

CLR-GB

Newsletter 3/2007

The **CLR-GB** Office is a platform linking CLR activities at EU and GB levels as well as trade union and academic work in GB in the field of Construction Labour Research. It will support related initiatives specific to GB.

Introductory Note:

First of all we continue reporting about projects concerning construction labour in our network. We are convinced there are more around and we will be happy to report on those in the next issue if you let us know.

Secondly, a seminar on 28th September 2007 organised jointly by the Westminster Business School and School of the Built Environment in association with CLR raises one of the most burning issues of construction labour in Britain. This seminar on 'Comprehensive vocational education for a sustainable construction industry' will be introduced by speakers of the social partners, universities, and training institutions, continue with workshops for all participants, and conclude with a plenary discussion. If you are interested it may be wise to book as soon as possible.

Thirdly, the day before the seminar on vocational education, a most interesting seminar on 'Rethinking post-war British Industrial Relations History' with Brian Bercusson, Simon Deakin, Jim Tomlinson and Frank Wilkinson on 27th September 2007 will also take place at the University of Westminster.

The CLR-GB committee held a meeting on 5th July 2007 and decided to combine its annual general meeting in December with a seminar on labour mobility in construction (contact Linda Clarke or Ian Fitzgerald).

Looking forward to more abstracts on your work in construction labour research and related issues,

Jörn Janssen/CLR-GB July 2007

Projects:

Women-Core

Women-Core has been established to address the under-representation of women working in construction-related research.

In the last decade, gender mainstreaming has become the main strategy in the struggle for gender equality at an international level. Gender mainstreaming, or the transition towards gender-balanced and gender-sensitive organisations, is essential to foster gender integration into research, innovation and business. Despite work addressing women's participation in science and engineering, very little is known about the role of women in construction research. Furthermore, awareness of the need to attract, retain and promote women researchers seems less widespread among the main stakeholders in construction than in other industrial sectors.

Women-Core is co-funded by the European Commission's Research Directorate General and runs from April 2006 until September 2008. The specific objectives are to:

- Enhance the knowledge of women and strengthen their involvement in construction research;
- Identify the main research areas that are attractive from women's perspectives;
- Identify and assess the gender-specific needs of research and development in the construction sector;

- Explore new opportunities and provide recommendations for empowering women in construction research; and
- Establish a network of women researchers in construction-related research, including those in industry and academia.

The **Women-Core** consortium partners are: Labein-Tecnalia, Spain (Co-ordinator); Fundació CIREM, Spain; Centre of Excellence Women and Science (CEWS), Germany; Copenhagen Institute for Futures Studies (CIFS), Denmark; Czech Technical University (CVUT), Prague; and Loughborough University, UK.

In April 2007 the UK **Women-Core** team and ARCOM (Association of Researchers in Construction Management) held a successful one-day seminar exploring the influence of gender in construction research. The event, aimed at construction researchers from both industry and academia, was attended by approximately 25 delegates and was chaired by Professor Pat Carrillo of Loughborough University. Speakers at the event (Pat Morton, Sheffield Hallam University; Dr Stephanie Glendinning, Newcastle University; Dr Denise Bower, University of Leeds; and Dr Vian Ahmed, University of Salford) discussed a variety of issues including: the growing, but still limited, trend for construction researchers to study gender, and the difficulties they may face in doing so; how institutions have been designed by and for men, which can make them less user-friendly; getting the balance right between research, teaching and administration in academia, and the importance of self-belief for women's success. The **Women-Core** team hopes to further develop some of the ideas that emerged from the event, particularly issues around mentoring and networking, which were highlighted as significant to the development of women's research careers.

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Or visit our website at: www.women-core.org

Powerlines: Documenting the Olympic Park Story

The aim is to provide the most thoroughly documented account of a site design and construction process anywhere in the world. The project will not only detail what is happening immediately on the ground but

explore the wider service and supply chains, the working practices, technologies and materials which directly and indirectly contribute to the design, maintenance, promotion, security and use of the Olympic Park.

The biographies of the workers involved on the Powerline Project, shown on the Powerline Boards produced by the Olympic Delivery Authority are drawn from work in progress involving interviews with a cross section of the workforce on the main Olympic Park site at Carpenter Road. Using a mixture of methods, including site observation, visual ethnography, in depth interviews, photographic studies, virtual mapping, and the study of documents and plans, we hope to trace the fabrication of the Olympic Park every step of the way: from the site preparation to the architectural drawings to the final built out form, from the design of signage systems to the security and sewage systems, from the public response to the published plans, to the local host communities reactions to the buildings as they go up around them.

The main output will be an online multimedia archive of interviews and visual documentation, hosted by the Museum of London. This will be organised after the fashion of the 'rational dictionary' of arts and sciences produced by Diderot and d'Alembert (1751/72), a masterwork of the Enlightenment which included a detailed inventory of the manual trades as well as of architectural styles and social customs.

