

and considering that the trend will be maintained in the foreseeable future, leads tax authorities in the direction of harsher policies of deterrence, sometimes complimented by erratic tax amnesty programs. These policies fall short of understanding the adaptive nature of taxpayers' reactions, also failing to realize that both measures are sometimes the cause and not the medicine for more tax evasion. A socio-historical analysis of the Portuguese case will be central to the project.

MAX-PLANCK-INSTITUT FÜR GESELLSCHAFTSFORSCHUNG
MAX PLANCK INSTITUTE FOR THE STUDY OF SOCIETIES



Economic Sociology at MPIfG

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The Institute

The Max Planck Institute for the Study of Societies (MPIfG) in Cologne, Germany, was founded in 1985 under the directorship of the sociologist Renate Mayntz, who was joined a year later by the political scientist Fritz W. Scharpf. It is one of the smaller institutes of the Max Planck Society, which maintains 80 institutes devoted to basic research in the natural sciences and the humanities.

Today the directors of the institute are Jens Beckert and Wolfgang Streeck. Some forty to fifty research staff members, doctoral students, post-docs and visiting researchers work at the MPIfG. Many have an international background.

Research program

The MPIfG's research aims to develop an empirically based theory of the social and political foundations of modern economies. It primarily investigates the interrelation between economic and social action. Using an institutional approach, it examines how markets and business organizations develop from the historical-institutional, political and cultural framework in which they are embedded and how institutional contexts change over time.

The institute has several research areas, including the sociology of markets (headed by Jens Beckert), industrial relations and welfare states, corporate governance, organized interests, European integration, and the governance of global structures (headed by Wolfgang Streeck), democratic government and economic governance (headed by Philip Manow) and science, technology and systems of innovation (headed by Raymund Werle).

New Focus on Economic Sociology at the MPIfG

The research in economic sociology at the institute focuses on markets as the core institution of capitalist economies. The overarching interest is in understanding the functioning of markets from a distinctively sociological perspective. Markets are analyzed from a Weberian viewpoint as arenas of social struggle in which actors confront each other under conditions of competition. Our primary interest is in the social, cultural and political underpinnings for the development of the order of markets. One crucial vantage point of the research projects is the problem of uncertainty that market actors face when making decisions. This brings attention to the coordination problems market participants must cope with, which can very abstractly be summarized as the problem of value, the problem of competition and the problem of cooperation. Uncertainty also provides a theoretical opening to explain the embeddedness of economic action. Much attention is given to comparative and historical research designs.

Projects recently launched include "Demand Structure and Distributional Effects of the Lottery" (Jens Beckert and Mark Lutter), "The Constitution of Markets and Collective Institutional Entrepreneurship" (Guido Möllering), "Industrial Relocation and the Problem of Disembedding" (Geny Piotti) and "Construction and Order of Markets" (Patrik Aspers).

Some Further Activities

The institute publishes MPIfG Discussion Papers, which are accessible via the internet. Papers are available as downloads and in print (http://www.mpi-fg-koeln.mpg.de/pu/dp03-05_en.html). Recent papers from the research area "Sociology of Markets" examine such topics as trust in markets, the moral embeddedness of markets and the global garment industry.

In October 2005 the MPIfG founded a new Graduate School which will award three-year research grants to four doctoral students every year. Research focuses on the relations between modern economies and their social and political foundations, which have a long tradition as the object of inquiry in sociology and political science. The Graduate School will attempt to connect and develop the disciplines and, in particular, the approaches of new economic sociology as well as comparative political economy.

Every fall, the MPIfG posts positions for post-doctoral fellows who come to the institute for one academic year. Recent PhDs and non-tenured junior faculty from all countries can apply for these positions. In addition the MPIfG offers the Scholar-in-Residence fellowship to senior scholars in the fields of economic sociology or political economy who spend three to six months at the institute.

Article by an MPIfG researcher

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