

Master thesis

The pros and cons of privatization: A qualitative investigation of Deutsche Bahn AG

Ever since the 1980s and continuing in the 1990s, a large wave of liberalization has swept through Western markets. In Europe, supported through the EU, past governments have privatized organizations that were formerly part of the public infrastructure. In Germany, this wave of privatization started with reforms on the post and telecommunications sector in 1989 and 1994. Further reforms followed as European electricity markets were liberalized in 1996 and the German electricity market experienced reforms starting in 1998 (e.g., Energiewirtschaftsgesetz). This trend spread into other sectors, such as health care and mobility, as well. The German railway company, formerly a government-owned organization, was partly privatized in 1994 to become a profit-oriented firm, Deutsche Bahn AG, that was to go public in the years to follow. These reforms of privatization and liberalizations held the promise of generating greater efficiency at lower costs for consumers, improving service quality and increasing innovation while reducing state debt. Looking back today, more than 30 years later, some of these promises seem to remain unfulfilled with dysfunctionalities in telecommunications, postal deliveries, a struggling health care system and high delays in the railway sector. Have these privatization efforts overall led to an improved system or created new or even greater dysfunctionalities than the formerly state-owned organizations?

To gain a deeper understanding of the topic, the Management Research Group offers the Master's thesis, which analyses what outcomes the privatization reforms in Germany have produced using the example of Deutsche Bahn AG. The thesis is written in collaboration with the German Center for Rail Traffic Research.

Possible tasks in the thesis would be

1. Reviewing existing literature on privatization and its outcomes
2. Qualitative analysis of Deutsche Bahn AG and its changes due to the Bahnreform in 1994
3. Analyzing archival data and scientific studies on the privatization of Deutsche Bahn
4. Deriving recommendations for policy and management: What benefits did privatization bring? What can be learned from the experience of the past 30 years? Where should managers and policy makers intervene or readjust?

The student will write the thesis in close collaboration with the supervisor. Through his or her work, the student will have the opportunity to generate insights that contribute to an important social debate. We are looking for highly motivated students who are characterized by excellent business management skills and a keen interest in issues relating to strong sustainability. Excellent communication and project management skills, as well as experience in qualitative data analysis, are desirable

Start date: April 2025 (flexible)

Duration: 3 to 6 months

Please send your brief application (short letter of motivation, CV, current certificate of grades, last degree certificate in one file) by e-mail to Hauke Lütkehaus (swantje.freund@uol.de). We are also happy to answer any questions you may have. We look forward to receiving your application!