

EU Active Inclusion Policies: Bringing the Role of Industrial Relations Back In

Manuela Galetto & Guglielmo Meardi

A new European Commission-funded research project funded involving IRRU and research centres in another three countries is taking IRRU's long-standing focus on the analysis of European employment relations and employment policies another step forward.

The project begins where a previous IRRU project left off. In 2009-13, a large-scale international, multi-level and multi-disciplinary Warwick-led EU-funded project (under the acronym 'GUSTO') explored the management of uncertainty in European labour markets. Evidence from this project (reported in IRRU Briefings no. 19 and no. 21) pointed to the importance of inclusive mechanisms of participation and collective bargaining to 'negotiate a different kind of crisis'. It also shed light on the sensitive issue of labour migration, highlighting the extant challenges with regard to this, but also identifying opportunities to avoid socially disruptive effects. The research, which has been widely cited and discussed in both EU-level and national policy circles, especially in Germany and Southern Europe (at an ad hoc conference organized by the Greek EU Presidency in June 2014, for instance), provided considerable evidence for the importance

of social policies in periods of uncertainty.

It may therefore be seen as a welcome development that the EU is now focusing more explicitly on social inclusion. However, at the same time, in these very same social inclusion policies, social dialogue and the industrial relations actors appear to have been largely forgotten. While this raises considerable cause for concern, for IRRU it also raises important research questions.

The new project – led by the University of Florence and with IRRU's Guglielmo Meardi and Manuela Galetto leading one 'work package' – is seeking to address some of the emerging questions on the changing role of industrial relations in labour market policies. Under the title 'Active inclusion and industrial relations from a multi-level governance perspective' (hence the new acronym AIRMULP), the project is looking specifically at the role of >> **continued on page 3**

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Trade Unions and the Politics of the Common Good: Jon Cruddas MP speaks at Warwick

In a wide-ranging talk drawing on political philosophy, cultural theory, history, religion and film, he argued for the reimagining of the meaning of work and of the category of labour. >> **See page 5**

IRRU wins new contract to continue as UK national centre for European Foundation

In March 2014, IRRU began a new contract as the UK national centre for The European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions (Eurofound). The contract is for four years, running to 2018. By the end of this four year period, IRRU will have been the national centre for the UK for over 20 years. >> **See page 6**

What does it take for women to achieve success in engineering?

All too often women who embark on an engineering career do not manage to remain within it. >> **See page 8**

International Recognition for Paul Marginson's Contribution to the Study of Employment Relations

On 19–20 June 2014, IRRU hosted a two-day international workshop marking the retirement of Professor Paul Marginson. With the exception of a brief period in the 1990s, Paul had been at Warwick since leaving the TUC in the early 1980s and had spent most of the last decade as Director of IRRU. He remains active in IRRU as an Emeritus Professor.

The event was attended by colleagues past and present, several of whom were his former doctoral students, from seven different countries (Belgium, Holland, Norway, Spain, Italy and Canada, in addition to the UK). On the first day, a round table keynote discussion was held on the theme of whether the future of employment relations governance will be transnational in nature. Chaired by former IRRU Director Willy Brown, Tony Edwards (Kings College London), Evélyne Léonard (Louvain-La-Neuve) and Aline Hoffmann (ETUI) presented academic and practitioners' views on a theme that was rather marginal when Paul started studying it in the 1990s, but is now attracting fast-increasing policy interest.

The second day of the workshop mirrored Paul's work in recent years, focussing on three themes. The first of these themes was industrial relations in multinational corporations, with presentations from Christina Niforou, Maarten Keune, Annette Hayden and Jimmy Donaghey with Juliane Reinecke covering issues such as supply chain management and regionalisation. The second theme was comparative European

employment relations, with Ida Regalia, Guglielmo Meardi, Sylvia Rohlfer and Jon-Erik Dølvik presenting their current work on comparative topics ranging from the Nordic to the Southern European industrial relations models. Under the final theme, the EU's role in industrial relations, Torsten Müller, Orestis Papadopoulos, Michel Goyer and Aristeia Koukiadaki presented their analyses of the EU's changing roles since the beginning of the Euro-crisis.

