

INTRODUCTION

Finding Work and Organizing Placement in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries

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How do people search for and find work? What does that involve? What organizations intervene or attempt to do so? These questions became more important once wage labour became more widespread and public policy concerned itself with job seeking. Yet despite the issue's significance, historical research on the subject remains quite patchy.

This volume assembles case studies that investigate job seeking and job placement practices. In particular, the book focuses on organizations in European countries, Australia and India in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. However, it does not only sketch out developments in a broad geographical area and extended time frame but – and this seems even more important to us – it also indicates the manifold dimensions of this research subject. Firstly, these studies explore a range of different forms of searching for work or employment, by which the various participants articulated specific interests, perspectives and agendas. Hence, there were not only people in search of work (commonly omitted in the relevant research), but also placement agents, trade unions, municipalities, administrations, state authorities, schools and so forth. Secondly, the contributors address several contexts in which more organized labour intermediation emerged as something to be regulated and/or controlled. Thirdly, the chapters collected here illustrate different approaches to this topic, ranging from a history of organizations and regulatory notions to an analysis of practices and autobiographical

accounts. Accordingly, the volume strives to represent the complexity of this subject and to open up possibilities and perspectives for further research. We do not proceed, however, from a specific definition of labour intermediation. Definitions tend to exclude one or other variation of the phenomenon in question, drawing on ‘logical logic’ in lieu of ‘practical logic’.¹ This is true of any attempt to define something *per se*. David H. Autor, for instance, characterizes labour intermediation as ‘entities or institutions that interpose themselves between workers and firms to facilitate, inform, or regulate how workers are matched to firms, how work is accomplished, and how conflicts are resolved’.² Such a definition is quite broad but at the same time (too) circumscribed. In our view, it would be an impediment to limit research on job seeking-related entities or organizations to a particular form of mediation or specialized placement services. This book instead takes an exploratory approach, uncovering the manifold interrelations of search practices and of different attempts to arrange placement services. Moreover, we do not want to narrow the focus to particular kinds of (formal) wage labour. Rather, a principal question – at least in several of the volume’s chapters – is how different livelihoods entailed different ways of finding work, inasmuch as work came to be historically redefined by the emergence of new forms of labour intermediation. In our introduction, then, we intend to outline the overall topic, the questions at stake and the lines of inquiry pursued.³

The Variety of Practices and Institutions

How did public labour intermediation and labour market policy emerge and develop? What impact did this have on search practices and on social categories? These are clearly central questions for historical research in this field and are posed in several chapters in this volume. (The understanding of what is to be seen as a public exchange varies from nation to nation; here the term is used to designate labour exchanges run by local communities, provinces or central states, as distinguished from private exchanges run by associations or commercial agencies.)⁴ Yet in modern Europe one can find multiple employment seeking scenarios, which may (or may not) involve organizations and facilities. Despite a few isolated exceptions, public placement facilities did not exist before the last quarter of the nineteenth century.⁵ At that time, a greater variety of facilities started to offer placement services. Public exchanges developed in this context, along with (and against) other forms of placement. As a result, this volume does not seek to reconstruct the history of job seeking and

placement exclusively from the perspective of a nascent system of public labour intermediation. Instead, public placement policy is examined in relation to other commercial or non-commercial placement services as well as in the context of social reformers, unions, employers and (last but not least) job seekers using (or avoiding) the placement services offered. To begin with, we would like to provide a brief overview of the multiple options – as examined in the chapters of this volume – that were available to nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Europeans for finding work or benefiting from job placement organizations.⁶ One common practice of job seeking was to take advantage of social networks provided by family, friends or colleagues.⁷ This way of searching for a job coincided with the recruiting practices of those firms which made use of their employees' contacts to fill vacancies, or which delegated this task to foremen, labour recruiters or gang leaders.⁸ Besides those options, it was very common to ask for work at workshops, factory gates, building sites, port entrances or mines. This practice – addressed by several contributors in this book – was known in Germany and Austria as *Umschau* ('looking around'), in the Netherlands as *leuren om werk* ('hawking for work') and in Great Britain as 'calling around'.⁹ Guilds, trade unions, relief funds or associations (such as the Catholic *Kolpingverein* in Central Europe) and relief stations supported skilled workers whenever they went on the tramp in search of labour. In particular, servants and agricultural labourers could find a job or post through the 'open air markets' found in some European regions until the Second World War. Responding to newspaper ads also became a new means of searching for a job in the nineteenth century, though it was never able to replace personal ties. Among the most important organized forms of job placement until the First World War were commercial placement agencies. They clearly met needs, as in the case of servants who were generally not organized in unions or associations and were thereby not easily able to call around for posts. To the extent that data are available, one finds that such agencies were responsible for a majority of (registered) job placements in some European (and other) countries, especially in the areas of domestic service or agricultural work.¹⁰ Both the research literature and surveys of that period suggest that, apart from actual commercial offices, placement was often practised on the side by innkeepers, concierges, waiters, warehousemen, travelling salesmen and peddlers.¹¹ Placement was additionally offered by philanthropic and professional associations, some of which can be regarded as direct forerunners of state-run (particularly municipal) employment exchanges.¹² Such associations were founded as general charitable organizations for the poor, or set up to support specific groups like apprentices, homeless, prostitutes or convicts. In addition, they created not only

labour exchanges but also hostels, asylums, wayfarers' lodges and railway missions in which a range of services – including job placement – were offered. Trade unions and employers' organizations likewise founded their own exchanges as a tool for political action and for guiding (if not controlling) the allocation of labour.¹³ The importance of union-run labour exchanges varied from country to country, as delineated in Ad Knotter's chapter. In Great Britain, where unions had long been established and accepted, such institutions were particularly significant. In France, unions were allowed to have their own labour exchanges after 1884. In states such as Germany, Austria and Sweden, craft cooperatives also ran (or were obliged to run) their own job placement services prior to the First World War, albeit with varying efficiency.¹⁴ The job placement activities of schools and political parties also had some impact.¹⁵ Overall, these ways of searching for employment or placing labour did not disappear in twentieth-century Europe, even as public labour offices plainly became more significant.

