

THE LECTURERS

ANDRÉ BÄCHTIGER is Professor of Political Theory in the Department of Social Sciences at the University of Stuttgart. His research focuses on the challenges of mapping and measuring deliberation and political communication as well as understanding the preconditions and outcomes of high-quality deliberation in the contexts of both representative institutions and mini-publics. His new research, “Designing Democracy on Mars and Earth” (DDME), is sponsored by an ERC Advanced Grant and focuses on how to design future democracy, taking a problem-based and citizen perspective. His work has been published by Oxford University Press and Cambridge University Press and has appeared in numerous peer-reviewed journals.

SIMONE DIETRICH is Associate Professor in Political Science and International Relations at the University of Geneva, Switzerland. She is the author of *States, Markets, and Foreign Aid* (Cambridge University Press, 2021). Her articles have appeared in leading political science and international relations journals. Her research explores how donor governments make decisions about foreign aid, how aid promotes development and democratic change in recipient countries, and how international organizations shape the creation and development of international development practices.

The *MPIfG Lectures* are open to the public. In the summer term 2023, they will take place on site. Please consult the MPIfG website www.mpifg.de for updates.

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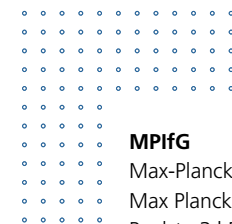
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SOPHIE MÜTZEL is Professor of Sociology, Media and Networks in the Department of Sociology at the University of Lucerne. Her research interests lie in the area of economic sociology, the sociology of culture, computational text analytic methods, the sociology of the digital, social network analysis, and sociological theory. Her recent publications include *Making Sense: Markets from Stories in New Breast Cancer Therapeutics* (Stanford University Press, 2023) as well as articles in *Socius* and *New Media & Society*. Sophie Mützel is currently Principal Investigator of the research project “Digital Payments: Making Payments Personal and Social” funded by the Swiss National Science Foundation. At the University of Lucerne she leads the MA program “Media and Networks,” is co-initiator of the Computational Social Sciences MA (LuMACCS), and is vice-dean of the University’s School of Humanities and Social Sciences.

ISABELLA WEBER is an Assistant Professor of Economics at the University of Massachusetts Amherst, an Associate in Research at the Fairbank Center, Harvard University, and currently a Berggruen Fellow at Peking University. Her first book, *How China Escaped Shock Therapy: The Market Reform Debate*, is the winner of the Joan Robinson Prize, the Keynes Prize, and the International Studies Association Best Interdisciplinary Book Award. Isabella Weber has worked on policy responses to inflation and has advised policy-makers in the United States and Germany on questions of price stabilization. For this work she has been named on the Bloomberg 50 Ones to Watch, the Capital 40 under 40, and the Focus Germany’s top 100 women lists in 2022. For her work on China’s market reforms she has won the International Convention of Asia Scholars’ Ground-Breaking Subject Matter Accolade and the Warren Samuels Prize for Interdisciplinary Research in the History of Economic Thought and Methodology. Isabella Weber holds a PhD in Economics from the New School for Social Research, New York, and a PhD in Development Studies from the University of Cambridge.

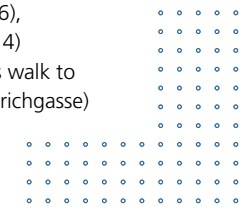
BIAO XIANG is a social anthropologist who has worked on migration and various political economy issues in China, India, and other parts of Asia. Currently a director of the Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology in Halle, he is exploring a “common concerns” approach in social research.



MPIfG

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Öffentliche Vorträge
MPIfG Lectures



Spring–Summer 2023
April 26 | May 3, 24, 31
July 5



WEDNESDAY, APRIL 26 | 17:00

The Specter of Inflation: Price Stability in Times of Transitions

ISABELLA WEBER

The dominant view of inflation is that it originates from macroeconomic imbalances. However, in times of structural shifts and large-scale economic change, sharp increases in specific important prices can have far-ranging implications for general price stability. Isabella Weber's presentation will start from *How China Escaped Shock Therapy*, her book charting China's early reform debates, when economists and policy-makers were grappling with the question of how to maintain price stability in the transition to a market economy. In the second part of her talk, she will lay out how her China research has led her to an analysis of today's inflation that considers the systemic significance of certain prices for overall economic stability. Presenting results from input-output simulations conducted for the COVID-19 inflation in the US, she will illustrate why not all prices are created equal. In the concluding part she will reflect on what this alternative view of inflation implies for monetary theory and economic stabilization.

