

OPEN ACCESS

ISSN 2280-4056

*E-Journal of  
International and Comparative*

# LABOUR STUDIES

Volume 3, No. 1 January 2014



**ADAPT**  
www.adapt.it  
UNIVERSITY PRESS

**ADAPT** *International School of Higher Education in Labour and Industrial Relations*

*Scientific Directors*

Lauren Appelbaum (USA), Greg Bamber (Australia), Stuart M. Basefsky, (United States), Daria V. Chernyaeva (Russia), Richard Croucher (United Kingdom), Maurizio del Conte (Italy), Tomas Davulis (Lithuania), Tayo Fashoyin (Nigeria), József Hajdu (Hungary), Ann Hodges (USA), Richard Hyman (United Kingdom), Maarten Keune (The Netherlands), Chris Leggett (Australia), Guglielmo Meardi, (United Kingdom), Shinya Ouchi (Japan), Massimo Pilati (Italy), Valeria Pulignano (Belgium), Michael Quinlan (Australia), Juan Raso Delgue (Uruguay), Raúl G. Saco Barrios (Peru), Alfredo Sánchez Castaneda (Mexico), Malcolm Sargeant (United Kingdom), Jean-Michel Servais (Belgium), Silvia Spattini (Italy), Michele Tiraboschi (Italy), Anil Verma (Canada), Stephen A. Woodbury (USA)

*Joint Managing Editors*

Malcolm Sargeant (Middlesex University, United Kingdom)  
Michele Tiraboschi (University of Modena and Reggio Emilia, Italy)

*Editorial Board*

Lilli Casano (Italy), Francesca Fazio (Italy), Emanuele Ferragina (United Kingdom), Antonio Firinu (Italy), Valentina Franca (Slovenia), Maria Giovannone (Italy), Erica Howard (United Kingdom), Karl Koch (United Kingdom), Lefteris Kretsos (United Kingdom), Attila Kun (Hungary), Felicity Lamm (New Zealand), Cristina Lincaru (Romania), Nikita Lyutov (Russia), Merle Muda (Estonia), Boaz Munga (Kenya), John Opute (UK), Eleonora Peliza (Argentina), Daiva Petrylaite (Lithuania), Ceciel Rayer (The Netherlands), Aidan Regan (Ireland), Marian Rizov (United Kingdom), Salma Slama (Tunisia), Francesca Sperotti (Italy), Araya Mesele Welemariam (Ethiopia), Barbara Winkler (Austria), Machilu Zimba (South Africa)

*Language Editor*

Pietro Manzella (ADAPT Senior Research Fellow)

*Book Review Editor*

Chris Leggett (James Cook University, Australia)

*Digital Editor*

Avinash Raut (ADAPT Technologies)



***Are Bad Jobs Inevitable?  
Trends, Determinants and Responses  
to Job Quality in the Twenty-First Century,***  
**edited by Chris Warhurst, Françoise Carré,  
Patricia Findlay and Chris Tilly. A Review**

Richard Monypenny \*

---

At an aspirational level job quality does matter, but can it be achieved and, if so, how? This edited volume of separately authored chapters, most of which were presented as papers at the 2010 International Labour Process Conference, makes a significant contribution to the bad jobs debate on some of the issues that can help answer these questions and on some of those that require a solution.

Whether jobs are good or bad does in different contexts matter to individual workers, to working communities, to employers and to governments, because good jobs can increase economic competitiveness, generate social cohesion and provide a sense of personal well-being. Good jobs can contribute to happy and rewarding lives, especially where employees can make choices about their work. It is true that bad jobs can create a sense of community (for example, where workers band together in adversity), but more often they restrict the choices employees can make about their work, although bad jobs are sometimes perceived as less bad than the available alternatives.

---

\* Richard Monypenny is an Adjunct Associate Professor at James Cook University, Australia. The present review refers to Chris Warhurst, Françoise Carré, Patricia Findlay and Chris Tilly eds. *Are Bad Jobs Inevitable? Trends, Determinants and Responses to Job Quality in the Twenty-First Century* Palgrave Macmillan, Houndmills, UK, 2012. 262 pp. ISBN 978 0 230 33691 9.

