02 2020

Governing Affects

Governing Affects
Neoliberalism, Neo-Bureaucracies, and Service Work
Otto Penz, Birgit Sauer
Routledge 2019, 178 pages

Governing Affects explores the neoliberal transformation of state governance in Europe towards affective forms of dominance exercised by customer-oriented neo-bureaucracies and public service providers.

By investigating the rise of affective labour in contemporary European service societies and the conversion of state administrations into business-like public services, the authors trace the transformative power of neoliberal political thought as it is put into practice. The book examines new affective modes of subjectivation and activation of public employees, as well as their embodiment of affective requirements, to successfully guide and advise citizens. Neoliberalism induces a double agency in neo-bureaucrats: entrepreneurialism is coupled with affective skills for the purpose of governing clients in their own best interests. These competences are unevenly distributed between the genders, as their affective dispositions differ historically. Drawing on the theoretical concepts of Foucault and Bourdieu, the book offers innovative insights into recent processes of state transformation, affective subjectivation, and changes in labour relations.

By combining theory building on governance with empirical research in key areas of state power, the book will be of interest to scholars and researchers in a broad range of disciplines, including political science, political sociology, and critical governance studies.

https://www.routledge.com/9780815380740
Download flyer