The Multiple Functions of Organizations Offering Placement

A particularity of this early period's various organizations (that applies also for early public labour exchanges) is evident from many of the chapters in this volume: job placement was usually only one of many services offered. The French *bourses du travail* might serve as an example, as discussed in Malcolm Mansfield's chapter. Aside from job placement, these institutions offered travelling benefits, lodging for wayfarers and advanced training courses. They also served as trade union meeting places, where strike funds were maintained and consumer cooperatives were housed. In addition, they were called upon to distinguish the employable from the unemployable.¹⁶ Philanthropic exchanges frequently offered lodging for wayfarers, cheap meals and bathing facilities whereas organizations with confessional backgrounds usually joined job placement with proselytizing. Foremen and labour recruiters not only signed up but also supervised new workers while also providing loans and helping migrants to integrate socially. Piet Lourens and Jan Lucassen describe in their chapter the role of *Ziegelboten* (or 'brick messengers') in the job seeking of brickmakers from Germany's Lippe region in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. These *Ziegelboten* travelled from factory to factory negotiating over the number of workers hired and wages to be paid. Likewise, they eventually became responsible for the brickmakers' burial funds (*Sterbekasse*). Amit Kumar Mishra's contribution examines different kinds of recruiters and

their role in the plantation economy of Southeast Asia. He reveals an array of services provided by the *sardars*, *kanganies* and *maistries* who not only recruited and supervised labourers from India but also granted them credit. Commercial placement agencies were another form of job placement, combining costly placement activities with lodging – a practice often criticized as exploiting job seekers. Hence, these organizations and facilities exercised multiple functions. Yet they all had something in common: the offer of some kind of support (whether free or at a price) to those in need of resources, especially social and professional ones. These unspecialized activities made sense, both in reference to the old poor welfare or to a market of personal services.

State Policy: Restricting, Regulating and Producing

How did state policies of labour intermediation emerge in this context? The launching of public labour exchanges as of the late nineteenth century is related to the understanding of local or national problems in that epoch. The requirement for public labour intermediation was acknowledged with regard to various questions: to the newly ‘discovered’ unemployment (as several chapters in this book illustrate), pauperism (as Noel Whiteside points out), casual work (as described in Anthony O’Donnell’s chapter) and migration or vagrancy (addressed by Sigrid Wadauer and Malcolm Mansfield). The starting point and main target of public measures could differ from country to country. Although public policy mostly targeted casual work in Australia, it focused on persons with stable employment records in Great Britain. As Anthony O’Donnell’s chapter demonstrates, rationales and agendas were clearly capable of shifting over time. Last but not least – as highlighted in many chapters here – state intervention was seen as necessary in improving existing practices of job seeking and placement. These included calling around for work, often criticized as ineffective and humiliating, as a pathway to vagrancy.¹⁷ Apart from establishing public labour exchanges, state policy accordingly aimed to regulate, restrict and/or integrate already existing forms of labour intermediation. Since the prevalent commercial agencies were suspected of malpractice, they were the main objects of criticism – not only of governments but also of unions, charitable organizations and (in part) employers.¹⁸ Detractors at the time argued that the economic interest of commercial agencies harmed job seekers, as well as the rest of the economy.¹⁹ The agencies were thus accused of exploiting job seekers by charging high fees for their services. They were alleged to have provided false information, thereby encouraging work-shyness and frequent job changes. Finally, they were

blamed for driving young women into prostitution. As a result, in most of nineteenth-century Europe, legal regulation and restriction of commercial placement agencies – such as requiring licences – were the state's first steps towards intervening in job placement.²⁰ Just how extensive or strict this policy was, particularly before the First World War, varied from nation to nation. Other placement services that were private (as defined by the ILO)²¹ but free of charge did not appear to be as problematic. Placement services run by benevolent philanthropic associations in Germany (and to a lesser extent in Austria, the Netherlands and Belgium) might even be regarded as precursors of public employment exchanges. These came to be increasingly subsidized by municipalities. Gradually integrated into communal administrations, they were ultimately managed by those municipalities. At the same time, placement agencies were transformed from anti-poverty associations to labour exchanges for combating unemployment and organizing the local labour market. Unions were often reluctant to give up control over placement, since they feared losing their influence on wages and labour relations. When public employment exchanges were able to integrate union- or craft-run exchanges, they began to become more essential in attracting qualified workers. Similarly, other organizations (such as the police or post offices) could be authorized or ordered to conduct placement services. In some countries, free of charge labour exchanges were subsidized if they fulfilled certain requirements (as had already been the case before the First World War in Denmark, France, Switzerland and Norway²²) – a way for the state to influence policy or implement certain rules.

