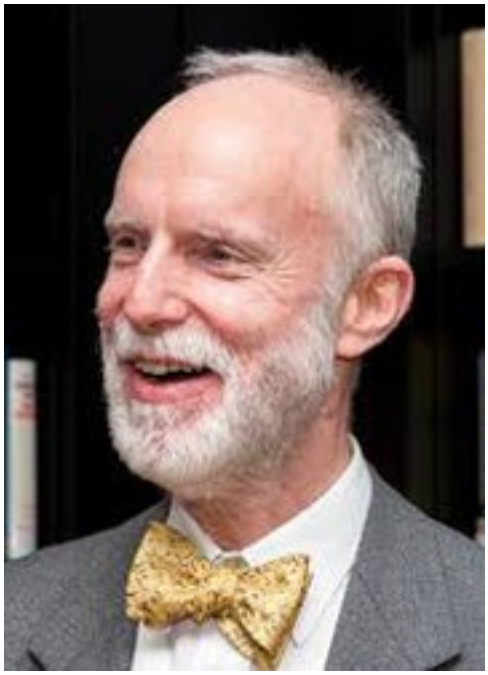
Prof. Christoph Engel
Director, Max Planck Institute for Research on Collective Goods



Most important awards, prizes and academies

Christoph Engel graduated in law in 1981 from University of Tübingen. He received his Dr.jur. from University of Tübingen in 1988, and passed habilitation in law in 1992 at University of Hamburg. Between 1992 and 1997 he held a chair for media and communications law at Osnabrück University. Since 1997 he has been a Scientific Member of the Max Planck Society. He founded the Max Planck Institute for Research on Collective Goods in Bonn. Most of his work is empirical, with a focus on the behavioral foundations of law, which he tends to interpret as a tool for governing society. Academies: 1997 Member of the Scientific Advisory Board of the German Minister of Economics; 2015 Member of the Board of the Society of Empirical Legal Studies. Honors: 2002 Academia Europaea; 2017 Dr. h.c. Hebrew University Jerusalem.

Summary of scientific research

In my work, I interpret the law as a social science. I am interested in two big questions: why is there a need for legal intervention? If there is, why can one expect the law to matter, and in which ways? Most of my work is empirical, and often experimental. This method matches my conviction: whatever the law achieves requires that it affects the behavior of its subjects: by facilitating their

autonomous coordination, or by preventing them from inflicting harm on third parties. Experiments make it possible to cleanly separate (legal) cause and (societal) effect. I am also very interested in legal decision-making. I start from the observation that almost all legal problems are ill-defined: one cannot derive a normative standard from first principles, and one knows that one does not know all the potentially relevant facts. How come legal decisions nonetheless appear largely sensible and responsible? In which ways does this surprising capacity of trained lawyers rest on (which elements of) the institutional framework? Much of my work is interdisciplinary, often in collaboration with behavioral economists, psychologists and recently also computer scientists.

Main publications

In the last decade, I have almost exclusively published in peer reviewed journals in law, economics and psychology. Examples include Bargaining in the Absence of Property Rights. An Experiment, in: *Journal of Law and Economics* 59 (2016) 477-495; You Are In Charge. Experimentally Testing the Motivating Power of Holding a Judicial Office, in: *Journal of Legal Studies* 46 (2017) 1-50; Diffusion of Legal Innovations. The Case of Israeli Class Actions, in: *Journal of Empirical Legal Studies* 15 (2018) 708-731; If the Worst Comes to the Worst. Dictator Giving When Recipients' Endowments are Risky, in: *European Economic Review* 105 (2018) 51-70; Non-Compete Clauses, Employee Effort and Spin-off Entrepreneurship: A Laboratory Experiment, in: *Research Policy* 45 (2016) 2113-2124; Dictator Games. A Meta-Study, in: *Experimental Economics* 14 (2011) 583-610; Homo Ignorans. Deliberately Choosing Not to Know, in: *Perspectives on Psychological Science* 11 (2016) 359-372; Role Induced Bias in Court. An Experimental Analysis, in: *Journal of Behavioral Decision-Making* 26 (2013) 272–284; How to Deal with Inconsistent Choices on Multiple Price Lists, in: *Journal of Economic Behavior & Organization* 160 (2019) 138-157.

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