

Marketisation and Public Administration. On the Particular Role of Public Authorities in the Production of Political Ideas by the Example of Home Ownership Promotion in Germany. Dissertation, submitted by Heide Haas, eDiss, Göttingen State and University Library (SUB) 2019.

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Abstract

Due to far-reaching consequences of the US subprime crisis and rising housing prices in many countries, social sciences have rediscovered housing policy as a research topic. Numerous studies show trends in marketisation and financialisation: a withdrawal of the state from housing provision is accompanied by an increasing promotion of home ownership worldwide. However, these global trends do not lead to a uniformity of housing markets. Germany is still the only country in the European Union where more people live for rent than in their own home. This dissertation describes in detail peculiarities of the marketisation and financialisation of home ownership promotion in Germany as small-scale institutional change since the end of the Second World War until 2008. Based on an analysis of selected parliamentary debates, the study shows how several reforms have helped to gradually change home ownership promotion from a family and socio-political measure within social housing to a part of state-subsidized private retirement provision. Based on a long-term perspective, it becomes clear that changing ideas are decisive for the change in home ownership promotion in Germany: The transformation of socio-political objectives of home

ownership promotion into economic justification enabled further marketisation and financialisation in housing politics.

The author identifies actors and mechanisms of knowledge production as key factors for this transformation: knowledge regime actors concretise abstract worldviews into political objectives and instruments. They provide problem definitions as well as analytical tools for political actors. Two conditions were decisive for increasing the significance of the economic models of justification. First, a depoliticisation of socio-political debates based on economic analyses was favoured by the fact that housing politics became less important for political parties over a long period. Second, the increased influence of economic interpretations is not due to an initiative of economists, but to the inclusion of economics expertise by public administration. With respect to knowledge production, public authorities take on a dual function: on the one hand, official statistics, with an increasing amount of data, provide a necessary basis for the economic analysis of home equity promotion. On the other hand, ministerial bureaucracy provides economic experts access to the field-specific knowledge machinery with commissioned research.

Public administration is producer and gatekeeper of knowledge production at the same time. Marketisation and financialisation can therefore be seen as unintended consequences of administrative action in knowledge production: the increasing economic consideration of home ownership in the Federal Republic of Germany would be inconceivable without the objective of ministerial administration to rest housing politics on accurate statistical reporting and scientific expertise. Marketisation and financialisation are neither an expression of an international, neo-liberal trend nor anonymous globalization processes. Instead, ideas as a condition of institutional change depend on the actors involved in their production and the contextual conditions of knowledge production.