

International Workshop

Labour Market Liberalisation after the Lehman Crisis: France, Germany and Japan in Comparative Perspective

December 14-15, 2018

German Institute for Japanese Studies (DIJ) Tokyo

Call for Papers

In the 10 years after the collapse of the investment firm Lehman Brothers, there has been a noticeable shift in discourses on structural labour market reforms. Whereas before the crash international organisations, liberal economists and many policymakers had been arguing that market-oriented reforms were necessary if painful to improve the performance of labour markets, the social costs of liberalisation seem to attract much more attention since 2008. The social and political costs of labour market inequalities are now widely acknowledged especially in countries with dual labour market structures like France, Germany and Japan.

Yet the jury is still out whether this discursive shift has prompted a similar change in policy. While policies emphasising social goals rather than economic efficiency have clearly gained in popularity (e.g. minimum wage reform in Germany and reinforced equal treatment rules for non-standard work in Japan), structural reforms echoing previous attempts at liberalisation are also still on the agenda (e.g. French reforms of labour contract law, Japanese “work-style” reforms or German temporary agency work reform).

The workshop aims to shed light on this mixed picture of continuity and change by bringing together scholarship on France, Germany and Japan from all disciplines of the social sciences. The countries share many structural problems (e.g. dual labour market structure, limited mobility between standard and non-standard jobs) but differ with regard to their regulatory approaches and political and economic institutions. The comparison therefore allows exploring the changing politics of structural reform in economically advanced democracies as well as to readdress key questions in comparative political economy research, e.g. to what extent governments, employers and trade unions are willing and able to influence processes of liberalisation and mitigate resulting labour market dualisation.

We seek in particular papers that engage with one of the following **four thematic themes**:

- **Discourses on labour market inequalities**
E.g., how have political discourses on labour market liberalisation changed since the Lehman shock?
- **Contents and direction of structural reform**
E.g., how has the substance of labour policies changed since 2008? What explains the recent popularity of minimum wage reforms and reinforced equal pay rules?
- **Policymaking processes and power**
E.g., how has the influence and role of business and organised interests changed since 2008? Which political actors profit/suffer due to controversies on non-standard work and labour market inequalities? How has the Lehman shock affected industrial relations?
- **Changing employment practices**
E.g., are reforms driven by changing employment practices or do reforms shape practices? How important are demographic change and labour shortages for changing practices?

We welcome single country studies and comparative papers from all disciplines of the social sciences

Keynote Speakers

Prof. Bruno Amable, Université de Genève, Geneva (confirmed)

Prof. Mari Miura, Sophia University, Tokyo (confirmed)

Prof. Paul Marx, University of Duisburg-Essen, Duisburg (confirmed)

Submission

We invite paper proposals from junior and senior scholars. Please send your proposal (max. 500 words) to labour-market-workshop@diptokyo.org by **July 30, 2018**.

Accepted paper givers will receive an allowance to help pay for travel and accommodation costs (maximum of one speaker per paper; app. 950 EUR for speakers from outside East Asia; 550 EUR for speakers from Japan/East Asia). We plan to publish selected papers of the workshop with a leading English-language publisher.

For inquiries, please contact Steffen Heinrich, head of the programme committee:

heinrich@diptokyo.org

About the Workshop

This is the second in a series of academic events comparing the political implications of labour market inequalities in France, Germany and Japan. The first workshop took place in Paris in 2017 (<http://ffj.ehess.fr/upload/Actualites/Events/2017/W-LabourMarketandPolitics.pdf>) and a final event will be held in Berlin in June of 2019.