As well as providing two days of insightful debate, the workshop also highlighted the legacy of Paul's mentorship and support of a wide range of scholars who have gone on to forge significant careers. It is notable that under Paul's IRRU directorship and PhD supervision, a new much more international, as well as feminised, generation of IR experts has emerged, contrasting with previous much more insular and male-dominated cohorts. In addition to this, the workshop illuminated the centrality of Paul's contribution in developing IRRU into an internationally recognised centre for the analysis of the growing area of transnational employment relations regulation. The workshop also highlighted IRRU's ongoing contribution as a developmental ground for empirical and policy impactful research. Indeed, demonstrating IRRU's contribution with regard to this, Professor Jimmy Donaghey has recently taken on the Directorship of the University of Warwick's prestigious Global Priority Programme on Global Governance, with effect from Summer 2015.

The workshop was much more than a celebration. By bringing together some of the world's top comparative and international employment relations scholars it also helped to nurture several new collaborative research avenues, including the AIRMULP research project with the Universities of Florence and Amsterdam (see article in this issue of IRRU-Briefing), an IRRU-North American collaboration on global supply chain research, and a Norwegian-led project 'Euro-strains' on collective bargaining in Northern Europe, involving Guglielmo Meardi and Paul Marginson himself. Within this last project, Paul has also taken an advisory post in the Norwegian research centre FAFO. This, along with his continued involvement within IRRU as an Emeritus Professor, ensures that the international industrial relations research field will continue to benefit from the rigour and insight for which Paul has become so well known.

Guglielmo Meardi

IRRU Briefing is published periodically by the Industrial Relations Research Unit. It contains summaries of key findings from current and recent research projects, information on new projects and publications, and analysis of significant industrial relations developments.

IRRU Briefing aims to inform and contribute to the thinking of practitioners in industrial relations and human resource management. Many of our recent papers can be found on our web site. Please go to: www2.warwick.ac.uk/go/irru

For further information on our work, please contact IRRU's Research Coordinator at the address on the final page.

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industrial relations in the active inclusion policies of six European member states at EU, national and regional levels.

There is increasing awareness at the European level that competitiveness and growth need to be balanced with social cohesion and security. Labour market reforms designed in the 1980s and early 1990s to meet employers' demands for flexibility have been complemented, to different extents in different countries, by initiatives and measures to meet employees' need for protection. Flexicurity – the combination or 'trade-off' between flexibility and security – has become a pivotal concept of the European Employment Strategy. The newest manifestation of the European approach to labour markets is the recognition of the potential positive-sum game between social equity and economic efficiency and the 'investment' that social policy provisions can represent, as captured by the Social Investment Package.

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One of the core elements of the Social Investment Package is 'active inclusion', defined as the enabling of every citizen, in particular those excluded from the labour market, to fully participate in society. This has three pillars: adequate income support; inclusive labour markets; and access to quality services. The AIRMULP project is focusing on the first two of these pillars. The research is being undertaken in six countries, each with different problems concerning labour market inequalities and underperformance: France, Italy, Poland,

Spain, Sweden and the United Kingdom. Although social and labour market policies have been studied extensively in all these countries, as well as at the European level, little has been said either about the role of industrial relations in shaping such policy initiatives or about the effects of industrial relations involvement.

Early evaluation of national active inclusion policies in these six countries by the European Commission in 2013 has suggested that the involvement of actors in policy elaboration and implementation has been limited and erratic. A central focus of the AIRMULP project will be to understand why this is the case, and to explore conditions for improvements by seeking to identify examples of best practice at subnational levels. The research will pay particular attention to the issue of multi-level governance and interaction between policy-makers and social partners. Of particular scientific and academic interest is the varying extent to which actions at various levels are horizontally coordinated and whether policies and reforms in different but related fields relevant to active inclusion (youth employment and vocational training, for example) are designed in an integrated and coordinated manner. The research will also seek to investigate the extent to which such actions are vertically coordinated (both top-down and bottom-up) between the European, national and territorial levels. This latter issue, on which particular attention will be paid to the degree of formality and informality of coordination (or lack thereof) between the various levels, is likely to be of particular relevance to policy-makers.

