

Einladung zum FORBA-Gespräch zur Arbeitsforschung 7/2012:

Austerity policy and public sector employment

Mittwoch, 21. November 2012, 17:00 - 19:00 Uhr
FORBA, Aspernbrückengasse 4/5, 1020 Wien (Nähe Urania)

Das FORBA-Gespräch zur Arbeitsforschung findet diesmal in englischer Sprache statt (Diskussionsmöglichkeit auf Deutsch).

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The domination of (neo)liberal economic approaches during the last three decades not only has led to an uncontrolled growth of (financial) transnational markets. This development has also had an important impact on the character of the state and the public sector in general. This talk is dedicated to the links between liberalisation, globalisation and changes in employment and industrial relations in the public sector. The topic will be discussed from a transnational perspective.

Programme

John Peters, Laurentian University Sudbury (Canada):

Public Sector Restructuring, Economic Globalization and the Financial Crisis in North America and Western Europe, 1980-2010

Jörg Flecker, FORBA:

Liberalisation and Privatisation of Public Services in Europe – Impacts for employment and working conditions

Abstracts

John Peters: Public Sector Restructuring, Economic Globalization and the Financial Crisis in North America and Western Europe, 1980-2010

This talk discusses the impacts of fiscal austerity and public sector reform on public sector labour movements. The argument is made that recent comparative literatures that have looked to 'Bring the State Back In' have yet to adequately consider governments themselves, and their budgeting, operation, collective bargaining structures, and their impacts on organized labour. Drawing on data for 13 North American and West European countries, the argument is made that financial globalization and rising debt have led to states widely introducing fiscal austerity measures and reforms to public sector industrial relations. For organized labour, this has led to job loss, labour market segmentation, and declining public sector labour power.

Jörg Flecker: Liberalisation and Privatisation of Public Services in Europe – Impacts for employment and working conditions

In his comment on John Peters' paper Jörg Flecker will focus on the consequences the European liberalisation policies of public services has had in particular on employment, industrial relations and employment conditions. The findings of the European research project PIQUE, which was coordinated by FORBA, showed that employers reacted to the new market

pressures and to the new ownership structures mainly by cutting costs with a focus on labour costs. Only in few countries the labour-relations regimes in public services managed to keep wages out of competition. In all the others liberalisation and privatisation led to job cuts, lower wages and partly even to precarious employment.

The speakers

Dr. John Peters is an assistant professor of political science and labour studies at Laurentian University, Sudbury, Ontario, Canada. He specializes in the political economy of labour and comparative industrial relations. He is most recently the editor of *Boom, Bust and Crisis: Labour, Corporate Power, and Politics in Canada* (2012). He is currently completing a study on the impacts of globalization, neoliberalism, and labour market deregulation on North America and Western Europe. Recent publications on this topic include: "Neoliberal Convergence in North America and Western Europe: Fiscal Austerity, Privatization, and Public Sector Reform," *Review of International Political Economy* Vol. 18 (June 2011); "The Rise of Finance and the Decline of Organized Labour in the Advanced Capitalist Countries," *New Political Economy* Vol. 16, no. 1 (2011), pp. 73-99.

Univ.-Doz. Dr. Jörg Flecker is scientific director of Forschungs- und Beratungsstelle Arbeitswelt (FORBA) and external professor for economic sociology at the University of Vienna. He has directed and coordinated numerous national and European research projects including 'Privatisation of Public Services and the Impact on Quality, Employment and Productivity' (PIQUE). Recent publications include: '*Privatization of Public Services*', *Routledge, New York 2012* (edited with Christoph Hermann), '*The liberalization of public services: Company reactions and consequences for employment and working conditions*', in: *Economic and Industrial Democracy*, Vol. 32, No. 3 (with Christoph Hermann) and '*Die "große Transformation" öffentlicher Dienstleistungen. Materielle und symbolische Folgen für Arbeit und Beschäftigung*', in: *Mittelweg* 36, 5/2012 (with Christoph Hermann).

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