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**Abstract**

This article outlines the evolution of a national research funding system over a timespan of more than 40 years and analyzes the development from a rather stable Humboldt-inspired floor funding model to a complex multi-tiered system where new mechanisms continually have been added on top of the system. Based on recent contributions to Historical Institutionalism it is shown how layering and displacement processes gradually have changed the funding system along a number of dimensions and thus how a series of minor adjustments over time has led to a transformation of the system as a whole. The analysis also highlights the remarkable resistance of the traditional academically oriented research council system towards restructuring. Due to this resistance the political system has, however, circumvented the research council system and implemented change through other channels of the funding system. For periods of time these strategies have marginalized the role of the councils. (HRK / Abstract übernommen)