



**TOWARDS
HUMANISING
SUPPLY CHAINS:
THE 2025
BUSINESS AND
MODERN
SLAVERY
RESEARCH
CONFERENCE**

**9-10 SEPTEMBER 2025
CARDIFF UNIVERSITY**

Event Programme



Welcome

Welcome to Towards Humanising Supply Chains: The 2025 Business and Modern Slavery Research Conference

Cardiff University's [Modern Slavery and Social Sustainability Research Group](#) (MSSS RG) is delighted to welcome you to Cardiff, the dynamic capital of Wales, for this two-day event, the fourth in a series dedicated to exploring the complex intersection of business and modern slavery. This year's theme, *Towards Humanising the Supply Chain: Reconciling People and Business*, highlights our mission to integrate ethical, humane, and socially sustainable practices into business operations.

As the exploitation of vulnerable individuals through abusive labour practices remains a pressing global issue, this two-day conference offers a platform for scholars, policymakers, practitioners, and business leaders to share research, spark dialogue, and explore solutions.

Over these two days, we will deepen our understanding of how businesses can move towards more human-centred practices and consider how to create value that benefits not just businesses but the people they impact upon. Held at Cardiff Business School, the event features keynote talks, research presentations, panels, and workshops for Early Career Researchers and paper development. We invite diverse perspectives to help dismantle harmful systems, amplify unheard voices, and promote business models where people and profit can thrive together.

We look forward to welcoming you to Cardiff as we work together towards a more just and humane future.

Conference Chairs



[Dr. Maryam Lotfi](#)

Co-Director of MSSS RG
Senior Lecturer of SSCM
Cardiff Business School
Cardiff University



[Dr. Anna Skeels](#)

Co-Director of MSSS RG
Research Fellow
Social Science Research Park (SPARK)
Cardiff University

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Public Value Business School

In late 2015, we publicly committed ourselves to a bold new strategy that would inform our research and teaching and see us become the world's first business school to put public value at the heart of its operations.

We are working to deliver economic and social value through interdisciplinary teaching, research, engagement and impact that confronts the grand challenges of our time.

By embracing interdisciplinary working, with academic colleagues and business partners and the Third Sector, we believe we can help find solutions to a range of social ills and reframe how people think of business and management.

Organising Committee

Professor Helen Walker (Cardiff Business School, Cardiff University)

Miss Amy Boote (Cardiff Business School, Cardiff University)

Mr Amir Salimi Babamiri (Cardiff Business School, Cardiff University)

Mr Zhe Li (Cardiff Business School, Cardiff University)

Mrs Beverly Francis (Cardiff Business School, Cardiff University)



Cardiff Business School
Ysgol Busnes Caerdydd

For updates on the conference, please visit the [conference webpage](https://www.cardiff.ac.uk/community/event/view/2872306-the-business-and-modern-slavery-conference):
<https://www.cardiff.ac.uk/community/event/view/2872306-the-business-and-modern-slavery-conference>

The conference is partly funded by **Cardiff Business School Seedcorn Funding**.



Keynote Speaker:

Professor Mohan Sodhi

Professor Sodhi is a Professor of Operations Management at Bayes Business School, where he has served since 2002. A lifetime Fellow of the Production and Operations Management Society and a Fellow of both the OR Society and the Institute of Mathematics and its Applications, his research centres on supply chain risk and sustainability, with additional work in healthcare operations.

Plenary Panel: Day 1



Joshua Vuglar

Head of Modern Slavery and Workers' Rights at Llywodraeth Cymru / Welsh Government

Chairs the Wales Anti-Slavery Leadership Group and the Wales Anti-Slavery Academic Group,



Andrew Wallis

CEO and founder of Unseen, a charity that believes modern slavery can and must be eradicated. The organisation provides secure housing and a wide range of services to over 300 survivors of human trafficking at any given time.



Eleanor Harry

CEO, HACE, Cambridge University

HACE'S mission is to drive impactful change through collaborative ownership, empowering investors and companies to eliminate Child Labour.

Plenary Panel: Day 2



Professor Andrew Crane

Professor of Management, Marketing, Business & Society, University of Bath

With over 100 publications, including books, articles, chapters, and reports, Andrew is one of the most widely-cited researchers in responsible business. Currently, Andrew's research is focused on the business of modern slavery, corporate activism, and CSR communications.



Professor Joanne Meehan

Professor of Responsible Procurement, University of Liverpool

Jo is an Associate Editor for the Journal of Purchasing and Supply Management (JPSM) and champions the journal's 'business-not-as-usual' research.



Professor Reza Zanjirani

Professor of Supply Chain Management, Paris School of Business

Reza is a senior editor in the Production & Operations Management Journal, an associate editor in Transportation Research Part E, and the IMA Journal of Management Mathematics.



Professor Alexander Trautrim

Professor of Supply Chain Management, Nottingham University

Alex co-chairs the British Standards Committee on Organisational Responses to Modern Slavery (BS25700) and served as a technical expert on the Council of Europe's Drafting Committee on Trafficking for the Purpose of Labour Exploitation.

**PRE-CONFERENCE SOCIAL PROGRAMME
8 SEPTEMBER 2025**

17.00 **Pre-conference drinks for early arrivals (optional)**
Barker Cafe and Bar
 1 Castle Arcade, Cardiff CF10 1BS
<https://www.coffeebarker.com>
 (Self-paid – not supported by the Conf.)

**DAY 1
9 SEPTEMBER 2025**

08.30 – 09.00	Registration, coffee, and pastries		
09.00 – 09.15	Welcome and introduction to the conference		
09.15 – 10.15	Keynote: Professor Mohan Sodhi, Professor of Operations and Supply Chain Management, Bayes Business School		
10.15-10.45	Break		
10.45- 12.15	Parallel papers session 1		
3 Parallel papers sessions	<i>Data, Technology and AI (4)</i> <i>Chair: Amin Vafadarnikjoo</i>	<i>Activism, Agency and Worker Voice (3)</i> <i>Chair: Victoria Stephens</i>	<i>A Human Rights Approach (3)</i> <i>Chair: Michael Rogerson</i>



<p><i>Leveraging AI for Preventing Exploitation and Unfairness Towards Migrant Workers</i></p> <p>Salma Khaled, Paras Kalura and David Bishop</p>	<p><i>Experimenting with Data: Partnering with labour activist organisations to challenge exploitation in the international garment sector</i></p> <p>Katy Huxley and Jean Jenkins</p>	<p><i>What do companies think supply chain human rights regulations are about? An interview study</i></p> <p>Ying Zhang and Chee Yew Wong</p>	
<p><i>Artificial Intelligence and Social Sustainability in Supply Chains: an integrative review</i></p> <p>Zhe Li, Maryam Lotfi, Yingli Wang and Jean-Paul Skeete</p>	<p><i>Contractual Governance in Global Supply Chains: Addressing Buyer-Supplier Agency Problems to Combat Modern Slavery - an EU Due Diligence Perspective</i></p> <p>Jeannie Morgan</p>	<p><i>Human rights due diligence: Grounded in reality</i></p> <p>Michael Rogerson, Nadia Bernaz and Amy Benstead</p>	
<p><i>Unveiling Grievance Mechanisms in Business Responses to Modern Slavery: A Text Mining Approach</i></p> <p>Amin Vafadarnikjoo, Razieh Ghaedi and Naureen Imran</p>	<p><i>Developing Recognition-Based Worker Voice- Insights from workshops with garment workers and stakeholders</i></p> <p>Amy Benstead, Victoria Stephens, Filipe Sarmiento, Erica Charles, Helen Goworek and Dane Lukic</p>	<p><i>UK implementation of the UNGPs: Reviewing progress on business and human rights and action on modern slavery in supply chains</i></p> <p>Faiza Zafar, Katarina Schwarz, Colin Mackie, Tina Davis and Sara Thornton</p>	
<p><i>The Role of Supply Chain Financing in Combating Modern Slavery: Leveraging Financial Regulatory Instruments and Anti-Money Laundering Mechanisms</i></p> <p>Simon Croom and Duncan Jepson</p>			

12.15 – 13.15	Lunch			
13.15– 14.15	Plenary panel: A multi-stakeholder perspective on business and modern slavery <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Joshua Vuglar, Head of Modern Slavery and Workers’ Rights, Welsh Government • Andrew Wallis, CEO, Unseen • Eleanor Harry, CEO, HACE, Cambridge University Moderators: Dr Maryam Lotfi & Dr Anna Skeels			
14.15-14.45	Break			
14.45-16.15	Parallel paper sessions 2			
4 Parallel papers sessions	Concepts and Contexts (3)	Legislation, Regulation, Policy: Australia, UK & the EU (4)	From SMEs to MNCs (3)	Sector Specific Perspectives: Tourism, Fisheries and Construction (3)
	Chair: Jo Meehan	Chair: Elizabeth Burroughs	Chair: Amy Benstead	Chair: Gabriela Gutierrez-Huerter O
	Theorising modern slavery in supply chains: the potential for thought experiments Jo Meehan	Challenging the Consumer-Centric Framing of Modern Slavery: A Critical Policy Analysis of Australia’s Modern Slavery Act (2018) Kyla Raby	The role of small brands in the future of ethical UK manufacturing and fair working conditions Amy Benstead, Jonathan Davies, Korry Robert and Hannah Newcomb	Modern slavery in tourism business: A systematic literature review Eliyas Ebrahim Aman and Árpád Ferenc Papp-Váry



	<p>Modern slavery conceptualisation: A South African perspective</p> <p>Hemisha Makan, Noleen PISA and Maryam Lotfi</p>	<p>Comparing Supply Chain Human Rights Reporting Regulations</p> <p>Matthew Skerritt, Leonard Taylor, Amaya Vega, Amir Azadnia and George Onofrei</p>	<p>Social Sustainability in Small-Medium-Enterprises (SMEs) in Welsh Media Sector</p> <p>Amy Boote, Maryam Lotfi, Anna Skeels and Marian Buhociu</p>	<p>Forced labour and commercial dynamics: materialities, competitions, and governance in industrial tuna fisheries</p> <p>Hyunjung Kim and Liam Campling</p>
	<p>Approaches to Addressing Modern Slavery in African Agrifood Supply Chains: A Stakeholder Perspective</p> <p>Salma Garra and Amine Belhadi</p>	<p>Child Labour and Forced Labour: A UK Perspective on Global Compliance</p> <p>Elizabeth Burroughs and Eleanor Harry</p>	<p>From Policy to Practice: How Do Sustainability Governance Initiatives Drive Anti-Business Modern Slavery Efforts in Leading MNCs?</p> <p>Nadeesha Muthuthantrige, Shirley Xu and Akrum Helfaya</p>	<p>Addressing modern slavery with 'better' labour regulation? Challenges and opportunities in the UK construction sector</p> <p>Gabriela Gutierrez-Huerter O, Yazan Alzoubi and Furqan Suhail</p>
16.15-16.30	End of Day 1			
17:00-18:30	<p>Drinks and Networking (optional)</p> <p>Gin and Juice</p> <p>6 Castle Arcade, Cardiff CF10 1BU https://www.ginandjuice.com (Self-paid – not supported by the Conf.)</p>			
19:00-22:00	<p>Conference Dinner</p> <p>Charles Street, Cardiff, CF10 2GA https://cornerstonecardiff.org</p>			

DAY 2
10 SEPTEMBER 2025

08.30 – 09.00	Coffee and pastries			
09.00 – 09.15	Introduction to Day 2			
09.15 – 10.15	<p>Plenary panel: Modern slavery research horizons: multi-disciplinary challenges and opportunities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Professor Andrew Crane, Professor of Management, Marketing, Business and Society, University of Bath • Professor Joanne Meehan, Professor of Responsible Procurement, University of Liverpool • Professor Alexander Trautrim, Professor of Supply Chain Management, Nottingham University • Professor Reza Zanjirani, Professor of Supply Chain Management, Paris School of Business <p>Moderators: Professor Helen Walker & Dr Maryam Lotfi</p>			
10.15-10.45	Break			
10.45-12.15	Parallel paper session 3			
4 Parallel papers sessions	<i>Colonialism, Resistance and Resilience (3)</i>	<i>Legislation, Regulation & Policy: New Zealand and Canada (3)</i>	<i>Sector Specific Perspectives: Social Care and Health (3)</i>	<i>Organisational culture, relationships and consumers (3)</i>
	<i>Chair: Ariba Abasi</i>	<i>Chair: Christina Stringer</i>	<i>Chair: Caroline Emberson</i>	<i>Christopher Pesterfield</i>
	<i>Building on Bondage: Vernacular Labour Practices, Colonial Blueprints, and the Foundations of Modern Slavery</i>	<i>Modern Slavery Legislation in New Zealand: Multi-stakeholder Advocacy and Resilient Leadership</i>	<i>The Risk of Exploitation in Adult Social Care</i>	<i>Addressing Modern Slavery in Labour Supply Chains: The Importance of Inter-Firm Relations</i>
	<i>Ariba Abasi</i>	<i>Rhiannon Lloyd, Christina Stringer and Brent Burmester</i>	<i>Jeff Norman</i>	<i>Christopher Pesterfield</i>
	<i>And Still We Rise: Black & Indigenous Strategies in the Face of Modern Slavery in Brazil</i>	<i>Making markets for exploitation: employer-centric migration policy and the trade in migrant lives in New Zealand</i>	<i>Detection of labour exploitation in state-funded domestic care</i>	<i>Organizational Culture Transformation and Sustainability Performance: Examining the Roles of Modern Slavery Supply Chain Capability and Ethical Sensitivity</i>

	<i>Reducing Vulnerability and Fostering Resilience in Refugee Communities: A Collaborative Network Approach</i> Julie Sharmin and Laura Shobiye	<i>Reducing forced labour in Canadian supply chains: Challenges with implementing Bill S-211</i> Nancy Southin and Stuart Milligan	<i>Implementing Ethical Public Procurement in the NHS: An Organisational Analysis</i> Lihani Du Plessis and Jonathan M. Cullen	<i>Understanding and modelling the impact of consumer purchasing behaviour on the global supply chains' decisions in adapting anti-slavery practices</i> Amir Salimi Babamiri, Maryam Lotfi, Bahman Rostami-Tabar, Nicole Koenig-Lewis and Anatoly Zhigljavsky
12.15-13.15	Lunch			
13.15 – 16:30	PhD development workshop			
	Break			
16.30-16:45	Wrap up and conference close			

Travel Information

Getting Here:

By Air:

Heathrow / Gatwick Airports

National Express (Enquiries Tel: 08705 808080) coach company and various rail companies (Enquiries Tel: 08457 484950) operate direct services to Cardiff Central Station from London's Heathrow and Gatwick airports. See www.traveline-cymru.org.uk for rail service information and www.nationalexpress.com.

