

contract. Finally, his analysis pinpoints the Achilles heel of formal law and institutionalised forms of workers representation.

One remarkable observation on my part: obviously the language barrier is still so strong that there is no reference made to the similar debate going on in the Anglo-Saxon community of industrial relations experts. And, on the other hand, I have not seen any reference to Jounin's interesting thesis in that community. How European are we?

Jan Cremers,
AIAS , 20.12.07

Revival of the political economy? Zur politischen Ökonomie der Schweiz. Eine Annäherung. Thinknet/Denknetz Jahrbuch 2007, Zürich 2007.

Our Swiss friends from the Thinknet group have produced their Yearbook 2007 with a series of contributions that criticises neo-liberalism and mainstream economic thinking. In the editorial they promise a critical confrontation with thinkers like John Stuart Mill, Adam Smith, as well as with Keynesian and Marxian economists. Developments in today's society have to be analysed with other instruments. Dependency and the imbalance of power are as important as analyses of trade relations or financial markets. The statement is symbolic for a (still limited?) revival of the political economy in Europe. In several countries scientists are returning to theoretical concepts that go beyond the plain belief in the free market.

Next to an opening **Essay** the book has five headings (**Labour, Migration, Public Services, Political Economy, Thoughts**). The contributions provide a wide spectrum of thoughts based on the notions 'freedom, equality and solidarity'. The opening by *Saskia Sassen* could not convince me. She sees the emergence of a global city that creates the possibility for new types of what she calls 'a global society'. Globalisation combined with

strong human rights activities by non-political subjects will lead in her view to a transformation and de-nationalisation of our society with as a result extreme inequalities as well as conditions enabling ‘progressive citizenship practices’. I was puzzled by her analyses and the wishful thinking in her contribution.

In the **Labour** paragraphs a critical review of the ‘work instead of social protection’ debate was picked up by *Eva Nadai*. Social protection is in this debate regarded as an instrument that paralyses people instead of activating them. She describes how social protection has become subordinated to the economy and competitiveness. As an effect, the individual is seen as the only responsible subject for his/her integration and his/her labour market perspective. Failure demonstrates the ‘lack to integrate’ (and other forms of stigmatisation). Editor *Beat Ringger* criticises the short term views that have dominated labour market debates till recently: first, the thought that mass unemployment would stay forever, nowadays the idea of structural labour shortages based on the age pyramid in our societies. Based on demographic and economic expectations the market outlook will probably relax in a few years. In the meantime, our economies have to be reformed in a sustainable direction. He formulates a plea for a long term vision and for a strategy that guarantees better opportunities for young people in vulnerable situations and with poor initial education. Therefore new forms of vocational training and education are a must. *Rudi Winkler* defends the thesis that the unemployed must have the right to decide on their vocational training and retraining. His contribution is a plea for a method to change ‘concerned people’ into ‘participants’. The result will be increased motivation and improved qualification. *Holgar Schatz* finally comes up with strong criticism of the emphasis on training in today’s political debate on inclusion and exclusion.

The **Migration** paragraphs start with a contribution called ‘Migration and the precarity trap’, written by *Vania Alleva* and *Hans Baumann*. They analyse the impact of old and new forms of migration on labour conditions. The Swiss situation is an interesting case: some 30% of migrants have already lived and worked more than 20 years in the country, 60% for at least 10 years. Various sectors would not function without migrant workers. The Swiss trade unions have succeeded in attracting migrant workers. They are prominently present in the rank and file as well as in the union leadership. The contribution of the authors reads like a manifesto

for equal treatment: fair labour conditions, recognition of home country education and training, abolition of discriminatory temporary permits, regularization of migrants that live already for years in Switzerland. Generally binding collective agreements can be seen as a strong weapon in this respect. These agreements, combined with minimum wage regulations, protect against social dumping as the joint, paritarian initiatives, developed by the social partners, demonstrate. *Annemarie Sancar's* contribution adds the notion that human rights are no commodity, but a political principle in our society. A consistent fight by the State against the precarious labour conditions of many migrants should have more priority than the optimality of the free movement of capital.

The remaining paragraphs include, for instance, a plea for an integral health care service and an excursion to the Finnish health care system. In the ***Political economy*** contributions an effort is made to analyse the development of the Swiss economy and the 'social reproduction of wealth'. For German readers the Yearbook 2007 is (again) a recommendation.