State Policy: Establishing Public Labour Exchanges

In the late nineteenth century, and particularly by the First World War, public placement services were instituted more broadly. They began to resemble public employment exchanges in the later sense, for they were (in one way or another) supposed to contribute to the organizing and controlling of labour markets, instead of just offering assorted help to those in need. The practical enforcement of labour intermediation by European states differed in at least two respects, depending on the practical meanings of state and job placement. Public labour placement could be initiated, established or run by municipalities (i.e. in Switzerland,²³ the Netherlands,²⁴ Belgium,²⁵ Germany until 1927 and in some cities of Austria-Hungary²⁶), by provincial authorities and/or districts (i.e. in Bohemia²⁷ and Galicia²⁸) or by national authorities. In Great Britain, one of the few examples of national placement before the First World War,²⁹ the establishment of a centralized

system of labour exchanges represented a sharp break with the country's non-interventionist tradition, as Noel Whiteside contends in the present volume. In many cases, the central state would only be involved marginally or hesitantly. But in a number of countries, the laws now stipulated that municipalities (of a certain size) had to set up employment exchanges. In much of Europe, trade unions and employer organizations became involved in administering public employment exchanges. As a result, a clear distinction could not always (if ever) be made between state-run and other placement activities. On the one hand, authorities acted by regulating, restricting and financing on the basis of certain principles, especially free placement and joint committees. They delegated intermediation to organizations and municipalities, or they integrated different forms of placement by setting up community or state-based options. On the other hand, though, public placement did not simply impose its own rules. It also adopted – and adapted – principles of already existing placement services. Apart from the different ways state policy established public labour exchanges, this volume also highlights remarkable differences in the actual practices of public job placement within and between countries. The terms used to describe these exchanges already manifest some differences: 'employment exchange', 'labour bureau', 'labour bourse', '*arbeitsbeurs*', '*bureau de placement*', '*Arbeitsamt*', '*Arbeitsbörse*' and '*Arbeitsnachweis*'. Some of these facilities only provided information about vacancies, while others engaged more actively in the process of matching men with jobs. Even when the same terms were used to describe organizations, practices within a given country were not necessarily similar. Thomas Buchner's chapter describes multiform placement techniques in early German public labour exchanges – practices representing not only the different functions of labour exchanges but also of labour markets. David Meskill highlights the considerable regional differences in the German system of vocational counselling. Anthony O'Donnell discusses the changing (and sometimes contradictory) regulatory rationales of Australian labour market policy, stressing how early public labour exchanges tended to disorganize the labour market there. Consequently, the work available – mainly temporary and casual – was divided up, placing all applicants (irrespective of their usual trade) on an equal footing.

The Principles, Rationales and Understanding of Public Labour Exchanges

What were the aims and prospects of state policies on labour exchanges? When these policies were inaugurated – as the chapters of this volume

illustrate – their objectives were defined rather broadly. Public employment exchanges were expected to organize the labour market(s) by reducing casual labour³⁰ and identifying the ‘real unemployed’ so as to separate them from those deemed unemployable³¹ or work-shy.³² The exchanges were intended as instruments that might increase national competitiveness by enabling more efficient use of human resources.³³ They were further supposed to combat poverty and thereby relieve cities of the burden of supporting the poor.³⁴ Their other perceived functions were to control migration, combat vagrancy and stabilize employment relations. Public employment exchanges promised to control labour movements while concurrently helping employers deal with labour shortages. They were additionally expected to assist in integrating former convicts or reservists, and to reduce the ‘malpractices’ that other placement services were accused of. In the context of the First World War, public employment offices were supposed to monitor the labour force, reintegrating war invalids and returnees while also helping to prevent social unrest. Although labour intermediation was chiefly a problem in larger cities, state policy did not exclusively focus on labour exchanges for urban economies.

One of the primary aims of state bureaucracies – particularly in the early period before the First World War – was to gather information about placement services in their respective countries.³⁵ Many attempted to get an overview of placement activities and the supply and demand of jobs. These surveys revealed not only how varied the organizations offering job placement were but also how unspecialized their activity was, even in the early twentieth century.

Another related concern was how to identify and count those needing more organized job placement – in other words, the unemployed. This problem went unsolved for a long time, since what being unemployed meant was not clearly defined or identifiable. In this regard, the development of mathematical statistics proved its practical and administrative value: it redefined the problem and elaborated ways of measuring unemployment as a social fact. In doing so, it made use of various materials, such as monthly reports of union-run labour exchanges (in Great Britain and Germany as well as France) and invented new statistical tools, such as rates and index numbers.³⁶ In most cases, states that established systems of unemployment insurance assigned the task of administering those benefits to public labour offices, which in turn produced information that government statisticians used to construct barometers of their national labour markets.³⁷

The Impact of State Policy

These public measures and placement services were not always welcomed or even accepted. Unions and labour movements on occasion mistrusted the state,³⁸ inasmuch as job placement and benefits were of vital importance whenever there were strikes. A commonly heard criticism was that state intervention might lead to bureaucratization, or to standardized placement without any concern for an individual's trade.³⁹ For despite the public employment services, unregulated job seeking (like tramping or calling around) and other placement facilities persisted. Among these facilities were commercial agencies, as highlighted in the contributions of Jessica Richter, Nils Edling, Antony O'Donnell and Sigrid Wadauer. And, as confirmed in Irina Vana's chapter, selective use was made of public labour intermediation, in line with individuals' particular livelihoods. Nevertheless, public labour exchanges experienced considerable growth in the first decades of the twentieth century, especially since they could be deployed to serve different interests. The crucial step needed to establish the predominance of state employment exchanges for organizing national labour markets was to connect them with unemployment insurance. Up to the 1930s, almost every European country had made provisions for unemployed workers either by establishing nationwide unemployment relief or by subsidizing the unemployment funds of associations, trade unions or municipalities (in accordance with the Ghent model).⁴⁰ Public employment exchanges varied according to the actual form these interventions took. But once unemployment insurance began to be administered, public placement achieved a hitherto unmatched effectiveness in defining unemployment to the extent that it identified and dealt with those who were (involuntarily) unemployed. Defining the unemployed by means of collective, bureaucratic administration was the only possible solution to the old problem of counting the 'real unemployed', which had haunted debates on unemployment from the outset.⁴¹ Unemployment insurance promised to separate the employable from the unemployable, the latter of which could then be turned over to other organizations or measures of the state, ranging from public welfare and the old age or disability pension to the penal system and psychiatry. In the process, policy-makers and experts could rely upon earlier experiences like the tests that identified war invalids' ability to work. Insurance was in effect dividing the old category of the poor into (1) stratifiable (and stratified) individuals within the national economy, and (2) those not considered part of the national economy.⁴² Unemployment insurance and benefits formally defined a status, permitting persons to understand their situation as unemployment, even if they were casually employed.⁴³ This resulted

in the emergence of ‘the unemployed’ as a phenomenon of the modern economic system and its cycles, thereby personifying a status beyond a person’s responsibility and reach.⁴⁴

