

**Project title:** The transformation of the employment relation: the example of the construction industry in different European countries  
**Studentship Code:** WBS5

### **The transformation of the employment relation: the example of the construction industry in different European countries**

The employment relation is in a process of rapid transformation, as evident from the changes in employer associations and trade unions and the range of different employment contracts – from agency and temporary labour, to self- and directly employed. No longer is there the expectation of staying with one employer for life, with huge implications for the structure of education and training provision and for employment rights and benefits and the status of unemployment – sometimes now even classified as a ‘gardening break’. Nowhere are these changes more evident than in the construction sector in Europe. The project will involve a detailed study of these changes in different European countries, their implications for construction workers and professionals, and the impact of different policies and institutional arrangements to address them.

#### **Further information on research environment and supervision**

Staff with expertise in employee and industrial relations and in the construction industry are situated in both the Westminster Business School (WBS) and the School of Architecture and the Built Environment (SABE), and are particularly focussed within the new joint WBS/SABE research centre for the study of the Production of the Built Environment *ProBE*. *ProBE* is an interdisciplinary and international centre founded on a coherent and persuasive theoretical perspective on the basis of which a rich programme of research and related activities related to the production of the built environment - including research projects, oral history, film, exhibitions, seminars and other events – is in the process of being developed. *ProBE* already has lively profile in terms of research projects, staff and research students, associated networks, and publications, with projects including:

- *Constructing Post-war Britain: building workers’ stories 1950-70*, a Leverhulme Trust oral history research project, led by Dr. Christine Wall and Professor Linda Clarke together with researchers, focussed on the building workers who built important examples of post-war architecture, which challenged traditional divisions of labour in construction and in society. The project addresses key factors of change, including: social relations on site; trade union organisation and involvement; training and apprenticeship; the working environment; industrial techniques; design conceptions; wage relations; work and family life; housing and living conditions.
- *Bricklaying Qualifications, work and VET in Europe*, a European Commission Project, an eight Country study (scientific coordination Professor Linda Clarke and Michaela Brockmann, Technical coordination: European Federation of Building and Woodworkers), concerning the implementation of the European Qualifications Framework and aimed at furthering the recognition of qualifications and competences in relation to bricklaying by enhancing their transparency and comparability, thereby increasing the effective mobility and quality of labour across Europe.
- *Olympic Builders Film Project: community film project*, coordinated by Marker Ltd in association with the European Institute for Construction Labour Research, Margaret Dickinson (film-maker) with Linda Clarke and Aletha Holborough (research student), with initial funding from the Amiel and Melburn Trust. This project, about construction workers - especially apprentices, students and new entrants to the industry - and the Olympic development, links the production of a documentary film with the education and training of a community.

Staff associated with *ProBE* has wide and long experience in international comparative qualitative research and in the use of statistical data, with many previous projects, funded by – amongst others – the Nuffield Foundation, Leverhulme Trust, Joseph Rowntree Foundation,

ESRC, EPSRC, and the European Commission. These have concerned: vocational education and training, skills, recruitment, wage relations, social protection, gender, diversity, disability, and labour organisation in a range of European countries, east and west, many concentrated on the construction sector.

This research has involved working closely with research partners in many European countries and involvement in a number of networks including:

- *European Institute for Construction Labour Research (CLR)*: a 500+ network based in Brussels and the British office at the University, organising seminars and discussions and producing regular newsletters and a book series
- *The British Universities Industrial Relations Association (BUIRA)*, of which Prof. Linda Clarke is an executive member and organises a seminar series
- *Britain at Work 1945-1990*: a consortium of academics and practitioners concerned to promote the post-war oral history of those at work

