

# Employment Research Centre News

**Issue 1 - Dec. 1999.** ERC - 1, College Green - Trinity College, Dublin, Ireland.  
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## What is the ERC?

The Employment Research Centre is a group of researchers at Trinity College Dublin. Our research is on employment in Ireland and Europe. The contemporary Irish experience is of recent economic success based on high technology industry and services, a supportive educational system and a framework of social partnership.

Our concerns grow out of this situation:

- the changing labour market, especially the creation and utilisation of technical skills and the increasing labour force participation of women
- the role of technology, especially information technology, within increasingly global enterprises

- public employment policy at the level of both the nation state and the European Union.

Our main work is through funded research projects usually lasting several years. However, unlike traditional academics, we aim to continually interact with policy makers and other relevant actors while we research.

Our core discipline is sociology and we have expertise in qualitative and quantitative research and data analysis. Individual members of staff also have a background in economics and political science. The ERC also carries out short term contract research and consultancy. Special areas are equal opportunities and labour market analysis.

## The researchers

### **James Wickham**

Jean Monnet Professor of European Labour Market Studies in the Department of Sociology at Trinity College Dublin. He has researched and published on Irish industrialisation and labour market issues, especially in the electronics industry. Main interests: high technology industry and high skill labour markets, equal opportunities, sustainable development.

### **Gerard Boucher**

(BA) Political Science and Sociology ( MA ) Sociology from Temple University. He is completing a PhD in Sociology at TCD on Ireland's national, British, European and global integrations.

ERC PROJECT: UNIREG

This project studies the role of the universities in regional development. It explores a broad range of topics from the linkages between universities and the public and private sectors to the training of software workers. The project involves various European partners.

### **Grainne Collins**

BA(Econ), MSc(Applied Econ), DPhil(Econ). Her interest is in social exclusion/inclusion. She examined poverty and inequality in the UK, Northern Ireland, the Republic of Ireland and Hungary. She also has looked at broad anti-poverty measures in developed and developing countries.

ERC PROJECT: SERVEMPLOI

She is working on a three-year Europe-wide study of women's employment and career prospects in the Information Society with participation from eight European Union countries, co-ordinated by ERC, TCD.

### **Maria Lohan**

Her main area of research expertise is in the sociology of science and technology with special reference to ICTs and transport technologies. Her doctoral thesis (Ph.D.,TCD, 1998) investigated the relationships of gender (masculinities) and domestic telephony.

ERC PROJECT: SCENESUS TECH. See next page for details.

### **Juliet Webster**

Juliet Webster directs project Servemploi. Her interests are in women's employment and social policy development for the Information Society. She has previously worked at the University of Edinburgh, and as an academic expert in DGV of the European Commission. She is the author of *Shaping Women's Work: Gender, Employment and Information Technology* (1996), *Office Automation: the Labour Process and Women's Work in Britain* (1990), and the co-editor of *The Information Society in Europe: Work and Life in an Age of Globalization* (forthcoming).

ERC PROJECT: SERVEMPLOI

### **Sinéad Ní Aoileáin**

(BA) Currently studying for M.Sc. in Applied Social Research. She has worked on projects on Child-care and Flexibility in Ireland and a study of staff in Drug Treatment Centres in Dublin. Previously worked with Goodbody Economic Consultants and Kelliher and Associates.

ERC PROJECT: GARDAI

This is to assess equal opportunities between women and men in An Garda Síochána (Irish Police Service). It involves analysis of both qualitative and quantitative data.

### **Piero Poli**

(MSc. Applied Social Research, Laurea in Sociology). His main areas of interest are epistemological foundation of the

## Labour market observatory

The Irish labour market is now changing rapidly. And some aspects, like the general labour shortage, are completely novel. To monitor these developments the ERC is creating the Labour Market Observatory. The first activity will be a monthly labour market commentary published on our web page. The January edition (published Jan 15) looks at the growth of labour contracting in Ireland. More information can be found at:

<http://www.tcd.ie/erc/labobs.htm>

social sciences and hi-tech labour market. His MSc. thesis used a qualitative approach to explore the living world of employees working in a call centre. In the past he carried out quantitative and qualitative research in the areas of community development, refugees and impact of e-commerce.