Public employment exchanges became progressively more specialized and – by extending their clientele – universalized. They were now able to relinquish other tasks they had performed earlier on (much like other organizations operating as placement services). In addition, these exchanges developed and formalized methods of placement, such as psychological tests for determining a client’s affinity or aptitude for particular occupations. This process of specialization and universalization demonstrates that the old regime of policing ‘the poor’ – a distinct class, nearly a world of its own – had lost its significance. Instead, a bureaucratic administration of increasingly unified national labour markets came to be favoured, with the aim of encompassing all employable citizens. Consequently, even more people experienced their situation of being out of work as ‘unemployment’.⁴⁵ At the same time, the present volume also shows how this process was neither linear nor homogeneous. The categories involved evidently remained ambiguous and disputed. Whiteside’s contribution explains how important poor law traditions were in Great Britain for differentiating ‘paupers’ from ‘the unemployed’. Sigrid Wadauer’s account demonstrates the persistence of old categories and organizations (such as the *Herbergen*) in interwar Austria’s new labour market regime. Establishing unemployment insurance – as explained in Vana’s chapter – modified the clientele of labour exchanges so that more kinds of wage-earners came to be addressed. However, people made selective use of public employment exchanges, as one of several methods of finding a livelihood throughout the course of life.⁴⁶ Unemployment benefits did not treat people uniformly: sometimes they excluded agricultural labourers, domestic servants, the young, the elderly or others. In the interwar period, many Europeans were still not insured. Not all kinds of work were equally considered part of the labour market, and not all people without employment understood themselves as unemployed. Many approaches to earning a living did not fit neatly into the idea of gainful employment. In many cases, the ways women earned a livelihood did not coincide with what was considered legitimate. Yet the emerging official categories of ‘decent’ employment or unemployment would unavoidably become a point of reference. Even those who tried to avoid them were compelled to be concerned about them.

Role Models and References

On the whole, the present volume focuses on intermediation within countries rather than transnational intermediation. Yet it also recognizes that national developments in labour intermediation cannot be described adequately by looking exclusively at national frameworks. In the late nineteenth century, intensive debate took place in numerous contexts about existing and future potential for job placement as a remedy for social problems.⁴⁷ Both within and between states, these discussions involved experts, scholars, social reformers, politicians and public servants⁴⁸ as well as officials of trade unions, employers' organizations and philanthropic associations. International conferences facilitated comparisons between different notions (and uses) of job placement⁴⁹ while international urban exhibitions presented public employment exchanges. Commissions of social reformers, experts and policymakers organized inquiries and visited labour exchanges, both at home and abroad.⁵⁰ They described their findings in several reports, articles and books, including some explicitly comparative studies.⁵¹ A broad range of societies and associations was founded at the local, national and international levels, ranging from philanthropic associations establishing local employment exchanges to the International Association on Unemployment that concentrated on job placement in its debates and publications.⁵² After the First World War, the International Labour Organization (ILO) became an important nexus for international exchange on the options for job placement. The ILO regularly organized comparative studies on the possibilities of job placement, and on related problems across the world.⁵³ Besides assembling and providing information, the ILO developed standards for creating and regulating employment exchanges. These international transfers and references are highlighted in several chapters in this volume: Nils Edling, for instance, describes how late nineteenth-century Swedish social reformers found German municipal labour exchanges an attractive option, although they soon turned their attention to the Oslo labour exchange opened in 1898.⁵⁴ In the early twentieth-century Netherlands, the British system was discussed as a model, but the German example of municipal labour exchanges was eventually deemed more appropriate.⁵⁵ Anthony O'Donnell's chapter shows how Australian social reformers were not only attracted by the British example but also by early attempts to establish public employment exchanges in New Zealand. Apart from national preferences, certain models were evidently more appealing to certain interest groups. Ad Knotter's chapter describes the example of the French *bourses du travail*, which served as an important point of reference for European trade unions before the First World War.

Particular systems of labour intermediation were therefore not the automatic outcome of particular socio-economic developments. After all, the German intermediation system was disseminated in countries with different political, social and economic conditions. It would thus be incorrect to regard the synchronic emergence of public employment policy or the international transfer of models as merely responses to a common challenge (such as globalization). In this context, Edling points to a ‘fashion’ of establishing public employment exchanges. However, the limitations of transfer can also be observed, as in the British example. As Noel Whiteside reveals, the implementation of a system orientated on the German model came to a standstill with the resistance of trade unions and employers.