Within the project, IRRU's role is to explore the national-level initiatives within the six countries, while the European partners (including Florence, the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona and the University of Amsterdam) are concentrating on EU and regional initiatives. The work dovetails neatly with previous extensive research conducted within IRRU on social dialogue in various EU countries (by Jimmy Donaghey on Ireland, and Guglielmo Meardi on Italy, Spain and Poland).

The research is expected to make contributions to two fields. The first is the field of comparative industrial relations research. Exploring the role of the respective social partners in initiatives for active inclusion in the six countries will allow for an analysis of the similarities and differences in approach across nation states. It will also

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allow for an analysis of outcomes from the point of view of the likely capacity of the social partners to contribute (both now and in the future) to active inclusion strategies. The insight into territorial initiatives and diversity of action will also inform debates on regional governance, while the research at the European level will enhance understanding of the implementation of supranational agreements at national level.

The second and more general contribution of the research will be to the understanding of democratic capitalism in Europe. In particular, the research will seek to unravel the degree and nature of coordination between institutional levels and policy fields, the role of rhetoric and ideas and their relation with policy action, the role of intermediate organizations, and the involvement of interest organisations. In essence, the research will seek to explore just how democratic it is possible for democratic capitalism to be.

One could argue that there is little room for optimism. As mentioned above, the first assessment of the implementation of the European Commission Recommendation on

Active Inclusion and its impact on national policies published in 2013 using data from 2008 to 2012 found limited involvement of the relevant social actors in the development and operation of inclusion policies. In France, for example, the experts group in charge of the assessment highlighted that “Although stakeholders, both unions

a condition for access to, its universalistic welfare state. This, however, has been challenged by the cuts to state support to help the unemployed find jobs, and the increased, arguably ideologically driven, shift towards individual responsibility, the result being an increased divide between protected workers and unemployed. In the

partners at different levels (EU, national and territorial) in the six countries.

The AIRMULP research, therefore, by shedding light on the complexity of the actors’ strategies involved, the power relations between them, and the diversity within national countries, aims at providing new answers to old questions of whether, how and under what conditions organized employment relations can contribute to better labour market governance. It is unlikely that the research will prove definitive. Nevertheless, the early evidence is that when European policy-makers forget industrial relations in their employment reforms, they do so at their own peril.

The project is funded by the European Commission DG Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion under the heading ‘Improving Expertise in the Field of Industrial Relations’. It involves the social partners at every step of the research more closely than is usually the case within purely academic projects. This is expected to open avenues for the research to have a significant impact on policy-making at European, national and regional level.

Further reading: Burrioni, L, Keune, M and Meardi, G (eds) (2012) *Economy and Society in Europe: A Relationship in Crisis*, Cheltenham: E Elgar

Crouch C (2014) *Governing Social Risks in Post-Crisis Europe*, Cheltenham: E Elgar

Galetto M, Marginson P, Spieser C (2014) “Collective bargaining and reforms to hospital health care provision: A comparison between the United Kingdom, Italy and France”, *European Journal of Industrial Relations* 20 (2)

Marginson P, Galetto M (2014) “Engaging with flexibility and security: Rediscovering the role of collective bargaining”, *Economic and Industrial Democracy* Online First

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and employers’ associations and persons suffering from poverty and exclusion, are particularly strongly involved in the Conseil national de lutte contre les exclusions [National Council against Exclusion], they are involved to a much lesser extent in the whole of the society, despite a large number of experiments”. Evidence from Italy suggests that inclusion strategies have different effects in different regions, with a particularly worrying lack of coordination both between different policies (housing, health, employment and training, for example) and between national and regional levels. In Poland, there would appear to be an ‘in principle’ adherence of national policies to the three pillars of the European social inclusion strategy, but inconsistent operationalization of the pillars within actual policy-making. There are, however, visible mechanisms by which social partners might become involved (the effectiveness of which will be explored within the AIRMULP fieldwork). Where Spain is concerned, implementation of the EU’s active inclusion recommendation has been found to be ‘patchy’. Here, general labour market vulnerability and high unemployment and poverty rates call into question the general EU-level assumption that “access to labour market equals relief from poverty”. Cases such as Spain may in fact highlight the limits of some of the European initiatives. In Sweden, activation to work has been a long and well established feature of, and