The rationale of the volume is that job quality does matter because of its contributions to the economy, the society and to the individual. By focusing on bad jobs, it outlines the debates, developments, issues and trends of job quality while asking whether bad jobs are inevitable. Its fifteen chapters define and measure bad jobs, explain variations and changes in job quality, and identify workplace practices and broader non-workplace strategies for making bad jobs better. Its editors (Carre et al.) overview the topic with their “Job Quality: Scenarios, Analysis and Interventions”. There follow contributions on job quality in different nations and a region: Europe (Antón et al.); the US (Osterman); Australia (Pocock and Skinner); Canada (Thomas). Some authors focus on job quality in occupations, sectors or industries in selected countries: Swedish manufacturing (Huzzard); US retail (Lambert and Henley); Mexican call centres (Álvarez-Galván); hospital cleaning in England and Scotland (Munro). Contributions on the international and global dimensions of job quality are the comparative determinants of low wages (Carre and Tilly) and auto workers in the global economy (Rothstein). Other, but related, criteria adopted are: labour standards (Fine and Gordon; Theodore et al.); skills development (Keep and James); frontline (Dill et al.).

Irrespective of its substantive contribution to job quality and the labour process this volume serves an auxiliary function. It provides a good example of the exploration of a new field and for this reason I would strongly recommend it to research students. Indeed, it will serve as a useful companion for honours and postgraduate students in the wider and applied social sciences of Sociology, Labour Relations, Labour Economics, Organization Studies, and Human Resource Management. Substantively, it is useful reading on methodological issues in the study of job quality, on the influence of institutions and social norms in producing and perpetuating low-wage work, and on the incentives that shape employers’ business strategies.

A limitation to this volume, and to the series of which it is part, *The Critical Perspectives on Work and Employment*, available at <http://www.palgrave.com/products/series.aspx?s=CPWE> is that I could find no electronic access to any of its papers. Given that this review is for an electronic journal, I feel bound to comment on the electronic availability of the conference papers and the papers published in this book. To this end I have identified the following links: the book series of the annual International Labour Process Conference (ILPC) at <http://www.ilpc.org.uk/BookSeries.aspx>, the conference books published by Palgrave at <http://www.palgrave.com/products/series.aspx?s=CPWE>, further information on the series at <http://www.ilpc.org.uk/> and at

[irena.grugulis@durham.ac.uk](mailto:irena.grugulis@durham.ac.uk), and the special issue of the Journal of Industrial Relations, 2011, 51(3) on job quality at <http://jir.sagepub.com/content/53/1.toc> .

I strongly recommend *Are Bad Jobs Inevitable? Trends, Determinants and Responses to Job Quality in the Twenty-First Century* to all those concerned with the study, management and the experience of work.



# Adapt International Network





**ADAPT** is a non-profit organisation founded in 2000 by Prof. Marco Biagi with the aim of promoting studies and research in the field of labour law and industrial relations from an international and comparative perspective. Our purpose is to encourage and implement a new approach to academic research, by establishing ongoing relationships with other universities and advanced studies institutes, and promoting academic and scientific exchange programmes with enterprises, institutions, foundations and associations. In collaboration with DEAL – the Centre for International and Comparative Studies on Law, Economics, Environment and Work, the Marco Biagi Department of Economics, University of Modena and Reggio Emilia, ADAPT set up the International School of Higher Education in Labour and Industrial Relations, a centre of excellence which is accredited at an international level for research, study and postgraduate programmes in the area of industrial and labour relations. Further information at [www.adapt.it](http://www.adapt.it).

For more information about the E-journal and to submit a paper, please send a mail to [LS@adapt.it](mailto:LS@adapt.it).

**DEAL** Centre for International and Comparative Studies  
Law Economics Environment Work

THE MARCO BIAGI DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMICS  
UNIVERSITY OF MODENA AND REGGIO EMILIA



**ADAPT**International.it  
www.adapt.it

Building the Future of Work