

The London School of Economics and Political Science

**Where responsibility lies:
Corporate social responsibility and campaigns for the
rights of workers in a global economy**

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Declaration

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Abstract

Sociological analysis of corporate social responsibility (CSR) is, as yet, limited. This thesis analyses how approaches to CSR are defined and mobilised in relation to the rights of workers in transnational contexts of production and exchange. Participation in emerging global discourses of CSR is becoming standard practice amongst transnational corporations, and the growth and professionalisation of CSR, even during global economic crisis, suggests there may be substantial incentives for those seeking to influence agendas. To misunderstand the significance of CSR is dangerous. It is necessary to go beyond questions of whether CSR is merely marketing, to understand how the terms of debate are being set regarding responsibility in the global economy. Drawing on critiques of globalising corporate practices and labour movements research, I examine how these debates are being mobilised not only by politicians and employers, but also by workers and their advocates.

Employment relations is an important arena for practical and ideological struggles over CSR, as production networks and labour markets have been dramatically restructured by globalising processes. To investigate the role of contestation in CSR development, labour rights campaigns were investigated as moments when responsibilities to workers are in dispute. A preliminary textual analysis categorised competing CSR agendas in terms of corporate, professional, political and activist approaches. Research into three case studies then explored how these can be mobilised in practice: the factory-focused Keep Burberry British campaign to prevent work being outsourced overseas; the event-focused PlayFair 2012 campaign for workers making Olympic merchandise; and product-focused campaigns for cut flower workers. The thesis contributes empirically and analytically to understanding the potential implications of emerging approaches to CSR for employment regulation, the relationship of states to corporations, and the response of labour movements. It is argued that activist framing of the employment relationship in terms of CSR is being used to pursue improved conditions of work and to influence debate over where responsibility lies.

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Acronyms and abbreviations

ACREW	Australian Centre for Research in Employment and Work
AM	Assembly Member
APCRG	Associate Parliamentary Corporate Responsibility Group
APPGICR	All Party Parliamentary Group on International Corporate Responsibility
BERR	Department for Business, Enterprise and Regulatory Reform (previously DTI, now BIS)
BFA	British Florist Association
BIS	Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (previously BERR)
BITC	Business in the Community
BOSS	Business and Organisations for Sustainable Society
BSR	Business for Social Responsibility Network
CC	Creative Commons – denoted by (cc)
CCC	Clean Clothes Campaign
CCRN	Cranfield Corporate Responsibility Network
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
CIPS	Chartered Institute of Purchasing and Supply
CON	Counter Olympics Network
CORE	Corporate Responsibility Coalition
CRASSH	Centre for Research in Arts, Social Science and Humanities
CSI	Corporate Social Irresponsibility
CSL	Commission for a Sustainable London 2012
CSR	Corporate Social Responsibility
DFID	Department for International Development
DTI	Department of Trade and Industry (now BIS)
EABIS	Academy of Business and Society
EC	European Commission
ECCJ	European Coalition for Corporate Justice
ECCR	Ecumenical Council for Corporate Responsibility
EIAG	Ethical Investment Advisory Group (of the Church of England)
ETI	Ethical Trading Initiative
EU	European Union
IGBAU	Trade Union for Construction, Agriculture and Environment (Germany)
FDI	Foreign Direct Investment
FFP	Fair Flowers Fair Plants

FIFA	International Federation of Association Football
FLP	Flower Label Programme
FNV	Trade Union Confederation, The Netherlands
FOA	Freedom of Association
FOI	Freedom of Information
FSI	Floriculture Sustainability Initiative
FTEPR	Fair Trade, Employment and Poverty Reduction Research
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GLA	Greater London Authority
GMB	Britain's General Union (previously the General, Municipal and Boilermakers, an amalgamation of unions now known as the GMB)
GUF	Global Union Federation
GURN	Global Unions Research Network
HEBI	Horticultural Ethical Business Initiative
HIVOS	Humanist Institute for Development Cooperation
HRM	Human Resource Management
ICC	International Code of Conduct for the Production of Cut Flowers
ICCSR	International Centre for Corporate Social Responsibility
ICFTU	The International Confederation of Free Trade Unions, now the ITUC
IDH	Sustainable Trade Initiative (Dutch)
IFA	International Framework Agreement
IGBAU	Trade Union for Construction, Agriculture and Environment (German)
IILS	International Institute for Labour Studies
ILO	International Labour Organisation
IOC	International Olympics Committee
ISO	International Organisation for Standards
ITUC	International Trade Union Confederation, previously the ICFTU
ITGLWF	International Textile, Garment and Leather Workers Federation
IUF	International Union of Food Workers
KFC	Kenya Flower Council
LOCOG	London Organising Committee of the Olympic and Paralympic Games
MEP	Member of European Parliament
MP	Member of Parliament
MPS	Milieu Programma Sierteelt (Dutch flower label standard)
nef	New Economics Foundation (officially referred to in lowercase)
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation

NOGOE	No to Greenwich Olympic Equestrian Events
NUJ	National Union of Journalists
SACOM	Students and Scholars Against Corporate Misbehaviour
SEDEX	Supplier Ethical Data Exchange
SRI	Socially Responsible Investment
TELCO	The East London Communities Organisation
TNC	Transnational Corporation
TPAWU	Tanzania Plantation and Agricultural Workers Union
TUAC	Trade Union Advisory Committee to the OECD
TUC	Trade Union Congress
OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
OLAA	Organisation for Latin American Activities
Pers.comm	Personal Communication
PR	Public Relations
UN	United Nations
UNCTAD	United Nations Conference on Trade and Development
UNCTC	United Nations Centre on Transnational Corporations (now UNTCMD)
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNI	Union Network International, since 2009 named UNI Global Union
UNTCMD	United Nations Transnational Corporations and Management Division (previously UNCTC)
VGB	Association of Wholesale Trade in Horticultural Products (Dutch)
WAC	Welsh Affairs Committee
WAG	Welsh Assembly Government
WHO	World Health Organisation
WRC	Worker Rights Consortium
WSF	World Social Forum
WoW	War on Want
WWW	Women Working Worldwide

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION: CSR AND WORK

Every company today asks itself how it can benefit a wider community and how it can use that engagement to motivate its people and highlight its values.

A new generation of business leaders is emerging with a fresh approach. They embrace elements of the free market but also believe that building value and creating opportunity demands other qualities, such as sustainability, responsibility and social impact. These new business leaders are also challenging the traditional boundaries between business, charity and state, finding innovative opportunities to work together to build more responsible businesses.¹

The Business Design Centre in London was an apt venue for the event these claims were used to promote. This was the Responsible Business Show, typical of the growing number of conferences, exhibitions, summits and award ceremonies focused on corporate social responsibility (CSR) that are becoming regular features of the corporate calendar. What I saw and experienced as I wandered the exhibition hall, went to workshops and spent time talking to people, was the proximate expression of the transnational practices I have been researching to understand how CSR agendas are being formed, the power relations involved and the implications for work.

Stalls were set out, literally creating a marketplace for CSR, as consultants and organisations promoted their own CSR models, their expertise, tools, and a range of specialised services. Talks and workshops offered company cases as examples of CSR excellence, sharing best practice and providing networking opportunities. This was a forum for creating competitive advantage by establishing corporate and professional identities as CSR innovators. However, whilst there are career benefits for individuals and brand image benefits for corporations, the overall impact of these practices strengthens a particular version of CSR – a vision of responsible practice that claims to improve societal welfare globally and that is self-regulatory in nature.

¹ These are quotations from promotional material for the Responsible Business Show, 14-15 March 2012. The first begins the Show Guide and the second is from its website (UBM, 2012).

The show had an atmosphere of professional solidarity. People were very willing to talk to me. They were passionate about CSR and its potential for improving experiences of work worldwide, as well as for relieving poverty, inequality, health problems and resource scarcity. The feeling and claim that ‘we’re really making a difference’ was regularly expressed. The seminars had a positive and motivational tone, and many spoke in almost evangelical terms about how they had found their vocation in CSR and now wanted to spread the word of what responsible business can achieve for the world. Beneath this fervour, analysis of the relationships and practices involved illuminates both the commercialisation and the politicisation of CSR. Two factors are of note.



Figure 1: The Responsible Business Show, Exhibition Hall

Firstly, the stalls set out in the exhibition hall were not only filled by professional CSR consultancies and pro-CSR business organisations, such as event sponsors Business in the Community (BITC). There was also a significant presence from diverse charities and non-governmental organisations (NGOs), including for example the Tutu Foundation, Crisis, the World Food Programme, Cambridge University Press and Islamic Relief. Those not there are of interest as well. Organisers promoted this Responsible Business event in terms of the benefits of partnership, as corporate CSR programmes seek a focus for activities and charities seek support and funding. Organisers were even heard discussing the idea of a speed-dating type of event at future shows to facilitate the making of such partnerships. For some NGOs the investment of taking part involved a desire to push their own issue to be part of CSR considerations. For example, the Institute for Human Rights and Business participate to engage with

corporations and CSR professionals about their responsibility to respect human rights and included the rights of workers as part of this.

Secondly, how the show was organised created clear divisions between the participants. Entrance to the exhibition and related seminars was free (Figure 1), so attracting a range of NGO and charity workers as well as the CSR consultants and corporate representatives present. In contrast, the main convention and programme of keynote speakers was in the adjacent hall and had a standard fee of £1440, limiting entrance to those with the budget. Participant status was displayed on your identity badge, determining the activities, spaces and people available to you.

Despite the convivial environment at such events, competing efforts to determine how corporate responsibilities in the global economy are understood make CSR a fierce battleground. The NGOs present try to further their influence by being close to major players, on this occasion including Coca Cola, Goldman Sachs, Asda, BskyB and Barclays, engaging in a type of pragmatic diplomacy. However, even within the show they were positioned on the periphery, dependent on corporate representatives leaving the main theatre of debate to come to talk to them.² Furthermore, there are many other activists passionately campaigning for businesses to be responsible, who were not and would not be present at these arenas. They too aim to influence how CSR is understood, but approach the battleground from different strategic directions, whether targeting the lawmakers or taking to the streets. In studying the practices and power relations at play in these battles, I am interested in the consequences for one particular area of corporate responsibility, responsibility for workers – their rights and conditions.

This thesis analyses how emerging approaches to CSR are defined and mobilised in relation to the rights and conditions of workers in transnational contexts of production and distribution. Researching CSR demands investigation of relations between businesses, the workers who contribute to their output, and the communities in which they operate. The nature of these relationships and how they are influenced and regulated has significant impact on the lives of those involved. There are also wider implications for governance as CSR involves dynamic power relations between states,

² Rajak (2011b) describes such venues for CSR speaker programmes as ‘theatres of virtue’.

corporations and civil society. Therefore the study relates to several sociological areas, principally the organisation of work, economic institutions, governance and regulation, inequality and resistance. Much of the literature on globalisation and work that draws on these areas is focused at a rather abstract level (Edwards & Wajcman, 2005: 245), but globalising practices have consequences that are lived out in experiences of work. A case study approach facilitates exploration of these experiences, focusing on three campaigns for workers' rights. These are interesting stories to tell,³ providing an insight into the mobilisation of CSR at moments when the responsibilities of corporations to workers are in dispute.

The first case is a factory-based, one-off campaign involving the luxury fashion brand Burberry. Opening the investigation up beyond a single production site, the second case is an on-going event-based campaign linked to the Olympics and the extended network of workers who produce official merchandise and supplies. The third case offers an even wider field, involving product-focused campaigns for cut flower workers, which are numerous but linked through their common focus on a single product. The cases differ in terms of campaign form, scale, location, actors, aims and outcomes, offering the opportunity to study the use of CSR within diverse practical contexts.⁴ From this research the thesis aims to contribute substantively and theoretically to understanding the implications of emerging approaches to CSR for employment regulation, the relationship of states to corporations, and the response of labour movements. I argue that activist framing of employment relations in terms of CSR is being used to pursue improved conditions of work and to influence debate over where responsibility lies. This may involve demonstrating how public acknowledgements by corporations that certain kinds of responsibility *lie* with them - through their CSR claims - are themselves *lies*. Highlighting gaps between corporate policy and practice not only puts pressure on individual corporations, but also contributes to wider deliberations about responsible business and employment practice and global regulation. In this way, corporate actors are not undertaking the social construction of CSR alone, rather this emerges from a process of multiple interactions within which labour activists are increasingly engaged.

³ This is literally so for the Keep Burberry British campaign, as a play was written and performed to dramatise the events (Harris, 2007).

⁴ An overview of each campaign is presented with the research strategy in Chapter 2.

This introductory chapter establishes the research questions and how these have been informed by existing bodies of knowledge, and explains the approach I have taken to key concepts mobilised in the research. Section 1.1 sets out the research problem and my motivation for pursuing it. The limited sociological literature engaged with CSR is considered and the research questions explained. Section 1.2 focuses on my approach to key concepts relating to work and labour movements, particularly globalisation and its impacts on work and workers. The phenomenon of CSR and its relationship to employment is considered in Section 1.3, setting out the terrain of the struggle over emerging approaches to CSR. Finally, the structure of the thesis is set out.

1.1 The research problem

How the social responsibilities of business are defined changes over time and depends on wider political, cultural and economic factors (Blowfield & Frynas, 2005; May, Cheney, & Roper, 2007). Seeing the development of CSR as a contemporary move within this process, this thesis investigates how workers' rights are being framed in terms of the social responsibilities of corporations. The research therefore addresses the established sociological problem of relations of responsibility between corporations and labour, but adds to the literature by considering how the concept of CSR is being mobilised within understandings of the employment relationship, the rights of workers and responsibilities of employers – particularly within the context of transnational production. In setting out the research problem, this section begins by explaining my motivations and how the project arose.

Challenges to the rooted relations of business and community

The evolution of the idea that businesses have responsibilities beyond compliance with the law is interlinked with the development of commerce itself. Just as people have moral and legal responsibilities, corporations as legal entities do also. Where the limits of each are drawn and how they overlap is an important area for studying how society works. Differences between how these responsibilities have been defined are vast. At one extreme, a significant social role is assigned to commercial actors, positioning companies as social managers and even peace makers (see for example Mertz, 1984; Minus, 1993; Zadek, 2007). At another, seeking profit within the law is seen as the

single ‘social’ responsibility a company has, typified in the often quoted approach of Milton Friedman (1962).⁵ Rather than evaluating the merit of these perspectives, I am interested in understanding how these perspectives – and the range of approaches that sit between these extremes – relate to attempts to understand current societal expectations of corporations. The role of companies as providers of employment and their responsibility for working conditions have been an integral part of approaches to the business-society relationship, and are reflected in some key approaches to the sociology of work (see for example Beck, 2000a; Edgell, 2005; Edwards & Wajcman, 2005; Grint, 2005; Sennett, 1998).