United Kingdom, much of the rhetoric around the re-definition of social and labour policies is based on the concept of ‘welfare-dependency’. The UK case is particularly interesting, however, given the diverse responses of the smaller nations (Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland); the role of the private providers (who are incentivised via payment by results schemes); and the incentives for employers to become engaged in job creation schemes given the low costs of doing so. Systematic consultation on these matters has been abandoned in recent years.

Many national accounts highlight that the political orientation of the government in power is central in steering the direction of social policies, this being at odds with some arguments within the literature pointing to the homogenization of some European policies. This in itself points to the renewed importance of comparative research, to provide critical analysis of European policy comparisons and benchmarking that are frequently undertaken in a hurried, decontextualised or even manipulative manner. Our research methodology has been designed accordingly, relying on a solid analysis of the statistical data concerning active inclusion policies; on desk research on the available literature on current legislation, relevant case law at EU and national level, collective agreements and social trilateral negotiations; and finally, in-depth interviewing of representatives of the social

Trade Unions and the Politics of the Common Good: Jon Cruddas MP speaks at Warwick

Deborah Dean

IRRU alumnus Jon Cruddas MP was invited to speak in the University of Warwick's 50th Anniversary Distinguished Lecture Series on 25th February 2015. This series brings public speakers of renown from academia, business, the arts and civil society to discuss ideas under the series heading 'Imagining the Future'. Jon is MP for Dagenham and Rainham and Policy Coordinator for the Labour Party. He was an undergraduate at Warwick, then took the MA in Industrial Relations, followed by a PhD in Industrial and Business Studies, supervised in IRRU by Professor Peter Nolan. Jon met current members of IRRU to discuss issues concerning contemporary industrial relations research. He then gave his lecture, titled *Labour Value – Trade Unions and the Politics of the Common Good*.

At the start of the lecture Jon described Warwick as formative in his intellectual development, and what he termed the 'intensely democratic Warwick tradition of analysis' was a theme that ran throughout the talk. In a wide-ranging talk drawing on political philosophy, cultural theory, history, religion and film, he argued for the reimagining of the meaning of work and of the category of labour.

Part of the lecture used the films *Made in Dagenham* and *Fish Tank* as frames for thought on socio-political changes that have distorted relationships at a personal level, with society, and with the state. He talked about the importance of the arts as a way of understanding these issues, noting that 'Drama can make these points better than academic commentary more often than not.' Continuing with this theme of unexpected institutional focus, he talked about religious interventions on the question of the relationship between capital and labour, referring to the comments from Pope Francis that 'trade unions have been an essential force for social change' and the Church of England bishops on successive post-war political failures and elections which 'did not honour work or labour.'

This in turn informed a discussion of the Aristotelian notion of the common good versus neoliberalism, the latter having 'become naturalised...like air' and having displaced the idea of workers and labour

value. His proposal was that this tension must form the future conversation to be had in public debate; that a constructive vision of civic peace and prosperity 'is inconceivable without a significant role for labour itself, at work and across society.'

“To be truly radical is to make hope possible rather than despair convincing”

Raymond Williams

Jon concluded by drawing out the lessons in fictional drama of the necessity for human wellbeing and interdependence. He highlighted that the Warwick industrial relations tradition had defied orthodoxies in its focus on labour and on institutions, and had thus 'laid crucial foundations for imagining the future'. He ended his talk by saying that as an ex-student he had come to say thank you. A lively and challenging question and answer session with the audience followed, rounding off a fascinating evening best summarised by Jon's final quote, from Raymond Williams: '*To be truly radical is to make hope possible rather than despair convincing*'.

IRRU wins new contract to continue as UK national centre for European Foundation

Duncan Adam

In March 2014, IRRU began a new contract as the UK national centre for The European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions (Eurofound). The contract is for four years, running to 2018. By the end of this four year period, IRRU will have been the national centre for the UK for over 20 years.