Bristol Airport

Bristol airport is 50 miles or 80 Km from Cardiff. If you are arriving during the day, it will take around 2 hours to get from Bristol airport to Cardiff University.

Coach: The Greyhound UK coach service runs every 2 hours from Bristol Airport to Cardiff Bus Station. A single fare is £6. Tickets can be bought online, and it shows whether the coach is full, getting full, or has spaces available. For more information see: www.greyhounduk.com/

Alternatively, you can get the Bristol International Flyer bus service from the airport into the center of Bristol (around 8 miles or 13 km from the airport) and then on to Cardiff either by train or coach. This bus service runs every 10 minutes from the airport.

The Bristol International Flyer also makes a stop at Bristol Bus Station, where you can catch the National Express coach service to Cardiff. Coaches run far less frequently than trains, around every two hours, and tickets cost around £10.

Train: Take the Bristol International Flyer. From the airport to Bristol Temple Meads train station, the fare for this journey is £7. Once at Bristol Temple Meads, the train service to Cardiff Central runs every 30 minutes. A one-way ticket costs around £10.

Cardiff International Airport

The airport is 11 miles from the city centre. See www.cwlfly.com.



By Rail:

High speed InterCity trains provide frequent services between all major British cities. The Cardiff-London InterCity service, from London Paddington, runs some seventeen times a day, with a journey time of less than two hours.

Frequent regional network trains connect Cardiff with:

Bristol (50 mins)

Birmingham (2 hrs 10 mins)

Southampton (2 hrs 30 mins)

Manchester (3 hrs)

Liverpool (3 hrs)

and with many other cities and towns.

Enquiries: 0870 6082608

See www.nationalrail.co.uk.

By Road:

Cardiff is served by the M4 and is easily accessible from all parts of Britain.

From the southwest, take the M5, and from the south of England, follow major A roads to the M4.

From Scotland, the north of England, and the Midlands, travel via the M50 to the M4.

Travelling east on the M4. Leave the motorway at Junction 32, follow the A470, signposted City Centre, into the Cathays area of the city.

Travelling west on the M4. Leave the motorway at Junction 29, follow the A48(M)/A48, signposted Cardiff East and South, to the A470. Follow the A470, signposted City Centre.

Car Parking

There are several short- and long- stay public car parks located in the center of the city.

Cardiff is a very compact city and can easily be explored on foot, with most of the attractions, shops, restaurants, hotels, and parklands all within a few minutes of each other. Cardiff Bay is 1 km from the city center and an easy walk. Alternatively, there is a cycle path the entire length of Lloyd George Avenue or a Bendy Bus, which runs every 10 minutes.

Accommodation

There are numerous hotels in the city centre. The University does not have a list of recommended accommodation but here is a list of hotels, all within walking distance of the conference venue.

Jurys Inn Cardiff

1 Park Pl, Cardiff

CF10 3UD

Tel: +44 161 774 2983

<https://www.jurysinns.com/hotels/Cardiff>

Hilton Hotel, Cardiff

Kingsway, Greyfriars Rd, Cardiff

CF10 3HH

TEL: +44-2920-646-300 FAX: +44-2920-646-350

<http://www3.hilton.com/en/hotels/united-kingdom/hilton-Cardiff>

Park Plaza Hotel, Cardiff

Greyfriars Road, Cardiff

CF10 3AL

Tel +44 (0) 2920 111 111

<https://www.parkplazacardiff.com>

Holiday Inn Cardiff City Centre

Castle Street, Cardiff

CF10 1XD

Tel: 0800 80 80 0800

<https://www.ihg.com/holidayinn/hotels/us/en/cardiff/cdfcy/hoteldetail>

Angel Hotel

Castle St, Cardiff

CF10 1SZ

<https://www.thecairncollection.co.uk/hotels/the-angel/>

Parkgate Hotel

Westgate St, Cardiff

CF10 1DA

Tel: 02922745595

<https://www.theparkgatehotel.wales/>

Visitor Information

Cardiff, the capital of Wales, is a vibrant, cosmopolitan city and one of the UK's top conference and event destinations. It blends historic landmarks with modern architecture and technology, offering a dynamic mix of culture and innovation. The lively city centre is just steps from tranquil parks and castle grounds, creating a unique backdrop for delegates.

The official Cardiff visitor website has full details: www.visitcardiff.com

Many attractions are located in the city centre, making it easy for delegates to visit Cardiff Castle, the National Museum, and the Millennium Stadium from any conference venue or hotel. Everything from parks, luxury and budget hotels, shopping malls, Victorian arcades, and a variety of dining options are within a 5-minute walk.

In central Cardiff, the Brewery Quarter and Mill Lane offer international cuisine and local Welsh produce in both indoor and al fresco settings.


Nearby, Queen Street and St. David's 2 are packed with designer brands, major retailers, and independent boutiques. The city's arcades preserve Victorian and Edwardian charm, housing stylish stores and quirky cafés.

Just minutes from the city centre is Mermaid Quay in Cardiff Bay, a waterfront hub filled with restaurants, cafés, and activities on and around a 200-hectare freshwater lake. Visit the Senedd (Welsh Parliament) and the iconic Wales Millennium Centre, a premier performing arts venue.




List of Registered Attendees

No.	72 Registered attendees
1	Alexander Trautrim - University of Nottingham
2	Amin Vafadarnikjoo - Sheffield University Management School
3	Amir Salimi Babamiri - Cardiff Business School
4	Amy Benstead - The University of Manchester
5	Amy Boote - Cardiff University
6	Andrew Crane - University of Bath
7	Andrew Wallis OBE - Unseen
8	Anna Skeels - SPARK, Cardiff University
9	Ariba Abasi - University of Technology Sydney
10	Bahman Rostami-Tabar - Cardiff University
11	Beverly Francis - Cardiff Business School
12	Caroline Emberson - University of Nottingham
13	Chee Yew Wong - Leeds University Business School
14	Christina Stringer - University of Auckland
15	Christopher Pesterfield - University of Bristol
16	Danish Zahoor - University of Leeds
17	David Bishop - The University of Hong Kong
18	Eleanor Harry - HACE: Data Changing Child Labour
19	Eliyas Ebrahim Aman - University of Sopron, Sopron, Hungary
20	Elizabeth Burroughs - HACE: Data Changing Child Labour
21	Erin Ryan-Phillips - Cardiff Council/Ardal
22	Eva Notté - Erasmus Universiteit Rotterdam / Terre des Hommes Netherlands
23	Faiza Zafar - University of Nottingham
24	Gabriela Gutierrez Huerter O - King's College London
25	Garra Salma - Rabat Business School, UIR
26	Heike Doering - Cardiff University
27	Helen Walker - Cardiff Business School
28	Hemisha Makan Makan - University of Johannesburg
29	Henry Kasadha - Lancaster University
30	Hyunjung Kim - Queen Mary University of London
31	Ilse Ras - Leiden University
32	Jane Lynch - Cardiff Business School
33	Jasmit Hanspal - Jaguar Land Rover Ltd
34	Jeannie Morgan - Roskilde University
35	Jeff Norman - Cardiff Council, UK
36	Jo Meehan - University of Liverpool
37	Johannes Dumay - Macquarie Business School
38	John Manso Frimpong – Kwame Nkrumah university of science and technology
39	Joshua Vuglar - Welsh Government
40	Katrina Whale - University of South Wales
41	Katy Huxley - Cardiff University
42	Kyla Raby - University of South Australia
43	Laura Gomez-Mera - University of Miami
44	Leonard Taylor - Atlantic Technological University



45	Lihani Du Plessis - University of Cambridge
46	ManMohan Sodhi - Bayes Business School
47	Mariam Ashkanani - Cardiff Business School, Cardiff University
48	Maryam Lotfi - Cardiff University
49	Matthew Skerritt - Atlantic Technological University
50	Mei Trueba - University of Sussex
51	Messias Basques - Beniba Centre for Slavery Studies, University of Glasgow
52	Mike Rogerson - University of Sussex
53	Muhammad Babar Shahzad - Pakistan Currency Exchange Company
54	Muhammad Umar Boodoo - Warwick Business School
55	Nadeesha Muthuthantrige - Keele University
56	Nancy Southin - Thompson Rivers University
57	Nathan Davies - University of Liverpool
58	Rachel Rooney - ATU Sligo
59	Rhiannon Lloyd - University of Auckland
60	Rohan Preece - SOAS University of London
61	Salma Khaled - Migrasia Global Limited Solutions
62	Samit Biswas - Health Tech Services Group Ltd. T/A Care Safe
63	Sharmin Julie - University of South Wales
64	Simon Croom - University of San Diego
65	Sofia Vougioukalou - Cardiff University
66	Syeda Gulnoor Zahra - University of Bath
67	Vasco Sanchez Rodrigues - Cardiff University
68	Victoria Stephens - University of Manchester
69	Ying Zhang - University of Leeds
70	Zahra Shirgholami - University of Manchester
71	Zhe Li - Cardiff University
72	Juliana Reimberg - Cardiff University
No.	21 PhD Students
1	Amir Salimi Babamiri - Cardiff Business School
2	Amy Boote - Cardiff University
3	Danish Zahoor - University of Leeds
4	Eliyas Ebrahim Aman - University of Sopron, Sopron, Hungary
5	Eva Notté - Erasmus Universiteit Rotterdam / Terre des Hommes Netherlands
6	Garra Salma - Rabat Business School, UIR
7	Hemisha Makan - University of Johannesburg
8	Henry Kasadha - Lancaster University
9	Hyunjung Kim - Queen Mary University of London
10	Katrina Whale - University of South Wales
11	Kyla Raby - University of South Australia
12	Lihani Du Plessis - University of Cambridge
13	Mariam Ashkanani - Cardiff Business School, Cardiff University
14	Matthew Skerritt - Atlantic Technological University
15	Nadeesha Muthuthantrige - Keele University
16	Nathan Davies - University of Liverpool

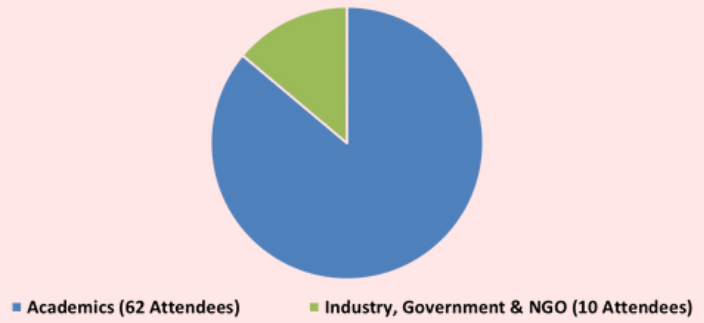


17	Rohan Preece - SOAS University of London
18	Syeda Gulnoor Zahra - University of Bath
19	Ying Zhang - University of Leeds
20	Zhe Li - Cardiff University
21	Juliana Reimberg - Cardiff University
14 PhD Students Attending the Workshop	
1.	Amir Salimi Babamiri
2.	Amy Boote
3.	Eliyas Ebrahim Aman
4.	Eva Notté
5.	Garra Salma
6.	Hemisha Makan
7.	Juliana Reimberg
8.	Kyla Raby
9.	Lihani Du Plessis
10.	Mariam Ashkanani
11.	Matthew Skerritt
12.	Nadeesha Muthuthantrige
13.	Ying Zhang
14.	Zhe Li

Participant Statistics

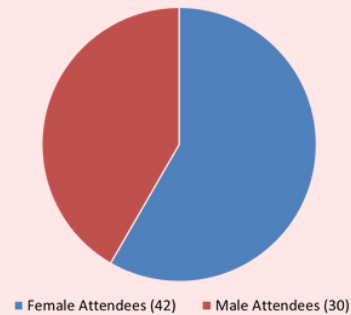
Participant Composition

- 86% of attendees are academics
- 14% of attendees are from industry, government, or NGOs



