EUROPEAN TRADE UNIONS AND ‘PRECARIOUS’ WORKERS

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OVERVIEW

• background: 10-country project
• varieties of ‘atypical’ and ‘precarious’ employment
• trade unions: challenges and responses
• concluding remarks
PRECARIOUS WORK affects us all
BACKGROUND:
10-COUNTRY PROJECT

• 3-year grant from Danish Social Science Research Council
• 10 west European countries, 4 varieties of capitalism
• focus on trade union strategic responses to globalisation and other challenges
• major theme emerging from interviews: decline of ‘normal worker’ with ‘permanent’ full-time employment contract
Abdel Mabrouki

GÉNÉRATION PRÉCAIRE

le cherche midi
VARIETIES OF ‘ATYPICAL’ AND ‘PRECARIOUS’ EMPLOYMENT

• part-time
  ➢ precarious – not necessarily!
• temporary
  ➢ but what is ‘permanent’?
• agency (Temporary Agency Work)
• subcontracting / outsourcing
• dependent self-employment
• posted workers
• ‘informal’ or undocumented work
• cross-national variation in regulation and deregulation
• employer strategic choice
BRITISH JOBS FOR BRITISH WORKERS
TRADE UNIONS: CHALLENGES AND RESPONSES

- threat and/or opportunity for unions
- almost universally low unionisation rate of these workers – why? workers, unions, or both?
- key strategic choice: exclude or include? historical dimension and ideological difference
- recruitment, representation, mobilisation
- new forms of organisation, incl. separate unions
- campaigns and alliances
- political pressure for improved regulation and protection
- EU dimension
CONCLUDING REMARKS

• complex picture: variations across countries depending on types of unions, role of employers, state and regulation
• parallels / interaction of atypical work with age, gender, ethnicity
• union responses: resist, control, include
• organising workers or regulating work: will, capacity and resource allocation
• but some success stories!
Sauberkeit hat ihren Preis!