

Doctoral Seminar

Economy and Society II

Prof. Dr. Jens Beckert

Max Planck Institute for the Study of Societies

Spring 2015

Meets Tuesdays, 2:00–3:30 (Paulstraße 3)

Course Description

The seminar focuses on recent debates on the interrelations between economy and society. It builds on a second course taught in Fall on foundational controversies (*Economy & Society I*).

The first part on “action” centers on processes of agency in the economy. At the beginning stands a discussion of Max Weber’s typology of action and a text by Hans Joas and Jens Beckert presenting an overview of sociological action theory and its relevance to understanding the economy. This is followed by critiques of the rational actor model and sociological conceptualizations of action. Creativity, habits, norms, reciprocity, and ongoing contacts are all elements of a theory of economic action which sees the economy as being embedded in its social environment.

The second part of the seminar is more macro-oriented, discussing markets and the constitution of markets through networks, institutions, and theories. Each of the sessions presents a different approach in the sociology of markets. The last session serves as a midterm session for reflection and integration.

The third and final part of the seminar focuses on capitalism. The first session introduces the debate on different types of production and capitalist regimes, which is one of the most influential paradigms during the last 20 years in political economy. From this we will turn to the analysis of credit, consumption, social inequality, and crises in recent socio-economic scholarship.

The goal of the seminar is to familiarize students with several major theories, approaches and topics that contribute to our understanding of the interrelations between the economy and society. The readings range from modern classics to contemporary sources. The seminar proceeds from the assumption that economic action and economic structures are socially, politically and culturally constituted. Understanding the processes leading to the actual forms of organization of the economy and to the specific forms of agency within the economy is the primary goal of economic sociology.

Participation in the seminar

All participants will be expected to *read all of the required texts* on the syllabus; *take an active part in class discussions*; and *prepare response memos* on the required readings for three of the weeks (2000 words each). The memos are intended to prepare the ground for discussions by asking participants to set out their responses to the readings in written form. Memos should not just summarize the readings, but rather take up specific arguments, compare the positions

of different authors, raise questions of evidence, usefulness, or plausibility or draw attention to particular strengths and weaknesses in the arguments and descriptions. We will share these memos through email. In order for everyone to have time to read over the comments of others, these will be due by 4 pm on the day before the class meets.

For registration and further organizational matters please contact the teaching assistant, Timur Ergen (te@mpifg.de).

Recommended readings

Recommended books, chapters, and collections introducing the debates relevant to the seminar include,

Jens Beckert, 2002 [1997]: *Beyond the Market: The Social Foundations of Economic Efficiency*, Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Frank Dobbin, 2004: Introduction: The Sociology of the Economy. In: Frank Dobbin (ed.), *The New Economic Sociology. A Reader*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1–26.

Mark Granovetter and Richard Swedberg (eds.), 2011: *The Sociology of Economic Life*. 3rd Edition, Boulder et al.: Westview Press.

Hans Joas and Wolfgang Knöbl, 2009: *Social Theory. Twenty Introductory Lectures*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Richard Swedberg, 1990: *Economics and Sociology: Redefining Their Boundaries. Conversations with Economists and Sociologists*, Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Richard Swedberg, 2003: *Principles of Economic Sociology*, Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Course Schedule

April 7, 2015

Introduction

Part 1: Economic Action

April 15, 2015 (Wednesday!)

Models of Action

Hans Joas and Jens Beckert, 2001: Action Theory. In: Jonathan H. Turner (ed.), *Handbook of Social Theory*, New York: Springer, 269–285.

Max Weber, 1978 [1921]: *Economy and Society: An Outline of Interpretive Sociology*, Berkeley: University of California Press. pp. 3–31.

April 21, 2015

Values and Norms in Economic Action

Marion Fourcade, 2011 Cents and Sensibility: Economic Values and the Nature of ‘Nature’ in France and America. *American Journal of Sociology* 116, 1721–1777.