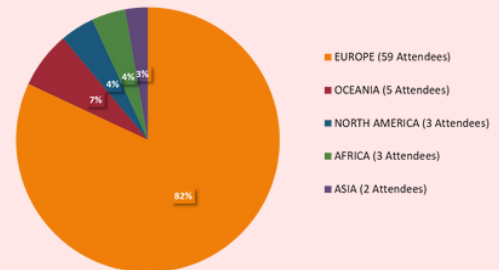
Gender

- 58% of attendees are female
- 42% of attendees are male

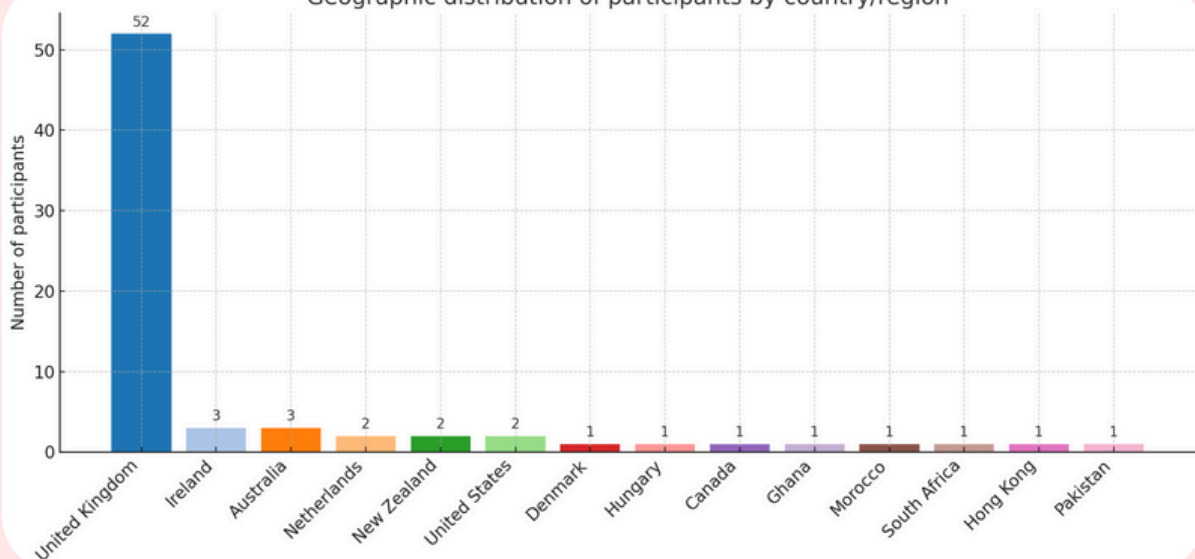


Geographical Distribution of Participants

- We have participants from all five continents
- 82% of participants are from Europe



Geographic distribution of participants by country/region



We look forward to welcoming you to Cardiff University

Modern Slavery Social Sustainability Research Group

Follow us on: [LinkedIn](#)

Interested in joining or collaborating with the Research Group?

Email:

LotfiM@cardiff.ac.uk
Skeelsa1@cardiff.ac.uk



Cardiff Business School

Cardiff University,
Aberconway Building,
Colum Drive,
Cardiff CF10 3EU

 cardiff.ac.uk/business-school

 facebook.com/BusinessCardiff

 twitter.com/cardiffbusiness



Appendix: Abstracts

1.

TITLE: Building on Bondage: Vernacular Labour Practices, Colonial Blueprints, and the Foundations of Modern Slavery

NAME OF AUTHOR: Ariba Abasi

ABSTRACT:

This paper explores how vernacular labour arrangements, specifically the Peshgi system in Pakistan's brick kilns, complicate dominant definitions of modern slavery. It contributes to modern slavery in supply chain management by interrogating the tension between formal compliance mechanisms and lived experiences of labour exploitation (Crane et al., 2022; Ahmad et al., 2023). The paper centres Pakistan's evolving political economy to uncover how colonial legacies continue to shape supply chain labour dynamics today. This work is situated within the context of engineering-led procurement, where risk mapping, ethical sourcing, and supplier due diligence frameworks are increasingly integral to infrastructure delivery. By surfacing the socio-historical foundations of Peshgi, the study equips engineers and project managers with the critical tools to understand how exploitative labour may persist in material sourcing, even when formal compliance indicators suggest otherwise.

The study employs a case study of a representative brick kiln in Pakistan, using historiography and document analysis methods. It integrates vernacular accounting theory (Kilfoyle et al., 2013) with historical institutionalism (Mahoney & Thelen, 2009; Thelen, 2004) to investigate how systems of labour control have endured over time. This interdisciplinary method enables a layered analysis of how accounting practices, formal and informal, construct visibility or invisibility of exploitative labour in engineering supply chains. By tracing the institutional persistence of Peshgi through colonial land revenue structures to modern infrastructure projects, the paper offers a framework for engineering professionals to interrogate the social embeddedness of materials procurement. A postcolonial lens (Said, 1994; Spivak, 1988) informs the critique of Eurocentric binaries, freedom/coercion, legal/illegal, embedded in global anti-slavery frameworks.

The Peshgi system, often labelled as debt bondage, persists through formal legal structures, social relations, and economic necessity rather than overt coercion (Khan, 2010; Martin, 2009). It operates as a vernacular, negotiated livelihood strategy in Pakistan's informal labour economy. Despite being targeted under anti-slavery regulations (ILO, 2022), Peshgi continues in sectors like brick manufacturing, where bricks produced under bonded labour conditions often supply infrastructure projects financed or influenced by global actors, thereby feeding into global construction supply chains (Fallon, 2014; Ghani, 2019). These findings suggest that engineering-led procurement and construction projects, particularly those financed through international development or aid, may be inadvertently reliant on labour systems that contravene human rights principles despite formal compliance.

While this study focuses on a single case in Punjab, Pakistan, its insights are grounded in a conceptual framework that interweaves vernacular accounting with institutional analysis, offering a flexible approach that can be adapted to other postcolonial or informal sector contexts. Future comparative research across South Asia could meaningfully extend and test these findings in diverse settings. The findings are particularly relevant for engineering and construction professionals working in regions with informal labour markets, where technical specifications often overlook historical labour dynamics. Comparative research across South Asia could extend these insights.

This study challenges engineering, procurement, and construction professionals to rethink their role in labour governance. It calls for a shift from checklist compliance to an engagement with historical and institutional mechanisms sustaining exploitation (Christ et al., 2023; Christ et al., 2020)...

2.

TITLE: Modern Slavery in Tourism Business: A systematic literature review

NAME OF AUTHOR: Eliyas Ebrahim Aman and Árpád Ferenc Papp-Váry

ABSTRACT:

The primary focus of this systematic review is on modern slavery in the tourism business, where contemporary slavery is frequently overlooked. Modern slavery, also known as neo-slavery, contemporary slavery, or modern-day slavery, is a complex and severe issue that has emerged in many sectors, and it is a hot-spot issue in global tourism sectors due to the nature of the tourism business. The tourism industry is inherently labour-intensive and often consists of vulnerable people, including women and low-skilled workers, which provides ideal situations for human exploitation, especially sexual slavery, human trafficking, and forced labour. In this regard, understanding the expressions and mechanisms of contemporary slavery in the tourism industry is critically important. Therefore, the objective of this review is to analyse the mechanisms, factors, and emerging prevention strategies of modern slavery in the global tourism industry based on scholarly and academic studies published in the past ten years. As an attempt to address these objectives, a systematic literature review was adopted. This approach was selected for its ability to synthesise the current knowledge and provide a comprehensive and in-depth understanding of the topic at hand. Consequently, guided by PRISMA protocols, we conducted this review in four main phases, namely, identification, screening, eligibility, and inclusion. The scope of the review was determined by developing two main research questions: What are the fundamental factors that enable contemporary slavery in the tourism business? What are emerging contemporary slavery prevention techniques within the global tourism sector? Regarding the database, Scopus was utilised due to the high-quality coverage of scholarly information. Furthermore, the Scopus database archives articles that are accessible via other databases, including the Web of Science. Consequently, using Scopus eliminates the necessity of checking other databases, as it would merely yield duplicate results. The evaluation of data involves assessing the quality and relevance of the articles through specific inclusion and exclusion criteria for further analysis. The employed inclusion/exclusion criteria were 1) a study related to tourism, and it must discuss any forms of slavery in the tourism sector, and 2) a journal article published from 2015-2024 in English only. After rigorous evaluation of article content (abstract, introduction, methodology, and conclusion), 52 appropriate articles were chosen for analysing and synthesising the review. From all the articles reviewed, the primary tourism business-related slavery forms, namely abusive working conditions, forced labour, sexual slavery, and human trafficking, were extracted. The review also identified emerging modern slavery prevention techniques, including ethical tourism initiatives, corporate responsibility, industry collaboration, and multi-stakeholder initiatives. While contributing to the existing body of literature, the review underscores the significance of interdisciplinary and stakeholder cooperation to combat modern slavery in global tourism.

3.

TITLE: And Still We Rise: Black & Indigenous Strategies in the Face of Modern Slavery in Brazil

NAME OF AUTHOR: Messias Basques

ABSTRACT:

Brazil was the last country in the Western Hemisphere to abolish slavery, and its first legislation criminalising work conditions analogous to slavery was enacted only five decades later. However, in 2003, the bill was revised, and since then, it has included a comprehensive definition of modern-day slavery. In parallel, the Brazilian government and non-profits have developed different and effective policies to monitor, identify, and process reports. According to the official database, RADAR SIT, since its launch in 1995, a total of 63,516 workers subjected to modern-day slavery have been identified and rescued. More than 80% were Black, male, and young (15 to 29 years old) individuals working in rural settings, primarily within the supply chains of global commodities such as meat, coffee, and soy, as well as serving as a vital workforce in illegal mining and logging. Numerous reports have demonstrated that expanding these industries and economic activities into remote or protected areas is further aggravating previous vulnerabilities. Consequently, Indigenous peoples, maroons (quilombolas) and traditional communities are facing new socioeconomic pressures and environmental threats, exposing them to a higher risk of being dragged into modern-day slavery. In light of these ongoing problems and inspired by a poem by Maya Angelou (Still I Rise, 1978), this paper describes the strategies and initiatives led by Indigenous and Maroon communities. Through partnerships with the private and third sectors, they promote sustainable and effective alternatives for generating income and managing their territories autonomously, in alignment with their traditional livelihoods. Two illustrative examples highlight these efforts. Indigenous peoples in the Amazon forest are partnering with private companies and governmental agencies to produce coffee in an agroforestry system. In the countryside of Sao Paulo, a maroon community has partnered with a leading Brazilian socioenvironmental non-profit to enhance their family agriculture system, which was recognised as a Brazilian intangible cultural heritage in 2022. Although much remains to be done in a country so profoundly marked by its past and present racial and economic inequities, both examples highlight the importance of building new bridges between universities and grassroots experiences of activism and social change. The paper argues that this understanding should inform research projects and be a critical teaching element. Providing students with opportunities to learn through problem-based approaches, developing a literacy that fosters global citizenship awareness, and building the capacity to address local-global challenges are urgent demands of our time. In sum, the paper aims to address examples from Brazil and provide a brief overview of similar projects developed by members of the Beniba Centre for Slavery Studies at the University of Glasgow.

4.

TITLE: The Role of Small Brands in the Future of Ethical UK Manufacturing and Fair Working Conditions

NAME OF AUTHOR: Amy Benstead, Jonathan Davies, Korry Robert and Hannah Newcomb

ABSTRACT:

The UK has seen a surge in small digital and ‘tabletop’ brands seeking to manufacture domestically, driven by demand for low minimum order quantities and flexibility. Recently, factory closures due to widespread reports of poor working conditions in e.g. Leicester have led many brands to shift production overseas to countries like Morocco. As a result, there has been a rise in smaller brands sourcing from Leicester to fill the gap left in the market. Despite recent challenges, Leicester has the potential for a resurgence as a hub for ethical manufacturing, a shift that is actively being encouraged (Hu, 2024, Husband, 2025).

Academic research has largely focused on how larger brands address modern slavery in their supply chains, driven by corporate responses to UK modern slavery legislation and the £36 million turnover threshold for reporting (Benstead et al. 2018; Stevenson and Cole, 2018). There is however a growing call for more research on SMEs to advance both theory and practice, providing a deeper understanding of how they can tackle modern slavery (Jardine 2021; Szablewska and Kubacki, 2023)

Smaller brands in the fashion industry may lack awareness of labour rights and complex legislative frameworks for ethical manufacturing. Established larger brands, have outsourced production overseas, creating a knowledge gap in the domestic industry and highlighting the need for accessible education on labour rights and supply chain compliance for smaller brands.

This research project, starting in Spring 2025, is in collaboration with Stronger Together, a not for profit supporting fair work free from exploitation. It aims to explore the support needed for small brands to operate ethically in the UK manufacturing sector. We will identify tools to help these brands uphold ethical standards and explore ways to reach decision-makers within these small brands who may lack formal power but influence day-to-day operations. This is crucial as many small businesses are exempt from legislation due to the minimum threshold, meaning they often fall under the radar in regulatory oversight and do not necessarily have the resources and/or internal expertise to achieve these goals.

This a short-term project that will run over Spring/Summer 2025. It will be split into two parts as follows.

Desk research: analysing market research reports, industry publications, academic literature, and white papers to gain insights into the regulations and voluntary codes businesses are adhering to.

Primary Research: We will conduct semi-structured interviews with a small number of brands within Stronger Together’s network.

This project will provide immediate benefits by identifying what small brands need to implement labour rights practices, reducing ethical and compliance risks while positioning them as trusted, ethical market players. It will address the gap in the literature on the barriers and challenges facing SMEs in tackling modern slavery. The research will inform Stronger Together’s resources to better support small brands in ethical manufacturing and contribute to broader policy discussions on fair and safe labour practices, creating a more level playing field for all brands. Insights may also apply to other UK sectors.

This project is funded with seed funding from The University of Manchester Business Engagement & Knowledge Exchange Sustainable Fashion and Retail Innovation Lab.

5.

TITLE: Social Sustainability in Small-Medium-Enterprises (SMEs) in Welsh Media Sector

NAME OF AUTHOR: Amy Boote, Maryam Lotfi, Anna Skeels and Marian Buhociu

ABSTRACT:

Social sustainability continues to be a significant challenge in global supply chains (SCs), yet there remains limited understanding of how small-and-medium enterprises (SMEs) engage with this issue, especially in the creative industries. This research aims to explore the engagement of creative SMEs in the Welsh Media Sector, in preventing, detecting, and responding to social sustainability risks, such as modern slavery, in their SCs. The study adopts the Spectrum of Exploitation framework to examine how these SMEs address issues such as exploitation, diversity, inclusion, and labor practices within the context of the broader ESG (Environmental, Social, and Governance) agenda.

