

Institution: London Metropolitan University
Unit of Assessment: Area Studies
Title of case study: Precarious Work and Migration
<p>1. Summary of the impact (indicative maximum 100 words)</p> <p>Professor Sonia McKay researched the relationship between precarious work and migration for the (European) Directorate General for Employment, Social affairs and Equality, ACAS, the Health and Safety Executive and the European Union's Framework 6 programme. She found new forms of employment relationships are emerging from the convergence of precarious work, migration and the current economic crisis with increases in informal working and concentration of precarity among certain groups such as Roma. While migration policies based on closing borders in EU countries increases the numbers of undocumented migrants and intensifies exploitation McKay's work has led to some changes in policies and practices.</p>
<p>2. Underpinning research (indicative maximum 500 words)</p> <p>McKay has carried out twenty funded projects in the UK and Europe on this topic since 2003 and is an internationally recognised and widely respected expert in the academic and policy fields. Her research combines qualitative and quantitative methods. She has used film as a medium of research, with a film '<i>All By Ourselves</i>' which was presented at a number of public events, including at the Museum of London. Stakeholder engagement is present in a large number of her projects through Project Advisory Groups, which in turn have led to the establishment of longer-term networks. In her most recent project on undocumented migrants she is using asynchronous focus groups as a method of reaching employers in ethnic enclave employment. This is specifically aimed at preserving anonymity in environments where workers who are undocumented may be employed. The research has identified the many ways in which migrant workers, and particularly undocumented migrants, are more likely to be at risk in employment, in terms of precarity, and of health and safety. It suggests that new forms of employment relationship are emerging from reliance on migrant labour. The positive outcome of this in the UK is that some employers are adopting a social care model in relation to migrant employees, and addressing their needs in terms of accommodation, language learning, cultural support and so on. Her research in twelve European countries (for DG Employment) confirms that precarity is associated with migration status, and is concentrated in some ethnic groups, as well as being related to age and lack of qualifications. She has also identified growth in informal working, and increasing precarity as the economic crisis deepens. In her FP6 project, carried out in seven European countries, McKay found a convergence of approaches to immigration policy, with increasing numbers of expulsions and controls on who can enter. The outcome of this is an increase in numbers of undocumented workers and in exploitation. In her project for the Health and Safety Executive in the UK she found that there was a clear link between workers not complaining about health and safety risks and undocumented status. Migrant workers were also more at risk as they were younger and less knowledgeable about possible risks associated with their work. Her interest in migration and health has led to participation, with eight other university partners in Europe, in an annual Erasmus-funded research student summer school on global health and migration. This has involved university medical teaching hospitals in five partner countries partnering with sociology faculties in another four countries and has brought together 30 students each year from the disciplines of medicine, sociology and law. Finally McKay's research identified a clear link between long working</p>

hours and accidents at work. She has recently won an ESRC grant to investigate how undocumented workers rely on ethnically based networks to find work and survive; the HSE and ACAS are on the Advisory Board of this project, which will therefore have a direct connection with, and impact on policy makers.

3. References to the research (indicative maximum of six references)

GRANTS:

- 1 'Undocumented Migrants, ethnic enclaves and networks', 2011-2013, ESRC, £170,000
- 2 'Precarious Work and Social Rights', 2011-2012, (European) Directorate General for Employment, Social affairs and Equality, £300,000
- 3 Migrant Workers in England and Wales – a study of health and safety', 2005-6, The Health and Safety Executive, £160,000
- 4 'Undocumented Workers' Transitions', 2007-2009, EU Framework 6, Euros 800,000

PUBLICATIONS

- 5 *Undocumented Workers' Transitions – legal status, migration and work in Europe*, 2011, Routledge: London and New York, with E. Markova and A. Paraskevopoulou
- 6 *Refugees, recent migrants and employment: challenging barriers and exploring pathways*, 2009, Routledge: London and New York, editor, sole author of three chapters; first author of a fourth with P. Synder; and second author of a fifth with T. Wright

4. Details of the impact (indicative maximum 750 words)

The research carried out for the UK Health and Safety Executive resulted in changes in its recording of accidents at work; the establishment by the HSE of a migrant workers website (<http://www.hse.gov.uk/migrantworkers/worker.htm>) designed to provide essential information, guidance and advice on workplace health and safety for workers from overseas and their employers. The HSE also now employs five health and safety officers with a direct remit on investigating health and safety in workplaces where migrants are employed. It also operates a confidential telephone service with advice in different languages and translates its basic materials into 20 languages, all as a direct result of McKay's research as the Head Policy Adviser, Vulnerable Workers Health and Safety Policy Team, Strategic Interventions Division, Health and Safety Executive states:

'Sonia McKay's 2006 report for the Health and Safety Executive (HSE), The Health and Safety of Migrant Workers in England and Wales, was important in shaping HSE's future policy and operational approach to ensuring the health and safety of migrant workers. A number of the 11 recommendations addressed specifically to HSE in the report directly influenced the development of HSE's policies on this topic, while all of the remainder were influential in shaping more broadly the organisation's thinking and approach.' (26/06/2013)