Indeed, the evolution of modern commerce has been based on a changing relationship between different economic classes, involving relations of power and mechanisms for structuring these relations. The responsibilities of landowners were dramatically affected by industrialisation, experienced in varied ways and at different rates in different places. Taking the UK as an example, the perceived irresponsibility of bringing rural workers into urban factories without adequate provision was countered by a few philanthropic industrialists whose businesses became archetypal responsible employers, such as George Cadbury and Joseph Rowntree. Paternalism was expressed through taking on responsibilities to workers beyond those legally required, including health care, improved hours and conditions, and in some cases, the building of company towns to care for and manage the working, social and religious lives of employees and their families. Specific motivations included religious belief, particularly Quakerism (Cannon, 1994); guilt (Rigsby, 1998); and the nouveau riche plutocrat’s desire for status through the conspicuous exhibition of benevolence (Camplin, 1978). However, accounts such as these only offer a partial explanation of how legal and social responsibilities have been approached and developed in a specific context.⁶ Investigating the context of time and place is less useful when trying to understand the responsibilities of corporations that are organised transnationally.

It was during a previous study that my interest in this problem was first provoked. A case study of St. James’s Gate Guinness Brewery in Dublin was undertaken to

⁵ ‘There is one and only one social responsibility of business – to use its resources and engage in activities designed to increase its profits as long as it stays within the rules of the game’ (1962: 33).

⁶ For a similar historical account of CSR in the US, see Perrow (2002).

understand why it had become judged a ‘good company’ and ‘good employer’ (Timms, 1998).⁷ By researching the political, religious, cultural and economic influences on the brewery’s historical development, it was seen that Guinness had successfully exploited the personal activities of key family members to establish a philanthropic and paternalistic company history. Civic roles were taken on and substantial donations given, including the landmark St. Stephen’s Green, the supply of Guinness to a local maternity hospital, and the setting up of a housing trust around the brewery.⁸ In promotional materials and the portrayal of company history in tourism efforts, Guinness claimed to have been supporting cultural and social developments in the community and in Ireland since 1759 (Timms, 1998: 53-4).

The benefits of being perceived as the archetypal philanthropic business included conflict avoidance with workers and the deprived, often unstable, local community, as well as promotion of the Guinness family and product. This was achieved in a time of great instability in Ireland’s history, including sectarian conflict and civil war, and was all the more remarkable as Guinness was a Protestant company, representing the religious minority seen as part of the occupying class. Other Protestant businesses and ‘Protestant porters’⁹ were boycotted or subjected to attack (Lynch & Vaizey, 1960: 142-143).

Importantly, the research also concluded that definitions of business and employer responsibilities founded in the social context of the firm’s history and location, have limited application. Wider changes in business structure, including separation of ownership and control, and increasing globalisation, mean corporate responsibilities are widened to a complex network of reciprocity and obligation between shareholders, communities, environment, governments, and international institutions, as well as workers. Transnational corporations (TNCs) can operate in many locations and frequently are the result of numerous mergers, joining together firms that are already the products of mergers themselves, so there is no single community or national context for understanding the business-society relationship. As discussed later in this chapter, the

⁷ This was a thesis submitted for a Masters in Social Science, specialising in economic sociology, at the Department of Sociology, University College Dublin, and was supervised by Dr Kieran Allen.

⁸ This was never restricted to employees and was not funded by the company as commonly perceived (Timms, 1998: 76).

⁹ ‘Porter’ refers to the type of drink Guinness is, first favoured by porters in Covent Garden Market.

situation is further complicated by the ability of some corporations to move operations when more favourable conditions are available. Therefore the geographical identities and related histories that traditionally influenced cultural, political and economic norms of social responsibility, are complex and multiple in transnational economies.

In the case of Guinness, once St James' Gate Brewery became part of a larger company, and eventually the transnational Diageo, a local or state-centric approach could not explain the CSR approach of the business.¹⁰ That study's main recommendation for further study was to investigate the global context of CSR and its impact on employment relations within transnational networks of production and exchange (Timms, 1998: 100); this thesis takes the research forward.

Sociological analysis of CSR: A limited but developing literature

Existing sociological literature that engages directly with CSR is limited, but developing. That is not to say that CSR literature does not abound, and indeed is being added to at a rapid pace, but the majority is based in management studies and is practitioner orientated. This material is relevant to the problem of CSR definition considered in Section 1.3, and also provides data for the categorisation of CSR agendas presented in Chapter 3. The many CSR handbooks, readers and studies are dominated by a business 'how to' approach (such as Cowe, 2002; Jones, 2011; Kotler & Lee, 2005; Pohl & Tolhurst, 2010), but some begin to include more critical reflections and from a range of disciplines (see for example Crane, 2008; Crowther & Capaldi, 2008; May, et al., 2007).

Within sociologically orientated writings on CSR, several themes can be identified. I limit myself in this section to those which directly engage with the concept of CSR. The broadest and most significant is the theme of power relations. CSR is discussed in terms of its contribution to shifting and contested relations of power between major business, state and civil society institutions (Banerjee, 2008; Bendell & Bendell, 2007; Habisch, 2005). CSR is seen as integral to corporate attempts to protect and promote a social role. Banerjee (2008: 51) describes CSR as an ideological movement, aiming to 'legitimize

¹⁰ The brewery became part of Guinness Plc in 1886 when it was floated on the stock market. In 1997 when it merged with Grand Metropolitan, Guinness became a subsidiary of Diageo (Timms 1998: 52).

and consolidate the power of large corporations'. Utting (2005) stresses that many businesses are mobilising around CSR in a proactive way, rather than only doing so through coercion. Dinan and Miller (2007: 12-14) consider the contribution of CSR to corporate lobbying. This is seen to be part of the significant efforts corporations put into public relations (PR), (Miller & Dinan, 2008). Developing this theme, Sklair and Miller (2010: 475 and 472) place CSR 'at the heart of the [capitalist] system' aiming to 'bridge the gap between the rhetoric and reality of corporate conduct' as capitalist economies face joint crises of class polarisation and ecological unsustainability (also see Sklair, 2007). They argue that CSR is playing an increasing role in social policy debates, and that CSR activities are being used by corporations to secure strategic roles in policy forums and an enhanced role in civil society. In this approach, CSR is seen as a tool to help corporations avoid further regulation of their activities, including in employment relations, or even to promote de-regulation (Jenkins, 2005; Sklair, 2001: ch 6; Sklair & Miller, 2010).¹¹

Wajcman and Edwards (2005: ch 11) specifically consider CSR in terms of work, considering linkages between organisational responsibilities in a global economy and individual workplace experiences. Sklair (2001: ch 6) directly addresses employment relations in terms of CSR – highlighting regulation, community relations, and safety as particular issues – and offers a case analysis of Shell's 'global corporate citizenship' discourse. Stohl et al. (2007) also recognise the global context of CSR as significant, notably in terms of development agendas. These include claims that business has a social responsibility to aid poverty alleviation (Blowfield & Frynas, 2005; Newell, 2005). However, poverty impacts from CSR activity are seen as unlikely, for example by Jenkins (2005). Wills and Hale (2005) question how the growth of CSR might address conditions of employment for the poorest workers, specifically those in global supply chains. Whilst they recognise that activist pressure has increased the number of companies who publicly recognise responsibility for workers, largely through CSR policies and codes of conduct, these do little to address the structural conditions of the global economy seen as the root cause of inequality and the erosion of workers' rights (Wills & Hale, 2005: 12-14). Also, issues of advocacy are raised as the poor have

¹¹ An relevant example explored in Chapter 3 saw the UK Minister for Health announce that food and alcohol companies would be funding the Government's healthy lifestyle programme in exchange for a non-regulatory approach to junk food – an announcement framed in terms of the social responsibilities of relevant companies (Ramesh, 7 July 2010).

limited means of accessing CSR debates (Newell, 2005). Related to these power relations, Khan and Lund-Thomsen (2011) see CSR in terms of imperialism and postcolonialism; Skair and Miller (2010) in terms of Orientalism; and Banerjee (2008) questions the ethnocentric dimension of globalising CSR discourses. Links between development agendas and CSR are particularly relevant to the case study research of campaigns for the rights of those in transnational supply chains, as these workers are often based in the poorest regions of the world.

Another relevant strand of CSR literature offers empirical studies of the CSR industry and the impact of specific initiatives (see for example Raman & Lipschutz, 2010). Ethnographic work in this context is slowly gaining momentum. On the production side, Rodriguez-Garavito (2005) conducted an ethnography of apparel factories in Mexico and Guatemala, demonstrating the key role of transnational advocacy networks in improving working conditions. Focused more on the processes of CSR, Shamir (2005) spent two years with a not-for-profit organisation that promotes CSR, taking a symbolic interactionist approach to highlight how CSR is used as a managerial tool to increase both employee commitment and brand loyalty. An ethnography by Rajak (2011a) also included time with a pro-CSR business organisation, Business in the Community (BITC), and then with a mining TNC. Her research argued that CSR was used to exercise corporate power, in particular by creating dependency relationships through social improvement programmes.

Other research evaluates the impact of particular CSR initiatives. Those relating to work often focus on practices involved in the self-regulation of labour standards. Particular schemes have been assessed, researched by company or country or tool, however again much of this work is practitioner focused to promote improvement. More analytical and comparative studies are gaining pace. These are relevant to my case studies when private labour regulation has played a part in the campaign, but few consider in-depth the implications of labour standards directly in terms of CSR.¹² Fransen (2012) does so in his sector-wide analysis of private labour regulation in the garment sector, showing how private standards have developed as a particular category of CSR within a wider context of globalisation, neo-liberalism and resulting pressures to manage the social and

¹² These are drawn on in discussion of case study findings, particularly for flower certification (for example Barrientos, Dolan, & Tallontire, 2003; O'Rourke, 2006; Riisgaard, 2009; Tallontire, 2007).

environmental impacts of business practice. More localised studies include that by Khan, Westwood and Boje (2010) of the difficulties encountered by NGOs in trying to implement Western-designed CSR initiatives in football-stitching factories in Pakistan.

The critical discourse analysis presented by Burchell and Cook (2006) demonstrates the role that civil society groups can play in the development of the CSR field, and again Fransen (2012) specifically addresses this in relation to labour standards. A particular example of CSR campaigning is offered by Sklair and Miller (2010), showing how the Students and Scholars against Corporate Misbehaviour (SACOM) successfully highlighted the ‘gulf’ between the CSR rhetoric of corporations subcontracting in Hong Kong export-processing zones, including Disney and Wal-Mart, and the CSR they practised, by identifying and naming contractors.

This emerging literature is drawn on throughout the thesis, together with the relevant wider sources discussed later in this chapter. It is particularly useful for comparative purposes when interpreting the findings of the case study research. As is already recognised by others, more sociological analysis of CSR is needed (Bendell & Bendell, 2007; Sklair & Miller, 2010). My thesis aims to contribute empirically and analytically to this endeavour, specifically in the area of CSR and the rights and conditions of workers.

The research questions

Processes of globalisation can stretch the scope of research in economic sociology,¹³ due to the emphasis often placed on the local and national context of economic interactions (Tonkiss, 2006b). A globalising of the research imagination is needed (Kenway & Fahey, 2009). The challenge of this thesis is therefore to consider the established sociological problem of relations of responsibility between corporations and labour, but to frame the analysis at the global level without losing sight of local and personal consequences. Three research questions were operationalised in pursuit of the research aims, and these guided the project design and data analysis.

¹³ Economic sociology is not seen to be a unified sub-discipline, but is used as a general term to refer to sociological research concerned with economic issues.

1. How are issues of employment and labour rights defined within current CSR agendas?

This question specifically addresses responsibilities to workers as part of CSR, requiring investigation of the themes and issues raised as relevant to socially responsible employment by different groups. It is the focus of Chapter 3.

2. How is CSR mobilised in campaigns where responsibilities towards workers are in dispute?

Here a move is made towards examining the development and application of CSR in practice. Investigating campaigns where corporate responsibilities to workers are in question provided data on how CSR is understood, mobilised, and challenged in real-life situations. This question guided the case studies presented in Chapters 4-6.

3. How may CSR be used to frame employment relations in a transnational context and what are the potential implications for (a) employment regulation, (b) the relationship of states to corporations, and (c) the response of labour movements?

This question provides an opportunity for the analytical contributions of the thesis to be drawn together. It allows exploration of the possible consequences for power relations between workers, their advocates, corporations and those who attempt to regulate them. Emerging approaches to CSR are considered in terms of the extent to which corporations are understood as self-regulating, within a framework of voluntary codes rather than government-imposed protections for labour rights and conditions, and the role of labour movements in this. This question guided analysis throughout the thesis, and is the focus of Chapter 7. The remainder of this chapter considers how existing research relates to and informs these questions, setting out how key concepts have been used and establishing the theoretical framework for the study.

1.2 Work and workers in transnational context

Globalising practices have radically impacted patterns of work and labour market structures, as well as the organisational forms, motivations and strategies of those campaigning for the rights of workers within them. As Edwards and Wajcman (2005: 255) discuss, the effect of structural changes on sets of social responsibilities is a key

issue in studying globalisation. I am interested in the effects of these changes on who is seen to have responsibility for conditions of work and what these are. It is important to set out the meanings I employ for the key concepts mobilised in the research. A core thesis theme is the impact of globalising practices on employment, so I begin by explaining the approach taken to globalisation, before setting out what are seen to be its most significant impacts on the organisation of work and the organisation of workers, and their relevance for this research.

A transnationalist approach to globalisation

That the concept of globalisation is contested is well documented.¹⁴ That globalisation is one of the most pervasive concepts of current social and economic analysis is also clear (Nederveen Pieterse, 2009: 31-31; Ray, 2007; Tonkiss, 2006a:ix). Debates over its existence, reach, age, inevitability and virtue have been intensely expounded and analysed.¹⁵ Whilst these debates are important and on-going, entering into what Sklair (2009a: 526) describes as ‘a new and more mature phase’, the aim here is to establish my own theoretical understanding of globalisation, focusing on how these issues relate to this thesis.

The approach to globalisation taken here can be described as *transnationalist*.¹⁶ Such an approach sees state-centric understandings of an inter-national system as limited, and views claims that the global system is a completed project as overstated (for example Beck, 2000b; Sklair, 2002: 7). I approach globalisation as an historically distinct phenomenon developing in the latter decades of the twentieth century. While longer historical trends and processes, such as colonialism, trading and missionary routes, and cosmopolitanism, have contributed to the conditions facilitating globalisation, the current density and speed of interconnectivity beyond state boundaries represents a fundamental change. Technological advances have promoted economic, cultural and political interactions in ways never before experienced. Related shifts in power and the policies of governments, corporations, and legislative and financial institutions, also

¹⁴ See for example Holton (2005), Ray (2007), Scholte (2000), and Waters (1995).

