

History of Labor Intermediation.

Institutions and Individual Ways of Finding Employment (19th and Early 20th Centuries)

Questions of labor market and labor intermediation have been a political concern in most European countries as well as the USA and Canada since the late 19th century. In contemporary debates, public labor exchanges were depicted as a tool to cope with the confusing complexity of labor markets and to match the supply and demand of labor more effectively.

Up to now, only a few studies have asked how public labor exchange contributed to the emergence and differentiation of nationalized labor markets. However, public labor exchange did not just coordinate or regulate a given labor market but also contributed to the historical creation of labor and the segregation of labor markets.

By defining regular employment, it helped to impose a particular distinction between formal and informal (or casual) work, between an officially "real" economy and a shadow economy. It established formal criteria of classifying occupational skills and employability. Finally, it aimed at distinguishing those willing and able to work from those deemed "work-shy".

Contemporary and recent research has mostly focused on the political aims and formal regulations of labor intermediation. By contrast, we know little about how labor exchanges functioned practically and what it meant to be subjected to those practices. Moreover, it seems necessary to reflect on the impact of public labor exchange on job search and to discuss it in the context of the variety of all forms of intermediation. Public labor offices have always been only one of many possible ways of finding employment or employees, but they have not necessarily been the most commonly used one. According to contemporary and recent estimates, placement by commercial mediation, charitable organizations, trade unions or associations was quite usual as well. Moreover, informal practices of finding employment by help of kin or other social networks, newspaper ads or direct inquiries have been important practices of job search until today.

The workshop will compare practices of labor intermediation and ways of finding employment in the 19th and 20th centuries across a variety of countries.

Concept & Organization



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November 27–28, 2009

University of Vienna
Marietta-Blau-Saal,
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Dr.-Karl-Lueger-Ring 1
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University of Vienna
Friday November 27, 2009
Saturday November 28, 2009

FRIDAY NOVEMBER 27, 2009

Chair: *Thomas Buchner & Sigrid Wadauer*

9.00–9.30 **Sigrid Wadauer** (University of Vienna)

Thomas Buchner (University of Linz):
Welcome and Introduction

9.30–10.30 **Ad Knotter** (Sociaal Historisch Centrum voor
Limburg/Maastricht University):

Mediation, Allocation, Control: The Changing
Faces of Labor Exchanges in Belgium and The
Netherlands (Late 19th / Early 20th Centuries)

10.30–10.50 *Coffee break*

10.50–11.50 **Malcolm Mansfield** (Université de Paris 3):

The Very Idea of Labor Intermediation: The
Bourses du Travail in Turn of the Century France

11.50–12.50 **Irina Vana** (University of Vienna):

Public Labor Offices and the Hierarchies
Between Different Forms of Unemployment
and Employment (1918–1938)

12.50–14.20 *Lunch break*

Chair: *Jessica Richter*

14.20–15.20 **Verena Pawlowsky** (University of Vienna)

Harald Wendelin (University of Vienna):
The Austrian Employment Agency for Dis-
abled Veterans During the First World War

15.20–16.20 **David Meskill** (Dowling College):

Between Labor Market Constituencies:
The Struggles to Establish Vocational
Counseling in Weimar Germany

16.20–16.40 *Coffee break*

16.40–17.40 **Tamara Stazic-Wendt** (University of Trier):

Labor Intermediation and Welfare Practices
in Rural Areas (The Southern Rhine Province,
1918–1935)

SATURDAY NOVEMBER 28, 2009

Chair: *Irina Vana*

9.00–10.00 **Jan Lucassen** (Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam/

International Institute of Social Science):
Labor Mediation Among Seasonal
Workers, in Particular the Lippe Brick
Makers c. 1650–1900

10.00–11.00 **Amit Kumar Mishra**

(University of Hyderabad, India):
Sardars, Kanganies and Maistries:
Intermediaries in Indian Labor Diaspora

11.00–11.20 *Coffee break*

11.20–12.20 **M. Erdem Kabadayı**

(Istanbul Bilgi University):
Petitioning as a Way to Find and
Regain Employment at State Industrial
Enterprises in the Ottoman Empire in
the Late 19th Century

12.20–13.50 *Lunch break*

Chair: *Alexander Mejstrik*

13.50–14.50 **Anna G. Piotrowska**

(Jagiellonian University):
Individual Strategies of Labor
Intermediation Among Early 20th
Century American and European
Composers

14.50–15.10 *Coffee break*

15.10–16.10 **Jessica Richter** (University of Vienna):

Between Service, Labor and
Subsistence: Self-Sustainment and
Perceptions of Changes of Employment
(Austria, 1918–1938)

16.10–16.40 **Conclusion**