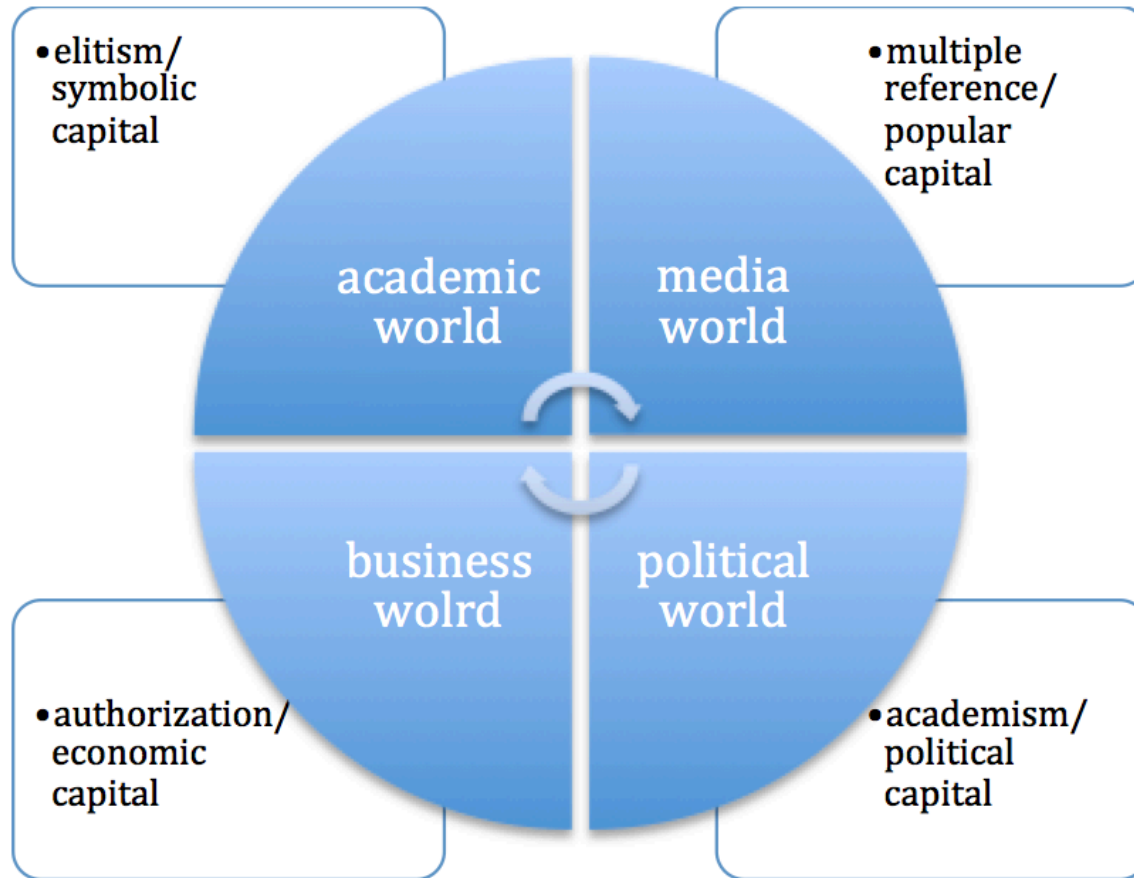
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# Academic capitalism formula:

$$R-C-C' = C^S$$

Academic Resources	Academic Capital	Accumulated Academic Capital	Symbolic Capital
professorships, money, PhD-students, editorial board positions, funds, social relations etc.	Resources used in discourses for publications in Top-Journals = transferring a symbolic hierarchy into a material hierarchy	Academic inequalities, elite departments, academic class society	Prestige as an academic export article = „star economists“, „Nobel prize economists“ etc.


# The Discursive Political Economy of Economics as Trans-Epistemic Field





# Political Economy of Economics formula

Discursive conversion of capital into a source of legitimacy (effect)



$C^{\text{symbolic}} \rightarrow C^{\text{populist}} + C^{\text{political}} + C^{\text{and so forth}}$



Social demand for capital as source of legitimacy (cause)

# The World of Economic Policy

- 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century: the construction of the nation state as a “society” with economic means:
  - Taxonomies: Statistics, econometrics, GDP, economic forecasting, accounting etc.
  - Institutions: statistical bureaus, economic research institutes , economic councils and commissions
  - Objects: the state, the firm, markets, branches etc.
- Modern world is a product of economic, sociological, and cultural performance
- End 20<sup>th</sup> century: scientification completed

# “Academization”

General trend in society towards education and credentialism (Bourdieu, Collins), accounting and financial certification (Thrift, Epstein), auditing in quality assurance, accountability and new public management (Power).

In particular:

- Germany: economic research institutes under pressure to prove “scientific quality”
  - Central banks recruit more and more academic researcher
  - Growth of experts in politics and media (especially in Europe: Troika, ECB)
  - Nobel Prize as “global expert degree”
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- Definition of Academization: constructing a legitimate position – an “expert” – which is allowed to make collectively binding judgements
  - Cause: end of modernity as a cultural and a political project
  - Expert degrees replace expert knowledges as power instrument
  - Academic capital is supplementing scientific capital

# Conclusion

- Rankings and the Elitism-Dispositive do neither improve nor impair research quality. They change it in multiple directions (Sauder/Espeland).
- Rankings usually have multiple effects on research. These effects are always (!) differently perceived from inside and from outside the academic world. There is no single and common perspective (Angermuller).
- Rankings and the Elitism-Dispositive change power relations inside the academic world and create a “winner perspective” which can be conceived from outside as “representative” for the entire field (Lee/Pham/Gu; Fourcade).
- External perspectives tend to follow these “winner perspectives” and expect positive contributions from research for society (expertise, education, knowledge and so forth) (economic functionalism). But academia’s abilities to find solutions for social problems are, in fact, very limited.
- What academia – in research and in education – is actually doing, can be studied on the symbolic and not on the functional level: academia is producing symbolic power which can be used in political and social struggle (Lebaron).
- Thesis: Elitism is constructing global hierarchies in economics which transform the academic world of economics into an “factory” for the production of symbolic capital circulating in the trans-epistemic field of the global political economy.