¹⁵ Examples of analysis of these debates and definitions include Held (2005; 1999); Lechner and Boli (2008); Martell (2010); Ritzer (2009); Urry (2003); and Waters (1995).

¹⁶ Please note, core concepts are identified in italics throughout the chapter.

contribute to a globally enmeshed system. These processes are on-going, and human agency within this is recognised, so globalisation is neither inevitable nor complete.

The current dominant form of globalisation, and the form explored here, is that of capitalist globalisation.¹⁷ Globalising processes are widening and deepening capitalism on a transplanetary basis. Central to this thesis and its approach to globalisation is the concept of *transnational practices*, which provides a framework for analysing corporate behaviour. As set out by Sklair (1995, 2002), transnational practices cross state boundaries but do not necessarily originate with state agents or institutions. For Sklair, transnational practices operate within three spheres. The first is the economic, dominated by the institutional form of the TNC, central to this research and discussed in the next section. The second is the political sphere, dominated by the transnational capitalist class. As will be shown, the four fractions of this class, as identified by Sklair, are influential forces for emerging agendas of CSR. These are the owners and controllers of TNCs; globalising politicians and bureaucrats; globalising professionals; and merchants and media. The third sphere is that of culture-ideology, dominated by the culture-ideology of consumerism (Sklair, 2002). It is this sphere that drives the desire for goods and services on an increasingly globalising basis, continually expanding capitalism's reach, and driving production and labour needs to satisfy it.

The case studies presented in this thesis explore the impacts of this globalising culture-ideology of consumerism. They illuminate the transnational practices involved in the production and promotion of global brands and non-essential consumer goods, namely Burberry, the Olympics, sportswear and flower brands, as well as the transnational practices involved in defining the responsibilities corporations have to the workers who produce them.

Whereas globalising processes are relatively abstract, the transnational practices that create them are observable in terms of the people involved and their institutional affiliations. Studying the transnational practices involved in the mobilisation of CSR contributes to this research. However, weaknesses in the framework put forward by

¹⁷ It is recognised that other forms of globalisation are possible. See Sklair (2005, 2009a) for discussion of the elements of generic globalisation and its emancipatory potential. Although referred to in the singular, variations in types of capitalism are also acknowledged (Nederveen Pieterse, 2009).

Sklair (2002) can be identified, particularly by the lack of adequate attention paid to the plight of workers and to the local impacts of transnational practices. As will be discussed in Chapter 2, the case study approach taken in this thesis seeks to foreground such impacts and those working to address them.

Transnational corporations and labour markets

In looking at the impact of globalisation on the organisation of work and workers, a significant development is the growth of *transnational corporations*. This is well-documented, and my aim here is to explain why it is a central unit of analysis for the research. Defining what constitutes a TNC is the subject of continued academic and legal debate.¹⁸ The UN recognised their importance to the global economy in the ‘UN Programme on TNCs’ from 1974, which included an attempt at definition.¹⁹ A working party was set up to establish a code of conduct for the operations of TNCs. This only reached draft stage before it was abandoned in 1992, and as discussed later, other largely voluntary attempts have developed since (Sagafi-nejad & Dunning, 2008; Weissbrodt & Kruger, 2003).

One achievement of early efforts was an often utilised definition of a TNC – employed in the thesis – as a profit-motivated organisation with operations in at least three countries, the home country and two or more host countries (for extended definition see UN Commission on Transnational Corporations, 1983). It is important to recognise that transnational production is not confined to the formal entity of the TNC. A complex and dynamic web of relationships is involved in transnational practices, as will be demonstrated in the case studies. TNCs impact employment relations in many other companies through contract terms and standard setting (Frankel, 2001: 557). There exist, then, a ripple effect from the policies and practices of TNCs.

In keeping with a transnationalist approach to globalisation, TNCs are seen as central to understanding the global system. The rise in numbers and spread of their activities is a key feature of capitalist globalisation. In 2008 there were an estimated 79,000 TNCs

¹⁸ See for example Jones (2006: 218-219); Moony and Evans (2007: 235-237); Wallace (2002: 102-118); and Weissbrodt and Kruger (2003: 907-909).

¹⁹ This was originally run by the United Nations Centre on Transnational Corporations (UNCTC) and then from 1993 by the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD).

controlling 790,000 affiliates, with sales of \$31 trillion (UNCTAD, 2008: 9). This has risen from a reported 35,000 TNCs with some 150,000 affiliates in 1992 (UNTCMD, 1992: 5).

The success of popular literature on the rise of corporate power is a telling indication of interest, and anxiety over its consequences, especially in terms of democracy and the environment (see for example Bakan, 2004; Hertz, 2001; Klein, 1999; Korten, 1995; Monbiot, 2001).²⁰ The turnover and assets of TNCs are often compared to the gross domestic product (GDP) of poor countries to highlight its extent (Dine, 2005: 10-11; Zerk, 2006: 21).²¹ Although these types of comparisons give a dramatic indication of the nature and potential power of TNCs, they can also be simplistic and fail to reflect the complexities involved in analysing size, wealth and reach (Loveridge, 2007). Some activities of TNCs can also be difficult to observe, such as corporate lobbying and ‘spin’ (Dinan & Miller, 2007; Hertz, 2001).

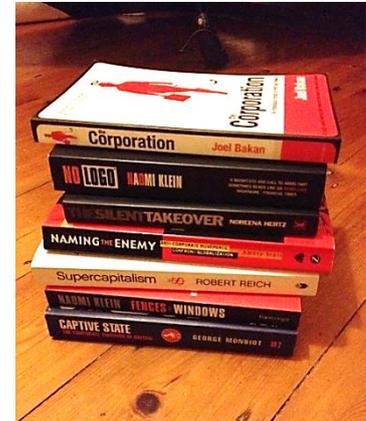


Figure 2: Popular literature critiquing corporate power

TNCs are a central unit of analysis due to their significant role in globalising processes, structuring labour markets, and relatedly, their role in emerging discourses of socially responsible employment. The question of whether globalisation is resulting in a convergence of employment practices is relevant here. Whether companies adopt a universal employment policy throughout their operations, or tailor this to different countries, has implications for whether the same or different levels of responsibilities to workers are recognised. The convergence thesis within human resource management (HRM) claims that a result of globalisation is that HR policies and employment relation systems are becoming similar. Proponents suggest the possibility of a transnational

²⁰ This is also true of films such as Franny Armstrong’s ‘The Age of Stupid’, Bakan’s ‘Corporation’, Michael Moore’s ‘Capitalism: A love story’, and the West End/Broadway production ‘Enron’. These do sometimes directly engage with the concept of CSR, such as Bakan (2004: 37) concluding it is ‘illegal – at least when it is genuine’.

²¹ For example Bantekas calculated that Coca Cola would rank 117th on the World Bank’s list of states by GDP (2004: 309-10); and Corp Watch claimed in 2000, 51 of the world’s top economies were corporations including Wal-Mart’s revenues being more than the GDP of Indonesia, and Royal Dutch Shell’s more than Venezuela’s (2001).

model of HRM applicable across national boundaries.²² However the complication of indirect employment is often neglected, including the extent to which TNCs influence a much wider pool of companies through their supply chains and the setting of industry standards, including employment standards.

An impact of globalisation related to the dominance of TNCs is the significant restructuring of labour markets to supply transnationally organised production. Policies of trade liberalisation and technological developments – particularly in transport and communications – have facilitated radically new patterns of employment on a global scale and changing experiences of work careers (Spilerman, 2009: 76). Some form of global labour market has always existed, and the impact of changes is not experienced universally. It is important to recognise that barriers to global trade do still exist, unevenly so (Ritzer, 2009: ch 8); and the extent to which global labour markets can be or are accessed is dependent on a wide range of factors, notably type of industry and work, skill needs, infrastructure needs, and value of goods. Although some corporations are able to seek cheap sources transnationally, with governments competing to attract them, the degree to which governments engage in this varies and changes as their circumstances change. However, some trends in work for TNCs can be identified, and these set the context within which many campaigns for workers' rights are being fought.

An early move was the development of export processing zones, where governments offer companies favourable terms to attract them (Klein, 1999; Sklair, 2002). This can include the deregulation of planning, environmental and labour standards, as well as reduction or suspension of rates and taxation (Tonkiss, 2006a: 72). Spilerman (2009: 76) claims this is evidence of a shift in power from states to capital, and Pearse (2012) questions the implications of recent land grabbing – whereby corporations are buying up or leasing huge areas from governments. Competition to attract TNCs can be fierce, as conditions of transnational production mean that some workforces can be exchanged for others elsewhere when a better deal is offered (Starr, 2000: 88). However, this is not as easy as might be suggested, and the idea of a 'race to the bottom' being relevant to all TNCs needs to be problematised.

²² For example, see discussions by Hollinshead and Leat (1995) and Scullion (2006).

Flexibility is a core feature of the impact of globalisation on employment (Amoore, 2002; Felstead & Jewson, 1999; Gereffi, 2006; Gereffi & Korzeniewicz, 1994). Strategies of outsourcing and subcontracting on a transnational scale mean a corporation's commitment to a location, and the number of directly employed workers, can both be kept minimal, resulting in geographical and numerical flexibility. This extends existing models of the flexible firm, as an attempt to facilitate the most efficient situation for employers (Atkinson, 1984; Kalleberg, 2001). In this way some corporations may seek to ensure the lowest cost for every element of the production process (Sklair, 2002: 126).

The resulting global supply chains are ever more complex, with *flexploitation* 'the intensification of exploitation' (Anne Gray, 2004: 3), describing the precarious and temporary nature of much associated employment. Buyers-driven commodity chains have a great deal of power as they 'orchestrate the procurement, manufacture and marketing of products through contractors and subcontractors' (Frankel, 2001). These chains are common in the apparel and agricultural sectors investigated in my case studies as competition from the reduction of trade barriers is high, processes are facilitated by technology, and there is a separation of knowledge and labour intensive work (Gereffi & Korzeniewicz, 1994). Major supermarket TNCs are gaining a powerful role and their 'trader mentality' can have negative consequences for working conditions (Bowman et al., 2012). The cases studied show the range of problems that arise from the 'flexible' and short-term contracts buyers often demand, and show how some activists are targeting these TNCs and their CSR claims, as well as lobbying for regulation of their activities, such as through the Groceries Code Adjudication Bill discussed in Chapter 3.

These changes to how work is organised have significant implications for experiences of workers. Those contributing to the output of TNCs can be contracted within complex networks of agents (Gereffi & Korzeniewicz, 1994; Hurley, 2005). A major challenge resulting from labour market restructuring is how to gain advantages for both companies and workers. Further research is needed as practices develop, including exploration of whether benefits, as well as costs, might be experienced through the alternative work opportunities global supply chains provide in some regions (Edwards & Wajcman, 2005: 246). Such a possibility is often presented in the language of social

as well as economic upgrading in global value chains. However, so far, economic benefits do not necessarily lead to social upgrading in terms of improvements for workers (Barrientos, Gereffi, & Rossi, 2011), and Rainbird and Ramirez (2012) call for more consideration of social institutions in global value chain analysis – to understand impacts on employment. The most negative effects of structural changes in global labour markets are experienced by the lowest paid, where women are overrepresented (ILO & ILS, 2008), and the embedding of gender relations in global production has been an area of concern from its early development and continues to be (Balakrishnan, 2002; Elson & Pearson, 1981; Hale & Wills, 2005; Razavi, Pearson, & Danloy, 2004).

These changes to the organisation of work have significant implications for how CSR is understood, and the responsibilities TNCs have to workers in supply chains are particularly disputed (Banerjee, 2008; Bantekas, 2004; Lund-Thomas, 2008; Vogel, 2008). The complexity of production and supply chains and differences in legal protection and enforcement locally, raise fundamental questions about whether a company's CSR policy should be globally applicable to all operations; if it should impact all contributing workers, so those in supply chain networks, as well as those directly employed; and the extent to which policies are implemented, monitored, or enforceable. I argue that corporations are keen to lead and limit the debate over questions such as these, using what Sklair and Miller (2010: 475) term 'the banner of CSR' to avoid serious challenges to current transnational practices and regulation of them (see also Banerjee, 2008; May, et al., 2007: 8). This thesis investigates both how corporations attempt to achieve this in relation to particular labour disputes, and how campaigners mobilise CSR in their response.

Transnational labour movements and campaigns

The transnational processes which facilitate new possibilities for globally orientated labour markets, also facilitate new possibilities for the organisation of workers on a global scale. The term *worker* is generally privileged in this thesis to capture all those contributing to the production and delivery of goods and services, including those indirectly or informally employed through outsourcing and contracting. *Labour movements* are seen to comprise of:

...people and groups who come together to establish and protect the rights of workers. They can differ in terms of their focus, organizational form and composition, ideology, size, reach, and the strategies employed, but share a determination to improve conditions of work. (Timms, 2012b: 1259)

These include formalised labour unions, but also take in wider social movements around work and employment rights. Labour movements are continually evolving, can be conflicting, and are increasingly diverse; however fair pay, equal treatment, freedom of association, and the right to safe and secure working conditions, remain common campaign themes (Timms, 2012b). Globalisation complicates the organisation of workers, with national labour movements in particular coming under pressure from global restructuring, so needing to seek new tactics (Bronfenbrenner, 1998, 2007; Wills & Hale, 2005: 7-12). The use of (often multiple) agencies to connect contractors in supply chains can make it difficult to identify relationships of employment, and a significant proportion of the global labour market is informal and non-unionized (Munck, 2002). Legal protection and enforcement practices vary immensely and, particularly for precarious work, union membership can be difficult or even dangerous in reality, even when theoretically a right (Fransen, 2012: 6).

However, Piven (2008) claims these elements of capitalist globalisation also offer opportunities for transnational protest. Extending outsourcing relations might facilitate easier corporate exit when more profitable opportunities arise elsewhere in the world, but these complex systems also provide communications, transportation and labour interdependencies which can be disrupted to exercise what she terms 'interdependent power' (Piven, 2008: 7). Furthermore, the globalising processes and technologies which facilitate global labour markets also facilitate new possibilities for organising, with campaigns and solidarity networks stretching beyond state boundaries (Clawson, 2003; Munck & Waterman, 1999; Waterman & Wills, 2001).

The thesis is concerned with *transnational labour movements*, defined as those involving and connecting groups and issues beyond state boundaries. These take myriad forms. Illustrations of the diversity include the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC) with 176 million members in eleven sector-based Global Union Federations (GUFs) throughout 151 countries and territories (ITUC, 2010); the Play Fair alliance for the rights of workers producing Olympics merchandise (a case study for this thesis, and

see also Timms, 2012c); and StreetNet International, a solidarity network for mobile street vendors (Scholte & Timms, 2009: 83-84).