The association between IRRU and the European Foundation first began when IRRU was awarded the contract for the EIRO (European Industrial Relations Online) Observatory on its inception in 1996. IRRU then subsequently won contracts with the other observatories EWCO (European Working Conditions Online) and EMCC (European Monitoring Centre on Change) on their creation. The re-award of the contract recognises the substantial excellence of the contribution that IRRU has made over the years to the study of UK and comparative industrial relations.

This time around, the contract has expanded to cover new and exciting topics. It no longer just covers issues relating to industrial relations, working conditions and restructuring. These familiar core elements remain, but social policy topics relating to living and working conditions have now also been added. There have also been changes at Eurofound. The old industrial relations and working conditions observatories (EWCO, EIRO) are being restructured and revamped into one single European Observatory of Industrial Relations and Working Conditions (EurWork), publicly accessible on-line at: www.eurofound.europa.eu. The EMCC observatory continues as before.

Due to the expansion of the brief, IRRU took the decision to tender for the contract in collaboration with the Institute for Employment Research (IER), also of the University of Warwick. The work is divided up so that IRRU covers the element of the contract relating to industrial relations and working conditions, and IER undertakes the work for EMCC focusing on restructuring and labour market trends. In previous years Mark Hall undertook a large amount of the Eurofound work. While he continues to be involved following retirement, Duncan Adam rejoined IRRU

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in May 2014 to work exclusively on the delivery of the contract. The core IRRU team, responsible for most of the output now comprises: Jimmy Donaghey and Guglielmo Meardi (award holders and workload managers), Duncan Adam and Paul Marginson, and associate fellows Mark Hall and Mark Carley.

IRRU's role on the contract is to provide high-quality up-to-date reports to Eurofound on key employment, working conditions and industrial relations developments. The reports, which are published online, represent an important 'go-to' resource for anyone interested in these matters. While this includes students, academics and other researchers, the reports also serve the needs of a core audience of trade unions and employer' associations at national and European level. In particular, the work supplies information which feeds into policy across four key priorities:

- Increasing labour market participation and combating unemployment by creating jobs, improving labour market functioning and promoting integration

- Improving working conditions and making work sustainable throughout the life course
- Developing industrial relations to ensure equitable and productive solutions in a changing policy context
- Improving standards of living and promoting social cohesion in the face of economic disparities and social inequalities

In addition to survey data reports highlighting findings from major national surveys (such as the 2011 Workplace Employment Relations Survey), national contributions to comparative analytical reports (CARs) which focus on a particular topical issue and its treatment across Europe, and sectoral representativeness studies (REP studies) which assess the representative capacity of employers' organisations and trade unions across the EU, the new contract has added several new elements. First, the new 'Quarterly Reports' focus on key debates and research relating to industrial relations and working conditions. Currently the reports are not published in full, but short sections are taken and published by Eurofound as information snippets (similar to the old information updates). Second, the newly-established 'Spotlight Reports' provide discussion on topical debates, changes to legislation and tribunal/ court judgements relevant to industrial relations practice. Third, the new 'Research in Focus' reports summarise the key findings and the main methodological elements of particularly important or relevant studies or surveys.

The information provided by IRRU within these reports has thus far covered a large number of topics (for examples of the topics covered, please see the box below). As these examples show, given the wealth of and breadth of the issues and information covered, the reports provide an invaluable

resource to a wide audience of academics, researchers, practitioners and policymakers. As the contract evolves, further updates

concerning the reports provided to Eurofound will be posted online.