Thanks!

# Appendix: Germany

	Fakultäten	Fakultäten	Fakultäten	Fakultäten
HB 25	5 = 100%	15 = 93,75%	7 = 21%	0 = 0%
HB 100 <sup>11</sup>	26%	40%		
Anzahl der Professuren (n=693)	149	230	212	102
Prozentualer Anteil der Professuren	21,5%	32,5%	30%	14%
1/5-Anteil der Fakultäten	1	3	7	7
Relativer Anteil von 50 ProfessorInnen	11	15	16	8
Relativer Anteil der Fakultäten (Gesamt 88)	5,6%	18,3%	37,5%	38,6%
Relativer Anteil der Fakultäten gemessen am relativen Anteil	1	2	4	8

# Appendix: UK

**Table 2.** *Stratification of research quality of economics departments*

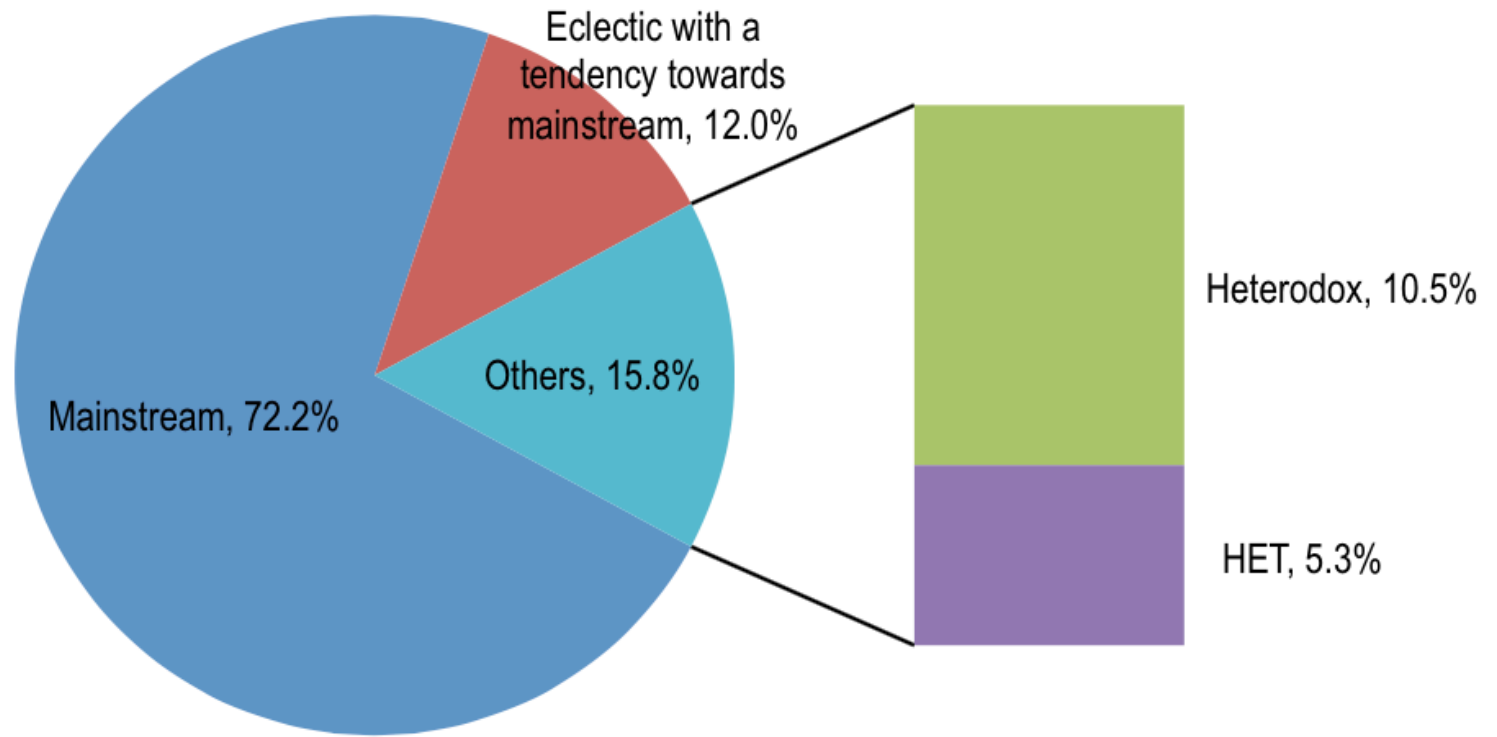
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Elite class	Near-elite class	Middle class	Working class
LSE	Nottingham	Kent	London Metropolitan
UCL	Bristol	Leicester	Kingston
Warwick	Queen Mary	Birkbeck	Manchester Metropolitan
Oxford	Cambridge	Surrey	
Essex	Manchester	Surrey	
	Southampton	Sheffield	
	Royall Holloway	York	
	Exeter	Birmingham	
		East Anglia	
		Sussex	
		City	
		Brunel	
		Loughborough	

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# Appendix: France I

2000 and 2011





# Appendix: France II

Evolution of SAD recruitments (average over two years)