Transnational cooperation is seen as essential for those seeking to challenge contemporary forms of economic globalisation (Bandy & Smith, 2005). ‘New labour internationalisms’ utilise technology to facilitate new virtual spaces for solidarity between dispersed workers and campaigners (Waterman & Wills, 2001), and new physical spaces facilitate the sharing of experience and collaboration. Examples include labour initiatives at the World Social Forum (WSF) initiative of global civil society (see Figure 3; and also Waterman & Timms, 2004), and community unionism bringing together networks locally, whilst benefitting from transnational solidarity and experience (McBride & Greenwood, 2009; Wills, 2001).²³ In sum, what is new for the organisation of workers in global capitalism is the diversity and scale of the challenges faced by labour on the one hand, and the solidarity opportunities and methods available to activists on the other. It is within this context that the campaign case studies play out.



Figure 3: Work and the World of Labour platform, WSF Mumbai 2004

1.3 CSR as a global industry: The terrain of the struggle

The concept that has not yet been addressed is that of *corporate social responsibility*. During the last decade there has been a remarkable rise in interest and investment in CSR (Rajak, 2011a: 7-8). Although debates about business responsibilities are not new (Burchell & Cook, 2006: 121), developments in CSR have intensified and

²³ The Living Wage Campaign is an example (Wills, 2009), as it draws on experiences of similar campaigns in other countries, whilst being run by a coalition of diverse local groups.

professionalised and a global industry has been established. Most major corporations, and many smaller businesses, have invested in CSR strategies. Many have their own CSR directors, departments or teams and belong to the growing range of CSR networks and certification schemes (Shamir, 2005: 232). A growing number have published codes of conduct, run increasingly diverse CSR programmes, and produce regular CSR reports (Fransen, 2012; Rajak, 2011a). An international survey of 2200 companies in 22 countries, including the *Fortune* Global 250, found an increase in CSR reporting from 50% in 2005 to 80% in 2008 (KPMG, 2008). Significant growth is also evident in CSR and PR consultancies specialising in reputation management and corporate communications, whom companies can consult or outsource their CSR to (Crane et al., 2008; Miller & Dinan, 2008: 99-124). Specialist corporate publications, such as *Ethical Corporation* and *Communicate*, also flourish.

I argue that CSR has become not only a new managerial discourse, but also a commodity, a 'marketable asset of companies' (Nijhof & Jeurissen, 2010: 618). Indicators of professionalisation are discussed in Chapter 3, and the timing is telling. A common criticism of CSR had been that it would be the first area to be cut in the face of economic problems, seeing it as an add-on or window dressing (Utting, 2005: 383). Such a belief was evident at the beginning of the latest economic crisis, illustrated, for example, in a *Financial Times* article by Stern (February 2, 2009):

Thank goodness, now the recession's here we can forget all that nonsense about corporate social responsibility (CSR) and get back to trying to make some money.

Studying CSR at this significant time for the global economy allows investigation of the value placed on CSR by different groups and the security of its position within corporate priorities. As yet, predicted cuts in CSR have not been seen; on the contrary, demands for CSR professionals and training have increased (Møller, 2009).

The thesis is timely for investigating why this is so and the implications it has for debates about responsibility. The crisis has also been used by some to initiate a more public debate concerning governance and corporate responsibility.²⁴ Proponents claim

²⁴ For example, see the review of CSR trends and publications from consultancy Lifeworth titled 'Capitalism in Question' (Bendell, Doyle, Cohen, Irwin, & Black, 2010).

CSR demonstrates the possibility of ‘caring capitalism’ and ‘ethical trade and employment’, as well as offering business solutions to the economic, social and ecological problems faced as a planet (see for example Heal, 2008; Hopkins, 2003; Zadek, 2007). In contrast, critics claim CSR can be used to legitimise corporate power, to cover up socially irresponsible behaviour and to avoid further regulation. Examples include the alternative annual report for oil company Chevron (True Cost of Chevron Coalition, 2010), the alternative social report for British American Tobacco (Friends of the Earth, 2005), and the Christian Aid (2004) report ‘Behind the Mask: The true face of CSR’ (also see case studies in Dinan & Miller, 2007; Sklair, 2001). These different positions and the complexities of competing agendas are explored in Chapter 3 where approaches to CSR are categorised, and the themes of crisis and response were found to have significant impact on CSR discourse.

Therefore this is an interesting moment sociologically, and highly relevant to a study of CSR. The remainder of this section focuses on CSR as a concept, providing a framework within which it is analysed, then considering its relationship to employment. It is argued that CSR is contested territory, with three main dimensions set out in the sections below. The first relates to the labelling of CSR, the second to the content of CSR, and the third to CSR standards.

Not defining CSR

Firstly, the very wording of CSR is contentious. Myriad names are used, sometimes interchangeably, sometimes to signify a particular focus or attitude to the area (Valor, 2005). The terms favoured change over time, although I would argue this can be as much about marketing, rebranding and professional boundaries as about substantive changes to meaning. For example, in 2009 an organisation called CSR International held a memorial service for the ‘death’ of *Corporate Social Responsibility – CSR 1.0*, walking its coffin in and describing it as a life finished. Then a naming and launch ceremony was held for the ‘birth’ of *Corporate Sustainability and Responsibility – CSR 2.0*, a concept and model which CSR International aims to promote (Figure 4).²⁵

²⁵ A copy of the invitation to this event is included in Appendix 8.



Figure 4: The death and rebirth of CSR ceremony (CSR International, 2009a, 2009b)

Some of the most common terms and variations used besides CSR include: corporate citizenship, business citizenship, good global corporate citizenship, corporate social opportunity, responsible stakeholder engagement, ethical business, green business, sustainable business, green wash, triple bottom-line approaches, corporate accountability, corporate responsibility, and corporate sustainability. In addition, work associated with CSR is sometimes within the remit of public affairs, corporate communications and PR departments.

In this thesis I mainly use the term *CSR*, as the original concept of interest with a history of more than 50 years (Carroll, 1999); it retains a dominant position within the field, often considered to be the most useful umbrella term (Blowfield & Frynas, 2005: 503-4). When other terms are used in the data studied, these are taken to refer to the general area of CSR, however the nuances and reasons for differences in terminology have been of interest to the research throughout. Investigating the struggle over how the concept of CSR is defined is a central aim of this thesis, within the categorisation of agendas in Chapter 3 and the mobilisation of CSR in the three campaign case studies. Therefore it was not possible or desirable to set out with a concise definition of CSR, and I was careful not to offer one to research participants. Instead each definition identified in the literature, documentary analysis and interviewing, was investigated in terms of its

positioning within this contested territory. In this way, trends of convergence and divergence have been highlighted and the struggle over CSR further explored.

Workers' rights as integral to CSR

The second dimension of contested territory relates to the content of CSR. One way of expressing this is in terms of who corporations have social responsibilities to, often described as a 'stakeholder' approach. The groups defined as stakeholders can include customers, suppliers, workers directly or indirectly employed, communities at local, national and global level, the environment, governments, and investors. However the groups included and relationships between them are viewed in vastly different ways. The ideology underlying this approach to relationships of responsibility has also been criticised as 'stakeholder colonialism', serving to regulate the behaviour of the stakeholder groups rather than to promote responsible corporate behaviour (Banerjee, 2008).

Another way of expressing the content of CSR is in terms of central issues or themes of responsibility and related behaviour. Again these are contested and changeable – generally and for particular corporations – and influenced by factors such as business type or relevant scandals (McMillan, 2007: 17-18).²⁶ Some of the major issues related to CSR include environmental impact, sourcing, tax arrangements, sustainability, ethical trade, investment criteria, employment strategies, working conditions, wage rates, child labour, community impact, poverty reduction, war and conflict, human rights, consumer welfare, philanthropy and sponsorship. This thesis mainly focuses on the aspects of CSR relating to the rights and conditions of workers. However, the place of these within wider CSR agendas has been an important consideration.

Socially responsible employment has now been firmly established as a core feature of CSR (De Neve, 2008: 219; Edwards & Wajcman, 2005: ch 11; Tonkiss, 2006a: 73; Vaughan-Whitehead, 2010). This can be seen in managerial and political policies – for example a 2003 EU resolution relating to CSR stressed internal responsibilities (such as HRM and safety) as well as external ones (Barnard, Deakin, & Hobbs, 2004). It is also reflected in academic research agendas – illustrated by a 2006 conference: 'Socially

²⁶ An example is drinks TNC Diageo focusing on responsible drinking promotion (Sklair, 2001: 172).

responsive, socially responsible approaches to employment and work'.²⁷ However, it is most clear that workers' rights are an integral aspect of CSR in the successes of campaigns that mobilise notions of responsible employment in their strategies to change corporate, consumer and investor behaviour.

Campaigns come in many forms, some anti-capitalist, some aimed at individual corporations, some coalitions, for example between trade unions, international non-governmental organisations (NGOs), and anti-corporate activists (Waterman & Timms, 2004). For trade unions, these campaigns link to agendas of 'decent work', and can involve engagement with the UN Global Compact, CSR policies and International Framework Agreements (Justice, 2002), as well as diverse collaborations. Workers in global supply chains can be connected through transnational campaigns to workers in the same chain but who are globally dispersed, and also to end-consumers and investors (see for example Brooks, 2005; Wills & Hale, 2005). The success of such campaigns to date can be linked to the rise of ethical consumption, defined as:

a set of social practices whereby consumers make decisions based on their own ethical priorities, and the perceived consequences of a purchase.
(Timms, 2012a: 541)

Products of consumption have always been socio-cultural vehicles for creating identities (Slater, 1997), and here the marketplace is constructed as a site for activism and purchases as 'votes' to support or oppose an issue, person, product or company (Shaw, 2007).²⁸ Within this context labour activists have succeeded in making conditions of work part of the ethical credentials interrogated.

Although consumer power is not new, with boycotts for example having a long history (Oliviero & Simmons, 2002), a market is developing to offer what claim to be ethical products. These may be recycled, raise money for charity, have a low carbon footprint, or – most relevant to this study – offer some reassurance that the workers producing them have been treated well. Guides to the ethical credentials of products and businesses proliferate, from sources such as *Ethical Consumer* and *CorpWatch*, as well

²⁷ I attended this in Prato, Italy, 1-4 July 2006. It was hosted by Centre for Research in Employment and Work, Monash University, and the Department of Management, King's College, London.

²⁸ I include socially responsible investment (SRI) as part of ethical consumption, as it involves the consumption of financial products based on ethical decision making.

as companies themselves, with social reporting becoming an established part of CSR practice. Although these ethical products only represent a marginal sector, proponents claim it is about more than sales as corporate practices are rendered more public. Consumers can be connected to workers and employment conditions become part of the company image being sold.

Particular targets for activists include the garment and flower sectors, as will be seen in the case studies. By informing consumers through campaigns, activists offer them a perceived power to bring about social transformation, and pressure companies to recognise CSR throughout supply chains. However the value-system most successful in facilitating capitalist globalisation is the culture-ideology of consumerism (Sklair, 2002), and ethical consumption can frame problems of global capitalism in a particular way, whilst offering a form of consuming as the viable solution. This again underlines the status of CSR as contested territory. Groups compete to put forward their own understanding of CSR and how they purport it should be achieved, making the role of contestation an important theme throughout the analysis.

Limited recognition of responsibilities: Certification, codes and clubs

The third and final dimension of the CSR terrain relates to how standards are negotiated. This is particularly disputed ground. To define CSR necessitates setting out what is responsible and irresponsible corporate behaviour. Struggles over the form standards should take, levels of standards, and whether or how these should be enforced, are intense (Fransen & Kolk, 2007; Lund-Thomas, 2008). This is increasingly so in the light of high profile failures of current systems, such as bank collapse. In relation to labour standards, approaches range from voluntary internal codes, through industry certification schemes, to instituting legally binding global regulatory frameworks, with increasingly innovative options being proposed.

It is necessary to consider these developments in relation to existing regulatory frameworks for global trade through international institutions and existing labour laws. In-depth and legal reviews of existing, as well as possible, frameworks abound but quickly become outdated (Bantekas, 2004; Fransen & Kolk, 2007; Vogel, 2008). Holding TNCs legally accountable can be particularly problematic due to complex

structures of ownership and operation (CORE & LSE, 2009). Governmental attempts at transnational regulation have had limited success. The abandoned UN efforts to develop a TNC code, mentioned earlier, hit difficulties mainly over whether it would be binding, with similar problems encountered by the efforts of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) and the tripartite International Labour Organisation (ILO) (Weissbrodt & Kruger, 2003). The International Labour Standards of the ILO include *conventions* that can be ratified by member states and *recommendations* that are non-binding (ILO, 1998). These can act as a guide for amendments to national regulation and are regularly referenced by corporations in CSR codes of conduct, but remain voluntary. Recent UN attempts to develop transnational ‘Guiding Principles’ are explored in Chapter 3, but the UN’s major CSR initiative is the Global Compact. This exemplifies the model of voluntarism, as corporations join by making a non-verifiable commitment to ten principles in the areas of human rights, labour, environment and anti-corruption (Sagafi-nejad & Dunning, 2008; UN Global Compact, 2009). In a similar way, European efforts to influence CSR agendas since 2001 have prioritised voluntary self- and co-regulation processes, such as sector-wide codes of conduct, as well as opportunities for business networks and some NGOs to participate in policy discussions through the European Multi-stakeholder Forum established in 2002. These European developments are also explored in Chapter 3, but the renewed EU CSR strategy for 2011-14 in particular draws on, and so again reinforces, the voluntary international guidelines and principles of the OECD, UN and ILO (European Commission, 2011).

Therefore national legal frameworks, and to some extent regional ones, are relied upon and vary widely in terms of content and the degree to which they can be or are enforced (Bercusson & Estlund, 2008; CORE & LSE, 2009). As a result, labour rights remain a contested area of contemporary capitalism and campaigns target a whole range of outcomes. This gets to the heart of the balance of power in a global economy and related questions of responsibility that are a core theme of this thesis, pitting struggles for governmental regulation against corporate voluntarism. A corporate accountability movement is identified by Bendell and Bendell (2007), based on engagement and cooperation between civil society and corporations as the way forward (Newell, 2005). In contrast, critics of voluntarism see a legally binding regulatory framework guaranteeing minimum labour standards as essential (Deacon, 1999); this can also be

posited as a need for labour rights, as economic rights, to be part of or additional to universal human rights (Glasius, 2006; Seidman, 2007; Sklair, 2009b). Different approaches are played out in the case studies investigated, but the campaigns cannot be viewed in a vacuum. They stand on the shoulders of a long tradition of labour activism, and a more recent history of CSR-related campaigning.