Examples of reports written for Eurofound		
Spotlight reports	Quarterly Reports	Research in Focus
<p>Government’s proposals for reform of the EU’s social policy role As the government examines the UK’s relationship with the EU, this article sets out the options for reform. This is particularly topical given that the EU role in social and employment policy remains highly controversial.</p>	<p>Report on the biennial survey of health and safety representatives This survey reveals the extent to which stress at work remains a major health risk.</p>	<p>Wage growth in the last 40 years This report focuses on key results from an Office for National Statistics research paper examining wage growth over a forty year period, and the views and policies of the social partners with regard to this. In particular, the article highlights the Confederation of British Industry’s call for economic growth to be translated into wage growth.</p>
<p>Right to request flexible working This came into operation on 30 June 2014. The report outlines its background, how the legislation will work, and the views of the social partners. It suggests that the impact may be limited because employers retain the right to refuse and also because many progressive employers offered these flexible working options prior to the legislation.</p>	<p>New rules to promote shared parental leave These rules came into effect for babies born or adopted after 5 April 2015. This report also links to guidance on the new arrangements prepared by BIS, by Acas and by the TUC.</p>	<p>Key results from the UKCES’s Employer Skills Survey This report explores issues including skills shortages, training and high performance working. The results of the survey suggest that while the UK may be emerging from recession, a lack of skills may limit this growth. The results have important implications in terms of skills policies and feed into debates about the roles of employers and government in skill development.</p>
<p>Zero Hours Contracts This report focuses on the rise of employment contracts which do not specify guaranteed hours of work (zero hours contracts). Such contracts have been hotly debated over recent years in the media, by social partners and by labour market experts. This report examines the debate surrounding the use of controversial ‘exclusivity clauses’ – where employment contracts do not permit employees to work for other employers even when no work is provided.</p>	<p>End to ‘check-off’ in the civil service This report analyses the conflict between the government and the PCS union, which represents civil service employees, over the changes to payment of union subscriptions, in particular the ending of the ‘check off’ system whereby union subscriptions are taken directly from employees’ pay packets by the employer.</p>	<p>The impact of the Information and Consultation of Employees (ICE) Regulations This ACAS-commissioned study, based on data from the 2011 Workplace Employment Relations Study and undertaken by IRRU’s Duncan Adam and Mark Hall and John Purcell (formerly of IRRU), revealed that the ICE regulations have had limited overall impact on the existence of consultative committees, but among certain sizes of organisation, some notable effects have emerged.</p>
<p>Key updates in UK employment legislation Including the introduction of ‘early conciliation’ for employment tribunal claims, abolition of statutory discrimination questionnaires and changes to pay rates for parental leave.</p>	<p>Fathers’ attendance at antenatal appointments This report outlines the new arrangements concerning rights of fathers (or partners of pregnant women) to attend antenatal appointments.</p>	<p>The 2013 PCS workload and work-life balance survey This survey of members of the civil servants’ PCS union highlights longer hours, poorer work-life balance and significant rises in time off due to stress.</p>

What does it take for women to achieve success in engineering?

Dulini Fernando

In recent months, the plight of Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths (STEM) has rarely been out of the limelight. Commentators agree that STEM has a key role to play in ensuring national prosperity and well-being. They also concede that current changes in higher education policy coupled with a seemingly deep-rooted lack of enthusiasm for STEM subjects among young people means that achieving this is no easy task. And the situation is worse for women. In spite of extensive efforts to encourage young women into STEM careers, few manage to reach the highest levels.

The situation is particularly severe for engineering where the career pipeline is notoriously leaky – all too often women who embark on an engineering career do not manage to remain within it. The reasons for this are well-known: ‘chilly’ university environments, a lack of equal opportunities, inflexible workplace arrangements. However, little is known about women engineers who succeed. This is problematic because if career interventions are to have an impact, an understanding of how successful women engineers account for their achievement is critical. Taking this as a starting point, I have, in collaboration with Laurie Cohen from Nottingham University and Joanne Duberley from Birmingham University, been investigating the career management strategies women engineers use to overcome or negate obstacles to advancement and what educational institutions and employing organizations are doing to facilitate their progress.