Outline of Chapters

The individual chapters of this volume are grouped according to geographical and thematic criteria. The first two focus on Germany as a role model. Thomas Buchner’s contribution proposes an understanding of labour offices that deviates from commonly held perceptions in research. His chapter argues that these offices were more instrumental in constructing than regulating labour markets. Hence the establishment of the labour market (*Arbeitsmarkt*) as an economic category in Germany was closely related to the establishment of public labour offices in the late nineteenth century. These offices both produced knowledge about the labour market and were shaped by notions of it. By referring to the example of placement officers, Buchner demonstrates how crucial their practices were in constructing new labour markets. At the same time, references to labour market knowledge were important for defining these officers’ tasks and their roles. This chapter thereby emphasizes the variety of persons and material devices (forms, architecture etc.) that played a role in this process. The assortment of persons and organizations involved in the constitution of public labour intermediation are also portrayed in David Meskill’s chapter. Meskill highlights the establishment of vocational counselling as a central objective of public labour exchanges in Germany. Especially after the First World War, vocational counselling was further developed to achieve the aim of total inclusion of all job seekers (*Totalerfassung*). That said, Meskill underscores the contentiousness of this process: schools resisted the labour offices’ attempts to monopolize vocational counselling; employers were sceptical about the offices’ apparently schematic mode of operations; and the financial and organizational security of vocational counselling remained precarious. Even in the

1920s – a period when vocational counselling briskly expanded – interest in and practices of vocational counselling still depended greatly on local and regional peculiarities.

Noel Whiteside and Nils Edling each discuss European examples of public labour intermediation inspired by the German model. Nonetheless, the outcomes of this transfer did not necessarily resemble their German counterpart. Applying a comparative perspective, Whiteside focuses on the principles underpinning the emergence of a national system of public labour intermediation in Great Britain. Unions there were much stronger than in Germany. And there was comparatively less autonomy for municipalities and less acceptance of official intervention, ultimately leading to mistrust of public labour exchanges. Furthermore, the aims of Beveridge and his fellow designers of the British system diverged from the intent of the German model. In the first instance, the British version attempted to organize the labour market as a way to fight poverty, thereby involving a separation of those who would work regularly from those who would not. This in turn opened the door for poor law criteria to be integrated into labour market organization, as Whiteside specifies in the case of Birmingham.

Edling's chapter describes the introduction of public labour exchanges in Sweden, a latecomer in the realm of Scandinavian social policy. When establishing labour exchanges, Swedish municipalities referred to German, Norwegian and Danish cities – all of which represented different economic, social and political experiences. The early history of Swedish labour exchanges can thus be described as a success story. Edling points out two conditions that played a part in this accomplishment: firstly, the system of public labour intermediation before the 1920s (decentralized and not linked to any form of unemployment benefit) complied with Sweden's economic structure, in which unemployment was more or less a seasonal matter. Secondly, public labour exchanges were – despite some initial hesitation – soon accepted both by unions and employers as 'neutral' organizations. Seen from a comparative perspective, this remarkable early acceptance both signified and helped to create social trust between employers and unions. Ad Knotter's overview of union-run labour exchanges in Central, Western and Northern Europe around 1900 further elucidates the role of unions and their use of placement services. Although union-run exchanges proved successful, particularly in small- and medium-sized trades, they were ultimately abandoned in most European countries. Knotter identifies a major reason why unions were unable to realize a monopoly on labour exchanges in their respective trades. They used unemployment insurance as a method of preventing a decline in wages. On financial grounds, however, unions were forced to

cooperate with employers and authorities in monitoring the unemployed. In the process, these exchanges were transformed from an instrument of wage control to a means of controlling those without work.

Malcolm Mansfield elaborates on the French *bourses du travail*, which served as a point of reference for unions all over Europe. The *bourses* were both union-managed and semi-public institutions offering an array of services, including labour intermediation. As such, they were attractive to both reformers and socialists since they promised to combat unemployment and vagrancy while reining in commercial placement agencies. Mansfield describes what they achieved for the labour movement when a major crisis hit the Paris building industry and contributed to the growing irrelevance of mechanisms put into place to defend trade standards. While the *bourses* provided premises for the new unions and contributed to the strike waves of the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries, their placement mechanisms never managed to impose monopolies over entry into a given trade.

The section on Austrian case studies opens with Verena Pawlowsky and Harald Wendelin's chapter on the Austrian employment agency for disabled veterans during the First World War. The first labour exchanges to reintegrate disabled veterans in the Habsburg monarchy were opened in 1915. However, most of them could not meet policy expectations since employers were unwilling to employ disabled veterans. More successful was a law passed after the war that forced firms to employ disabled veterans. Although these exchanges more or less failed to reintegrate war invalids into the labour market, they are remarkable as a first attempt at establishing a system of state-run labour exchanges covering the entire country. They furthermore signified the state's acceptance that certain groups in society might make demands on it.

The system of Austrian public labour exchanges after the First World War is described by Irina Vana. Her main focus is on job seekers' changing use of these exchanges in the interwar period. With the introduction of unemployment insurance after the war, these became more attractive not only for job seekers in general, but for skilled male job seekers in particular. Public labour offices in Austria were now key for receiving unemployment benefits. That in turn was a factor in producing employment and unemployment and thus in enforcing an administrated labour market. With an analysis of life narratives, Vana extends her focus: public labour offices allowed particularly qualified male workers in Austria to organize a stable life course. To be unemployed came to be perceived as a problem of the labour market. For other groups of job seekers (servants, casual workers etc.), organizing a stable life course or an administrated labour market became less relevant – not least because those groups only

received partial unemployment benefits. Yet public labour offices had a say in the implementation of a new understanding of an official labour market, thus becoming relevant even for those job seekers who rarely used or even avoided them.

Jessica Richter's chapter focuses on domestic servants as a group who only used public labour exchanges selectively, but who frequently changed posts. Service was a task mainly performed by women who usually lived in their master/mistress's household. Changing one's position, then, almost always implied changing one's household. Richter indicates the mix of intermediaries that domestic servants consulted when searching for a position. She specifically addresses a Catholic and a social democratic association when examining different notions of service as a vocation. While the Catholic organization represented the idea of service as a vocation closely connected to family integration, its social democratic counterpart conceived of domestic servants as domestic workers. The servants' change of positions was thereby perceived as resulting from poor training or from poor working (or living) conditions. In a further move, Richter analyses domestic servants' life stories. In these narratives, service is described either as a vocation (for the good of a community or for individual advancement) or as a means to a livelihood. Changes of position were thus depicted as resulting from a desire to enhance one's abilities, a wish to be integrated into a family, or poor working (or living) conditions.