Early transnational efforts seized on an agenda of CSR, and pressurised high profile global brands, such as Levi Strauss, Gap, Nike and Coca Cola, to acknowledge responsibility for the labour conditions of all workers involved in their supply chains (Frank, 2003; Jenkins, Pearson, & Seyfang, 2002; Starr, 2000: 89-93). There has been limited recognition of this responsibility expressed through the development of CSR policies, codes and certification schemes. These can be used by consumers and investors to indicate 'ethical buys'. Indeed, the market for codes of conduct and the monitoring of their implementation and maintenance has become a big business in itself (Elliott & Freeman, 2003: 27-48). In addition, many corporations, including those investigated in the case studies, belong to an increasing range of CSR networks, professional associations, and certification schemes.²⁹

Although labour activism has successfully ensured workers' rights has become an issue for CSR, some developments are problematic and the case study research shows the consequences for particular campaigns. Firstly, regarding professional CSR associations, terms of membership vary dramatically and can be limited to the payment of a joining fee, signing up to ideals, or engagement in processes of external monitoring. Nearly all come with some sort of symbol of membership that can be used by the corporation to differentiate themselves to consumers, investors and regulators. One example is the business network, CSR Europe, which proclaims engagement with EU institutions and 'smart policy dialogue' as one of many benefits of membership.³⁰ Sklair and Miller (2010: 487-92) show how corporations can be connected through these memberships, in a 'strategic corporate social responsibility web', where CSR activity overlaps with broader corporate agendas. These memberships, therefore, aid the

²⁹ Examples include the UN Global Compact, the Fairtrade Foundation, the Ethical Trading Initiative, the FTSE4Good Indices, the Rainforest Alliance, the Forest Stewardship Council, the Kimberly Process, CSR International, and the Business for Social Responsibility network.

³⁰ Corporate membership is currently charged annually at 17,500 Euros, with an additional 5000 Euro signing on fee. See: <http://www.csreurope.org/join-csr-europe>.

collective effort to promote a corporate-friendly version of CSR whilst also promoting the image of the businesses involved.

Secondly, regarding codes of conduct and certification schemes, myriad versions exist. These vary in terms of the workers' rights included, as well as the extent to which they are implemented and overseen, if at all (Bercusson & Estlund, 2008; Vogel, 2008). For example, the research in Chapter 6 investigates the range of certification schemes for cut flowers (summarised in Table 3 on page 207). Whilst many campaigners see these developments as a positive step, and some take an active part in their construction and monitoring, the actual impact on worker experience is questioned (Barrientos & Smith, 2007; Lund-Thomas, 2008; O'Rourke, 2006). As Wills and Hale (2005: 7-8) point out, the transnational context of production can mean that workers do not even know who they are working for, let alone being aware of the company's CSR policies and codes of conduct. A desire to address these issues drives the momentum of campaigns for corporate responsibility.

In sum, it is not only capitalism and corporations that have been globalising, resistance can be global, too: 'may the struggle be as transnational as capital!' (People's Action Group slogan, quoted in Juris, 2008: 7). The elements of globalisation that have facilitated the spread of capitalism also facilitate the spread of critical social movements. In this way, inherent contradictions in the current system undermine its future viability. Despite differences in manifestos and objectives, the elements and successes associated with global anti-capitalist movements might demonstrate the 'emancipatory potential' of generic globalisation (Sklair, 2009a). The campaigns researched in this thesis contribute to the social movements challenging the current system. Through these case studies I investigate how the terms of debate about responsibility are being negotiated in real-life contexts.

Structure of the thesis

The thesis is made up of four parts. Chapters 1 and 2 establish the research aims and the methodological strategy for achieving these, including an overview of the case study set. Chapter 3 focuses on competing agendas of CSR and identifies four categories for analysis. The findings from the case study investigations are presented in Chapters 4-6.

The factory-focused Keep Burberry British campaign is considered first, then the event-based PlayFair 2012, followed by the product-based campaigns for cut flower workers. Finally Chapter 7 sets out the main conclusions. The themes that cut across the empirical work are drawn together and linked to the research questions. Reflections are provided on the project as a whole, and areas for future research are suggested.

CHAPTER 2

THE RESEARCH STRATEGY

A case study method was employed in this thesis. Three labour rights campaigns were investigated to explore how CSR was mobilised by different groups when corporate responsibilities towards workers were being fought over. In addition, I sought to connect to actors engaged in the CSR field and those critical of it, by joining and following groups and network for the duration of the study. Initial research developed a preliminary categorisation of corporate, professional, political and activist CSR agendas. Case study investigations provided an opportunity to investigate how these operated in practice within particular campaigns for workers' rights. Data collection involved the analysis of documentary sources, in-depth interviewing, event participation and observations. Chapters 3-6 each explain the data sources specific to that part of the research, including issues of access and challenges encountered.³¹ The aim of this chapter is to set out how the research strategy fits together as a whole, the approach taken to data collection, and rationale for decisions made. I include an introduction to the campaigns studied, but begin by explaining how the research strategy evolved over the course of the project.

Evolution of the project

As with all research, the thesis has its own particular story. This 'natural history' is important for understanding the aims of the study and the factors that have influenced its design (Rose, 1982: 115). CSR is a fast growing area and this research has been done at a time of rapid change and crisis in the global economy. The challenge of keeping up with these developments was exacerbated by the need to take an unexpected interruption from the thesis for a number of years. Here I explain how these challenges were approached and how the research plan was adapted during the course of the study.

When originally started in 2000 the thesis was concerned with CSR as a rapidly developing, but relatively new, area of management and social practice. I was interested

³¹ These link to the details of documentary sources and research participants provided in Appendices 1-5.

in investigating whether CSR was understood to include employment issues. At an early stage I identified groups and networks that engage in different ways with CSR and labour relations. I signed up to many of these between 2000 and 2012, to monitor their activities and outputs. These included professional groups, such as Business in the Community (BITC) and CSR Chicks; research networks, such as the Global Union Research Network (GURN) and the Development Studies Association's CSR group;³² and activist networks, such as Global Compact Critics and the Corporate Responsibility Coalition (CORE).³³ My monitoring included observation of websites, blogs, e-lists and social media, and participation in a range of events. This allowed a degree of immersion into CSR and labour group activities and cultures, providing documentary data, useful contacts, invitations, and informal communications with involved individuals. Initial research surveyed the reports and websites of *Fortune* Global 500 companies and anti-corporate groups, to investigate how CSR was defined, associated activities, whether labour issues were linked, and if so the themes presented.³⁴ Interviews were conducted with those responsible for human resource (HR) and CSR policies, to investigate relationships between them. It was during this research work that I had to take an unplanned interruption for several years, which had several impacts to be reflected on as part of the research story. These mainly relate to my research focus and conceptualisation, the scope of the data and methodological approach taken.

The last decade has been particularly significant for CSR and the development of related debates and controversies (Rajak, 2011a: 7-8), with Chapter 3 arguing that a process of professionalisation has taken place to establish CSR as a defined field of practice. The years of my break were especially important ones in this process. Although I maintained contact with CSR and labour groups throughout this time away and retained an active interest, when I restarted the thesis in late 2008, it was necessary to systematically review the research I had already completed, as well as new developments in the field. This was important for conceptualising CSR, its link to work, and the thesis project. It was found that employment had been firmly established as a core feature of CSR agendas (De Neve, 2008: 219; Edwards & Wajcman, 2005: ch 11; Tonkiss, 2006a:73), as discussed in Chapter 1, and it was the processes of contestation

³² Originally the CSR group, the name was later changed to the Business and Development group.

³³ Details of these are provided in Chapter 3 and summarised in Appendix 1.

³⁴ Much of this was web-based research, as most reports were available online.

involved in competing agendas in relation to responsibilities to workers, that was identified as a most interesting and fruitful area. This led me to refine the focus of my research, moving from an interest in the relationship between conceptualisations of CSR and employment more generally, to a specific focus on CSR and the rights and conditions of workers in transnational contexts of production and exchange.

How best to adapt the research plan to take account of these influences and changes was carefully considered. I had already gathered significant data on CSR agendas and their relationship to labour relations. I had been particularly struck by the transnational resistance developing in response to the impacts of global restructuring and related employment practices; so investigating this resistance was seen to be a useful way into debates concerning CSR and presented an opportunity for a detailed understanding of the mobilisation of CSR in practice. Novel political practices are being developed by activists in transnational spaces (Bandy & Smith, 2005; Della Porta & Tarrow, 2004; Shaw, 2003; Tarrow, 2005), and I was interested in whether/how campaigners use CSR to frame their claims about the responsibilities companies have to workers, and the strategies they use to promote these claims.

In developing a revised methodology suitable for this focus, sections of the original data - particularly early website-based analysis and interviews - were deemed to be less relevant to the revised research aims or too out of date to be included in the final thesis. These did though inform and provide a valuable foundation for the adaptation of the research strategy on my return, and some early data were useful for comparative purposes, to indicate longitudinal changes.³⁵ These particularly contribute to the preliminary categorisation of CSR agendas presented in Chapter 3, reflecting the fact that my enforced break did actually extend the scope of the data as I was able to monitor CSR engaged groups over an extended period and during a significant time for CSR.

To build on the initial research, and to take into account developments in CSR and in the global economy, I then devised and employed the case study method explained in the next section of this chapter. Three transnational labour rights campaigns were

³⁵ It is important to note the research was not originally designed to be longitudinal. Only some sections of data were suitable for this, but as pointed out by Menard (1991: 23-24), this serendipitous strategy can present additional opportunities for understanding, so provided another positive from my time away.

chosen, to investigate how CSR can be mobilised and contested in terms of responsibilities to workers. This eventual case study focus on campaigns for workers' rights can, then, be seen as emerging from the effects my enforced break had on the research aims and conceptualisation. As found by Halebsky (2009) in his study of campaigns against the opening of Wal-Mart stores, campaign case studies can bring together real-life representatives of the groups impacted by seemingly remote globalising processes.

The particular story of this research project therefore demonstrates how the methodological strategy employed was subject to reflection and adaptation in response to the challenges faced during the time of the thesis, taking best advantage of the situation and of the benefits of focusing on an issue for an extended period. From this background, Section 2.1 below explains the approach taken to the case study method, and presents an overview of the three campaigns selected. Section 2.2 sets out how documents and discourses were researched, and Section 2.3 the approach taken to interviews and observations. All include an explanation of the research process and ethical considerations. The chapter concludes by summing up why this research matters.

2.1 A case study approach

Case studies can facilitate an understanding of the 'how' and 'why' questions of phenomena in a real-life context (Yin, 1989: 13). This was important for investigating how CSR is mobilised, as 'context plays a fundamental role in the description and explanation of text and talk' (Dijk, 1996: 19). I was interested in the influences and conflicts involved in how responsibilities to workers are defined and acted on. As this is a study of transnational practices, it was important to investigate connections between corporations, activists, and workers and communities. Investigating campaigns offers a dynamic site for understanding relations of power and resistance in a particular context, whilst also appreciating the role played by specific individuals (Halebsky, 2009). I was interested in how such relations impact on experiences of work. As pointed out by Edwards and Wajcman (2005: 247), 'without close analysis of concrete experience, there is the danger that analysts will assume that globalisation is having certain effects'.

It was decided that studying three campaigns would allow detailed investigation of each and provide opportunities for comparison, so these were chosen on the basis of diverse case selection (Gerring & Seawright, 2008: 300). Each study included analysis of corporate, activist and other documentary material relating to each campaign, in-depth interviews with key people involved, and participation at events. The target population they were selected from was defined as campaigns for labour rights that had a transnational dimension and engaged in some way with notions of responsibility, to allow study of the role CSR played. The aim was to provide greatest variation and so involved purposive sampling (Patton, 1987: 69-70). The three campaigns were not chosen as unique or fully representative, rather the point was to contribute an understanding of how CSR has been utilised in three distinct settings. Each campaign was deemed to be 'transnational' as it involved, to some extent, individuals, groups, corporations, issues or actions that operated beyond national state boundaries.

The three campaigns researched

The case study set was designed to offer three differently orientated types of campaigning. The first case investigates activism focused on a single-site, campaigning to prevent the closure of a Burberry factory. The second case investigates a wider and on-going campaign linked to the events of the Olympics, PlayFair 2012. The third case then involves a broader field-site to investigate industry-wide campaigning for the rights of workers involved in the supply of one product type, cut flowers. The role of CSR was the focus of inquiry for each study, identifying where it was discussed, how it was used differently by competing groups, and the consequences. Both the PlayFair 2012 and cut flower case studies investigated mobilisations around the rights of distant and dispersed workers, in contrast to Keep Burberry British which mainly involved the defence of British workers threatened by overseas outsourcing. Together then, this case study set facilitates research of how responsibilities to workers are characterised in the context of complex and changing labour market conditions. The campaigns are introduced below.

Case 1: Keep Burberry British

The first case study provides an example of a factory-focused campaign for workers' rights. The case shows how local labour campaigns can be connected to broader critiques of employment strategies in transnational labour markets, and the role of CSR

in doing this. The factory involved belonged to the luxury fashion company Burberry Plc and was located in Treorchy, Wales.



Figure 5: Campaigners march on day of Treorchy factory closure (campaign archive)

In September 2006 the management announced that the plant would close at Christmas. This was a shock to staff and the GMB trade union³⁶ to which many of the employees belonged. Local Member of Parliament (MP) Chris Bryant had previously been assured that there were no closure plans and if this changed he would be consulted, but it later transpired that Burberry had conducted a 12 month review of production without the knowledge of unions, staff or even local management. The Keep Burberry British campaign grew from immediate protest on the day the closure was announced.

The campaign was led by the GMB with significant input from local Assembly Member (AM) Leighton Andrews and MP Chris Bryant, and gained supporters around the world. It aimed to stop the closure and loss of 309 jobs, but later, focus shifted to improving the package available to employees and the local community when the factory did close on 30 March 2007. The campaign created sufficient damage or threat to the Burberry brand and its activities to leverage considerably improved outcomes for employees and locals. The campaign also drew attention to labour issues arising from global outsourcing, not only in terms of the loss of British jobs, but also relating to the working conditions in outsourcing centres such as China, where it was believed work would be outsourced to, so Burberry would no longer directly employ the people doing it. This case brings together a corporation and the activists who campaigned against it, and also allows the range of other actors and their roles to be explored, such as investors, consumers, contractors, politicians and CSR associations. It presents a valuable first case study as both the specific corporation, Burberry, and the specific campaign, Keep Burberry British, are particularly relevant to the aims of the thesis.

³⁶ GMB originally stood for the General, Municipal, and Boilermakers, but is now an amalgamation of several unions. It is known only as the GMB, and described as Britain's General Union (GMB, 2009a).

Burberry is of interest for three main reasons. Firstly, Burberry has strong geographical roots in one state, the UK, but in line with the development of capitalist globalisation, has expanded its reach and pursued a global strategy. Founded in London in 1856, Burberry is a manufacturer and retailer of luxury fashions. It was floated on the London Stock Exchange in 2002, and in the financial year 2008-9 its total sales exceeded £1 billion for the first time at £1.2bn (Burberry, 2009a: 18). Through manufacturing, retail and franchising, Burberry has operations in 45 countries spread over six continents, claiming a defining feature of its brand as being a ‘globally recognised icon portfolio’, and a defining feature of its business as its ‘global reach’ (Burberry, 2010). In 2008 Burberry was ranked eleventh in the Interbrand global luxury brands listing (2008: 5), and by 2011/12 the company had been in the ‘top 100 valuable global brands’ for three successive years (Interbrand, 2012).

