Research Begins at Max Planck Sciences Po Center in Paris

Culminating many years of collaboration in research and teaching between the Max Planck Institute for the Study of Societies (MPIfG) in Cologne and Sciences Po in Paris, the Max Planck Sciences Po Center on Coping with Instability in Market Societies (MaxPo) will open its doors at Sciences Po on October 1, 2012. In jointly founding the Center, the MPIfG and Sciences Po, a university specializing in the humanities and social sciences, are taking a major step toward working together more closely.

At MaxPo, they will investigate the impact of increasing liberalization, technological advances, and cultural change on industrialized Western societies. Sociologist Marion Fourcade and political scientist Cornelia Woll are the heads of the center. Along with a small group of internationally recruited junior researchers, they will examine the profound transformation of the industrialized world and analyze how individuals, families, organizations, and societal subsystems are coping with increasing instability.

Funded in equal parts by the Max Planck Society and Sciences Po for the coming five years, the Center is a unique innovation in Franco-German collaboration in the social sciences and reflects the Max Planck Society’s aim to put its operations on an increasingly international footing. A ceremony marking the official opening of the Center at Sciences Po in Paris on November 29, 2012, will be followed by a reception at the residence of the German Ambassador in Paris.

More: www.maxpo.eu
Max Planck Sciences Po Center on Coping with Instability in Market Societies

Numerous social-scientific studies have shown that since the late 1970s, the societal functions of families, collective actors, and political and administrative systems have increasingly shifted to individuals, loosely connected groups and markets. The historical causes and progression of this process have been extensively researched and described using such catchphrases as economization, flexibilization, deregulation and liberalization. Up to now, however, very little analysis has focused on the ways in which individuals, governments and Western societies are attempting to cope with the increasing insecurity and maintain order in the private as well as the public spheres. The Max Planck Sciences Po Center on Coping with Instability in Market Societies (MaxPo) in Paris aims to fill this research gap.

MaxPo is the first cooperative project of this kind to be conducted between the Max Planck Institute for the Study of Societies (MPIfG) in Cologne and Sciences Po University (Paris Institute of Political Studies), which specializes in social sciences. Sociologist Marion Fourcade and political scientist Cornelia Woll head the two research groups at the Center, which is financed by the Max Planck Society and Sciences Po and is currently designed as a five-year program. A four-member Joint Council made up of representatives from the MPIfG and Sciences Po advises the two group directors.

MaxPo’s research agenda concentrates on strategies and approaches to solutions when dealing with an uncertain environment. How do societies organize themselves when their social fabric is becoming insecure and unstable due to increasing liberalization, technical advancements and cultural shifts? What impact do these developments have on individuals, families, organizations and societal subsystems? How are politicians and regimes responding to these changes? How are organizations defending their interests? How are different segments of the population coping with the change, and how do individuals demand their rights? In order to answer these questions, MaxPo examines the relationships between economic, cultural and social forces in international comparison. For the Center’s scholars, the focus of their research interest is the analysis of social changes. Their research aims at comparisons between Germany and France as well as with the USA and the United Kingdom.
The MPIfG and Sciences Po see MaxPo as an Excellence Initiative for German-French academic cooperation. With a view to international research competition, both institutions expect to create synergies which will lead to independent scientific impulses. In addition, by bundling their research approaches, they aim to further strengthen the outstanding reputation of social scientific research in Continental Europe, thereby imparting it with even greater international attention and prestige.

The Organizational Structure of MaxPo

MaxPo’s directors are sociologist Marion Fourcade and political scientist Cornelia Woll. The directors also head the Center’s two research groups. Each group consists of up to three doctoral students. In addition, the Center will host a number of visiting researchers each year.

A four-member Joint Council made up of representatives from the MPIfG and Sciences Po advises the directors. The members of the Joint Council are:

- Jens Beckert, Director at the MPIfG, Cologne
- Patrick Le Galès, Director of Research at the Centre d’études européennes, Sciences Po Paris
- Christine Musselin, Director of Research at the Centre de sociologie des organisations, Sciences Po Paris
- Wolfgang Streeck, Director at the MPIfG, Cologne

Doctoral Program and Guest Program

Students at the International Max Planck Research School on the Social and Political Constitution of the Economy and the graduate program of the École doctorale de Sciences Po can pursue a double doctorate (cotutelle de thèse) at MaxPo. The Doctoral Program includes research stays in Cologne and Paris.

MaxPo aims to provide a continuous exchange between international researchers, offering cooperative workshops, conferences and summer schools. In this way, interested experts can gain insight into the different areas and traditions of Continental European sociological research.
Director Profiles

Marion Fourcade has been a research group leader at MaxPo in Paris since 2012. After completing her studies in Sociology and Economics at the University of Paris, the Ecole des hautes études en sciences sociales and the Ecole normale supérieure, Paris, she received her doctorate in Sociology at Harvard University in 2000. She has been teaching at the University of California at Berkeley since 2003.

In her sociological research, Fourcade focuses on international comparative research dealing with the cultural backgrounds and institutions that shape actors' self-perceptions and their perceptions of their actions.

Cornelia Woll has also been a research group leader at MaxPo since 2012. Following her studies of Political Science and International Relations at the University of Chicago and at Sciences Po Paris, she received her bi-national doctorate at Sciences Po and the University of Cologne. She subsequently taught and conducted research at Sciences Po, where she served as leader of the “Otto Hahn” junior research group on Economic Patriotism, sponsored by the Max Planck Society.

As a political scientist, Woll focuses her research in international and comparative economic policy-making on financial regulation and trade policies as well as on interest mediation and lobbying.