The usage and avoidance of organizations offering job placement is further discussed in Wadauer's chapter. She maintains that tramping as a way to search for work did not disappear in the early twentieth century but was redefined and reorganized in the context of normalizing unemployment. Her focus is on relief stations and lodging houses for work-seeking wayfarers in Austria from the late nineteenth century to the 1930s. These stations, which provided lodging and some form of labour intermediation, were established to enable 'orderly' tramping and differentiate work-seeking wayfarers from work-shy vagrants. In this sense, job seeking started to become normalized, but primarily for skilled workers. Although the latter were over-represented among those using relief stations around 1900, that situation changed after the First World War when their proportion declined. Autobiographical accounts are particularly valuable, indicating a variety of reasons why people hit the road in addition to representing their attitudes towards lodging houses (ranging from selective usage to avoidance). Nonetheless, work could still be found by calling at workshops and farmhouses rather than relying on the intermediation of the lodging houses.

The importance of mobility as a way of finding work is elaborated further in the next chapters. Piet Lourens and Jan Lucassen discuss the

long history of brickmakers' temporary migration from the Lippe region of Germany to northwest Europe, particularly the Netherlands. This system of seasonal migration involved *Ziegelboten*, who offered a range of services: they negotiated the size of the gangs needed with the factory owners; they visited the gangs during the season; and they were responsible for mutual illness (and funeral) funds. However, the main focus of this chapter is on the changing composition of the brickmakers' gangs. Drawing on rich source material, the authors argue that the individual brickmaker's switch from one gang to another was an indicator of individual careers. They further identify work experience as particularly decisive for upward mobility. Success in making a career as a brickmaker enabled one to be successful in one's overall life course.

Amit Kumar Mishra's chapter discusses the Indian labour diaspora in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, with a special emphasis on the multiplicity of services offered by labour intermediaries. Mishra focuses on three groups of intermediaries: *sardars*, *kanganies* and *maistries*. After the abolition of slavery, planters introduced a contract system and turned to India as a source of labour. The *sardars* operated as appointed agents who recruited workers (on an individual basis) and also supervised them. But since that system proved unsuccessful in some colonies, the system of *kanganies* and/or *maistries* was also introduced. These intermediaries were men of high status, able to recruit workers from their own caste (or kinship group) and to serve as financiers. The systems developed even proved appropriate in transforming the plantation economy when there was an increased demand for credit and new kinds of labour because of heightened competition from other sugar-growing regions. From a different perspective, the last chapter of this volume also explicates the transformation of systems of labour intermediation. Anthony O'Donnell discusses public employment services in Australia from the late nineteenth century to the post-Second World War period. Public labour exchanges were established there as early as the late nineteenth century. Yet surprisingly, until the 1920s, they did not follow British attempts to decasualize the labour market, but rather operated as a headquarters for a mobile reserve of casual labour, mainly provisioning government departments with unskilled labour. This would change during the Second World War when public labour exchanges became centralized and gained a privileged position against private agencies. However, at the end of the war, the Commonwealth Employment Service was newly established to administer unemployment benefits and to reduce labour market frictions within a macroeconomic framework. O'Donnell argues that their long history of changing functions shows how such public employment

services operated as sites of contesting – and frequently conflicting – regulatory rationales.

In the concluding section to this volume, we suggest some additional questions, discuss research gaps, and outline some perspectives for future research.

Notes

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1. P. Bourdieu. 1997. *Méditations pascaliennes*, Paris: Seuil.
2. D.H. Autor. 2009. 'Studies of Labor Market Intermediation. Introduction', in idem (ed.), *Studies of Labor Market Intermediation*, Chicago/London: The University of Chicago Press, 1. Similarly Bosma et al. write: 'In the labour historiography, mediators constitute an intriguing category, operating in the interstices between labour and capital.' U. Bosma, E. van Nederveen Meerkerk and A. Sarkar. 2012. 'Mediating Labour: An Introduction', *International Review of Social History. Special Issue 20*, 2.
3. See also S. Wadauer, T. Buchner and A. Mejstrik. 2012. 'The Making of Public Labour Intermediation: Job Search, Job Placement, and the State in Europe, 1880–1940', *International Review of Social History. Special Issue 20*, 161–189.
4. International Labour Conference. 1932. *Abolition of Fee Charging Employment Agencies. Sixteenth Session 1932*, Geneva: ILO, 12ff. In nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Europe, a bewildering multiplicity of terms were used to describe organizations and facilities that offered placement services. National and international statistics, surveys and studies that were conducted in the first decades of the twentieth century faced the problem of answering which designations implied different or similar services – even within the same country. For example, two labour exchanges could offer quite different services, while an employment exchange and a labour registry might offer similar ones. For this reason, this introduction avoids the temptation of deducing a clearly distinguishable typology of placement services from the terminology used in late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Europe. For clarity and readability, we will differentiate terms very simply. The term '(job) placement' is used to denote all kinds of placement services provided by states, associations, commercial businesses, or other kinds of organizations. Job placement facilities are called 'labour exchanges', 'employment exchanges' or 'exchanges', these terms being used interchangeably. In cases where such a facility was run by a municipality, a province or a central state, 'public labour (or employment) exchange (or office)' is used in distinction to private exchanges. Yet there were some differences in how the term 'public' was deployed between countries. In general, a 'public' labour exchange around 1900 offered different services from such an exchange around 1930. In some cases, this was paralleled by a change of terms (for example in Germany, from *Arbeitsnachweis* to *Arbeitsamt*). In many others, however, the terminology did not change. Finally, the term 'public labour intermediation' is used to describe not only public labour exchanges but all measures enacted and facilities established by states with respect to the ways of searching for jobs or placing and recruiting workers.
5. See G. Hannsen. 1846. 'Über öffentliche Arbeitsnachweisanstalten', *Archiv der politischen Ökonomie und Polizeiwissenschaft*, N.F. 4, 296–323.