Secondly, Burberry has placed significant emphasis on its CSR policies. In line with its global vision, Burberry claims to employ a global CSR programme, including reference to labour standards throughout the supply chain (Burberry, 2009b). Burberry is also involved in wider CSR initiatives, as a member of the Business for Social Responsibility network (BSR), and as a signatory to the UN Global Compact; it is also listed on the FTSE4Good Indices.³⁷

Thirdly, Burberry is of particular relevance as the Keep Burberry British campaign tested the boundaries and meaning of the company’s CSR policy and practices. Solidarity networks and celebrity supporters were used to gain and maintain an international media profile, with protests and boycotts coordinated at Burberry outlets in several countries. Pressure was also brought to bear in different political arenas and by targeting investors and CSR associations Burberry belonged to. Burberry was forced to publicly defend the closure and its employment practices, including in a compulsory appearance before the UK Parliament’s Welsh Affairs Committee as part of its investigation into the impact of globalisation on Wales (WAC, 2009).

³⁷ BSR is a network of 250 aims to ‘develop sustainable business strategies and solutions through consulting, research, and cross-sector collaboration’ (Business for Social Responsibility, 2009); the UN Global Compact is ‘a strategic policy initiative for businesses that are committed to aligning their operations and strategies with ten universally accepted principles in the areas of human rights, labour, environment and anti-corruption’ (UN Global Compact, 2009); and the FTSE4Good is an index series for the stock market designed to ‘measure the performance of companies that meet globally recognised corporate responsibility standards, and to facilitate investment in those companies’ (FTSE4Good, 2009).

The case highlights the challenges of globally orientated CSR and globally orientated employment practices which pursue the ‘race to the bottom’. What is seemingly a local issue is linked to key globalising processes, in terms of corporate practices and campaigning strategies and networks. Notions of CSR were discussed by a range of actors, including the company, the campaign, politicians, shareholders, workers and celebrity supporters, providing a breadth of data for the analysis.

Case 2: PlayFair 2012

The second case study provides an example of event-focused labour rights campaigning. Play Fair³⁸ brings together labour-related NGOs to mobilise global public interest in the Olympic Games to improve work conditions



Figure 6: Play Fair logo for international campaign (Play Fair)

in sporting goods and related industries. To research the role of CSR in another context, this case explored how labour groups collaborate, how campaigns evolve over time, and how a global platform can be utilised in negotiations with official bodies and TNCs.

The Economist described Play Fair as ‘perhaps the biggest-ever crusade against sweatshops’ (The Economist, 2004). It was launched in March 2004 by Oxfam, the CCC and two Global Union Federations (GUFs): the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU)³⁹ and the International Textile, Garment and Leather Workers Federation (ITGLWF). Each founding organisation represents a host of others, involving a transnational network of labour activists in Play Fair. It evolved into an on-going international initiative, with a particular campaign chapter developed for each Olympic Games.

My research focused on the PlayFair 2012 chapter, targeting London. This was run by the Trade Union Congress (TUC) and Labour Behind the Label, with many supporters (see PlayFair 2012, 2010a). The campaign is an example of how activists can ‘hijack’ an already created platform for systematic communication of their own agenda (Price,

³⁸ A number of different names have been used for the campaign throughout its development. Recent efforts to standardise this employ *Play Fair* for the umbrella campaign and *PlayFair 2012* for the current chapter focused on London (interviews with Seely, ITGLWF and Blom, ITUC).

³⁹ In November 2006 the ICFTU became the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC).

2008: 86). The value and reach of the Olympic platform presents a very particular opportunity for those able to mobilise it, but why should it be useful for promoting labour rights? I found three main reasons, which directly contribute to why PlayFair 2012 is a useful case for this thesis.



Figure 7: PlayFair 2012 publicity (Labour Behind the Label)

Firstly, the garment industry represents a significant proportion of the global labour market, with over 40 million workers; including some of the poorest, least organised and least protected workers, who are disproportionately women (Wills & Hale, 2005: 1). Campaigners claim employment can involve long hours, pressure to work at unrealistic speeds, low wages, dangerous conditions, intimidation, and little access to unions (Oxfam GB, 2004; PlayFair 2008, 2007; SACOM, 2012; War on Want, 2011). These problems and the visible nature of products have made the garment industry a target for labour activists (Louie, 2001; Rosen, 2002; Wills & Hale, 2005). Sporting goods are a particularly high profile part of this industry, and major brands have also become key corporate players in world sport (Tomlinson, 2005a). Therefore the Olympics provides a platform to coordinate campaigns and to call for industry-wide improvements. This builds well on the Burberry case study as luxury goods are also a high profile part of the garment industry. However whereas the Burberry campaign focused on protecting existing jobs in Britain from being outsourced overseas, PlayFair 2012 mainly focuses on workers in outsourcing centres, so providing an interesting comparison between claims of social responsibility.

Secondly, ethical campaigning on sportswear supply chains has had some success in establishing responsible governance as an issue companies need to address. Major targets have included Adidas, Nike, Reebok, and Puma, many of whom are associated with the Olympics (see for example Sage, 1999). This has allowed Play Fair to monitor the voluntary standards companies have agreed as part of their CSR, drawing on the weight of Olympic bodies to add pressure.

Finally, the particular nature of the Olympics offers specific opportunities for Play Fair to promote labour rights, namely its global reach, its system of licensing, and its ethos. The official guide for sponsors and advertisers claims ‘the Games are one of the most

effective international marketing platforms in the world, reaching billions of people in over 200 countries' (IOC, 2008: 3). Mobilising this platform gives Play Fair an opportunity to highlight labour practices to a global audience of consumers. Also, putting on an Olympic Games involves systems of licensing for merchandise, suppliers, and sponsors. Play Fair claims the International Organising Committee (IOC) and National Organising Committees (NOCs) could significantly impact conditions if contracts were only given to companies meeting internationally agreed labour standards. Then in relation to ethos, the first fundamental principle of Olympism in the Olympic Charter 'seeks to create a way of life based on the joy of effort, the educational value of good example and respect for universal fundamental ethical principles' (IOC, 2007: 12). The promotion of Olympic humanism has a long tradition, with official Olympic statements regularly making claims about their role in promoting world peace (Forster & Pope, 2004: 9). Play Fair has used this discourse to argue that some companies supplying the Games violate the Charter due to exploitative conditions (Oxfam GB, 2004: 4). In doing this, the campaign presents 'a subversive narrative' and legitimises its claims 'by bringing them into the world of the IOC's own documents' (Price, 2008: 100).

Researching the particular campaign chapter of PlayFair 2012 has been especially valuable because London's bid to host the Games prioritised offering a sustainable and socially responsible Games as a major selling point (One Planet Living, 2005: 4). As will be shown, this provided more opportunities for activists to draw on official discourses of CSR to leverage pressure. The timing of the research and being based in London was a further advantage for monitoring the profile of the campaign in the years running up to the Games and being able to participant in events.

Case 3: Campaigns for the rights of cut flower workers

The final case study moves beyond both single-site or event-based campaigns, to consider a wider group of labour rights initiatives focused on a single product and type of worker. The product-focused campaigns in this case study share a common goal of wanting to improve what are seen as exploitative and dangerous conditions in parts of the cut flower industry. However no single alliance has emerged as an umbrella for this campaigning globally, so this is a different type of case, offering an alternative context for studying CSR mobilisation.

The cut flower industry has experienced significant growth over the last two decades, and more newly developing countries are aggressively pursuing flower exports, (Morser & McRae, 2007: 4). This raises important labour issues in the global context, and the case is of specific relevance to this thesis for three main reasons.

Firstly, working conditions in cut flowers can be particularly problematic and explanations for this are often linked to processes of capitalist globalisation. Technological developments have promoted intensive farming and facilitate transnational supply chains involving some of the poorest countries, whilst rising supermarket power has intensified competition and price sensitivity.⁴⁰ All of this can impact conditions of work.



Figure 8: Worker sorting cut flowers ready for export (War on Want)

The precarious nature of this employment and safety issues mean that flower workers are a particular concern for campaigners and have attracted the focus of CSR initiatives. The work is precarious as it is characterised by dramatic changes in seasonal demand, such as for St Valentine's and Mother's Day, and because the workforce is largely made up of temporary, unorganised workers, predominantly women. Many flower farms exist in countries with little employment protection or enforcement of legislation. Problems of continual temporary contracts are reported, denying workers job security and rights, such as maternity leave and union membership (Women Working Worldwide, 2006). This precariousness, together with increased pressure from supermarkets, all contribute to the low pay, enforced overtime, and insecurity experienced by workers (Morser & McRae, 2007: 8-9). The situation is set to worsen as newly developing countries, such as Ethiopia, Tanzania and Zambia, determinedly pursue promotion of flower exports.

In addition, cost pressures and the nature of the product bring environmental and health concerns. The way water, chemicals and transport are used raise ecological concerns, but for this case study I focus on the welfare of workers. Highly toxic chemicals are used to increase flower crops and to prolong their life in transit. The World Health Organisation (WHO) recommends workers should not re-enter an area until at least 24

⁴⁰ For example, in the UK 70% of flowers are purchased from supermarkets who wield increasing influence over producers (Evans, 2007:4).

hours after flowers have been sprayed, but campaigners claim this can be ignored with some forced to work immediately (Morser & McRae, 2007: 5). Sickness, miscarriages, and respiratory problems can result from pressure to simultaneously reduce costs whilst producing ever-more flowers to be frozen to survive the long journey to shops on the other side of the world. Again this needs to be seen within the wider context of global development trends, and so the links that campaigns make between the flower workers and the changing structures of global consumer and labour markets are particularly relevant to this thesis.

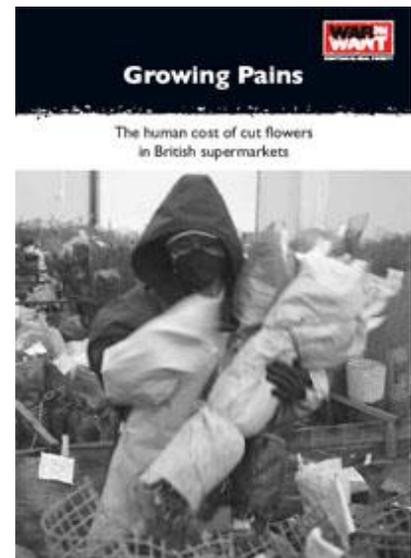


Figure 9: Cover of campaign report detailing dangerous conditions (War on Want)

Secondly, this is an interesting case as campaigners have had an impact, with some recognition of the need for CSR in the supply chain. In 1998 an International Code of Conduct for the Production of Cut Flowers (ICC) was developed, and many certification schemes now exist as expressions of CSR. The case study allowed investigation of the power struggles involved in the production and use of these standards, with campaigners and industry bodies playing different roles. Rather than seeing these as successes, some campaigners argue that the diversity of codes mean they are confusing, unusable, and ultimately the voluntary nature of this ‘web of codes’ (Morser & McRae, 2007: 4) fails to protect workers. The research focuses on how the notion of CSR contributed to the development of codes, and responses to them. I was particularly interested in the uneven emphasis placed on CSR at different points in supply chains, as well as the under-researched role played by auction houses, with surprising findings.

Thirdly, the case provided an opportunity to study how a wider range of actors mobilise CSR for the same issue, and the relationships between these. Parties included campaign organisations and networks; corporations and their subcontractors; auction houses; buyers, wholesalers and retailers; trade unions; industry associations; researchers; and officials involved in certification and regulation. Many of the campaigns investigated focus on the rising number of flower farms developing in East Africa and South America, including the work of Women Working Worldwide (WWW) and War on Want (WoW) based in the UK, and HIVOS and the International Flower Campaign in

the Netherlands. Holland proved a key field site given its historic role in the global flower trade and as the base of FloraHolland, the world's largest flower auction.

This research contributes to the case study set by offering an industry-wide analysis. It allowed investigation of a wider range of actors and strategies, both in terms of form and location, and so I could study the use of CSR by different but sometimes connected groups, all working in different but sometimes overlapping ways, to improve conditions of work. I now focus on the data collection methods used for these case studies.

2.2 Documents and discourse

Critical approaches to discourse use have informed this research. I was interested in understanding how the language of CSR can be mobilised to produce particular representations of the relationship between business and society, and more specifically between corporations and workers. These representations can shape attitudes towards corporations, including those of consumers, employees, and those who could or do regulate them. They can also be resisted. In focusing on mobilisations of CSR in campaigns for workers' rights, it is recognised that 'discourse is an inherent part of society and partakes in all societies' injustices, as well as in the struggle against them' (Dijk, 1996: 23). To facilitate a study of CSR language, documents and interviews and observations were the main sources of data collection. This section focuses on the first.

Discourse takes the form of 'texts' to be 'read'. A 'text' can refer to all products of written or spoken language, and in fact, to all the forms of representation we see (Ali, 1998: 266), such as logos, buildings, paintings, and combinations of images and words. I employed a method of qualitative thematic analysis (Seale, 2004: 314), involving reflection on how the emerging issues related to existing literature and the thesis aims (Bryman, 2004). This could be tailored to the needs of the research, and allowed study of a large and diverse corpus of material over time.

Documentary sources can be approached systematically, allowing for comparison of the different records that actors have created from their use of language (Scott, 1990). The documents analysed for this research mainly included texts and also some of the images accompanying them, utilising what Rose (2001: 15-16) termed a 'critical visual

methodology'.⁴¹ Social practices are involved in creating particular forms of texts and maintaining their version of a social issue or context and their relationship to alternative versions. As in the approach of Foucault (1972), discourses are seen to define and organise the very categories of the things they intend to describe (Tonkiss, 2004: 373). They are not neutral, but can support institutions, reproduce inequalities and have ideological connotations, and studying the processes involved can be both interpretative and explanatory (Richardson, 2007: 27). In relation to this thesis, uncovering the 'ideological workings of discourses' (Brookes, 1995: 462) can contribute to an understanding of how and why companies invest in CSR and why notions of socially responsible employment are so contested.

Research process

A graduated approach to sampling was employed (Flick, 1998: 65-70). Texts were selected on the basis of their relevance to the research questions and case studies, possibilities of access, and the variety they would contribute to the corpus in terms of format and origin.⁴² The goal was to identify and analyse the dynamic range of definitions and representations of CSR, focusing on how they relate to responsibilities to workers. This involved reflection on how the emerging issues related to existing literature and the thesis aims (Bryman, 2004). Data were gathered from the CSR and labour related groups I signed up to and followed throughout the research, the early work on *Fortune* 500 companies and anti-corporate websites, the literature review of CSR publications, and study of the campaign cases. Please note that details of the exact sources are given in each substantive chapter, but the types of materials included company reports and policies, web and blog content, e-list and social media, management and industry publications, media articles and campaign materials.