By integrating this framework, the research will explore the weaknesses, challenges, and solutions SMEs face in addressing social sustainability, using this theory to guide findings and improve practical strategies.

This research has multiple phases. It began with a review of sustainability statements and industry reports, including EDI and modern slavery statements, to understand current social sustainability practices and challenges. The second phase involved focus group discussions (FGD) with representatives from industry SMEs in the Cardiff Capital Region (CCR), a subset of the Welsh Media Sector, to explore barriers they face in tackling social sustainability and their compliance practices. The final phase consists of ten semi-structured interviews, building on insights from the FGD and further developing a comprehensive framework for managing social sustainability risks in SMEs. The study uses the Spectrum of Exploitation (see Figure 1) to understand how SMEs may inadvertently facilitate risks like modern slavery and how they can address these issues more effectively.

Preliminary findings suggest that SMEs in the creative industries sector in Wales are preventing social sustainability risks through informal practices, often categorised as “silent CSR” (Jenkins 2006). These SMEs typically rely on certifications like SA8000, but the research indicates these alone are insufficient. Instead, SMEs blend compliance with capacity-building measures, such as providing supplier training and fostering direct engagement with suppliers, to create more sustainable practices (Ciliberti et al. 2008). However, significant barriers persist, including limited financial and human resources, and fragmented CSR efforts. SMEs often lack infrastructure for formal reporting or auditing processes, making it difficult to detect and address more nuanced forms of exploitation, such as forced labor in informal or subcontracted labor arrangements.

This research contributes to the limited knowledge on social sustainability in SMEs, specifically within the creative industries. It offers insights into the challenges SMEs face in addressing social sustainability, especially in sectors with complex SCs and informal labor practices. The findings will provide practical guidance for SMEs to strengthen their responses to social sustainability risks by integrating formal compliance measures with capacity-building strategies. Developing a comprehensive framework for managing these risks in SMEs will offer a significant contribution to the field, providing a practical tool for SMEs in Wales and beyond. Additionally, by focusing on the creative industries in Wales, this study fills a critical gap in the literature, offering a context-specific analysis of social sustainability risk management in Welsh SMEs.

6.

TITLE: Child Labour and Forced Labour: A UK Perspective on Global Compliance

NAME OF AUTHOR: Elizabeth Burroughs and Eleanor Harry

ABSTRACT:

This research project will investigate the gap between UK companies' understanding of Child Labour and Forced Labour and their preparedness to comply with international reporting regulations, such as the Canadian Fighting Against Forced Labour and Child Labour in Supply Chains Act. The project hypothesises that the UK Modern Slavery Act's current structure may inadvertently lead to UK companies overlooking the specific nuances of Child Labour, potentially hindering their ability to report accurately and efficiently on both issues. By surveying and analysing the perceptions and practices of UK companies, this research aims to inform the development of national legislative frameworks that will support UK companies in meeting their international reporting obligations regarding Child Labour and Forced Labour. The project seeks collaborators and funding partners to expand its scope and impact, ensuring that UK companies are well-equipped to navigate the complexities of international regulations concerning Child Labour and Forced Labour within their supply chains.

7.

TITLE: The Role of Supply Chain Financing in Combating Modern Slavery: Leveraging Financial Regulatory Instruments and Anti-Money Laundering Mechanisms

NAME OF AUTHOR: Simon Croom and Duncan Jepson

ABSTRACT:

This paper explores the critical yet underleveraged role of financial systems in identifying, disrupting, and ultimately eradicating modern slavery within global supply chains. While regulatory frameworks, transparency initiatives, and corporate social responsibility have contributed to progress, the integration of financial risk analysis and compliance mechanisms—particularly those developed for anti-money laundering (AML)—presents a transformative opportunity to combat forced labor and exploitation.

The paper argues for the application of AML protocols and financial surveillance tools—traditionally used to detect illicit financial activity—to the domain of labor rights monitoring. For instance, mechanisms such as Customer Identification Programs (CIP), Suspicious Activity Reporting (SAR), and risk-based compliance frameworks employed by financial institutions can be adapted to identify unusual transactional patterns indicative of labor abuse.

These tools, when calibrated to detect anomalies in supplier payments, trade finance structures, and fund flows, can illuminate opaque parts of supply chains where exploitation typically thrives.

The urgency of this approach is underscored by recent data. As of March 2025, U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) has detained over 8,465 shipments linked to entities flagged under the Uyghur Forced Labor Prevention Act (UFLPA), a clear demonstration of the intersection between regulatory enforcement and trade finance. Meanwhile, the European Union's Corporate Sustainability Due Diligence Directive (CSDDD), passed in April 2024, mandates companies to integrate human rights and environmental due diligence into financial and operational decision-making, signaling a regulatory shift toward finance-driven accountability.

Despite these developments, financial markets have shown signs of retreat. The removal of ESG indicators from S&P Global's credit ratings in 2023 represents a step backward, reducing visibility of human rights risks for lenders and investors. At the same time, companies with documented labor abuses, such as Del Monte—whose guards were implicated in serious violations in Guatemala and Kenya—continue to access substantial financing, including a \$500 million revolving credit line, without apparent repricing of risk.

Supply Chain Finance (SCF), encompassing trade financing, invoice discounting, dynamic discounting, and other liquidity tools, is a multi-trillion-dollar domain. According to McKinsey (2022), global SCF volumes surpassed \$1.3 trillion in 2020, yet risk-adjusted mechanisms reflecting social impact remain largely absent. Aberdeen Group (2007) defines SCF as a convergence of financing tools and technology platforms linked to supply chain events—creating numerous touchpoints to integrate risk-based pricing models that factor in labor rights violations.

We propose a novel framework that adapts AML architecture to modern slavery detection, including:

- Real-time transaction monitoring to flag high-risk geographies and suppliers;
- Cross-referencing payment data with sanctions and forced labor watchlists;
- Collaboration between financial institutions and enforcement bodies (e.g., FinCEN, FATF, INTERPOL);
- The development of sectoral risk profiles and typologies based on product categories and regions;
- Enhanced due diligence requirements for financial instruments such as project finance, syndicated loans, and sustainability-linked bonds.

Supply chains operate through four interconnected flows—products, information, relationships, and finances. It is in the financial flows, often the most data-rich and regulated, where intervention holds the most promise. This paper contends that embedding anti-slavery metrics within financial oversight not only strengthens compliance but also shifts incentives—redirecting capital away from exploitative practices and toward ethical sourcing...

8.

TITLE: Implementing Ethical Public Procurement in the NHS: An Organisational Analysis

NAME OF AUTHOR: Lihani Du Plessis and Jonathan M. Cullen

ABSTRACT:

The English National Health Service (NHS) is responsible for the delivery of healthcare services to improve the health and wellbeing of the English population; however, the NHS is currently procuring goods tainted with human and labour rights abuses (Berman et al., 2020; Trueba, Bhutta and Shahvisi, 2020; Hughes et al., 2021). Previous work has identified the issue (Bhutta, 2017; Feinmann, 2020) indicated how NHS purchasing practices impacted working conditions during the COVID-19 pandemic (Bhutta, Bostock and Brown, 2021; British Medical Association, 2021; Hughes et al., 2021), and suggested organisational and policy solutions (Jaekel and Santhakumar, 2015; Bhutta and

Santhakumar, 2016; Bhutta, Bostock and Brown, 2021; British Medical Association, 2021; Brown et al., 2024). However, there is a lack of clarity around the current NHS' organisational ethical procurement practices. Neither is there an understanding of the challenges NHS procurers face in implementing human rights due diligence (HRDD) in light of the 2022 Health and Care Act stipulation to eradicate modern slavery from public sector supply chains.

This paper offers a critical analysis of HRDD in the NHS based on information from a desk review and 21 exploratory expert interviews with NHS and non-NHS professionals working in the medical sector. Findings suggest that the NHS is a system under stress wherein procurement functions in a complex network of fragmented players. While there are efforts within the NHS to address human and labour rights abuses in its supply chains, current actions are insufficient. System wide transformation is required to resource and build capacity to improve working conditions in the NHS supply chains and meet regulatory requirements.

9.

TITLE: Detection of labour exploitation in state-funded domestic care

NAME OF AUTHOR: Caroline Emberson

ABSTRACT:

Policy instruments such as Article 4 of the European Convention on Human Rights (European Court of Human Rights, 2021) and the Council of Europe Convention on Action Against Trafficking in Human Beings (Council of Europe, 2005) place human rights protections at the centre of European policymaking. Recent horizontal policy developments open up the possibility for the development of public procurement mechanisms to achieve these social policy aims. However, legal scholars have identified both risks and dilemmas for the state as it attempts to leverage its role as a 'buyer' to improve human rights. EU regional governments, sometimes in the guise of the local municipality, are important procurers and administrators of domestic care, a service which is, increasingly, delivered in the home.

This summary of a forthcoming paper highlights governance gaps in the regional administration of labour rights protections within the direct state-funding of long-term care. Drawing upon data from secondary sources and semi-structured interviews with stakeholders in four European countries, municipal activities including whistleblowing procedures; care-worker professionalisation; the expansion of employee's roles and inter-agency data analysis have been identified and are described. Long-term care in France and Italy has evolved from a tradition of conservative familialism – where the family is seen as the main support provider. Whereas in Sweden and The Netherlands, welfare services have followed universalist egalitarianism principles: where the state aims to provide access for all those in need. In each of the countries I studied, my informants had no doubt that the phenomenon of exploitation was real. In this context, my research question sought to identify what actions municipal government and other regional actors had taken to mitigate the risks of labour exploitation among domestic care workers and what barriers remained?

My analysis suggests that initiatives to enhance individual agency are more commonly reported in traditionally familial welfare regimes while collective actions are more frequently described in countries which have had a more universalist approach to the provision of long-term care. Yet my findings show that significant gaps still exist in the regulation of labour exploitation among domestic workers, particularly in relation to live-in care workers, who are usually beyond the reach of national labour inspectorates. Despite these regulatory gaps, findings from the studies conducted in The Netherlands and Sweden show that those in municipal roles are starting to change their practices to combat labour exploitation. This is an important and significant finding. However, even where municipal engagement to address these problems was at its most extensive, collective action could be hampered by legacy legislation.

In addition, the governance activities that have emerged among regional state actors, particularly at the municipal level also warrant improvement.

The EU and its member states clearly have a duty not only to protect, but also to respect, human rights in the domestic care services that they fund. Without further reform and greater theoretical diversification, particularly in relation to its gendered nature, our understanding of potential avenues to improve the detection of labour malpractices seems unlikely to adequately address the evidential threat.

10.

TITLE: Organizational Culture Transformation and Sustainability Performance: Examining the Roles of Modern Slavery Supply Chain Capability and Ethical Sensitivity

NAME OF AUTHOR: John Frimpong, Abdul Samed Muntaka, David Asamoah and Louis Kuoru Nibonmua

ABSTRACT:

At this critical juncture, sustainability is no longer a choice but a strategic imperative in the developing economy's agribusiness sector. Firms are increasingly pressured to align with ethical and sustainability standards, particularly in addressing environmental, social, and economic concerns. However, while regulatory compliance and technological advancements have received considerable attention, the role of organisational culture transformation (OCT) in driving sustainability remains underexplored. This study examines how shifts in organisational culture impact sustainability performance within the agribusiness sector, with a particular focus on ethical sensitivity and modern slavery supply chain capability (MSSC) as critical market-driven boundary conditions and mechanisms, respectively.

Sustainability performance has appeared as a critical focus for firms addressing global sustainability challenges. Defined as the control and monitoring of economic, environmental, and social performance, sustainability performance reflects an organisation's ability to balance financial success with environmental stewardship and social responsibility. While many organisations have established a strategic course to become more sustainable, implementing these strategies requires the development of an organisational culture that reflects and promotes these sustainability goals. Notably, firms that excel in corporate sustainability are more proactive in addressing modern slavery within their supply chains, a critical social dimension of sustainable business practices. MSSC capability is conceptualised as the ability of organisations to detect, remediate, and disclose modern slavery through intra- and inter-organizational collaborations. Ethical sensitivity, on the other hand, relates to the extent to which stakeholders value and expect moral behaviour from businesses—it has a significant impact on an organisation's sustainability drives. In an ethically sensitive market, the behaviours of ethical consumers have been examined as a driver of sustainable practices. However, the volatility of ethics-driven market segments and consumer disinterest can constrain their impact.

The study will employ the perspectives of stakeholder and institutional theories to explain how organisational culture transformation and modern slavery supply chain capabilities drive sustainability performance in an ethically sensitive business environment. Survey data will be collected from the Ghanaian agribusiness industry to empirically confirm the proposed theoretical framework and test the research hypotheses. Structural equation modelling (SEM) will be employed to examine the relationships between the constructs, and moderated regression analysis will be utilised to assess the moderating effects within the model.

In consonance with the proposed hypotheses, organisational culture transformation is expected to drive sustainability performance (environmental, social, and economic). Organisations that fully embrace sustainable practices will enhance compliance, reduce emissions and waste, improve awareness and protection of human rights, commit to ethical practices, and increase financial resilience. Additionally, the capability to address modern slavery in the supply chain is expected to mediate this relationship. Furthermore, ethical sensitivity is proposed to mediate the relationship between OCT and both sustainability performance and MSSC capabilities in markets with high ethical sensitivity.

Conversely, firms operating in markets with weak ethical sensitivity will experience lower sustainability performance despite undergoing cultural transformation.