6. Walter Licht's study on Philadelphia describes a similar spectrum of job placement possibilities. W. Licht. 1999. *Getting Work: Philadelphia, 1840–1950*, Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 34ff.
7. The importance of 'weak ties' for job seeking, although difficult to trace in a historical setting, should not be underestimated. M. Granovetter. 1995. *Getting a Job: A Study of Contacts and Careers*, 2nd ed., Chicago/London: The University of Chicago Press.
8. J.L. Rosenbloom. 2002. *Looking for Work, Searching for Workers: American Labor Markets During Industrialization*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press; on foremen, see P. van den Eeckhout (ed.). 2009. *Supervision and Authority in Industry: Western European Experiences 1830–1939*, New York/Oxford: Berghahn; A. Rees. 1966. 'Information Networks in Labor Markets', *The American Economic Review* 56, 559–566.
9. See Knotter in this volume; W. Beveridge. 1909. *Unemployment: A Problem of History*, London/New York/Bombay/Calcutta: Longmans, Green, and Co, 262ff.
10. F. Ludwig. 1906. *Der gewerbsmäßige Arbeitsnachweis*, Berlin: Carl Heymanns; W. Lee, 'Private Deception and the Rise of Public Employment Offices in the United States, 1890–1930', in Autor, *Studies of Labor Market Intermediation*, 166ff.
11. Statistisches Departement im k.k. Handelsministerium. 1898. *Die Arbeitsvermittlung in Österreich*, Vienna: A. Hölder, 85ff. (hereafter *Arbeitsvermittlung in Österreich*).
12. Some examples are recorded for Berlin, Vienna, Prague and Amsterdam. See R. von Fürer. 1911. *Die Gestaltung des Arbeitsmarktes*, Vienna/Leipzig: A. Hölder, 127; O. Uhlig. 1970. *Arbeit amtlich angeboten. Der Mensch auf seinem Markt*, Stuttgart etc.: Kohlhammer, 81ff.; and R. van Bekkum. 1996. *Tussen Vraag en Aanbod. Op zoek naar de identiteit van de arbeidsvoorzieningsorganisatie*, The Hague: Sdu Uitgevers, 166, 181.
13. See Knotter in this volume. However, Edling points to the remarkable exception of Sweden where employers consciously decided not to establish exchanges.
14. O. Becker and E. Bernhard. 1913. *Die gesetzliche Regelung der Arbeitsvermittlung in den wichtigsten Ländern der Erde*. Berlin: Carl Heymanns, 48–51.
15. In the 1930s, some organizations of the German Nazi Party (particularly the SA) offered job placement.
16. See also P. Schöttler. 1982. *Die Entstehung der 'Bourses du Travail'*. *Sozialpolitik und Syndikalismus am Ende des 19. Jahrhunderts*, Frankfurt a.M./New York: Campus; C.K. Ansell. 1997. 'Symbolic Networks: The Realignment of the French Working Class, 1887–1894', *The American Journal of Sociology* 103(2), 360ff.
17. William Beveridge, for example, described hawking of labour as being 'wasteful' and as indicator of unorganized labour markets. Beveridge, *Unemployment*, 197–200.
18. Becker and Bernhard, *Gesetzliche Regelung*, 2ff, 69–140; International Labour Conference, *Abolition*, 14.
19. See also B.H. Warner, Jr. 1903. *Die Organisation und Bedeutung der freien öffentlichen Arbeitsnachweisämter in den Vereinigten Staaten von Nordamerika*, Leipzig: Jäh und Sohunke, 5–14; *Arbeitsvermittlung in Österreich*, 69.
20. Becker and Bernhard, *Gesetzliche Regelung*, 69–77.
21. *Ibid.*, 12ff.
22. *Ibid.*, 4, 25, 31, 40f.
23. E. Gruner. 1991. 'Arbeitsvermittlung und Arbeitslosenversorgung. Das Beispiel der Schweiz', in H.-P. Benöhr (ed.). *Arbeitsvermittlung und Arbeitslosenversorgung in der neueren deutschen Rechtsgeschichte*. Tübingen: Mohr, 237–256.
24. Van Bekkum, *Tussen Vraag en Aanbod*.
25. E. Deslé. 1991. *Arbeidsbemiddeling en/of werklozencontrole. Het voorbeeld van de Gentse arbeidsbeurs (1891–1914)*, Brussels: Gemeentekrediet; Becker and Bernhard, *Gesetzliche Regelung*, 23.

