

## Relations industrielles

***International and Comparative Employment Relations: Globalisation and Change, 5<sup>th</sup> ed.***, Edited by Greg J. Bamber, Russell D. Lansbury and Nick Wailes, London: Sage, 2011, 418 pp., ISBN: 978-1-84920-723-2.

Anthony Gould

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Il ressort de ces contributions, aussi riches que variées, que les expériences de travail des jeunes diffèrent selon le contexte national mais aussi les conjonctures, le degré de qualification et les catégories sociales. Malgré l'universalité de la mondialisation, la réalité des jeunes est vécue différemment d'un pays à un autre, mais aussi au sein d'un même pays. Le monde actuel du travail, plus exigeant, crée des inégalités entre les jeunes eux-mêmes. Si, pour certains, la flexibilité permet de concilier une expérience de travail avec les études (par exemple au Québec), les plus vulnérables (les jeunes immigrants ou peu qualifiés) sont affectés par la précarité, parfois de manière durable. Cet ouvrage collectif regorge d'exemples sur la situation des jeunes au travail, tant dans les pays occidentaux que dans les économies émergentes qui ne manqueront pas d'alimenter les réflexions des chercheurs, praticiens et étudiants qui s'intéressent aux nouvelles générations qui forgent le monde du travail de demain.

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### **International and Comparative Employment Relations: Globalisation and Change, 5<sup>th</sup> ed.**

Edited by Greg J. Bamber, Russell D. Lansbury and Nick Wailes, London: Sage, 2011, 418 pp., ISBN: 978-1-84920-723-2.

This edited volume is the fifth in a series that has earned a place as required reading for serious students of employment relations in the modern era. More than in its previous iterations, the current work is influenced by debates about globalization. In keeping with this emphasis, it has new chapters devoted to the emerging economies of China and India.

Like its predecessor volumes, Bamber, Lansbury and Wailes' latest book is state of the art. It is broad in its scope, and sophisticated in its consideration of national context and history. It gives a sense of where

countries are headed but also is replete with micro-level detail drawn from credible primary sources. I was especially impressed by the first chapter which addresses labour-orientated theory about globalization. The topics covered include the recent global financial crisis, the convergence debate, varieties of capitalism theory and contemporary international issues such as labour standards. The chapter also touches on methodological issues which pertain to comparative studies of employment relations. Such an overview of key ideas offers two kinds of advantages. First, it serves as a useful stand-alone piece about globalization-related agendas that may influence employment relations. In this sense, it could be viewed as a solid and focused synopsis of key paradigms. The second way that Chapter One is useful is that it implicitly creates hypotheses that the astute reader subsequently has the opportunity to test as they learn about the experiences of individual countries. Hence, the introduction does not just provide appropriate context but gives the engaged reader a chance to think critically and reflect on whether experience and data bolster or refute theory. At the end of the first chapter, the editors give a description – and a graphic – of how they have grouped countries. Their taxonomy is based on previous conceptualizations (e.g. Liberal Market Economies, Coordinated Market Economies, European Developed Economies, Asian Developed Economies and Asian Emerging Economies). However their up-front preoccupation with identifying and describing between-nation patterns is especially useful for interpreting the more focused treatment of individual countries that is subsequently presented.

Reflecting the contributions of the world-class scholars who contributed to them, chapters dealing with individual countries are uniformly written to a very high standard. They all have a similar format: an overview of the focal nation's history and its social and economic circumstances; a more direct spotlight on its labour rela-

tions circumstances and current challenges; and, at the end of each chapter, a tabular chronology of employment-relations milestones. Being the 5th book in a series, the editors clearly intended to bring the work up to date. They fully accomplished this goal. Hence, at least when I read the book, key issues were topical and many were still being dealt with in the press and other less serious media. Indeed, as I read the book I was again reminded that, at least insofar as employment relations is concerned, serious inquirers need to eschew popular print and electronic media if they want to understand the underlying and/or more conceptual element of a phenomena.

Aside from the book's consistent structure, it is uncanny that, despite its multiple contributors, stylistic aspects of its written expression are very similar. This perhaps reflects the editors' substantial involvement in redrafting. Whatever the case, the work is clear and straightforward throughout. For example, sentences are mostly short and concise. Despite the fact that material being dealt with is often complex, the authors take care to be concise and differentiate between salient and less relevant material. Without exception, it is possible to effortlessly follow the narrative of each chapter. Along the way, key employment relations themes and challenges are typically well differentiated from mere description. Such a style creates a sense of methodological discipline and has a great deal of instructional value (those of us fixated on methods mostly make a big deal about the observation/inference distinction but often fall short with our examples).

My criticisms of the book are very minor and mostly concerned with quality control. For example, the work contains a few typos and – sometimes – I think that conclusions do not follow easily from the data upon which they are based. An example of this latter problem is on pages 92-93 dealing with (alleged) declining unemployment in Canada following the country's 2000 natu-

ral resources boom. Table 4.1's data (p. 93) do not show any particular trend towards declining unemployment in the post-2000 period. Furthermore, it is noted at the end of page 91 that "Canada achieved a 32 year low in unemployment in 2007 with a rate of 5.8 percent." In fact Table 4.1 indicates that the rate of unemployment in that year is 6.0 percent. There are a couple of similar problems in other sections of the work.

In their latest work, Bamber, Lansbury and Wailes have made a serious attempt to achieve two seemingly incompatible – or at least mismatched – goals. First, they have managed to give a detailed (and strategic) overview of modern comparative employment relations. Second, and perhaps more importantly, they have mostly made the narrative interesting and accessible. I reiterate, doing these things simultaneously is perhaps one of the toughest challenges in our field. For this reason alone, I conclude that this work is an important milestone. It should be on the shelf (or downloaded to the e-reader) of all serious 21<sup>st</sup> century employment relations scholars.

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### La dispersion au travail

Par Caroline Datchary, Toulouse : Octarès éditions, 2011, 192 p., ISBN : 978-2-915346-88-6.

Bien qu'il s'agisse d'un ouvrage ayant, avant tout, comme objet la description sociologique d'un certain type de situations de travail, il porte un regard nouveau sur les transformations du travail et sur les questions que soulèvent le stress et la pression des postes impliquant des responsabilités. Élargissant son approche, issue de la théorie des conventions et plus particulièrement de la sociologie des engagements, par celle de l'activité de travail qui est historiquement présente dans la sociologie du travail française, Caroline Datchary nous emmène à la découverte des situations de travail dispersives. Il s'agit de ces situations où la