April 28, 2015

Reciprocity in Economic Exchange

Marcel Mauss, 2002 [1950]: *The Gift: The Form and Reason for Exchange in Archaic Societies*, London: Routledge. pp. 1–23 and 83–107.

May 5, 2015

The Embeddedness of Economic Action

Mark Granovetter, 1985: Economic Action and Social Structure: The Problem of Embeddedness. In: *American Journal of Sociology* 91, 481–510.

Part 2: Markets

May 12, 2015

Markets as Networks

Brian Uzzi, 1997: Social Structure and Competition in Interfirm Networks: The Paradox of Embeddedness. In: *Administrative Science Quarterly* 42, 35–67.

Jens Beckert, 2005: Soziologische Netzwerkanalyse. In: Kaesler, Dirk (ed.), *Aktuelle Theorien der Soziologie*, München: Beck, 286–312.

May 19, 2015

Markets as Institutions

Neil Fligstein, 2001: *The Architecture of Markets: An Economic Sociology of Twentieth-First-Century Capitalist Societies*, Princeton: Princeton University Press. pp. 3–44.

May 26, 2015

The Construction of Markets through Theories

Frank Dobbin and Jiwook Jung, 2010: The Misapplication of Mr. Michael Jensen: How Agency Theory Brought Down the Economy and Why it Might Again. In: *Markets on Trial: The Economic Sociology of the U.S. Financial Crisis. Research in the Sociology of Organizations* 30b, 29–64.

June 2, 2015

The Sociology of Markets

Jens Beckert, 2009: The Social Order of Markets. In: *Theory and Society* 38, 245–269.

Marion Fourcade and Kieran Healy, 2007: Moral Views of Market Society. In: *Annual Review of Sociology* 33, 285–311.

Part 3: Capitalism

June 9, 2015

Varieties of Capitalist Production

Peter Hall and David Soskice, 2001: An Introduction to Varieties of Capitalism. In: Ibid. (eds.), *Varieties of Capitalism: The Institutional Foundations of Comparative Advantage*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1–45.

June 16, 2015

Credit and Money

Bruce G. Carruthers and Laura Arriovich, 2010: *Money and Credit. A Sociological Approach*, Cambridge & Malden: Polity Press. pp. 6–11, 23–49.

André Orléan, 2014: *The Empire of Value. A New Foundation for Economics*, Cambridge, MA: MIT Press. Chapter 4.

June 23, 2015

Consumption

Gunnar Trumbull, 2012: Credit Access and Social Welfare: The Rise of Consumer Lending in the United States and France. In: *Politics and Society* 40, 9–34.

Colin Campbell, 1987: *The Romantic Ethic and the Spirit of Modern Consumerism*, Oxford: Basil Blackwell. pp. 1–35.

June 30, 2015

Social Inequality

Thomas Piketty, 2014: *Capital in the Twenty-First Century*, Cambridge, MA & London: Harvard University Press. Chapter 10.

Shamus Khan, 2011: *Privilege. The Making of an Adolescent Elite at St. Paul's School*, Princeton & Oxford: Princeton University Press. Introduction, Chapter 1, Conclusion.

July 7, 2015

Crises in Capitalism

Wolfgang Streeck, 2011: The Crises of Democratic Capitalism. In: *New Left Review* 71, 5–29.

Hyman Minsky, 1982: The Financial-Instability Hypothesis: Capitalist Processes and the Behavior of the Economy. In: Charles Kindleberger/Jean-Pierre Laffargue (eds.), *Financial Crises. Theory, History, and Policy*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 13–39.

July 14, 2015

The Sociology of Capitalist Dynamics

Christoph Deutschmann, 2011: Capitalist Dynamics: A Sociological Analysis. Paper presented to the Annual Conference of the “Ausschuss für Evolutorische Ökonomik im Verein für Sozialpolitik”, Linz/Austria, July 2010, revised version.