The ACAS commissioned research resulted in an ACAS policy paper on employer use of migrant labour published in December 2011 as part of its *Future of Workplace Relations Discussion Paper Series*. The paper offers a new model for future workplace relationships arguing that they will be dependent on the extent to which employers can accommodate the wider social and welfare needs of migrant workers. The Acas Senior Policy Advisor, Acas Strategy Unit, has provided the following statement:

'We've worked a lot with Sonia over the years, most recently on a discussion paper about work place relations and migrant work. This is part of a series for practical use by organisations. It has an external circulation list of over 900, to a mixed audience of employers, trade unions, policy people and the press.' (04/06/2013)

McKay's work has also impacted on wider migrant communities as the Director of the Migrant Rights Network, indicates:

'Sonia's work has helped us better understand the situation and informed a lot of our influencing work with government. It takes several years to see change happen in an environment which is hostile though. But there is now greater appreciation among policy workers that migrant workers are not all criminals, and that they are people struggling to get by and earn a living. There is also a greater awareness of how enforcement measures, by bodies such as the UK Border Agency, have been influenced by race discrimination as witnessed by their focus on closing ethnic businesses.' (04/06/2013)

Additionally McKay's work on vulnerable and migrant workers is also acknowledged in the following statement from the Head of the Economic and Social Affairs Department of the Trades Union Congress:

'Sonia's research helped highlight the challenges for vulnerable workers and to improve their conditions of work. The immediate impact of the research was that it was included in the Commission's final report. As this was presented to the PM (Gordon Brown) and to Ministers across a range of departments, it contributed to the political debate. There were moves to reform Employment Rights Enforcement, including removing some of the legal barriers to sharing information between different departments, in areas such as the minimum wage and HMRC. This report helped that process. A cross-departmental Pay and Workers Rights Helpline was also established, which people could call on for a wide range of issues. As well as providing extensive support it was also an attempt to move away from the former pattern where people would have to phone different departments for different things. The Helpline still exists, with extended out of hours access, and following on from one of Sonia's recommendations it is available in over 100 languages.' (21/06/2013)

McKay also produced for the European Commission an EC policy brief based on her *Undocumented Workers' Transitions* research. Directly arising from her research she was appointed as one of three peer reviewers on the government inquiry into the underlying causes of construction fatal accidents, resulting in the report to the UK Parliament: *One Death is Too Many* (July 2009). She has been an invited keynote speaker at a number of policy directed conferences, including a TUC conference on vulnerable employment (December 2011); a round table discussion with film maker Ken Loach (November 2010); to a 200 strong conference in Frankfurt of civil servants and lawyers organised by the European Labour Law Network, the advisory group to the European Commission (October 2013) and at the Centre for Parliamentary Studies, Brussels (January 2010).

5. Sources to corroborate the impact (indicative maximum of 10 references)

1. A contact at the HSE is provided: Head Policy Adviser, Vulnerable Workers Health and Safety Policy Team, Strategic Interventions Division, Health and Safety Executive

The contact can provide corroboration on the impact of Sonia McKay's research on the practices of the Health and Safety Executive in relation to their work on migrant workers.

Report on Migrant workers in England and Wales: <http://www.hse.gov.uk/research/rrpdf/rr502.pdf>

2. The report on the inquiry into construction fatalities is provided:

One Death is Too Many:

<http://www.official-documents.gov.uk/document/cm76/7657/7657.pdf>

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3. A contact at ACAS is provided: Acas Senior Policy Advisor, Acas Strategy Unit

The contact can provide corroboration on the value of Sonia McKay's research and its influence on policy agendas within and beyond ACAS, as well as in its practical application by a range of social actors.

Report on Employer Use of Migrant Labour:

http://www.acas.org.uk/media/pdf/g/a/0309_Employer_use_of_migrant_labour.pdf

Future implications of migrant labour for employment relations, ACAS policy paper, January 2012:

http://www.acas.org.uk/media/pdf/n/f/The_future_implications_of_migrant_labour_for_employment_relationsL.pdf

4. A contact at the Migrants Rights Network is provided: Director

As the statement in section 4 above indicates, the contact can corroborate the significance of Sonia McKay's research in informing and influencing the work of the Migrants Rights Network, particularly in their communications with government.

5. The report on migrant workers published by the East of England Development Corporation
Migrant Workers in the East of England:

http://www.eeda.org.uk/files/migrants_report_final.pdf

6. A contact at the Trades Union Congress is provided: Head of the Economic and Social Affairs Department

The contact can provide corroboration on the impact of Sonia McKay's research on vulnerable workers, which was included as part of the TUC's submission of evidence to government. The contact can furthermore corroborate that the research contributed to the TUC's decision to establish a Pay and Workers' Rights helpline.