Each piece of discourse was made ready for analysis by producing a hardcopy of original and electronic documents. The guiding aim was to identify key words, phrases, and images representing CSR, related themes, and associated practices, with a particular

⁴¹ For example, see Sklair's analysis of the 1998 report from Shell on 'Profits and principles – does there have to be a choice?' which utilises beautiful imagery, reader invitations, particular typefaces and other visuals, to guide the reader's questioning and to deliver the company's own message (2001: 185-191).

⁴² Unfortunately mainly samples in English are included, but some of these originated in other languages and most were written for transnational audiences.

focus on the relationship to work. This required initial readings of the material, in what Gill (2000: 178-179) describes as ‘the spirit of sceptical reading’ involving ‘the suspension of belief in the taken for granted’. I attempted to set aside assumptions to develop what Schenkein (1978) calls an ‘analytic mentality’. The analysis focused on patterns in the data, variability, similarities, and an interrogation of the function of language (Gill, 2000: 179-180). As discourses are historical and can only be understood in relation to their context (Richardson, 2007: 27), attention was paid to how documents had been prepared, by whom, for what purpose, who the intended audience was, and how it was to be communicated, using similar criteria to those outlined by Scott (1990).⁴³ I was interested in the use of CSR by different actors for different audiences, and some analysis was possible of changes over time through comparing data from different years. Therefore as well as analysing discourse samples on an individual basis, cross-sample analysis facilitated an investigation of the commonalities, conflicts, and interconnections within the corpus (May, 1997: ch 8).

Ethical considerations

As with all methods, textual analysis has related drawbacks and ethical concerns (Cameron, 2001). There were three potential issues for this documentary research. The first relates to my joining membership-based groups with those working in or campaigning around CSR and labour issues, in order to access materials. However, these were mainly in the public domain and I was transparent about my research whenever I had direct contact with other members or organisers. Most had no restriction on membership, but I was able to join some of the professional and academic groups because of my base at London School of Economics, and I already had connections with some activist groups. Secondly, the documents studied can be categorised using the dimension of ‘access’ (Scott, 1990: 14-17). As explained in relevant chapters, the majority of data were from publicly available sources, but others were restricted access, including parliamentary papers gained through a Freedom of Information (FOI) application, and materials from the private archives of campaigns and individual campaigners. These sources were treated with care to ensure privacy and security. The final ethical consideration relates to an associated criticism of documentary research:

⁴³ He sets out four main criteria for the quality of documentary evidence in social research – authenticity, credibility, representativeness and meaning (for detailed discussion of these, see: Scott, 1990: 6-8).

reliance on the subjective interpretation of the researcher (Cameron, 2001: 137-140; Scott, 1990). Important decisions are made in the selection of samples and in the process of analysis, which can serve to present the results in a particular way. Therefore a range of related texts were always selected and in-depth interviews were used to interrogate and develop the findings.

2.3 Interviews and observations

There were two main rationales for using in-depth interviews as a part of the research strategy. Firstly, the research is not only concerned with the language of CSR but the processes and relationships involved in its construction and mobilisation. Interviewing key figures from groups engaged with CSR, allowed me to understand how each category of discourse developed, the main influences, motivations, key relationships, and areas of conflict. Interviewing major actors involved in each case study, provided an opportunity to investigate first-hand experiences of the campaign, to interrogate further the use of CSR, and to verify facts and any details missing from documentary sources. An understanding of the complex social context would be limited if relying on texts alone. It was also possible to gain an understanding of the personal backgrounds and motivations of those involved in CSR, in addition to their institutional or campaigning personas. In-depth interviewing was appropriate as the thesis aims to explore the perspective of the respondent, and it provides an opportunity for meanings to be unpacked (Patton, 1987: 109). This is always a challenge, especially as interviewees included communications professionals skilled in presenting the ‘corporate line’. Face-to-face encounters did though provide the best opportunity for building personal rapport, which can help to get beyond official responses (May, 1997: 118).

Secondly, as acknowledged, textual analysis involves interpretation. Interviews can provide an opportunity for a corpus of text samples to be enhanced (Fairclough, 1992: 226-228). The interview programme mainly involved semi-structured in-depth interviews, but more informal ones were also possible through membership of CSR groups and attendance at events. Interviewing allowed me to interrogate further the meanings different participants associated with CSR, and how these were mobilised in campaigns. Cameron (2001: 140) suggests these strategies can reduce the risk of

making overly sweeping claims, and throughout the project interviewee responses were used to clarify and inform the interpretation.

In addition to the in-depth interviews, two further sources were used. Firstly, pre-existing, documented interviews with relevant actors were analysed. These were mainly media interviews relating to the campaigns, involving activists, corporate executives, politicians, workers, and members of the public. As well as those that appeared in the mainstream press, others were accessed in specialist press such as marketing and activist publications and blogs. These presented the interviewee's understanding of what was happening at the time and their response. The questions asked of them are also interesting and tell something of the interviewer's agenda. These sources were used in conjunction with my own interviewing, as they were only useful up to a point. During my own interviews I was able to question key actors (sometimes the same published interviewees), directly in relation to the research aims and also to gain insight into their current reflections on the campaigns they had been or are involved in.

The second additional source took the form of observation and participation. Through my membership of CSR and labour related groups, I was able to monitor the different levels and types of activities taking place, as well as relationships within and between groups and individuals. This method allowed me to maintain contact with a network of people and groups engaged in CSR. I was able to demonstrate my interest to potential research participants. It also kept me informed of conferences, workshops, protests, discussions, and other events – either public access or by invitation to group members.

Attendance at a range of these events involving corporations, CSR professionals and activists, furthered my connections and became an important source of data collection as described in each empirical chapter. In particular, participation in corporate-focused CSR conferences and exhibitions, such as the Responsible Business Show described in Chapter 1, was found to offer at least some access to corporate elite culture and the opportunity to observe and interact with those seen as industry leaders within the CSR field. It is noted that the valuable data to be gained from this type of research activity is an underappreciated method for gaining access to elite cultures. Much literature exists offering methodological techniques for elite research and 'studying up' (Aguilar & Schneider, 2012), however many of these focus on the challenges of elite interviewing

(for example Harvey, 2011; Mikecz, 2012). In addition, more ethnographic approaches to studying elite cultures usually entail working in some way in such circles – not possible for many researchers – and rarely stress the value to be gained by participation in corporate-aimed exhibitions, conferences, conventions and award ceremonies. Rajak's (2011a) ethnographic study provides an example of where this can work well in the field of CSR, but she faced similar challenges in terms of access to these, overcome to some degree by taking voluntary roles at such events. As discussed in relation to the Responsible Business Show in Chapter 1, my access was often limited to certain parts of events, determined by status and fee-level paid. However, experiencing the space, language, symbols, practices and atmosphere, all provided valuable insight into CSR industry culture, as well as further contacts and opportunities for interview.

Research process

The criteria for a 'good informant' were similar to those of Morse (1994: 228): that a potential interviewee had relevant knowledge or experience, was capable of reflection and articulation, had time, and was willing. A graduated sampling strategy was employed (Flick, 1998: 65-70), with individuals selected because of their (perceived) knowledge and insights relating to CSR or the campaigns investigated. Major interviews were conducted with 71 interviewees: 18 from CSR engaged groups, 16 for the Keep Burberry British campaign, 16 for PlayFair 2012, and 21 for cut flower campaigns. I spoke to several of participants more than once, especially as I followed campaign progress. Each participant set is discussed in the relevant chapter, including details of access and specific issues faced, but interviewee types included politicians, CSR consultants, executives, activists and their supporters, workers and their representatives, researchers, investors, journalists, and representatives from trade associations, certification bodies and CSR networks.⁴⁴

A structured format aided consistency in the use of interviews throughout the project, involving the process described here with any special issues explained in each

⁴⁴ Appendices 2-5 provide summary lists of each interview set, including the participant's position, interview format and location. I also indicate if an interview has been drawn on in other chapters. Please note, indented interviewee quotations are presented throughout the thesis in italics (referenced that gained by interview, who with and their organisation) to distinguish them from quotations taken from existing materials. Non-indented shorter quotations clearly state they are from interview and additional information from participants is referenced to be from personal communications (pers.comm).

substantive chapter. Potential participants were usually contacted in writing, including an explanation of the research aims and why they were being asked to contribute. I began each interview by restating the project aims and intended use of the data. Participants were asked to confirm they were happy to proceed and for a dictaphone to be on. Topic guides were used for a degree of structure and cross-comparability,⁴⁵ although the design of each schedule was informed by why the respondent was selected. These were reviewed after interview so each research experience informed the next (Gaskell, 2000: 40). However, a significant degree of flexibility was built in; this was important as I wanted to be able to react to new information and to interrogate the language used by respondents. I was also aware of the power relations in some interviews, so the degree of structure was adapted as appropriate. In some cases this was in terms of my perceived status as ‘knowledgeable researcher’, representing an official institution and possessing control over the analysis of the data (Lee, 1993: 107). More flexibility was needed here, as a highly structured approach could have emphasised perceived hierarchical relationships (Oakley, 1981). In other cases power relations existed with regard to ‘elite’ respondents, such as the government ministers, corporate executives and consultants interviewed, when it was important to present a well-researched and professional approach to gain their respect and justify their time (Feldman, Bell, & Berger, 2003: 53).

Participants were given the opportunity to add anything and to recommend other interviewees. The potential problems of ‘snowballing’ are acknowledged, namely the danger of limiting respondents to a particular linked group (May, 1997: 119). However I was not seeking a ‘representative sample’, for example in terms of all TNCs or all labour campaigners, rather I sought to identify key players engaged in the case studies chosen. The contacts gained through interviews were mainly used to confirm the importance of the respondents already selected and to aid access to them. This was particularly important for contacting high status interviewees, when drawing on the social networks of participants can open heavy doors. As was found by Hill in his boardroom study: ‘being known by the right people’ can be an important strategy (1995: 245). After each interview I wrote up notes on my immediate impressions and followed

⁴⁵ For example, every interviewee was asked what CSR means to them. See sample in Appendix 6.

up each with a handwritten letter of thanks for their contribution and time, restating my contact details, so keeping lines of communication open (Feldman, et al., 2003: 33).

These interviews facilitated comparison between written and spoken language use, allowing me to investigate the processes involved in their construction and relationships between categories. In addition, 20 minor interviews were conducted at trade fairs and markets. These were shorter and less formal, having not being pre-arranged but a standard guide was still employed. As Chapter 3 explains, a number of other interviews from early stages of the research have not been directly drawn on but informed the development of the research, as did informal discussions in the groups joined and with participants at conferences, workshops, protests and other events attended.

Each participant observation of events was prepared for in terms of the purpose, who might be there and the contacts to be made, and how it might contribute to the research. Field notes were made, noting language use, atmosphere, interactions and organisation (May, 1997:144). Photographs were also taken where appropriate and I gathered materials provided for participants when available.

Ethical considerations

Interviewing involves in-depth interaction with individuals, taking up their time, and interpreting the results, all necessitating a due regard for research ethics. As suggested by the description above, I tried to build-in safeguards to ensure ethical conduct throughout. Three main issues were relevant to the interviewing done. Firstly, participants included those who had lost jobs, people doing dangerous and insecure work, and those campaigning for their rights. Sensitivity was required and, as discussed above, an understanding of how power relations could be perceived within the interviews. It is important to note that none of my interviewees required their identity to be protected and there were several reasons for this openness: participants were often selected because of their official organisational position and saw themselves as publicly representing this office, such as in the case of executives, consultants, trade unionists and politicians; or they had been selected because of their public role in campaigns and were keen to expound on their cause. Despite this, it was decided that providing anonymity for the ex-Burberry workers interviewed would be a sensible precaution

against any impact on future work prospects. Therefore these respondents are referred to by employing first name pseudonyms to safeguard their identity. In addition, on the rare occasion of anything being shared ‘off the record’ or deemed to put any interviewee at risk in any way, materials have not been included.

Secondly, transparency was very important for the interviews and observations. Many interviewees had vested interests in campaigns outcomes, such as job security for workers and reputation for corporations. By being clear about my aims when inviting people to take part, and then reiterating these at each interview, I tried to avoid any false expectations. Regarding events, I was clear about my research when accepting invitations, introducing myself or making a contribution. Demonstrating an understanding of the complex issues involved for all parties helped to avoid setting myself in opposition to any group. The nature of my participation needs also to be explained (May, 1997: 138-141). Specifics are given in each chapter, but my role was generally as observer, taking care to impact proceedings as little as possible. I was interested, for example, in the questions the audience asked rather than asking my own. However, as is evident in the case study descriptions, my position was in constant negotiation depending on circumstance. For both interviewing and observations, reciprocity was sometimes involved due to obligations felt for the time and access organisers gave me (DeWalt & DeWalt, 2002: 141-142). I attempted to balance this against overtly ‘taking sides’ by being guided by my data needs (Hammersley, 2000).

Finally, as language is not static and as the campaigns are recent or on-going, I was aware of impacts I might myself have by doing this research. Being open about my project helped, but more direct influences are acknowledged, including facilitating contact between participants, publicising campaigns by my discussions and presentation of findings, and information sharing. For example, as a result of being interviewed by me the previous day, MP Hywel Francis made a direct reference to the Burberry campaign in his St David’s Day Speech to Parliament.⁴⁶ The publicly accessible transcription became part of my data for the study (House of Commons, 2010). Again, transparency in presenting the findings has been important. This also demonstrates well the earlier point about the evolving and socially constructed nature of discourses.

⁴⁶ I was informed of this by personal letter from Hywel Francis, as discussed in Chapter 4.

Why this research matters

The research strategy explained above was designed and evolved to understand how CSR is being defined and mobilised in relation to conditions of work. As established, sociological analysis of CSR is so far limited, but why should more be done and why does this particular research matter?

It is argued that to misunderstand the significance of CSR is dangerous. The recent professionalisation of the CSR industry and its continued growth, even during global economic crisis, suggests there may be substantial benefits for those seeking to control and influence agendas. It is necessary to go beyond questions of whether CSR is simply marketing, to investigate how the terms of debate are being set regarding notions of responsibility in a global economy. However, it should not be assumed that the meaning of CSR is only being shaped by corporate voices. The role of other actors in mobilising CSR to question, oppose and shape practices and to get responsibilities to workers recognised, should not be neglected. Employment relations is an important arena for practical and ideological struggles over CSR. Investigating this contestation matters for understanding power relations between workers, corporations and those who attempt to regulate them, and the consequences of CSR discourse becoming ever more pervasive matters for the lived experiences of workers around the world every day.