26. H. Hülber. 1965. *Weg und Ziel der Arbeitsvermittlung. Studie über das Arbeitsmarktgeschehen in Österreich von 1848 bis 1934*, Vienna: Verlag des österreichischen Gewerkschaftsbundes, 19, 39.
27. Becker and Bernhard, *Gesetzliche Regelung*, 44.
28. R. Boleslawski von der Trenck. n.d. *Die Arbeitsvermittlung in Oesterreich*, n.p.: n.publ.; Becker and Bernhard, *Gesetzliche Regelung*, 46.
29. Becker and Bernhard, *Gesetzliche Regelung*, 33; E.P. Hennock. 2007. *The Origin of the Welfare State in England and Germany 1850–1914. Social Policies Compared*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 298ff.
30. This was of particular importance in the British context. See Whiteside's chapter in this volume.
31. J. Welshman. 2006. 'The Concept of the Unemployable', *Economic History Review* LIX, 578–606; C. Topalov. 1994. *Naissance du chômeur. 1880–1910*, Paris: Albin Michel.
32. 'Labor exchanges became mechanisms through which American and British governments could enforce a division between worthy and unworthy supplicants for assistance'. D. King. 1995. *Actively Seeking Work? The Politics of Unemployment and Welfare Policy in the United States and Great Britain*, Chicago/London: The University of Chicago Press, 19.
33. N. Whiteside. 1991. *Bad Times: Unemployment in British Social and Political History*, London: Faber and Faber, 56; D. Meskill. 2010. *Optimizing the German Workforce: Labor Administration from Bismarck to the Economic Miracle*, New York/Oxford: Berghahn.
34. A. Faust. 1986. *Arbeitsmarktpolitik im Deutschen Kaiserreich. Arbeitsvermittlung, Arbeitsbeschaffung und Arbeitslosenunterstützung 1890–1918*, Stuttgart: Franz Steiner, 71, 73.
35. See, for example, the survey on the possibilities of job placements within the Cisleithanian part of the Habsburg monarchy: *Die Arbeitsvermittlung in Österreich*. For the domestic German comparison, see Kaiserliches Statistisches Amt. 1906. *Die Versicherung gegen die Folgen der Arbeitslosigkeit im Ausland und im Deutschen Reich*, Berlin: Carl Heymanns, part II.
36. Topalov, *Naissance du chômeur*, 375–406; R. Davidson. 1995. 'Official Labour Statistics: A Historical Perspective', *Journal of the Royal Statistical Society. Series A (Statistics in Society)* 158, 165–173; D.G. Maier. 2004. *Anfänge und Brüche der Arbeitsverwaltung bis 1952. Zugleich ein kaum bekanntes Kapitel der deutsch-jüdischen Geschichte*, Brühl: FBV, 31ff.
37. W.R. Garside. 1980. *The Measurement of Unemployment in Great Britain, 1850–1979. Methods and Sources*, Oxford: Basil Blackwell.
38. See, for example, Hülber, *Weg und Ziel*, 39.
39. Particularly employers but also unions used these arguments. See M. Mansfield. 2001. 'Flying to the Moon: Reconsidering the British Labour Exchange System in the Early Twentieth Century', *Labour History Review* 66, 24, 29, 34; Faust, *Arbeitsmarktpolitik im Deutschen Kaiserreich*, 92, 97.
40. International Labour Conference. 1933. *Unemployment Insurance and Various Forms of Relief for the Unemployed. Seventeenth Session*, Geneva: ILO, 1f.
41. Topalov, *Naissance du chômeur*, 269–350.
42. A. Desrosières. 2000. *La politique des grands nombres. Histoire de la raison statistique. Postface inédite de l'auteur*, Paris: La Découverte, 318f.
43. See Vana in this volume.
44. Topalov, *Naissance du chômeur*, 407.
45. See M. Cole. 2007. 'From Employment Exchange to Jobcentre Plus: The Changing Institutional Context of Unemployment', *History of the Human Sciences* 20, 129–146.
46. Walter Licht's study on Philadelphia shows that the usage of different methods of finding work varied over the life course. Licht, *Getting Work*.

47. See N. Edling. 2008. 'Regulating Unemployment the Continental Way: The Transfer of Municipal Labour Exchanges to Scandinavia, 1890–1914', *European Review of History – Revue Européenne d'Histoire* 15, 23–40; van Bekkum. *Tussen Vraag en Aanbod*, 151, 173f, 249, 251f.
48. See E. Fric. 1993. *Wohlfahrtsstaat und Provinz. Fürsorgepolitik des Provinzialverbandes Westfalen und des Landes Sachsen 1880–1930*, Paderborn: Schöningh, 48; W. Booth. 1890. *In Darkest England and the Way Out*, London: Diggory Press, 110.
49. An early example of an international conference including a focus on job placement was the International Conference on Unemployment (Paris, 1910). See Garraty, *Unemployment in History*, 139; Topalov, *Naissance du chômeur*, 59–115; S. Rudischhauser and B. Zimmermann. 1995. "Öffentliche Arbeitsvermittlung" und "placement public" (1890–1914). Kategorien der Intervention der öffentlichen Hand – Reflexionen zu einem Vergleich', *Comparativ* 5, 93–120.
50. See, for example, Beveridge's report on his visit to Germany: W. Beveridge. 1908. 'Public Labour Exchanges in Germany', *The Economic Journal* 18(69), 1–18.
51. See for example, D.F. Schloss. 1904. *Report to the Board of Trade on Agencies and Methods for Dealing with the Unemployed in Certain Foreign Countries*, London: Darling; O. Becker and E. Bernhard, *Gesetzliche Regelung*; N.N. 1895. 'Die Arbeitsvermittlung im Deutschen Reich', *Austria. Archiv für Gesetzgebung und Statistik auf den Gebieten der Gewerbe, des Handels und der Schiffahrt* X, 1008–1012.
52. This association edited the *Quarterly Journal of the International Association on Unemployment*.
53. See for example, International Labour Office. 1933. *Employment Exchanges: An International Study of Placing Activities*, Geneva: ILO; International Labour Conference, *Unemployment Insurance*; International Labour Conference, *Abolition*.
54. See also Edling, 'Regulating Unemployment'.
55. However, in discussions of unemployment insurance, the Danish model appeared to be attractive for the Netherlands. See van Bekkum, *Tussen Vraag en Aanbod*, 257. According to Daniel Levine, Danish social reform was likewise interested in model solutions abroad but was strongly inclined to opt for solutions perceived to adhere to existing institutions of the country. D. Levine. 1978. 'Conservatism and Tradition in Danish Social Welfare Legislation, 1890–1933: A Comparative View', *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 20, 54–69.

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