The study presents a comprehensive framework that enhances the understanding of how internal organisational dynamics and external market forces collectively impact sustainability outcomes.

11.

TITLE: Approaches to Addressing Modern Slavery in African Agrifood Supply Chains: A Stakeholder Perspective

NAME OF AUTHOR: Salma Garra and Amine Belhadi

ABSTRACT:

Modern slavery encompasses a range of human rights abuses, including child labor, forced labor, debt bondage, and human trafficking (Pinnington & Meehan, 2023). Africa remains the region most vulnerable to modern slavery, with a rate of up to 64%. Over 3.8 million individuals, including women and children, endure forced labor, particularly within agriculture, mining, fishing, and domestic work (Global slavery index, 2023). Given the prevalence of modern slavery in agriculture, this study explores modern slavery within African agrifood supply chains (AFSCs), which are characterized by complexity, globalization, and multiple stakeholders over different countries with varying levels of modern slavery risk (Geng, et al., 2022; Zhao, et al., 2024). The intersection of agrifood supply chains and Africa's context creates conditions that facilitate modern slavery (Crane, et al., 2019; Gold, et al., 2015; Razak, et al., 2024). Despite Africa's vulnerability to modern slavery, no African country has fully criminalized all forms of modern slavery (Walk Free, 2023). Furthermore, many African agrifood products, such as cocoa from Côte d'Ivoire and coffee from Nigeria, are produced under poor working conditions but are exported to developed countries with stricter modern slavery regulations (Bhutada, 2020). While existing research on modern slavery in supply chains is extensive (e.g., Robb & Michailova, 2022; Geng et al., 2022; Pinnington & Meehan, 2023), there is a significant gap in understanding how African agrifood firms address modern slavery risks. To bridge this gap, this study seeks to investigate the following research questions (RQs):

RQ1. How African agrifood firms are responding to modern slavery within their supply chains?

RQ2. How AFSCs/stakeholders interact to implement strategies to address modern slavery risks?

This research adopts a qualitative research approach by leveraging an in-depth single case study of an agrifood supply chain in Africa to describe and observe complicated phenomena like modern slavery (McCutcheon & Meredith, 1993; Meredith, 1998; Eisenhardt & Graebner, 2007; Handfield & Melnyk, 1998). To collect data, we will rely on a combination of secondary data from document analysis (e.g., sustainability reports, corporate social responsibility reports) and primary data generated from semi-structured interviews with key AFSC stakeholders, including farm owners, sustainability managers, supply chain/operations managers, purchasing managers, human resources managers, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), labor unions, and legal institutions such as labor inspectors. The study will explore the approaches adopted by each stakeholder to address modern slavery and analyze how these stakeholders interact to ensure effective mitigation strategies.

Grounded in Stakeholder theory (Freeman, 1984), this research aims to develop a framework for understanding how companies manage modern slavery risks while ensuring that all stakeholders collaborate to create supply chains free from modern slavery. By examining stakeholder interactions, the study will highlight approaches and strategies adopted by businesses, policymakers, and other groups committed to ethical practices. Ultimately, this research will contribute to the broader discourse on modern slavery by providing insights into the African context, where stakeholder engagement is critical to addressing modern slavery in agrifood supply chains.

12.

TITLE: Addressing modern slavery with 'better' labour regulation? Challenges and opportunities in the UK construction sector

NAME OF AUTHOR: Gabriela Gutierrez Huerter O, Yazan Alzoubi and Furqan Suhail

ABSTRACT:

As a wicked societal problem, modern slavery has become ubiquitous in contemporary debates around extreme forms of labour exploitation. Modern slavery is an umbrella term used to refer to exploitative practices ranging from human trafficking to bonded and forced labour (ILO, 2019). Incorporated in Target 8.7 'End modern slavery, trafficking, and child labour' of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the phenomenon of modern slavery has received heightened interest due to developments in international and domestic policy (Christ et al., 2023). Across the world, except for some recent laws focused on due diligence, most legislative schemes of modern slavery reveal a strong preference for reporting and transparency as a way of dealing with the problem (Christ et al., 2020). In the UK Section 54 of the 2015 Modern Slavery Act (MSA) was introduced with the intention of facilitating public scrutiny of business statements on modern slavery by civil society, investors, and consumers and creating 'a level playing field' for businesses and driving a 'race to the top' in terms of respecting human rights (Sinclair & Nolan, 2020, p.1). Although initially claimed as a globally leading piece of regulation, nine years on since its introduction, it has not created the outcomes it intended. Scholars examining the efficacy of transparency driven legislative initiatives, including the MSA (Ahmad, Haque & Islam, 2024; Christ et al., 2023; Szablewska & Kubacki, 2023) have argued that its shortcomings lie in its legislative design (LeBaron & Rühmkorf, 2017) including the low bar of reporting statutory requirements (BHRCC, 2021; Pinnington et al., 2023) and the absence of monitoring and stringent enforcement mechanisms (Ahmad et al., 2024; Islam & van Staden, 2021).

Against this background, scholarship has suggested that instead of regulating business disclosure, the focus of national governments should be shifted towards regulating the labour practices of businesses to prevent worker exploitation and guarantee decent working conditions (Balch, 2019; Fudge, 2018; LeBaron, 2020). Based on this premise, our study seeks to explore the potential of such regulation to alleviate modern slavery in the UK, specifically in the construction sector. Considered the sixth most prevalent sector for labour exploitation in the UK (UK Home Office, 2019), it has been heavily criticised for its lukewarm response to solving the issue and its weak compliance with the reporting requirements of the MSA section 54.

To address this question, we draw data from an ongoing research project commissioned by the Director of Labour Market Enforcement (DMLE) covering developments such as the Fair Work Agency (FWA). The FWA aims to bring together existing state enforcement functions and, over time, intends to take on enforcement of a wider range of employment rights. Our mixed-method approach to data collection combines near-insider primary data with secondary sources including interviews with experts from regulatory agencies such as the Gangmasters and Labour Abuse Authority (GLAA), the Health and Safety Executive (HSE), the Home Office (HO), the Employment Agency Standards Inspectorate (EAS) and the National Minimum Wage (NMW) compliance office. Complementing these interviews, rich secondary data focused on the UK construction sector were collected including documents, reports and news articles published by relevant actors in the sector.

13.

TITLE: Experimenting with Data: Partnering with labour activist organisations to challenge exploitation in the international garment sector

NAME OF AUTHOR: Katy Huxley and Jean Jenkins

ABSTRACT:

The Clean Clothes Campaign (CCC) is an international NGO which works in close cooperation with a range of civil society partners to improve working conditions and empower workers in the global garment and sportswear industries. At the core of CCC's vision and purpose, lies their Urgent Appeals (UA) system. The UA is, in simple terms, an urgent plea for international assistance in defending human rights and employment rights, originating in a request from workers, activists, or their organisations at the local level. Cases often involve exploitation, harassment, suppression of freedom of association, and inhumane and unjust working conditions and practices.

Whilst there is a vast amount of information collected in relation to UA cases, there has been limited scope for detailed interrogation of the nature of cases and the strategies employed to create meaningful access to remedy. The sensitive nature of the case materials further complicated the potential for academic use of UA information.

We have undertaken 2 projects with CCC that aimed to consider the creation and use of data to support UA cases. In the first project we focused on secondary analysis of the UA related information held by CCC. We assessed UA case records, explored the quality of the information and the methods via which information was collected. This led to recommendations for its improvement. In our second project we focused on development of a new UA database to support UA work on the ground and strategically at local, national and international levels. This database was then developed and implemented in partnership with CCC. The projects have promoted strategic and rigorous data management to support advocacy, challenge, and generation of evidence of action and impact in relation to violations of workers' rights.

This presentation will detail the development of the projects, consider the nature of UA cases and evidence generated by the UA data, as well as the impact on data collection and strategy that these projects enabled.

14.

TITLE: Reducing Vulnerability and Fostering Resilience in Refugee Communities: A Collaborative Network Approach

NAME OF AUTHOR: Sharmin Julie and Laura Shobiye

ABSTRACT:

Refugee education is a critical component of global efforts to reduce vulnerability, promote social inclusion, and build resilient communities (Jimenez and Bjorvatn, 2018). With over 65 million people displaced worldwide, nearly half of whom are under the age of 18, ensuring access to quality education for refugees is essential for their personal development, social integration, and long-term well-being (Ugolott and Webster, 2023; Fiddian-Qasmiyeh, 2020).

This paper explores how collaborative networks between researchers, civil society organisations, and refugee communities can foster resilience and sustainability through shared learning and capacity-building initiatives.

The study employed a participatory research approach, conducting three interdisciplinary workshops with refugee communities, early career researchers, and civil society organisations. These workshops focused on core themes—multilingual environments, non-verbal communication, and capacity building—and analysed their relevance for both academic research and practical implementation. Data were collected through focus group discussions, participatory activities, and reflective sessions, ensuring that the voices of refugee participants were central to the research process.

Findings revealed the critical role of multilingual spaces in promoting inclusivity and engagement, as well as the importance of non-verbal communication, such as gestures and visual symbols, in bridging cultural and linguistic divides. Participants emphasised the value of capacity-building initiatives in enabling individuals to adapt acquired skills and knowledge to their specific contexts. The workshops also highlighted the need for sustainable, community-driven frameworks to support long-term resilience and self-reliance. These findings align with the work of Shamieh et al. (2022), who stress the importance of adaptive practices and participatory approaches in addressing refugee education crises.

This paper contributes to the growing body of research on refugee education by offering a model for interdisciplinary collaboration that prioritises inclusivity, sustainability, and resilience. It demonstrates how principles from refugee-led initiatives and Vulnerability and Capacity Assessment (VCA) frameworks (Tegene, 2018; Soares et al., 2012) can be adapted to foster resilience and sustainability in diverse contexts. By integrating insights from participatory research and academic scholarship, the paper provides practical recommendations for policymakers, practitioners, and researchers working with refugee communities. Ultimately, this work contributes to a globally responsible vision where inclusive practices and sustainable resilience are prioritised, ensuring that refugee communities can thrive in the face of adversity.

15.

TITLE: Leveraging AI for Preventing Exploitation and Unfairness Towards Migrant Workers

NAME OF AUTHOR: Salma Khaled, Paras Kalura and David Bishop

ABSTRACT:

Migrant workers (MWs) face numerous labor-related challenges such as long working hours, inadequate rest, and wage problems. These conditions create a complex environment, necessitating accessible information for justice, which is often lacking. This knowledge gap leaves them susceptible to various forms of exploitation, notably forced labor. With the International Labor Organisation estimating 169 million international migrant workers worldwide in 2019 there is a need for scalable solutions to support this vulnerable group. AI-driven interventions can play a critical role in addressing these challenges by building solutions which provide migrant workers with accessible, real-time information about their rights, legal protections, and available support services.

16.

TITLE: Forced labour and commercial dynamics: materialities, competitions, and governance in industrial tuna fisheries

NAME OF AUTHOR: Hyunjung Kim and Liam Campling

ABSTRACT:

The literature on unfree labour in supply chains (see Mayer and Phillips, 2017; Strauss and McGrath, 2017; LeBaron and Philips, 2018;) challenges the liberal perspective of labour unfreedom, incorporating the production dynamics that underpin unfree labour into the discourse. This literature provides insights into the commercial relations underlying forced labour practices, especially in labour-intensive industries, by interrogating the correlation between the unequal power dynamics in global production and various forms of labour exploitation in the upstream nodes of production (Andrijasevic, 2021). They argue that modern slavery has become a management practice (Crane, 2013) as suppliers to global firms rely on cheap labour, rapid production cycles, and low profit margins (Strand et al 2024). The suppliers' low profit margins, in turn, exert downward pressure on wages and working conditions of already cheap labour, thereby creating the conditions for modern slavery or forced labour.

A significant body of academic research on fishing labour has repeatedly drawn attention to the coercive labour relations experienced by migrant fishing crews both prior to and during their employment (Schoenholtz et al 2019; Yen and Liu Huang, 2021; Yea and Stringer 2021; Vandergeest and Marschke, 2021; Marschke and Vandergeest, 2023; Murphy et al., 2023). This literature provides valuable insights into the structural causes and drivers of labour unfreedom in fishing industries, which include immigration regulations, transnational migration processes mediated by labour intermediaries, and the distinctive nature of maritime labour, with fishing crews stationed on boats at sea beyond the reach of jurisdictions. However, a crucial element is absent from the analysis, namely the dynamics of production. There is significantly less research to approach labour unfreedom from the supply chain perspective.

Notable exceptions are Stringer et al (2014; 2016) and Clark and Longo (2021).

The paper aims to address this lacuna by examining how the labour unfreedom experienced by migrant fishing crews is shaped and sustained by the commercial dynamics of production. Through a thorough investigation of labour relations and industrial dynamics of tuna longline vessels in South Korea and Taiwan, the paper elucidates how specific ecological conditions of production give rise to industrial dynamics and maritime governance, thereby driving fishing vessels to maximise their profit by utilising forced labour practices. In doing so, the paper highlights two critical factors determining labour relations on board: the combination of biophysical characteristics and the commodity standards by the markets that run through the operation and coordination of the production network, and the specificity of at-sea production that entails the ever-changing time, location, tempo and duration of production, which eventually influence the temporality and spatiality of governance frameworks that a vessel abide by. Given the specificity of maritime labour at sea, we argue that forced labour practices are adopted within the domain of legal operations, and as such, becomes 'business as usual' practices, rather than an 'aberration' (Phillips and Mieres, 2014:245) from the normal functioning of labour management in tuna longline industries.

The paper elucidates the importance of the commercial dynamics as the drivers of unfree labour relations at the node of production by situating forced labour on fishing vessels within wider socio-economic relations of production networks. In addition, the paper advances the discussion on how ecological constraints articulate with the power relations among actors in production networks in extractive industries (Campling and Havice 2019) and the role of the states as a property holder in governance and regulation (Bridge, 2008).

