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**Title**

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**Abstract**

This article examines the normative roots of criteria used for the accreditation of study programs in German higher education based on the orders of worth framework by Boltanski and Thévenot (On justification. Economies of worth, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 2006). From 1999 to 2017, the criteria have been subject to continuous efforts of legitimation, especially by the German Länder, which are in charge of public higher education in Germany. The empirical analysis shows that industrial (e.g., ‘standardization’), civic (e.g., ‘gender justice and equal opportunities’), and civic-industrial (e.g., ‘employability’) codings are the core of accreditation criteria. The normativity of these criteria constitutes accreditation as a technical arrangement running (a) a structural program (e.g., qualifications of academic teachers, modularization of study programs, and quality management) and (b) a political program (e.g., diversity of students and system of studies). Based on the empirical analysis, it is concluded that X does not stand for the accreditation of quality X. X stands for the accreditation of X qualities for specific normative purposes via the higher education

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accreditation regime. (HRK / Abstract übernommen)