

The Evolution of Intermediary Institutions in Europe

From Corporatism to Governance

Edited by Eva Hartmann
and Poul F. Kjaer



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Reprint of the original edition 2015
Softcover reprint of the hardcover 1st edition 2015 978-1-137-48451-2

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First published 2015 by
PALGRAVE MACMILLAN

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Palgrave Macmillan in the US is a division of St Martin's Press LLC, 175 Fifth Avenue, New York, NY 10010.

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ISBN 978-1-349-57541-1 ISBN 978-1-137-48452-9 (eBook)
DOI 10.1057/9781137484529

This book is printed on paper suitable for recycling and made from fully managed and sustained forest sources. Logging, pulping and manufacturing processes are expected to conform to the environmental regulations of the country of origin.

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library.
Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Hartmann, Eva, 1968–

The evolution of intermediary institutions in Europe : from corporatism to governance / Eva Hartmann, Assistant Professor, Department of Business and Politics, Copenhagen Business School, Denmark and Poul Fritz Kjaer, Professor, Department of Business and Politic, Copenhagen Business School, Denmark.

pages cm

Includes bibliographical references and index.

1. Corporate governance—Europe. 2. Corporate state—Europe.
3. Neoliberalism—Europe. I. Kjaer, Poul F. II. Title.

HD3616.E852H37 2015

338.6094—dc23

2015002344

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Acknowledgements

The contributions in this book were developed as part of a larger scientific project on the evolution of intermediary institutions and partly draw on results presented at the conference “Institutional Transformation in European Political Economy: Corporatism, Neo-corporatism and Governance Reconsidered”, which took place at the Department of Business and Politics of the Copenhagen Business School on 30 and 31 January 2014. The conference and the subsequent book project were generously funded by the European Research Council, within the framework of the research project “Institutional Transformation in European Political Economy – A Socio-legal Approach” (ITEPE-312331 – www.itepe.eu).

Invaluable support was provided by Chris Engert, who carried out the linguistic editing of the manuscript.

*Eva Hartmann and Poul F. Kjaer
Copenhagen, November 2014*

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List of Abbreviations

BVG	<i>Bundesverfassungsgericht</i>
CJEU	Court of Justice of the European Union
DER	<i>Deutscher Ethikrat</i> /German Ethics Council
DFG	<i>Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft</i> /German Research Foundation
DG	Directorate General
DIN	<i>Deutsches Institut für Normung</i> /The German Institute for Standardisation
EC	European Community
ECHP	European Community Household Panel
ECJ	European Court of Justice
ECN	European Competition Network
EDL	Everyday Life
EEC	European Economic Community
EKD	<i>Evangelische Kirche in Deutschland</i> /Evangelical Church in Germany
EP	European Parliament
EPP	European People's Party
ERT	European Round Table of Industrialists
ESF	European Social Fund
ETUC	European Trade Union Confederation
EU LFS	European Union Labour Force Survey
EU-SILC	European Union Statistics on Income and Living Conditions
IACtHR	Inter-American Court of Human Rights
ICT	Information and Communications Technology
ILO	International Labour Organization
IO	International Organisation
ISO	International Organization for Standardization
ITEPE	Institutional Transformation in European Political Economy
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NER	<i>Nationaler Ethikrat</i> /National Ethics Council
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
OMC	Open Method of Co-ordination
PGD	Pre-implantation Genetic Diagnosis
STS	Science and Technology Studies

TFEU	Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union
TNC	Transnational Corporations
UNICE	Union of Industrial and Employers' Confederations of Europe
VDI	<i>Verein Deutscher Ingenieur</i> /Association of German Engineers
WTO	World Trade Organization

Introduction

Poul F. Kjaer

European society is undergoing deep-seated changes. The neo-corporatist institutional set-ups, which structured the relationship between the economy and politics, as well as areas such as education, health and social security within (Western) European welfare state frameworks in the immediate post-war era, have been challenged in numerous ways over the last decades. A reconfiguration of the set-up which frames substantial parts of society has taken place through increased liberalisation, privatisation and deregulatory and reregulatory measures.

Within the areas of history, law, political science and sociology, considerable efforts have been made to explain and to assess the consequences of this development. The answers have been manifold. Reference has been made to issues such as increased globalisation and the deepening of the European integration process, technological developments, the increased importance of neo-liberal ideological formations and the reconfiguration of the state, and especially the reconfiguration of the public/private relations which have followed from it. But just as no consensus has emerged concerning the underlying central driving forces and the desirability of this development, its long-term consequences remain, to a large extent, unknown at this stage. It is, for example, too early to assess to what extent the financial crisis which occurred in 2007 will lead to a profound change in the direction in which European society is developing. While the possibility of a profound change of direction certainly exists, the crisis might also turn out to be nothing but a small bump on the road or even a phenomenon which reinforces the pre-crisis globalisation and liberalisation path.

This book does not attempt to provide a comprehensive answer to the question of where European society is heading. It does, however,

provide a novel and quite unique long-term perspective on the development path of an important dimension of European society, in so far as it explores the consecutive shifts between different types of intermediary institutions in the European context: Corporatist, Neo-corporatist and Governance institutions. Considerable variations in time and space can be observed, but, in general terms, corporatist institutions were an important social phenomenon from the mid-nineteenth century until the mid-twentieth century; neo-corporatist institutions emerged in the immediate post-Second World War era, and the governance phenomenon has been vibrant since the 1980s.

The core idea guiding the book is that intermediary institutions possess a strategic location in society, and that the study of such institutions thus has an intrinsic heuristic value because it provides an optimal access point for understanding the more general transformations which society is going through. The reason for this is that intermediary institutions can be understood as being located “in-between” societal spheres. Not just in-between the economy and politics – although these two dimensions of society are at the forefront – but also between areas such as religion, science and education. Thus, in a very overall manner, one might define intermediary institutions as interfaces located in-between two or more societal spheres, which are simultaneously oriented towards internally stabilising the spheres in question, and increasing the external compatibility of these societal spheres through the construction and enforcement of overarching frameworks, leading to the formation of (legal) norms and expectations characterised by a high degree of stability over time, as well as concordant social roles and categories within a limited spatial context.

The above definition admits a whole range of issues, not all of which can be thoroughly addressed in this volume. The book should accordingly be seen as initiating a new research agenda and providing an overall conceptual framework for the study of intermediary institutions, one which is garnished by selective explorations of a number of central dimensions, while also paving the way for additional studies in the future. Accordingly, the book develops central aspects of a new conceptual framework for understanding the function and position of intermediary institutions in society, as well as a vocabulary aimed at explaining the causes and consequences of the shifts between different types of intermediary institutions in relation to politics, the economy and other segments of society. This is done through the systematic linking of four rather distinct, yet also overlapping, bodies of literature: macro-sociology and social theory, European political economy, European