17.

TITLE: Artificial Intelligence and Social Sustainability in Supply Chains: an integrative review

NAME OF AUTHOR: Zhe Li, Maryam Lotfi, Yingli Wang and Jean-Paul Skeete

ABSTRACT:

Global supply chains have shifted from mere delivery systems to strategic assets, compelled by mounting economic, social, and environmental pressures (Hartmann, 2021). Despite the proliferation of CSR initiatives and Supplier Codes of Conduct, entrenched issues such as forced labor, human trafficking, and exploitation persist, particularly beyond first tier suppliers (UK Home Office, 2021; Jiang, 2009). Limited visibility and inconsistent enforcement undermine traditional approaches (Mares, 2010; Wieland and Handfield, 2013). In contrast, Industry 4.0 technologies, most notably Artificial Intelligence, offer transformative capabilities for real time data analysis and proactive risk detection (Khan, 2023). By swiftly identifying emergent concerns, AI driven solutions enable timely interventions that reduce harm and promote ethical practices throughout multi tiered networks (Song et al., 2022). This study systematically examines how Artificial Intelligence can be leveraged to improve social sustainability in supply chains, focusing on key drivers and barriers to its adoption.

A systematic literature review was conducted, examining 32 peer-reviewed articles published between 2014 and 2024, sourced from Scopus and Web of Science, alongside publicly available documents from leading AI companies such as OpenAI, Google, Amazon, and NVIDIA. Articles were selected based on their relevance to the research questions, with a particular focus on studies that explicitly address the application of Artificial Intelligence to social sustainability within supply chains. The Diffusion of Innovations (DOI) theory (Rogers, 2014) was adopted as the theoretical lens to analyze the integration of AI technologies in advancing social sustainability across supply chain contexts.

In supply chain management, AI offers substantial promise for advancing social sustainability by improving working conditions, enhancing supplier transparency, and supporting parent firms' ethical initiatives. Our primary findings provide evidence that:

On the worker side, AI can notably improve working conditions by automating repetitive or physically demanding tasks that pose higher risks of workplace injuries and fatigue (Klumpp and Zijm, 2019; Chen et al., 2025). This automation allows employees to shift their focus to more creative or higher-value activities (Hassel and Özkiziltan, 2023).

In supplier selection, AI tools can strengthen transparency and ethical sourcing by linking diverse partners and making data-driven decisions about supplier credentials and performance (Asokan et al., 2022). Through more rigorous vetting and oversight, organizations can detect labor violations or environmental mismanagement earlier. This promotes a fairer supply chain, contributes to better labor practices, and fosters trust among partners (Shahidzadeh et al., 2022).

For parent firms, AI insights optimize inventory management, distribution networks, and operational efficiency, creating cost savings that, when effectively channeled, can be reinvested in socially responsible initiatives to benefit workers and communities (Hassel and Özkiziltan, 2023).

However, a lack of robust oversight can exacerbate social divides if AI tools primarily benefit top-tier suppliers or select workforce segments, intensifying inequality and undermining equitable development. AI-driven monitoring systems may also enable invasive employee surveillance, leading to privacy concerns, mistrust, and heightened stress (Smids et al., 2023). Furthermore, even when AI generates efficiency gains, workers may not reap the benefits if organizations fail to reinvest savings in social programs, ultimately neglecting key stakeholder interests.

18.

TITLE: Modern Slavery Legislation in New Zealand: Multi-stakeholder Advocacy and Resilient Leadership

NAME OF AUTHOR: Rhiannon Lloyd, Christina Stringer and Brent Burmester

ABSTRACT:

New Zealand's movement for modern slavery legislation has emerged through dynamic, multi-sector advocacy efforts. Following the 2023 election, however, the government deprioritised legislation, effectively halting its progress. Despite this setback, advocacy efforts have persisted. Our research examines this movement as an inter-organisational network of responsible leadership, exploring how diverse stakeholders adapt their strategies, and mobilise collective action to try and advance legislative reform in an uncertain political landscape.

19.

TITLE: Modern slavery conceptualisation: A South African perspective

NAME OF AUTHOR: Hemisha Makan, Noleen Pisa and Maryam Lotfi

ABSTRACT:

Over the past decade, supply chains have become more complex, filled with uncertainty and volatility. Lack of visibility and transparency has established an environment where modern slavery prevails. Modern slavery is a phenomenon that is occurring across global supply chains, with South Africa being no exception. In 2023, the approximate number of people in modern slavery was 158 000, driven by factors such as lack of basic needs, weak governance structures, disenfranchised groups and high levels of inequality. In 2019, South Africa was listed on the TIP report as the source, transit and destination country for human trafficking. This means that most victims to modern slavery are recruited within South Africa, trafficked through its borders and exploited domestically. Even though the reality of modern slavery is recognised, its full extent, remains hidden. Limited research, both academic and grey literature from a South African context, underscores the need to conceptualise modern slavery within the South African supply chain. As such, the objective of this research is to conceptualise modern slavery within the South African supply chain.

To conceptualise modern slavery within the South African supply chain industries by exploring its prevalence and occurrences within the country.

This research will follow an explanatory descriptive design which will allow the researcher to explore the current understanding of modern slavery and the underlying causes that enables its occurrence. A qualitative approach will be undertaken, and data will be collected from stakeholders within the labour-intensive industry. The primary data collection instrument will be a semi structured interview with open ended questions. Using snowball sampling, a combination of online and face-to-face interviews with 15 to 25 participants will be done or until data saturation is reached. Data analysis will be done using Nvivo whereby themes will be identified.

Due to limited research from a South African perspective, this research aims to provide thorough understanding of Modern slavery within South African Supply chains. The identification of modern slavery prevalence and factors contributing to its occurrence contributes to the development of a well-defined conceptual framework, ultimately contributing to the South African body of knowledge, policymakers as well as academia. The findings from this study are expected to assist policymakers and businesses develop intervention in targeting modern slavery, reinforce regulatory framework and encourage ethical supply chain practices. In addition, this research will fill the existing knowledge gap, especially from a South African perspective where there is minimal research on modern slavery.

20.

TITLE: Theorising modern slavery in supply chains: the potential for thought experiments

NAME OF AUTHOR: Jo Meehan

ABSTRACT:

Modern slavery is arguably “one of the defining grand challenges of our time” (Crane, LeBaron, Phung, Behbahani, & Allain, 2022: 264). Its persistence is rooted in systemic inequalities “hard-wired into supply chains” (LeBaron & Lister, 2021: 688). Existing supply chain theories often fail to capture these complexities, as they are bounded by firm- and supply chain-level perspectives. Researching from positions of power can limit our ability to grasp the lived realities of vulnerable workers. This paper argues that thought experiments offer a useful approach to theorising modern slavery, allowing for a shift in perspective, beyond supply chains’ dominant actors, that challenges prevailing assumptions, centers human rights, and generates alternative approaches to tackling exploitative labor practices.

Thought experiments are short fictional scenarios (Egan, 2016), that invoke moral dilemmas or counterfactuals to surface intuitions and assumptions. Described as “expeditions to possible worlds” (Sorensen, 1992: 135) they clarify or illustrate abstract ideas or principles rather than explore causal relationships (Pressley, 2011). From Plato’s cave to Foot’s (1967) trolley dilemma, thought experiments have been used across many fields, notably in physics, mathematics, and philosophy to examine concept boundaries (Lowe, 1995). While their potential for organisation studies is acknowledged (Kornberger & Mantere, 2020), they remain underutilized in supply chain research. This paper applies thought experiments, including the trolley dilemma (Foot, 1967), Singer’s (1972) drowning child scenario, and Rawls’ (1971) veil of ignorance, to explore moral obligations within global supply networks, interrogating issues such as responsibility, complicity, voice, visibility, and power.

Thought experiments enable detachment from empirical constraints to tease out nuanced issues (Zohny, 2021). They also invoke human connection and emotion. Studies of decision-making in supply chains recognise the importance of ethics (Ko et al., 2019), but tend toward binary positions of good/bad. While there is little moral disagreement that modern slavery is abhorrent, thought experiments help navigate the ethical complexities of change, or indeed, inaction. If we conceive of scholarly research as prescient and capable of shaping organisations and society (Corley & Gioia, 2011), tools to discover and direct our moral attention become essential.

Theorising differs from theory in that it involves the discovery process rather than justification; the latter follows through empirical testing (Swedberg, 2012). Freed from empirical constraints, theorising can be a more creative and imaginative process: ‘theorists build theory, they design, conduct, and interpret imaginary experiments’. (Weick, 1989: 519). However, once theories are accepted, their assumptions and foundations are frequently forgotten (Ketokivi, Mantere, & Cornelissen, 2017). A critical function of theorising is its ability to generate multiple, diverse, and even contradictory ideas. Recognising unequal systems of power underpinning modern slavery, thought experiments support the call for pluralism in theorizing (Cornelissen, Höllerer, & Seidl, 2021) rather than privileging dominant approaches, voices, and positions.

While the recognition that the supply chain field suffers from insufficient theorisation is not new (Ho, Au, & Newton, 2002), the persistence of exploitation in the global economy demands urgent attention. Conceptualisations of human rights and supply chain harms need recalibration. However, without new theories, and therefore new theorising, the supply chain field can be slow to react...

21.

TITLE: Contractual Governance in Global Supply Chains: Addressing Buyer-Supplier Agency Problems to Combat Modern Slavery - an EU Due Diligence Perspective

NAME OF AUTHOR: Jeannie Morgan

ABSTRACT:

This research investigates how the EU Corporate Sustainability Due Diligence Directive (CSDDD) creates a framework for addressing modern slavery (MS) risks in global supply chains through governance mechanisms. Analysing the American Bar Association's Model Contract Clauses (ABA MCCs 2.0) as a case study, the research explores how contractual innovations can mitigate buyer-supplier agency problems. The study focuses on how governance tools can operationalise shared responsibility between buyers and suppliers to reduce modern slavery.

The study applies principal agent theory (PAT) (Eisenhardt, 1989) to analyse governance challenges in complex, multi-tiered supply chains. The methodology includes legal text analysis of the CSDDD's contractual assurance requirements (Articles 7/8) and liability regime (Article 29), and examination of the ABA MCCs' innovative approach to shared accountability frameworks through Schedule P (Human Rights Policy) and Schedule Q (Buyer's Code).

Also briefly presented are case examples of sustainability clauses. This approach draws on Montgomery's (2024) firm-level research directions RD14 and RD16 and specifically investigates:

- Agency problems. How contractual governance can address agency problems in buyer-supplier relationships, such as opportunistic supplier behavior, goal conflicts, and information asymmetry, exacerbate modern slavery risks.
 - Governance mechanisms. The effectiveness and role of contractual tools in addressing agency challenges.
- Shared responsibility frameworks. The ABA MCCs' Schedule Q "responsible purchasing practices" (e.g., price alignment, order freezing) mitigates procurement-driven exploitation and addresses power imbalances by aligning buyer purchasing practices with living wage costs, reducing supplier opportunism by addressing goal conflicts between buyers and suppliers
- Subcontractor accountability. Schedule P's "perpetual clauses" enforces subcontractor accountability by extending human rights obligations to subcontractors, mitigating information asymmetry by ensuring compliance cascades across tiers. It also has the potential to address the issue of inability of firms to audit all of their suppliers due to the vast and multitiered structures, and/or if the firm will not acknowledge a subcontractor.
 - Remediation focus. Unlike conventional "comply-or-exit" approaches, the clauses prioritise joint corrective action over abrupt contract terminations, preventing suppliers (and loan sharks) from resorting to more extreme exploitative practices that exacerbate forced labor risks.

This study contributes to the modern slavery literature by applying PAT - a novel approach in EU due diligence law - to analyse contractual governance mechanisms in the EU CSDDD and ABA MCCs and focus on its potential to: a) mitigate the agency problems that enable exploitation, and; b) restructure MNE-supplier dynamics. It also provides practical insights into how model clauses can create shared responsibility frameworks that address root causes of modern slavery.

22.

TITLE: From Policy to Practice: How Do Sustainability Governance Initiatives Drive Anti-Business Modern Slavery Efforts in Leading MNCs?

NAME OF AUTHOR: Nadeesha Muthuthantrige, Shirley Xu and Akrum Helfaya

ABSTRACT:

This study investigates how sustainability governance initiatives (SGIs) influence the eradication of business modern slavery (BMS) practices in multinational corporations (MNCs).

Design/methodology/approach - Using panel data from Global 500 (G-500) firms (2009–2023) sourced from Refinitiv Eikon, we apply fixed-effects and two-stage least squares regression models. The analysis evaluates the impact of six SGIS—corporate social performance, board gender diversity, CSR strategy, CSR committee, external CSR assurance, and CSR recognition—on anti-BMS outcomes.

Findings - Empirical results reveal that firms with stronger SGIs exhibit significantly greater commitments to anti-BMS practices, particularly in high-risk sectors. Board gender diversity and CSR assurance emerge as key drivers.

However, variation across industries suggests that some firms adopt SGIs for symbolic compliance, highlighting institutional decoupling.

The study introduces and operationalises the concept of BMS, distinguishing it from broader notions of labour exploitation. It extends neo-institutional theory by examining how institutional pressures shape firm-level governance responses to ethical risks.

Research limitations/implications- While robust econometric techniques mitigate endogeneity, causal inferences are constrained by the use of secondary data. Future research should explore SME contexts and qualitative assessments of SGI implementation.

The findings offer guidance for policymakers, investors, and managers to enhance corporate accountability, embed SGIs into core strategies, and strengthen regulatory enforcement against exploitative practices.