## SceneSusTech

In early 2000 the research project 'SceneSusTech' comes to an end. This novel research links how people actually use cars to the different social and political structures of four European cities. It is led by the ERC and funded by the European Commission in its 'Targeted Socio-Economic Research' (TSER) programme. Professor James Wickham has been the co-ordinator of the project, Dr. Maria Lohan has been full-time researcher in TCD. The project has included research teams in three other countries – Finland, Greece and Italy.

The project studies four cities. Athens and Dublin are 'car dependent' cities – they have very high levels of car usage, in particular for the journey to work. In Bologna and Helsinki people are less dependent on the car for their daily movements.

The project began by locating our four case study cities in a range of European and global cities using city level data on variables such as transport usage, wealth, population density etc.

The next stage was an historical account of the decline of public transport and the rise of the private car in each of the cities. It traced the emergence of a new public transport policy in Bologna and Helsinki, and the continued dominance of the car in Athens and Dublin.

The fieldwork research of the project began by studying the politics of the 'car system' in each city. In each city we have also analysed two key decisions which either stimulate or reduce car usage (in Dublin the Liffey Valley shopping centre and the Luas light railway). Later stages examined three different areas within each city: a working class suburb, a middle

class suburb and a 'yuppified' inner city area. Using ethnographic research, in-depth interviews, a social survey and focus groups, we have studied people's *mobility* (different forms of transport) and *accessibility* (what and where they can reach). The final stage of the project will construct different *scenarios* for more sustainable urban transport in the different cities. These will be presented at a conference in Helsinki in early 2000.

Some main results

In a European context Dublin, like Athens, represents an extreme case of car dependency. The initial statistical analysis showed that this cannot be explained by its new wealth or even its low population density. Bologna and Helsinki are wealthier, but less car-dependent, while Helsinki has a population density as low as that of Dublin.

Comparing the four cities show that car dependency can only be curtailed if the city combines an effective public transport system, restrictions on car usage, and land-use planning (locating housing, employment and leisure facilities at transport nodes). The only cities to do this have an effective urban political system with real responsibility and power at the city and regional levels. So one explanation for Dublin's transport chaos is that decisions about public transport in *Dublin* are made by the *national* government.

For many people, especially in Dublin and Athens, using the car is not a choice, it is a necessity. In the city people go to work, do their shopping, visit the hospital, see friends. In a car dependent city there is no other way to do these things but to use the car. In Dublin and Athens such facilities can only be reached by car, while public transport is inefficient, unattractive and unreliable.

If a city is car dependent, some people suffer more than others. Where people cannot afford a car but where public transport is bad, then they become 'transport poor' – out of reach of jobs, shopping, entertainment. Dublin's car dependency therefore worsens social exclusion in the outer suburbs – in a way that does not happen in Helsinki.

## Appointments:

### ERC Seminars

Next term seminars will be held on Mondays in 1, College Green, Trinity College Dublin at 17.00 in room 2 on the ground floor. For further information tel 6082498 - [www.tcd.ie/ERC/activ.htm](http://www.tcd.ie/ERC/activ.htm)

## Activities and Publications

### Maria Lohan

*presented the paper...:*

- "Creating Sustainable Transport, Losing Political Innocence". Network of European Centres of Science and Technology Studies (NECSTS). Conference on Regional Innovation Systems (RIS) San Sabastian, Spain.

*...and attended the Conferences:*

- ESRC Seminar Series on Gender and Technology, Seminar 1 Sept. 15th at University of Teeside.

- COST 269 User Aspects of ICTs Meeting on Mobility and ICTs Malaga, 6th-9th November.

### James Wickham

*presented the papers:*

- "Contextualising Car Dependency" ECMT-OECD Workshop Managing Car Use for Sustainable Travel, Dublin, Dec. 1st-2nd, 1999.

- "Personal wealth in Western Europe: massification, individualisation, Bransonification?" Understanding Class in Ireland, Dec. 11th-12th University College Dublin

- "The transport rich and the transport poor". Conference 'Urbanism and Suburbanism at the end of the Century' National University of Ireland, Maynooth, Nov. 27th, 1999.

### Grainne Collins

*Published the article:*

- V. Borooah and G Collins (1999), 'Where You Do Versus What You Do: The Relative Importance of Region and Economic Status in Determining Income Inequality in the United Kingdom' in Vasudevan, A; Nachane, D. M; Karnick, A.V; (1999), '50 Years of Development Economics'.