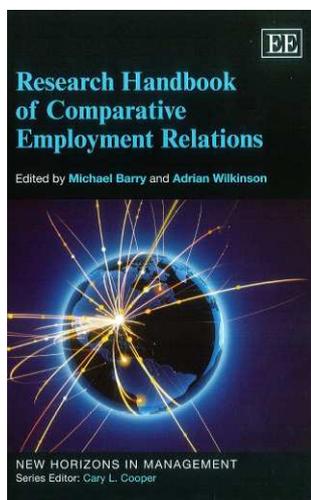


***Research Handbook of Comparative Employment Relations by Michael Barry and Adrian Wilkinson (eds). New Horizons in Management, Series Editor: Cary L. Cooper, Cheltenham, UK and Northampton MA, USA: Edward Elgar Publishing, 2011, ISBN 978 1 84720 889 7 (cased)***

Book review by Silvia Florea  
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The book is a comprehensive volume of studies on employment relations in a wide variety of settings. Against a general agreement that the field lacks a theoretical core, the handbook assembles contributions from such fields as industrial and employment relations, political economy, cross-cultural studies, comparative economics and politics, labour law, all of which remain dominant perspectives informing the study of comparative employment relations. From ample specification of the narrow and broad conception of CER subject territory, to the difference between comparative and international ER and the range of countries included in the CER theorizing, the compendium sheds light on the evolution of the contemporary world of work. From this point of view, as an endeavour, the book remains an enriching compendium. However, from the viewpoint of advancing scientific knowledge in the field, the task remains a challenging exercise, in the absence of any steady stream of theoretical models and a fragmented, non- or hardly-integrative INI literature on comparative employment relations. Not to mention the strange, yet not surprising, selection of paired countries with the US, UK and Germany heading the list, at the expense of the partial or total exclusion of less developed (LDCs) and present or former socialist states. We argue against their sample size being too small or against the much too

often invoked lack of labour movements and conventional employment relations which “traditionally” constitute the object of examination in CER. In the absence of all this, an ethnocentric perspective seems to diminish an enterprise of what might have otherwise been an insightful resource for specialists, for much like Robert K. Merton (1996) argues, centrality and superiority are often correlated, but somehow need to be kept analytically distinct.

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