In addition an audio trail will be available enabling visitors to the Olympic Park to learn about the workforce and labour processes that went into its making. A series of exhibitions, books, reports and learning resources will also be produced. In this way the project will constitute a major contribution to the living legacy of the London 2012 Games available to future generations.

The project is being delivered as a partnership between the London East Research Institute, University of East London, the Museum of London and the Hackney Building Exploratory.

For further information or if you would like to tell your story please contact:

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Future Events:

Comprehensive vocational education for a sustainable construction industry: challenging a fragmented and narrow skills structure

Friday September 28th, 10.00am -5.30pm, Room CG79

Joint workshop Westminster Business School & School of the Built Environment in association with the European Institute of Construction Labour Research (CLR)

University of Westminster, 35 Marylebone Road, London NW1 5LS

(opposite Madame Tussauds and nearly opposite Baker Street tube station)

9.45am	<i>Registration and coffee</i>		
10.00am	Welcome	<i>Professor Linda Clarke</i>	University of Westminster
10.05am	The right to vocational education (VET)	<i>Professor Richard Pring</i>	University of Oxford
10.30am	The trade union's role in VET	<i>Tom Hardacre</i>	Unite, Construction & Contracting
10.55am	The employers' view:	<i>Joe Johnson</i>	CC and CECA
11.20am	<i>Tea Break</i>		
11.35am	Areas of training need: a new training scheme for concreting	<i>Neil Mitchell</i>	MD of Mitchellson
12.10pm	Career aspirations of trainees and operatives	<i>Joseph Kappia</i>	University of Loughborough
12.25pm	CITB's Role	<i>Pat Bowen</i>	ConstructionSkills
1.00pm	<i>Lunch</i>		
2.00pm	What can Skill Academies contribute?	<i>Sheila Hoile</i>	National Skills Academy
2.25pm	The FE role		
2.50pm	The Dutch alternative model	<i>Anneke Westerhuis</i>	CINOP, the Netherlands
3.15pm	<i>Tea Break</i>		
3.30pm	Workshops: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. How can VET be in tune with innovation? 2. What are the limitations of the institutional framework? 3. How to provide for a future career in construction for young people? 		
4.30pm	Report back and Platform Discussion		
5.15pm	<i>Drinks Reception and launch of 'Vocational Education' book</i>	<i>Professor Alan Jago and Len Shackelton</i>	University of Westminster

If you would like to attend, please contact:

Linda Clarke: 0207 911 5000 x 3158 or clarkel@wmin.ac.uk

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About the Workshop

Many of us have growing concerns if not alarm about the skills structure and system of vocational education

in the construction industry, for both the operative and the professional workforce. These include:

- the fragmentation and narrowness of skills;
- the lack of permeability in the qualification structure to develop a career path;

- the lack of a modern, comprehensive and innovative VET structure covering all activities in the industry;
- the low quality and quantity of VET compared with many other European countries;
- persistent skill shortages;
- the difficulties for young people – in particular those from ethnic minority groups and women - to gain good quality VET and systematic work experience;
- the institutional gap between college and industry;
- the distance between government policy and reality and lack of involvement of educationalists, trade unions and employers in determining and improving VET.

There are many more.

The large programme of construction now in progress and planned for, in particular in London and for the Olympic developments, has focussed attention on the problem of skills and VET in construction. It is often seen as offering an opportunity to educate and train many more for the construction industry. However, given the short term nature of this building imperative, the danger is that this opportunity will be lost as firms' priority is to meet immediate skill needs, the government's to fulfil the building programme, and colleges' to maintain student numbers and viable programmes. The more long term aim to develop a comprehensive VET system, encompassing both professionals and operatives and integrating the many thousands of youngsters who seek a worthwhile and even life-long career in the construction industry, may just be put to one side. What is needed for this is long term programme of investment able to overcome some of the problems that exist.

This workshop is intended to identify and discuss the problems confronting the VET system and to outline and agree proposals for an alternative system. These will subsequently be published. Participants are invited with a range of expertise – employers, trade unionists, VET providers, academics, researchers and those from government – from Britain and mainland Europe.

Rethinking post-war British Industrial Relations History

Westminster Business School, 35 Marylebone Road,
London NW1 5LS
(opposite Madame Tussauds and nearly opposite Baker Street tube station)

Thursday 27th September, 2007, 2.00 to 5.15 pm,

Room CG79

1.45 pm Arrival and Coffee

2.00 pm Reinventing the moral economy in 20th century Britain

Jim Tomlinson (University of Dundee)
Discussant: Frank Wilkinson (University of Cambridge)

3.30 pm Tea break

4.00 pm The evolution of the employment relationship in post-war Britain

Simon Deakin (University of Cambridge)
Discussant: Brian Bercusson (Kings College London)

5.30 pm CLOSE and Drinks

Please contact by email: clarkel@wmin.ac.uk

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To Our Readers:

The CLR-GB Newsletter is the organ of exchange for CLR in Great Britain. This function depends on the co-operation of its readers. The editors ask everybody who is interested in construction labour to contribute with information and commentaries. Please send your suggestions, articles, information, letters, etc. to

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