Ariane Leendertz, The Power of Competition. The Max Planck Society and the Economization of Research since the 1990s

Since the mid-1990s the Max Planck Society (in German: Max-Planck-Gesellschaft, abbreviated MPG) dedicated itself to the continuous optimization of its international competitiveness the same as a global concern. Like the business sector, research organisations had to constantly improve their strategic positioning in order not to fall behind in the global race. Otherwise, MPG Presidents argued, social welfare in Germany was under threat. Ariane Leendertz shows, how, at the turn of the millennium, an economization of the political language of the MPG as well as the social legitimation of research funding occurred. She also discusses, which institutional and content-related consequences can be connected with this economization.

José Manuel Sáenz Rotko, Pius XI. in the Spanish Arena. The Vatican, National Socialist Germany and the Struggle for the Socio-Political Orientation of the Franco-Regime, 1936 to 1938

The author illuminates the position of the Holy See in the Spanish Civil War. He analyses, why Pope Pius XI took sides in favour of the insurrectionists under General Franco, long before the outcome of the conflict was foreseeable. Sources from Vatican archives reveal new perspectives on decisions and strategies of the Holy See. They indicate, that the Pope reached out to Franco mostly for one reason: He wanted to confront the danger of a National Socialist infiltration of the Franco state in statu nascendi. After the Kirchenkampf (church struggle) in the German Reich had escalated in 1937, the Holy See carried out a radical shift in strategy in its policy on Spain: Its international recognition of Franco was followed by intensive diplomatic engagement with the goal of at least marginalising, if not breaking German influence. The Vatican won its ideological struggle against Hitler: Franco based his regime on the foundation of a traditionalist-reactionary Weltanschauung; the Catholic Church became one of its cornerstones.

Martin Tschiggerl / Thomas Walach, The Invented “Rubble Woman”. Dealing with the Nazi Era in Austria

In 2018 then Austrian Vice-Chancellor Heinz-Christian Strache of the Freedom Party of Austria solemnly inaugurated a monument for Austria’s Trümmerfrauen (rubble women) in Vienna. This triggered a broad public debate about their importance and significance. The present contribution highlights the facts behind this strongly emotionalised discussion on the basis of hitherto hardly considered sources. Two conclusions provide the basis of this discussion: According to the available sources, men were overrepresented in the removal of rubble. For the most part, these rubble workers (both male and female) were former members of the Nazi movement, who were on work duty according to a constitutional law. At the centre of this contribution thus stands the question, how this legally prescribed “emergency work” was able to develop into a specifically Austrian idea of the Trümmerfrauen.
The compensation of hundreds of thousands of survivors of the Holocaust by the Federal Republic of Germany was an unprecedented, complex and controversial legal process. In the early 1950s, the question of who should be held responsible for the persecution of the Jews in territory under Romanian control during the war developed into a major area of dispute between survivors, their representatives, and West German compensation authorities. In this context, historical experts such as historians from the Institute for Contemporary History, first and foremost Martin Broszat, came to play an instrumental role. While focusing on the case of Romania, Gaëlle Fisher’s article explores a wider set of tensions between history writing and the legal practice.

Bernhard Rieger, “Florida-Rolf” Sends Greetings. Social Demons, Social Assistance Paid Abroad and the Debate about the Welfare State during the Schröder Era
During the debate on Agenda 2010 the Bild newspaper turned social assistance recipient and Florida resident Rolf J. into a symbol of welfare state dysfunction in order to emphasise calls for reforms. After a historical reconstruction of social assistance paid abroad as a special German welfare state practice, Bernhard Rieger analyses the campaign initiated by Bild against “Florida-Rolf” and other “social spongers”. The focus on unemployed men who often lived in unconventional family constellations reinforced the impression that existing welfare legislation eroded conventional norms of masculinity, intensified an ominous crisis of working society and required fundamental reforms in order to strengthen work ethics.

Nikolai Wehrs, “Abolish Economists!” The Britcom “Yes Minister” and the Transformation of British Conservatism during the Thatcher Era
What role did formats of popular culture play in the renaissance of political conservatism after 1968? The Britcom “Yes Minister” (1980–1988) is generally viewed as a left-wing satire of the elitism of the British Civil Service. Nikolai Wehrs however shows, how the authors of the TV series purposely merged the left-wing anti-establishment narrative with a new middle class populism and thereby created a political/cultural space of possibility for the conservative ideology of Thatcherism. His thesis simultaneously is that “Yes Minister” allows for the investigation of central transformation processes of British conservatism under the aegis of Margaret Thatcher during the 1980s.