Women in engineering: the story so far

Women comprise over half of the higher education student population in most European countries. However they make up only a small proportion of students in engineering and technology. In the UK, where women account for only 5.5 per cent of all engineering professionals, the UK government has taken a range of initiatives to encourage them to pursue education in STEM subjects. However, only 51 per

“ Women engineers are marginalised from core knowledge clusters because they are seen as less competent than their male counterparts. In addition to direct work-related exclusion, research has shown that they also face significant bias in performance evaluations and barriers in gaining access to social networks. Given that some engineering posts are advertised through personal or informal contacts, being outside established networks can be professionally dangerous and escalate into a profound obstacle. ”

cent of female STEM graduates actually go on to work in STEM roles, compared with 68 per cent of male STEM graduates. In explaining why this happens, engineering has traditionally been seen as a masculine territory in which women are only ever present at the margins. Studies have also drawn attention to how women engineers are marginalised from core knowledge clusters because they are seen as less competent than their male counterparts. In addition to direct work-related exclusion, research has shown that they also face significant bias in performance evaluations and barriers in gaining access to social networks. Given that some engineering posts are advertised through personal or informal contacts, being outside established networks can be professionally dangerous and escalate into a profound obstacle.

Also particularly notable is prior research demonstrating the widespread occurrence of sexual harassment. For instance, research in the construction industry reveals how women engineers frequently encounter crude humour displays of pornographic imagery on-site and potentially unruly male colleagues, making work settings extremely uncomfortable and hostile. In addition, engineering is characterised by the expectation that incumbents prioritise work above all other concerns and by long hours. With regard to this, prior research has found examples of women engineers being asked questions in recruitment

processes about their plans for marriage and starting a family. It has also been found that women in engineering and technology are more likely than women in other sectors to work 100 hours a week, with significant demands related to travel. Such cultures significantly disadvantage workers who have responsibilities out of the work sphere.

Developing research into success

While we have increasing knowledge about the obstacles women face in the engineering profession, less is known about how women navigate these obstacles to achieve career success. Previous studies have provided some insights into the approaches women engineers adopt. Strategies of lying low, acting like 'one of the boys', emphasising advantages over disadvantages of working in engineering, adopting an 'anti-woman' approach, proving one's technical ability and projecting a professional image have all been identified. A recent US study suggests that women's technical ability and commitment can serve as catalysts for change through initiating incremental, individual-level changes in their peers, subordinates and superiors. However, overcoming prejudice by developing one's skills may be easier said than done given that women are often closely scrutinized by the dominant majority especially in relation to their performance. The aforementioned US study also draws attention to women convincing themselves that gendering is simply part of the culture – a strategy referred to as 'rationalization'. Such a strategy may enable women to tolerate marginalisation, but it may also serve to sustain the masculine occupational culture, rather than creating an impetus for change. In another American study it was found that some women engineers construct engineering as gender neutral. Reflecting on women's reluctance to frame their experiences in terms of gender, this study suggests that engaging in discussions about gender would be at odds with their professional identity.

The research I am currently engaged in seeks to build on this body of literature. Starting from the view that if career interventions are to have an impact, an understanding of how successful women engineers account for their achievement is

critical, the research seeks to understand: first, what women at various career stages seek to achieve in their careers; second, what they do to achieve their career goals; third, who helps women engineers stay in the career pipeline; and fourth, the resources they find particularly useful for their career development.

The study is based on data collected through qualitative interviews and focus groups with 100 women at 5 stages of the 'engineering career pipeline': AS-level (i.e. pre-university) students, final year undergraduate/masters students and practicing engineers working at entry, middle and senior levels within their organizations. The company-based

assistance. Instead, our respondents focused on developing informal relationships with colleagues and superiors, describing how these could lead to sponsorship and access to high-prestige foreign assignments. They also talked about the importance of developing close relationships with immediate line managers in shaping their career direction and increasing their self-confidence. Particularly striking was the importance of these relationships in preventing women from dropping out of the profession altogether. Also notable, however, was that in order to develop these relationships, our respondents considered it important that they strategically distanced themselves from their gender category.

“Contrary to our expectations, respondents did not find formal interventions such as quota systems, mentors or women's networks helpful. Indeed, they attempted to distance themselves from these measures because they saw them as stereotyping women as a weak group in need of special assistance. Instead, our respondents focused on developing informal relationships with colleagues and superiors, describing how these could lead to sponsorship and access to high-prestige foreign assignments.”

interviews take the form of three case studies: a company supplying fuel, energy, lubricants and petrochemicals to customers around the world; a gas and diesel engine manufacturer; and a leading automotive company.

