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**Abstract**

The integration of higher education systems in the Western world has led both to development of overall strategies for the organization of higher education institutions by public authorities, as well as to strategies by higher education institutions aiming to position themselves within emerging higher education systems. This article first asks whether these developments represent converging or path dependent trends before it sketches a conceptual point of departure for the analysis of the relationship between institutions in higher education systems based on the effects of integration on academic hierarchies and functional specialization. Then I discuss how recent attempts at integrating higher education systems in Europe and the US may affect the relationship between institutions in the light of conceptions of education as a process by which students learn to learn or by which they learn specific occupational skills. Thirdly, the development is situated in a wider context where the relationship between different types of institutions are considered in relation to the spread of an extended and more utility oriented concept of knowledge. Finally, I consider briefly some possible

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future developments based on how modern capitalist and public managerialist knowledge regimes constitute conditions for higher education integration. (HRK / Abstract übernommen)