



Work on Demand: Contracting for Work in a Changing Economy

University of Glasgow

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‘Embedded Racialisation’: Racial Hierarchies in the Construction of Labour

Markets and Precarity

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This paper explores the interaction between labour regulation and social welfare law, and their impact on racialised precarious workers in the UK. The broader conceptual framing for this enquiry draws on economic sociology of law, in taking sociological approaches to legal and economic phenomena, in particular, the role of law and social structure (ethnicity and migration status) in the construction of labour markets and insecure work in the UK. The focus will be on teasing out what might be called ‘embedded racialisation’, i.e. how ESL can help us to better understand the gender and racial hierarchies encoded in labour markets and the disproportionate representation of minority ethnic workers in precarious work and low-paid sectors. This will in part entail a historicising of economic sociology of law, to understand the interconnections between racial inequalities in the contemporary labour market, in particular the racialised ‘clustering’ into zero hours contracts, agency work, casual work and low paid self-employment, and the colonial/post-colonial history of economic interactions between the UK and countries of the global South.