Preliminary analysis of the data collected thus far has revealed some notable findings. In particular, the analysis has highlighted the importance of informal relationships. Contrary to our expectations, respondents did not find formal interventions such as quota systems, mentors or women's networks helpful. Indeed, they attempted to distance themselves from these measures because they saw them as stereotyping women as a weak group in need of special

Indeed, in doing so they often associated fellow female colleagues with established negative gender stereotypes. Arguably, this had the potential to contribute significantly towards the ongoing reproduction of prevailing structures of patriarchy.

Another key finding is how women's conduct in engineering environments is regulated by implicit but powerful norms of appropriate behaviour which include modest dress code and maintaining a distance from male colleagues. These norms of behaviour, however, conflict significantly with the ability of women to engage in networking activities. While women described the gender recruitment and retention efforts of their apparently

modern, liberal organisations, they also talked about how their conduct was regulated through surveillance, rumour and 'put-down' humour. Our respondents drew on a number of strategies to deal with this paradoxical situation, which included positioning themselves as 'daughters' and 'sisters' to try to secure acceptance. An

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emerging minority, however, took a more defiant stance, flaunting their femininity in a highly sexualised way in order to gain career favours from powerful men. Those who sought to achieve their career goals through such means, however, resulted in appropriating a typically stigmatised femininity in the process.

When the research is complete, the findings may well have significant implications for HR practitioners in engineering and other male-dominated industries. Through understanding what forms of help women find particularly useful for their career development and what they find less helpful, the research will highlight ways in which retention and support interventions can be redesigned to better suit the needs of the female workforce. Likewise, by gaining insights into the implicit behavioural norms which shape women's experiences in the contemporary organisational world, HR practitioners can work towards raising awareness of these norms and their associated negative repercussions for women's careers. Women workers themselves might also reflect on the findings to understand how their behaviours (particularly the tendency to stigmatise fellow women) may contribute towards reproducing existing structures of disadvantage.

IRRU staff

Sophie Gamwell, Paul Marginson and Dimi Stoyanova left IRRU during 2014. All three of these departing members contributed enormously to IRRU's research profile, as well as to the unit's collegiality. Paul Marginson was the Director of IRRU for ten years (2002–12). He remains in IRRU as a Professor Emeritus. Duncan Adam, David Allen, Stefano Gasparri, James Hayton and Emma Stringfellow joined IRRU during the year.

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About IRRU

IRRU embraces the research activities of the industrial relations community in Warwick University's Business School (WBS). There are currently 17 academic and research staff in membership, plus a number of associate fellows.

Our work combines long-term fundamental research and short-term commissioned projects. In both instances, we maintain the independence and integrity which have been the hallmark of IRRU since its establishment in 1970. We aim thereby to improve the quality of data and analysis available to industrial relations policy-making by government, employers and trade unions.

IRRU's advisory committee includes senior representatives of the Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service, the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development, the Confederation of British Industry, the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills, and the Trades Union Congress.

IRRU's research projects are clustered around these main themes:

- Europeanisation and internationalisation of employment relations
- Equality, diversity, careers and work-life balance
- Employee representation, voice and workplace management

IRRU, jointly with the Institute for Employment Research (IER), also based at the University of Warwick, is the UK national centre for the European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions (Eurofound). Eurofound operates two 'observatories': EurWork and European Monitoring Centre on Change (EMCC). IRRU takes responsibility for the EurWork observatory, while IER is responsible for the EMCC observatory. IRRU's role is to provide up-to-date information on key employment and industrial relations developments, research findings and policy analysis, aimed primarily at practitioners and policymakers at national and EU levels and published online: <http://eurofound.europa.eu/observatories>.

Further information

Information on our current research programme and projects, and on recent papers and publications, is available from IRRU's website: www2.warwick.ac.uk/go/irru/

Alternatively, please contact Val Jephcott, IRRU Research Coordinator, Warwick Business School, University of Warwick, Coventry, CV4 7AL; email: irruoffice@wbs.ac.uk; phone: +44 (0)24 7652 4268

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