Promoting effective SGIs can improve human rights protection and ethical labour standards across global supply chains, contributing to SDG 8 and SDG 12.

23.

TITLE: The Risk of Exploitation in Adult Social Care

NAME OF AUTHOR: Jeff Norman

ABSTRACT:

Modern slavery is said to be surging in social care since immigration rules were relaxed to fill thousands of vacancies, with a growing incidence of exploitation leading to workers being 'ripped off' and living in squalor. On 24th January 2022, a statement of changes to the immigration rules was published, confirming that care workers would be added to the UK's list of 'Shortage of Occupation'. Care workers from overseas therefore became eligible to apply for Skilled Worker visas under the new, points-based immigration system.

In August 2022, it was reported that staff shortages in the adult care sector in the UK had risen by more than 52% from the previous year to 152,000 vacancies, accounting for vacancies in one in ten social care posts.

Where labour shortages exist, there is an increased risk of exploitation, and the likelihood of opportunists using the situation for their own financial gain.

Unpublished figures show at least 800 people working in care homes or providing domiciliary care were reported as potential victims last year, more than ten times the number recorded before the government's visa scheme.

24.

TITLE: Addressing Modern Slavery in Labour Supply Chains: the Importance of Inter-Firm Relations

NAME OF AUTHOR: Christopher Pesterfield

ABSTRACT:

Modern slavery legislation has been adopted by various countries, including the US, UK, Australia, and Canada. Much of this legislation aims to improve supply chain transparency via disclosure and reporting practices as way to address exploitative labour practices. Beyond reporting requirements, however, responses to the presence of labour exploitation is effectively at the discretion of each company. Consequently, scholars have aimed to understand company and management responses to the presence of exploitation, and particularly in relation to this legislation. However, this literature has so far focused almost exclusively on the firms and managers are the top of supply chains. This is despite the widespread acknowledgement that exploitation has to be addressed collaboratively. Where collaboration features in the literature it is often to look at how those working at the top of supply chains collaborate with government or non-government organisations, or civil society actors. What has received virtually no attention is relationship quality between actors within the supply chain. It is crucial to understand this because without the supply chain working together to address modern slavery risks the measures or policies developed at the top will have little or no impact.

The present research presents an analysis of inter-firm relationship quality between actors in supply chains via an exploration of attempts to implement labour exploitation mitigation measures. Findings draw on 50 interviews with managers in various sizes of firms and positions within UK construction supply chains – from very large principal contractors to medium and small subcontractors – as well as material suppliers and third-party organisations. Data are analysed using a Supply Chain Relationship Quality framework. Analysis identifies four types of inter-firm relations: fragmented, antagonistic, contractual, and collaborative. These types of relations not only explain inter-firm relations, and some of the contextual factors that shape them, but also how important vertical relationships within supply chains are in finding solutions to labour exploitation.

25.

TITLE: Challenging the Consumer-Centric Framing of Modern Slavery: A Critical Policy Analysis of Australia's Modern Slavery Act (2018)

NAME OF AUTHOR: Kyla Raby

ABSTRACT:

Like similar transparency legislation that came before it, Australia's Modern Slavery Act (2018) (MSA) adopts a decentralised, reflexive, and self-regulatory approach to governing modern slavery in global supply chains, positioning consumers as key actors responsible for driving ethical corporate behaviour. This study utilises a Foucault inspired critical policy analysis framework proposed by Bacchi (2009) to analyse this representation of the 'problem' of modern slavery in global supply chains. It finds the MSA constructs modern slavery primarily as an information and market problem, rather than a criminal or systemic issue involving the exploitation of people.

As a form of post-structural critical analysis, the WPR approach adopts Foucault (2019, p. 456) view that critique of what type of 'established, unexamined ways of thinking the accepted practices are based' is essential in such analysis. In doing so, this study finds that deep-seated assumptions associated with neoliberal principles of non-intervention, free markets, and individual responsibility underlie the MSA's problem representation. This problem representation suggests that it is consumer behaviour which enables modern slavery, while businesses are positioned as non-offenders needing regulatory support to deal with the issue, rather than as entities that profit from the exploitation of workers in their supply chains.

Utilising the WPR approach in policy analysis enables the contestation and disruption of pervasive problem representations that are found to be harmful. Importantly, this study finds that the MSA's problem representation is harmful in that it fails to prevent the exploitation of workers, deflects responsibility away from businesses and governments and offers the potential for consumers to be deceived. In essence, it removes the human impact of modern slavery from the realms of what is thought about. Therefore, this study argues that the MSA's problem representation needs to be replaced, and alternative problem representations adopted by policy makers to truly address the exploitation of workers in global supply chains.

To support conceptualisation of alternative problem representations, this study engages the perspectives of those found to have been excluded in the development of the MSA's problem representation. Despite supposedly being at the centre of the issue of modern slavery in global supply chains, the experiences of exploited workers were almost entirely absent from Australian government discourse surrounding modern slavery in global supply chains in the 10 years prior to the MSA becoming law. Also, despite being a key subject within the MSA's problem representation, neither consumers themselves nor representations of consumer voices were engaged in the problematising process.

Through undertaking a focus group discussion with survivors of modern slavery and a survey of Australian consumers, the study demonstrates how these perspectives further highlight serious flaws in the MSA's problem representation however also offer helpful alternative problem representations. These findings have relevance not just to the Australian context but to any jurisdictions currently relying on, or considering implementing, transparency in supply chain legislation as a form of governing modern slavery in global supply chains.

26.

TITLE: Human Rights Due Diligence: Grounded in Reality

NAME OF AUTHOR: Michael Rogerson, Nadia Bernaz and Amy Benstead

ABSTRACT:

The role of business in protecting human rights has gained increasing attention since the publication of the United Nations Guiding Principles 13 years ago. Even as human rights abuses continue to destroy lives around the world, businesses have implemented due diligence programmes. These largely voluntary attempts to ensure that risks are managed in their supply chains have been picked up by legislators, who have initiated a swathe of transnational regulation seeking to codify focal firms' responsibilities and mandate due diligence. Despite its increasing institutionalisation, management scholars have paid human rights due diligence very little attention. The term is mentioned occasionally in the literature, often with claims – poorly supported in academic research – that the social audit aspect of due diligence is ineffective. We seek to theorise human rights due diligence by conducting foundational research on the process and its development, impacts, and limitations. Through interviews with supply chain and sustainability professionals at focal firms, social auditors, and human rights consultants, we develop a field-level understanding of due diligence informed by supply and demand. Though our research is in its early stages, we intend to have findings to present by September.

27.

TITLE: Understanding and Modelling the Impact of Consumer Purchasing Behaviour on the Global Supply Chains' Decisions in Adapting Anti-Slavery Practices

NAME OF AUTHOR: Amir Salimi Babamiri, Maryam Lotfi, Bahman Rostami-Tabar, Nicole Koenig-Lewis and Anatoly Zhigljavsky

ABSTRACT:

Modern Slavery Act (2015) seeks to leverage consumer power to prevent forced labour. Consumers play a pivotal role in driving demand for products linked to forced labour in global supply chains, making their attitudes and purchasing behaviour critical to addressing this issue. Their collective power can significantly influence the decisions of other stakeholders, such as retailers and policymakers, in adopting anti-slavery practices. However, despite their importance, the role of consumers remains an underexplored area in the literature.

This research explores the role of consumers in addressing forced labour within global food and drink supply chains, focusing on their influence on supply chain decisions. It aims to understand and model consumer behaviour by examining their awareness, attitudes, and actions toward ethical products. Additionally, it seeks to develop a multi-level, multi-stakeholder framework that links consumer-driven demand to upstream supply chain decisions, assessing how this demand shapes the adoption of anti-slavery practices. To support these efforts, the study will develop innovative machine learning models to predict consumer purchasing behaviour regarding forced labour, enabling proactive decision-making by supply chain stakeholders.

The study follows a mixed-methods approach, starting with semi-structured interviews with consumers and retailers to explore key behavioural drivers and barriers. Preliminary findings reveal that consumers perceive varying levels of moral intensity regarding forced labour, influencing their ethical purchasing decisions. Many consumers also employ neutralization techniques to justify inaction, especially denying personal responsibility and appeal to higher loyalties. The most influential barriers to ethical consumption include price sensitivity, shopping habits, and a lack of accessible information and transparency regarding supply chain practices. These findings align with the Norm Activation Theory, where moral intensity helps explain awareness of consequences, and neutralization techniques provide insight into ascription of responsibility. Retailer interviews further explore their perspectives on shared responsibility in tackling forced labour. Understanding how retailers perceive their role and their influence on consumer decision-making is crucial for designing effective interventions. Insights from both consumer and retailer interviews guide the next phase of the study: developing predictive behavioural models.

The research contributes to both theory and practice. Theoretically, it integrates Moral Intensity Theory and Neutralization Theory within the framework of Norm Activation Theory, offering a detailed understanding of the attitude-behaviour gap in ethical consumption. It also advances multi-level stakeholder models by linking consumer-driven demand to upstream supply chain decisions. Practically, the study informs policy and business strategies by identifying key levers for consumer engagement. By modelling consumer purchasing behaviour, it enables retailers and policymakers to design targeted interventions—such as improved transparency, ethical labelling, or pricing strategies—to encourage ethical consumption. The machine learning models developed in the later stages will enhance the predictive capability of supply chain actors, supporting more effective anti-slavery initiatives. By bridging theoretical and practical gaps, this research strengthens the multi-stakeholder approach to combating forced labour, emphasizing the critical yet underutilized role of consumers in driving systemic change.

28.

TITLE: Comparing Supply Chain Human Rights Reporting Regulations

NAME OF AUTHOR: Matthew Skerritt, Leonard Taylor, Amaya Vega, Amir Azadnia and George Onofrei

ABSTRACT:

Disclosure regulations are currently the favoured approach to addressing modern slavery in the cross-jurisdictional supply chains of focal firms in more economically developed countries. The underlying logic behind these regulations is that, through having to comply with these disclosure criteria, organisations will have to make efforts to identify if there is modern slavery in their supply chains. In instances where this is determined to be the case, the focal firm, given the social risk of disclosing the existence of modern slavery, will be pressured to resolve the instance of modern slavery.

The two most popularly researched instances of modern slavery regulations in the academic literature are the 2015 UK Modern Slavery Act and the 2018 Australian Modern Slavery Act. However, in practice, these regulations have been highly criticised for their lack of effectiveness for several reasons. Firstly, the reporting requirements are relatively loose and unspecific in nature (Christ et al. 2019). This has resulted in a lack of “substantive” reporting (Schaper and Pollach 2021; Pollach and Schaper 2023) with the focus on meeting the reporting criteria, rather than on providing depth within (Mai et al. 2023; Pinnington et al. 2023). Furthermore, studies have found that organisations will strategically leverage these weak reporting requirements to create ambiguity in their disclosures (Meehan and Pinnington 2021), sometimes decoupling their reporting from their actual modern slavery mitigation efforts (Moussa et al. 2023; Robb and Michailova 2023).

Drawing from this, it is proposed that these regulations fail due to specificity in their reporting requirements. Particularly, by failing to require “substantive” or detailed reporting (Schaper and Pollach 2021), organisations can produce vague and “low-quality” (Pinnington et al. 2023) modern slavery disclosures.

To evaluate this proposition, the effectiveness of the Modern Slavery Acts, as evaluated by the academic body of literature on the topic, will be compared to the effectiveness of the incoming European Sustainability Reporting Standards (ESRS) introduced by the 2024 Corporate Sustainability Reporting Regulations in Ireland. These regulations are the implementation of the Corporate Sustainability Reporting Directive in the European Union, and the mandatory ESRS framework will require organisations to provide far more information on human rights impacts in their supply chains than existing frameworks. As such, this study aims to understand if the limitations of the Modern Slavery Acts stem from its vagueness, or if reporting regulations alone are insufficient to address modern slavery in supply chains.

29.

TITLE: Reducing forced labour in Canadian supply chains: Challenges with implementing Bill S-211

NAME OF AUTHOR: Nancy Southin and Stuart Milligan

ABSTRACT:

Supply chain transparency is increasingly mandated through regulation (Flynn, 2020; Maruchek et al., 2011; Swift et al., 2019) with the goal of eliminating forced labour in supply chains. Canada, with the introduction of Bill S-211, is the latest country to introduce a law to mandate organizations work to detect and eliminate such practices (Flynn, 2020). Challenges of mandating supply chain transparency through regulation have been highlighted in previous studies, for example difficulties in gathering material information about extended supply chains and high costs associated with collecting and disclosing this information (Kalkanci & Plambeck, 2020; Sodhi & Tang, 2019; Villena & Dhanorkar, 2020).

No previous research has investigated the creation of the first government mandated transparency reports nor how reporting has changed over time. Existing research suggests firms may embrace reporting and incorporate it as a core focus of procurement and supply activity, embracing a culture focused on social sustainability (Stevenson & Cole, 2018). Alternatively, firms may report the minimum required, leading to reports that do not necessarily result in substantive changes in supply chain practice or effectively route out forced labour in supply chains (Rogerson et al., 2020).

The Canadian government's Bill S-211 - An Act to enact the Fighting Against Forced Labour and Child Labour in Supply Chains Act and to amend the Customs Tariff came into effect on January 1, 2024. Bill S-211 has no established institutional structures to support compliance. Additional business reporting is not unusual; for example, many organizations produce annual sustainability reports. However, these are voluntary and have no specific reporting criteria. Financial reporting is the norm, but well-established institutional support structures exist for this type of reporting. In this exploratory research, we aim to answer the following research questions:

1. How do firms initiate the process of responding to government-mandated forced labour reporting?

2. Over time, how are procurement and supply practices modified to support government-mandated forced labour reporting?

While implementing Bill S-211 is a much-needed step toward addressing forced labour issues in Canadian supply chains, firms will face challenges finding the required inputs and creating the reports. Activities such as re-evaluating supply chain risk assessment criteria, developing new organizational policies and practices, and engaging in additional training and professional development.