WEDNESDAY, MAY 3 | 17:00

Good and Ideal Democracy: How to Design It
ANDRÉ BÄCHTIGER

The talk is related to the project "Designing Democracy on Mars and Earth" (DDME), which sets up a bottom-up design to obtain a deeper understanding of citizens' democratic preferences in two Western countries, Germany and the United States, and one non-Western country, India. Based on input from democratic theorists, DDME explores how citizens imagine "ideal" democracy (on Mars) and mend "real" democracy, i.e., how they would reform the political systems they live in (on Earth) when they have the chance to reflect or deliberate on the pros and cons of the various conceptions and schemes of democracy. DDME is the first large-scale project to delegate democratic designing to citizens adopting a systematic and global approach where citizens together with democratic theorists reflect on advanced theoretical inputs (e.g., problem-based thinking on democracy) and think creatively about optimal democratic designs.

WEDNESDAY, MAY 24 | 17:30

Digital Payments: New Relations in Embedded Finance

SOPHIE MÜTZEL

Sophie Mützel shows in her talk how the small act of paying digitally in physical stores shapes new and existing relations between consumers, retailers, financial and non-financial payment providers, marketing agencies, and app providers. For decades, retailers, marketing agencies, and payment providers have been trying to improve their only partial view of customers in physical stores. Mützel suggests that payment apps used at in-store checkouts are fast becoming central devices for gaining insights on offline consumer preferences and behavior similar to those available online. She argues that research on datafication processes must be expanded to focus on these new and changing relations: retailers, banks, payment providers, fintech companies, and payment app users form qualitatively and quantitatively new relations with one another, laying the groundwork for future data monetization and contributing

to embedding finance in everyday life. To further zoom in on how such relations develop, Mützel introduces in her talk an analytic model of the process of "relating," which shows how data-generating relations and relation-generating data are formed when customers pay digitally in physical stores. Recombining insights from the sociology of valuations, digital data studies, and economic sociology, the talk contributes to analyses of how the digital economy works, with its business model of advertising, consumer loyalty, and user retention, and how this model is expanding into the in-store world.

WEDNESDAY, MAY 31 | 17:00

The Privatization of Ambition in China: A History
BIAO XIANG

How has individual ambition – the desire to improve one's life chances – driven China's remarkable growth over the last forty years, and subsequently become a source of the widespread feeling of powerlessness, especially among the youth? To address this question, Xiang provides a history of ambition in China with a focus on its "privatization." Ambition as a widely approved attitude in China emerged at the end of the nineteenth century as a collective outlook, namely the national ambition for independence and development. This collective ambition resulted in a set of ideologies, for instance those of the inevitable progress of history and the glory of sacrificing short-term benefits for long-term visions. After the 1980s, the desire for collective betterment turns into individuals' pursuits for personal interests. But old ideological apparatus and institutional structure remain hegemonic. In this condition, individual ambition is construed as part of nationalist endeavor and is therefore legitimated, and unchecked by such concerns as individual responsibility. Individual ambition in practice is channeled into hierarchically organized competition that is often led by the state (e.g., in the rigidly unified education system). This explains why interpersonal competition in China became particularly fierce and all-embracing. Young people, especially in lower socioeconomic positions, are often forced into competition for material resources and for basic social recognition. Many feel burned-out but have difficulties breaking into alternative paths of life.

WEDNESDAY, JULY 5 | 17:00

States, Markets, and Foreign Aid
SIMONE DIETRICH

Why do some donor governments pursue international development through recipient governments, while others bypass such local authorities? Weaving together scholarship in political economy, public administration, and historical institutionalism, Simone Dietrich will argue in her talk that the bureaucratic institutions of donor countries shape donor-recipient interactions differently despite similar international and recipient country conditions. Donor nations employ institutional constraints that authorize, enable, and justify particular aid delivery tactics while precluding others. Offering quantitative and qualitative analyses of donor decision-making, her talk will illuminate how donors with neoliberally organized public sectors bypass recipient governments, while donors with more traditional public sector-oriented institutions cooperate and engage recipient authorities on aid delivery. She will demonstrate how internal beliefs and practices surrounding states and markets inform how donors see and set their objectives for foreign aid and international development itself. Her findings contribute to the debates on aid effectiveness and donor coordination and have implications for the study of foreign policy more broadly.