#### **Recent relevant publications of key staff:**

##### **Linda Clarke**

- (2009) 'Enabling and disabling: disability in the British and Dutch construction sectors', with van der Meer M., Bingham C., Michielsens E., Miller S., *Construction Management and Economics*, 27, April-June, pp. 555-568,
- (2009) 'Difficulties in Recognising Vocational Skills and Qualifications across Europe' with Brockmann M. and Winch C., *Assessment in Education: Principles, Policy & Practice*, Vol. 16, No. 1, March, pp. 97-109,
- (2009) 'Competence and competency in the EQF and in competence-based VET systems: different conceptions and realities in England, France, the Netherlands and Germany' *Journal of European Industrial Training*, with Brockmann M. and Winch C
- (2008) 'Obstacles to diversity in construction: the example of Heathrow Terminal 5', with Gribbling M., in *Construction Management and Economics*, October, 26/10, 1055-1065
- (2008) 'Knowledge, Skills, Competence: European divergences in vocational education and training – the English, German and Dutch cases', with Brockmann, M., and Winch C., in *Oxford Review of Education* Vol. 34, No. 5, October, pp. 547-567
- (2007), *Vocational education: international approaches, developments and systems*, co-editor, Routledge paperback book
- (2007) 'Divergent Divisions of Construction Labour in Britain and Germany' with Georg Herrmann, in ed. A. Dainty, *People and Culture in Construction*, Taylor and Francis
- (2006) 'Valuing Labour' in *Building Research and Information*, 34(3), 1-11
- (2005) 'From Craft to Qualified Building Labour in Britain: a comparative approach' in *Labor History*, 46/4, November, 473-494, awarded best non-US article 2005
- (2004), 'Cost vs. production: labour deployment and productivity in social housing construction in England, Scotland, Denmark and Germany', with Georg Herrmann in *Construction Management and the Construction Process: Economics*, 22/10, December, 1057-1066

##### **Christine Wall**

- (2010 forthcoming) *Work, Identity and Social Action in the Twentieth Century: bank workers, rail workers and teachers*, Palgrave/Macmillan (with John Kirk)
- (2010 forthcoming) 'Skilled versus Qualified Labour: the exclusion of women from the construction industry' (with Linda Clarke) in *Gender and Class Revisited*, ed. Mary Davis, Merlin Press.
- (2009) 'A woman's place is where she wants to work': barriers to the retention of women in the building industry after the Second World War, *Scottish Labour History* with Linda Clarke
- (2009) 'Biography, Education and Civic Action: Teaching Generations and Social Change' in *Theorising Identities and Social Action*, ed M. Wetherell, (with J. Martin, and J.Kirk) Palgrave/Macmillan
- (2009) 'Resilience and loss in work identities: a narrative analysis of some retired teachers' work-life histories,' *British Educational Research Journal*, 99999:1, with John Kirk
- (2008) 'Picturing an Occupational Identity: images of teachers in careers and trade union publications 1940-2000' (2008) *History of Education*, vol. 37, No.2, 317-340.

- (2006) 'Women in Manual Trades', in A. W. Gale and M. J. Davidson (eds.) *Managing Diversity in the Construction Sector*, Spon Press, Taylor and Francis, (with L. Clarke and E. Michielsons)
- (2004) *Women in Construction* with L. Clarke, Elsebet Frydendal Pedersen, Elisabeth Michielsens, and Barbara Susman , CLR, Reed International.

### **Fernando Duran-Palma**

- (2010 forthcoming) Durán-Palma, F., Atzeni, M., and Ghigliani, P. 'Chile and Argentina', in Barry, M. and Wilkinson, A. (eds) *Handbook on Comparative Employment Relations*, Edward Elgar Press.
- (2009) Durán-Palma, F. and López, D. 'Labour Mobilisation in Chile's Copper Mining and Forestry Sectors', *Employee Relations*, 31, 3, 245-263.
- (2005) Durán-Palma, F., Wilkinson, A. and Korczynski, M. 'Labour Reform in a Neo-Liberal Protected Democracy: Chile 1990-2001', *International Journal of Human Resource Management*, 16: 1, 65-89.

**Contact for informal enquiries about this project:** Professor Linda Clarke, email: clarkel@wmin.ac.uk

**For details of how to apply, [click here](#)**