This study aims to explore the implementation of Bill S-211 by interviewing individuals responsible for the creation of the reports for both public and private sector organizations. Fifty semi-structured interviews are planned, 25 for each type of organization, to understand the challenges experienced in the creation of the initial reports and determine what, if any, impacts on practice the participants expect due to the reporting requirements. Initial interviews have already highlighted supply chain mapping problems, lack of information regarding reporting requirements and sources of information, and confusion about which organizations should report.

By examining the implementation of Bill S-211 from the initial implementation date, we can develop an inclusive understanding of managing the challenges of meeting the Bill S-211 requirements, provide knowledge to fill this current theoretical framework gap, and offer much-needed practical insight.

30.

TITLE: Developing Recognition-Based Worker Voice- Insights from workshops with garment workers and stakeholders

NAME OF AUTHOR: Amy Benstead, Victoria Stephens, Filipe Sarmiento, Erica Charles, Helen Goworek and Dane Lukic

ABSTRACT:

The ongoing struggles pertaining to labour exploitation within global supply chains require new ways of capturing workers' perspectives. The garment sector in Leicester has long been portrayed for its history of systemic abuse, leading to repeated calls for stronger grievance mechanisms (Hammer et al., 2015; Gardner et al., 2022; Dutta, 2024). While such calls often focus on compliance and exposing failures to uphold material rights, this paper draws on recognition theory (Honneth, 1995; Bernacchio, C. 2023) to explore how workers develop their sense of dignity, self-confidence and respect from their interactions with other people and bodies in society. Fundamentally, we build on the conceptual work of Stephens et al. (2024), which explores workers' voice in terms of three key forms of recognition: (1) affective recognition, or the sense of emotional support and care provided by others; (2) status recognition, which refers to a stable disposition of respect for one's identity; and (3) capacity recognition, which highlights the value of individuals' skills and their ability to contribute meaningfully. In doing so, our research asks: "How can the experiences of recognition among workers and relevant stakeholders in the garment industry be harnessed to develop worker voice mechanisms that enhance social justice?"

The approach adopted was to conduct a series of workshops as "mirror data" with the aim of unveiling not only the workers perspective but also those of other actors whose actions influence workers' sense of recognition (Virkkunen & Newnham, 2013). This involved four iterative workshop sessions structured around key elements from previous research phases, literature and interview findings, which served as reflective tools, allowing participants to visualise, critically evaluate, extend or challenge existing understandings. These were designed to explore how well current worker voice mechanisms serve as a pathway to mutual recognition, where individual priorities can be addressed by being genuinely 'seen' and valued by others, and the development of practical solutions.

Our findings reveal the importance of capturing both workers and stakeholders' sense of recognition when developing worker voice mechanisms. Workers consistently emphasised the emotional support of their immediate social circle and expressed strong pride in their garment making skills as fundamental to their identity and self-worth. They saw recognition of their skills as crucial but felt undervalued by wider societal attitudes to the garment industry.

Stakeholders, on the other hand, highlighted systemic constraints such as job insecurity and lack of investment, but acknowledged declining societal respect for the industry and recognised that workers' contributions have historically been overlooked. Both groups agreed that transparent communication, mutual trust and recognition of workers' practical needs such as comfort and basic dignity in their working environment were fundamental to improved social justice.

Ultimately, this has informed the co-creation of a roadmap that proposes mechanisms such as open forums, celebratory events, transparent career paths and others to develop an environment that acknowledges and dignifies the worker experience. By adopting a human-centred approach to workers as actors in their system (Pagell and Wilhelm, 2024; Fayezi et al., 2025), this study changes the prevailing narrative surrounding Leicester's garment industry. It creates space to look at the sector and its people through a broader lens, beyond the widely reported material injustices...

31.

TITLE: Making markets for exploitation: employer-centric migration policy and the trade in migrant lives in New Zealand

NAME OF AUTHOR: Francis Collins and Christina Stringer

ABSTRACT:

Labour market orientation in migration policy has often been associated with the commodification of migrant labour and workplace exploitation. However, our research reveals a more concerning evolution: when migration policies prioritize employer needs above all else, exploitation shifts from being an unfortunate side effect to a systematically traded commodity. Migration labour markets are continually evolving—renegotiated and adjusted over time (Boeckler & Berndt, 2020; Martin, 2021)—while maintaining a fundamental reliance on migration flows. When disruptions occur, these markets don't merely absorb and restructure through new visa policies; they create conditions where migrant vulnerability becomes an exploitative and tradeable asset within the economic system. This commodification of exploitation represents a shift beyond the already problematic commodification of migrant labour. In this paper, we argue that employer-centric migration policy can create conditions where exploitation not only becomes endemic but evolves into a tradeable commodity. To support this argument, we examine the transformation of New Zealand's migration policy and its role in the systemic exploitation of migrants across workplaces, accommodation and other spheres. Our analysis focuses on the development of temporary labour migration management in New Zealand since the early 2000s, particularly how policies are prioritising employer demands for workers. A key consequence of this policy orientation has been growing reports on migrant exploitation (e.g. Chiang, 2018; The New Zealand Herald, 2019; Walton, 2018), for which policymakers have sought solutions that protect and prioritise employer-centricity. This is especially apparent in post-COVID19 response to labour shortages, where a new labour migration scheme was developed based on accrediting employers—the Accredited Employer Work Visa scheme—shifting to employer-initiated visas and quantifying employer entitlements to recruit migrants.

Methodologically, we conduct a systematic document analysis of primary sources, including proactively released Cabinet papers and ministerial briefing documents, alongside an analysis of the New Zealand Public Service Commission's review of the Accredited Employer Work Visa scheme. Additionally, we incorporate commentary from key stakeholders, such as the New Zealand Human Rights Commission, to provide broader context. This triangulation of sources allows us to trace policy evolution from multiple institutional perspectives. Our research question asks: "How has New Zealand's employer-centric migration policy framework since the early 2000s contributed to the commodification of migrant labour and shaped the conditions for exploitation?". The outcome has been the expansion of exploitation from the workplace to a literal trade in precarious workers who experience heightened risk of exploitation. Migration policy has thus constructed a marketplace for exploitation, where migrant lives and their capacity to work and be subject to substandard conditions have become tradeable commodities for employers and intermediaries. Our account, in this regard, offers a critical and cautionary tale about employer-centric migration policy and the ways in which this can facilitate the entrenchment and expansion of exploitation. By providing both theoretical insights and policy critiques, this paper advances scholarly debates on temporary migration schemes, commodification, and precarious work.

32.

TITLE: Unveiling Grievance Mechanisms in Business Responses to Modern Slavery: A Text Mining Approach

NAME OF AUTHOR: Amin Vafadarnikjoo, Razieh Ghaedi and Naureen Imran

ABSTRACT:

Modern slavery represents a complex global challenge characterised by exploitative practices, including forced labour, debt bondage, human trafficking, and forced marriage, among other forms of exploitation. The increasing globalisation of supply chains has significantly contributed to the persistence and complexity of modern slavery. Thus, legislative responses to tackle modern slavery have emerged globally, notably the UK's Modern Slavery Act 2015, Australia's Modern Slavery Act 2018, and France's Duty of Vigilance Law of 2017. These legislative frameworks usually require businesses to publicly report on their efforts to mitigate modern slavery risks within their operations and supply chains. Organisations' responses to these legislative requirements vary significantly. Research indicates that businesses commonly adopt less demanding measures, such as implementing basic policies and training, over more resource-intensive practices, such as comprehensive audits and worker engagement programs. This shows an ongoing challenge in ensuring genuine compliance and effective action against modern slavery beyond superficial or performative measures. There are important tools such as Operational-level grievance mechanisms (OGMs) that emerged to address human rights violations related to modern slavery in businesses. These mechanisms allow affected stakeholders to submit complaints regarding corporate impacts, facilitating the early remediation of potential human rights harms. Despite growing academic and practitioner interest, significant gaps remain in understanding how companies implement and communicate about grievance mechanisms specifically related to modern slavery. This represents an important area for further investigation, particularly knowing that these mechanisms provide early warnings of exploitation and offer pathways to remedy for affected individuals. Text-mining approaches offer promising methods for systematically analysing large volumes of corporate disclosures to identify patterns in how organisations describe their grievance mechanisms and assess whether these disclosures indicate substantive engagement with modern slavery risks or merely symbolic compliance. In this research, text mining tools such as topic modelling including Latent Dirichlet Allocation (LDA) are used to analyse key topics and keywords from the dataset of the UK Modern Slavery Act (MSA) statements to assess the effectiveness of grievance disclosures.

33.

TITLE: What do companies think supply chain human rights regulations are about? An interview study

NAME OF AUTHOR: Ying Zhang and Chee Yew Wong

ABSTRACT:

Recent years have seen a significant increase in supply chain human rights transparency and due diligence (HRT&DD) legislation globally, placing unprecedented pressure on organizations to identify, mitigate, and report on risks of modern slavery and other human rights abuses within their operations and supply chains. While the legal texts provide formal requirements, how organizations cognitively frame and respond to these complex demands remains a critical area of inquiry. This study addresses the central question: What do companies think supply chain human rights regulations are about?

To explore this, the research utilizes an interview-based methodology, drawing on insights from 12 semi-structured interviews with participants who have direct, hands-on experience in implementing HRT&DD acts. The sample includes a diverse range of key stakeholders from retailers, brands, NGOs, consulting firms, legal services, and trade unions, ensuring a multi-faceted view of the challenges and interpretations surrounding compliance.

The findings reveal a distinct four-stage cognitive process that organizations navigate when making sense of these regulations: understand, assess, prospect, and select.

Understand: The initial stage is often characterized by feeling overwhelmed. The vast scope of HRT&DD, which extends to both direct and indirect suppliers, is perceived as a monumental, almost impossible, task. This feeling is compounded by a misunderstanding of regulatory intent, where companies fear a large liability for failing to report perfect outcomes, rather than understanding the focus is on demonstrating a transparent, process-focused approach to due diligence.

Assess: In the second stage, organizations assess the feasibility of implementation. They identify significant system-level constraints that they believe ‘cannot be fixed,’ such as the inherent opacity of multi-tier supply chains and the difficulty in obtaining reliable data from lower-tier suppliers. Furthermore, they perceive the benefits of compliance as mostly indirect—such as enhanced reputation or legitimacy—rather than direct, tangible payoffs, which can temper motivation.

Prospect: The third stage marks a crucial cognitive reframing. Organizations shift from viewing compliance as a singular corporate burden to a ‘system-level multi-stakeholder problem.’ This perspective distributes responsibility, suggesting that governments, trade unions, NGOs, suppliers, and even customers share the duty to create a more ethical ecosystem. In this view, a company’s role is to embrace the ‘spirit of the laws’ by making its supply chain more transparent.

Select: Finally, in the selecting stage, organizations determine their response. They conclude that compliance is indeed feasible, not by achieving a perfectly audited, risk-free supply chain, but by being transparent about their human rights policies and due diligence processes. The path forward is not a single, perfect solution but a series of manageable, incremental actions—such as developing a policy and starting risk assessments.

This study contributes a valuable cognitive process framework that provides critical insights for both regulators and businesses. It demonstrates that making sense of HRT&DD legislation is a dynamic journey of managing perceptions, evaluating constraints, and strategically selecting feasible, process-oriented responses rather than achieving an immediate, perfect outcome.

34.

TITLE: UK implementation of the UNGPs: Reviewing progress on business and human rights and action on modern slavery in supply chains

NAME OF AUTHOR: Faiza Zafar, Katarina Schwarz, Colin Mackie, Tina Davis and Sara Thornton

ABSTRACT:

The United Nations Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights (UNGPs), unanimously endorsed by the Human Rights Council in 2011, operationalise the United Nations ‘protect, respect, and remedy’ framework and have led to over a decade of action on business and human rights. Embedding international human rights law within a polycentric governance approach, the UNGPs represent a global standard for preventing and redressing corporate-related human rights abuses and impacts. In 2013, in response to the UNGPs, UK became the first country to launch its National Action Plan on business and human rights. This paper presents preliminary findings from a new National Baseline Assessment of UK implementation of the UNGPs, assessing each of the three pillars: the state duty to protect against human rights abuses by third parties, including businesses (Pillar I); business responsibility to respect human rights, including to conduct due diligence to prevent human rights-related abuses (Pillar II); and victims’ access to effective remedy, including both judicial and non-judicial (Pillar III).

Focusing on UNGP Pillar I, the paper first identifies legal and policy measures taken by the UK Government to monitor, enforce, and support business adherence with international and regional human rights standards, as well as steps taken to ensure access to effective remedies for victims of human rights violations. Second, focusing on UNGP Pillar II, the paper evaluates the progress of UK businesses in fulfilling their responsibility to respect human rights, including addressing adverse human rights impact through ongoing human rights due diligence and by providing for or cooperating in effective access to remedies for victims. Third, focusing on UNGP Pillar III, the paper provides an assessment of the access to effective remedies for victims of business-related human rights abuses through both judicial and non-judicial processes.

The paper employs a mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative and qualitative data from existing sources with primary data collected through interviews, surveys, focus groups, and participatory workshops. The findings provide a comprehensive assessment of the current state of play and offer insights into the substantive and procedural shortcomings and gaps in the implementation of the UNGPs across the UK, by the UK government and UK businesses. As wider human rights due diligence regulation and mechanisms are increasingly centred as critical frameworks for combatting modern slavery in global supply chains, this paper evaluates the efficacy of existing efforts and potential pathways for the future.