CHAPTER 3

COMPETING AGENDAS OF CSR AND RESPONSIBLE EMPLOYMENT

As I sat in the small library at the offices of the New Economics Foundation (nef), there was a crucial moment when the penny dropped and the interviewee ‘got’ what my research is about. He expressed relief. Throughout the study I found that the very mention of CSR can evoke strong emotional responses, from passionate belief in its potential to deep scepticism and suspicion. Needing to get over assumptions about what my thesis on CSR is about became a familiar experience, not only with interviewees but fellow researchers and anyone who casually asked ‘that’ question about my PhD focus. Reactions have ranged from assuming I am promoting the concept and looking to position myself for a career in CSR, through to dismissing me as naïve as I must have been duped by corporate speak if I think CSR is a worthy or useful PhD subject. This was exacerbated if participants knew of my membership of certain groups or knew me from related events. So it has been necessary to clearly explain that I am not seeking to promote a particular version of CSR, but rather to understand how others are doing this. The disparate reactions I experienced are interesting themselves for the research, indicating the vast range of approaches to CSR and the powerful sensitivities involved.

This particular interview was with the Head of Business and Finance at nef, Tony Greenham, responsible for the organisation’s research on reforms in the financial sector and strategies for aligning the interests of business and society. In this case it did not take long to overcome the blinkers the concept of CSR can create, so my aims were understood and Greenham felt comfortable expressing his own position:

I am a huge CSR sceptic and I think it is pretty much devoid of content in the way that the word ‘sustainability’ has become devoid of content... It has just been abused, the language of it, to death. But because of that, then the marketing people say ‘well it is old hat so let’s think of a new word to describe the thing’... but I like that you are holding them to account that it is still CSR.⁴⁷

⁴⁷ As explained in Chapter 2, indented quotations from my interviewees are presented in italics throughout the thesis (such as here) to distinguish them from existing materials.

The idea put forward of CSR as an empty concept is an interesting one and typical of ‘CSR sceptics’. This can, however, lead to CSR being dismissed as unimportant and presuming if it is a meaningless concept, it must be a worthless one. In this chapter I argue that the opposite is true. Rather than CSR being empty, battles are being fought by competing groups to imbue the concept with their own meaning and to champion particular versions of CSR over others possible. During the time I have been researching it, CSR has become deeply embedded in corporate discourse. A CSR ‘industry’ has been established and is supported by the professionalisation of its champions. Furthermore, by connecting CSR to social policy and development agendas, the concept has infiltrated many areas of social life, including health, education, and environmental protection. Therefore CSR is by no means worthless. The differing approaches to CSR tell of the value groups place on controlling its meaning and scope, and these have direct implications for how the responsibilities of corporations to workers are defined.

This chapter provides a structure within which the role of contestation can be examined. I draw on my research done with groups and individuals who engage with notions of CSR, and I present a categorisation of competing CSR agendas. The research benefits from having been conducted over a significant period for the development of CSR and the lens of workers’ rights was employed to focus the analysis. The aim was not to provide a comprehensive history of CSR,⁴⁸ or to present a complete inventory of when the term CSR is employed. Rather, my goal was to identify the main messages from competing CSR agendas and influences over these. Whilst these provide the context for this thesis, I am interested in how the agendas produce discourses of socially responsible employment. In this, the chapter is central to the first research question of the thesis regarding issues of employment within current CSR agendas.

The chapter has three sections. I begin by setting out the field of CSR as a site for the research and my data sources. The categorisation of CSR agendas is presented in Section 3.2, namely: political, corporate, professional and activist. Section 3.3 then considers the timing of CSR, relating efforts to establish it as a professional field with moves to question whether ‘responsible capitalism’ is possible. The chapter provides a

⁴⁸ Some of the groups themselves have developed these (see for example Doughty Centre, 2011).

bridge from the literature relevant to CSR, work and labour movements discussed in Chapter 1, to the analysis of how these CSR agendas are mobilised in practice in the campaigns presented in Chapters 4-6.

3.1 The field site of CSR

I am interested in how CSR is being formed as a field of discourse and practice. Of course the two are interlinked, with language and debate working to shape action. To identify the processes involved, the main players with influence, and how these relate to issues of work, I attempted to enter, observe and participate in this CSR field. I did this by participating in groups and events, studying of documents, and interviewing key individuals. As this field is dynamic and fast-growing I limited the scope of the analysis by asking how developments impact meanings of socially responsible work. Even with this approach, the view of the field was necessarily partial – limited particularly by language, focus and time. By the end of the research, the number of potential CSR networks and groups had grown to such an extent, and those I belonged to had become so prolific, that it was impossible to fully analyse the materials arriving in my inbox or on group websites, blogs, tweets, and events. Therefore an approach of data saturation was employed, with new materials scanned to identify whether they added anything new to the corpus within the scope of the research questions (Richards, 2005: 135).

CSR related groups and networks

One of the first tasks undertaken at the start of the research was to join groups identified as working with the concept of CSR, whether directly using or opposing the term, or through the nature of their work and aims. The range was added to as new groups and networks formed, whilst others became obsolete. Three main types can be described as professional, academic and research, and activist. Details are provided in Appendix 1.

Professional groups included those for or run by businesses, professionals and consultancies. Common types of documents were reports being launched, invitations to events and courses, news items, requests for information and surveys, job advertisements (useful for understanding the posts being created and employers' expectations), discussion pieces, and advertisements from consultancy services. Some

off-topic postings also allowed an insight into the community formation taking place and the lifestyles of those involved. Research orientated groups and networks involved university institutions, individual academics and labour researchers. Common types of output included invitations to participate in events and research, notification of publications, news and debate features, job and funding requests and advertisements. Finally, activist groups and networks mainly included not-for-profit organisations and networks of campaigners working on issues around corporate responsibility and labour, whether aimed at a specific corporation, industry or issue. Common types of documents generated included calls for actions, discussions, tools for monitoring corporate activities, news updates, reports, and invitations to events.

What constituted ‘membership’ varied. For some this involved signing up to email lists for regular updates, digests, and discussions, with up to ten communications daily. For the less prolific it involved occasional communications and my surveying the organisation’s website. In the latter years of the research the social media accounts of some became increasingly important, such as their output on LinkedIn, Twitter, and FaceBook. This is seen as consistent with the experience of other researchers (Cann, Dimitriou, & Hooley, 2011). In this study the role of social media in the professionalisation of the CSR, and also in the strengthening of solidarity networks transnationally, was found to be particularly interesting and evolving.

Interviews

Interviews with key individuals working in or engaging with the field of CSR were conducted to gain further data on emerging agendas, and to more directly interrogate the relationship of CSR to employment issues. I was also able to question participants on their background, motivations and networks. Two types of participants contributed. First, throughout the course of the PhD I used every opportunity to discuss the project with those interested or involved in CSR. Some interviews were conducted at an early stage. For example, I had opportunities to interview HR managers working for TNCs in various countries when working for the Centre for Labour Market Studies, University of Leicester.⁴⁹ Others were arranged on research trips, such as with CSR consultancy, the

⁴⁹ Informal interviews included HR managers in Hong Kong, Singapore, Malaysia, Malta, USA, and UK.

Ethos Institute, in Brazil,⁵⁰ with business school career advisors in New Zealand and with NGO workers in Sierra Leone. In addition, useful meetings took place when attended CSR related events as described below, ranging from informal chats to short semi-structured interviews. Although these encounters have not all proved directly relevant or recent enough to include, they contributed to the categorisation of CSR agendas which inform the analysis. Many provided contacts for the formal interviews, and offered the opportunity to test out developing themes from the research.

Those formally interviewed for the thesis represented a second participant type. Appendix 2 provides details of the 18 key interviewees for the categorisation of agendas. This group consists of people who engage regularly with CSR issues in some form, including politicians, consultants and campaigners from some of the leading consultancies, assurance bodies, think tanks, and campaigns. Others were selected for the particular role they had played, such as the former UK Minister for CSR. Interviews done as part of the case studies also fed into the research for this chapter in two ways. Firstly, during all 71 main interviews, participants were asked how they define CSR, the words that came to mind, and who they see as responsible for workers' rights. Secondly, many of the interviews done for the case studies were with people directly engaged in CSR beyond their involvement with the relevant case, and so some were useful here.⁵¹

CSR related events

Most events I attended were open to the public, with some invitations gained via CSR groups. Academic conferences and workshops on CSR included some aimed at PhD students, business orientated ones, and some international. Examples were an invitation-only Corporate Governance conference at the Netherlands Institute of Advanced Studies (2002), the launch of the Global Unions Research Network (GURN) at the ILO in Geneva (2004), an international conference 'Socially responsive, socially responsible approaches to employment and work' in Prato (2006), and the Corporate Responsibility Research Conference in Leeds (2011), at which I presented some preliminary findings.

⁵⁰ The Ethos Institute was an early proponent of CSR in 1990s and has become a leading influence on CSR in Brazil and beyond, including work with government, see: www.ethos.org.br. Interestingly, a representative was a key note speaker at the Responsible Business Show discussed in Chapter 1.

⁵¹ Details of the other 53 main interviews and additional 20 minor ones are introduced in relevant chapters, and provided for reference in Appendices 3-5. Appendix 2 indicates those drawn on here.

Corporate-orientated events were designed for networking between CSR professionals, training and sharing best practice, engaging with stakeholders such as charities and NGOs and launches of new consultancies.



Figure 10: Exhibition hall at Responsible Business Show

As noted in Chapter 2, attendance at these provided valuable access to corporate elite cultures and those purporting to be industry leaders in CSR. The frequency of these events has increased significantly. Some demand very high fees from delegates, or tier fees depending on the access tickets give to the different parts of the event. This will often determine the types of participants and contacts delegates encounter, and so can be used to ensure their exclusivity for corporate elites. In common with Rajak (2011a: xvi), this limited my ability to attend and sometimes my access when I did, but I was able to include events free or cheaper for civil society and students. Examples include the Responsible Business Show (2012); a business event ‘Principles and Profit: Conference on corporate accountability’ involving Friends of the Earth (2003); and others involving corporate CSR in some form, such as an ‘Ethical Careers Forum’ aimed at London graduates (2010).

Events organised by or involving activists have been most varied. These included street protests, rallies, themed fundraising nights, workshops, conferences and events relevant to CSR as part of wider initiatives. They ranged from general anti-capitalist or pro-worker solidarity events, to specific actions aimed at particular industries, events or employers (for example the anti-Olympics campaign meeting in Figure 11).

Overall, by attending these events I was able to develop connections with groups and individuals engaged with CSR in different ways, observe this engagement and gain additional documentary data and interviewees.



Figure 11: Greenwash Gold event to highlight campaigns against key Olympic partners

A framework for the analysis

Given the amount of data generated by these methods, it was important to maintain a consistent framework for analysing CSR. This was purposefully kept simple, with each sample – whether a report, conference or protest speech, email, website, interview transcript or observation notes – analysed in terms of three elements. These directly relate to the ‘terrain of the struggle’ set out in Chapter 1. The first element concerned *terminology*: how CSR and socially responsible employment was referred to, the words and images used to represent this. The second concerned *content*: what themes were focused on, towards which groups were responsibilities recognised, and what activities were associated with CSR and responsible employment. The third element concerned *standards*: what standards of corporate behaviour were expected, what format were these expected to take, were they supposed to be enforced and if so, how and by whom.

3.2 The categorisation of CSR agendas

In categorising CSR agendas my aim was to identify the versions of CSR being promoted and key messages involved. Four categories were developed: political, corporate, professional and activist. It is important to note that these categories are artificially constructed and that agenda types cannot be perfectly separated. Overlap and connections exist, between some more than others, as will be discussed. However common themes and messages were regularly observed to form relatively distinct discursive approaches, making the four CSR categories helpful to the project. In the case study research it was then possible to see how these were mobilised in specific labour campaigns. Table 1 summarises the main messages found to be promoted by the different CSR categories. The remainder of this section gives an overview of each category, considering the key messages from each.

Table 1: Summary of key messages from CSR agendas

<p>Political</p> <p>CSR encourages best practice Acting responsibly is good for competitiveness and business growth CSR is important for national business profile and reputation on the world stage Voluntarism offers a tool for negotiation with business</p>
<p>Corporate</p> <p>Business has a positive social role even when or especially in crisis CSR offers a sensible solution to problems being faced globally Through self-regulating CSR, corporations already go beyond what is expected of them Businesses with strong CSR are good to buy from, invest in, work for and live near</p>
<p>Professional</p> <p>CSR is an expert field essential to business survival Competitive advantages can be gained by being at the cutting edge of CSR CSR is important for relations with stakeholders CSR is performed by individuals with good ethics and gives a ‘moral’ identity</p>
<p>Activist</p> <p>CSR demonstrates the failure of voluntarism and the need for regulation CSR can be a tool for engagement and leverage CSR greenwash can provide ammunition for personal and corporate embarrassment CSR can be a tool to question corporate-political power relations in global capitalism</p>

Political

The concept of CSR encompasses at its very core the relationship of states to business, because it entails an understanding of where responsibility lies. As set out in the research questions in Chapter 1, this is a central issue for the thesis in terms of how competing approaches to CSR characterise this relationship. The processes involved are not static, but key messages have been observed from political discourse relating to CSR over the course of the research and these contribute to an understanding of the dynamic role of politicians, political institutions and the influences on them.

Political 1: CSR encourages best practice

This claim is used to justify political efforts to promote CSR at transnational, regional, national and local levels. Transnational political discourse at the European level is evident in official initiatives specifically focused on CSR since 2001.⁵² This saw a

⁵² For example the European Commission includes a special focus on CSR within its website, including discussions, studies, events, and a resources section (see European Commission, 2012).

European Commission Green Paper (COM(2001)366) published on public policy to promote CSR,⁵³ the establishment of a European Multi-stakeholder Forum on CSR, and in 2011 a renewed EU CSR strategy with an ‘Agenda for Action’ for the following three years that specifically includes ‘disseminating good practices’ (European Commission, 2011: 8-9). Much of this has been done in collaboration with business, such as the Commission supporting the establishment of a business-led European Alliance for CSR. Corporate involvement in policy is increasing at all levels of governance (David Miller, 2009), and as will be seen, is becoming closely related to CSR work. The transnational initiatives to develop codes and guiding principles for TNCs discussed in Chapter 1 also support CSR as encouraging best practice, but voluntarily. The ILO mandate on CSR encourages more research and exploration of how its ‘key instrument’ on CSR – the Tripartite Declaration of Principles Concerning Multinational Enterprises and Social Policy – can be used to improve labour standards. As with other ILO instruments, this can be ratified by governments but only guides corporations as it is not binding. The ILO is keen to stress its increased involvement with CSR (defined overtly as voluntary) since 2000 and now provides an ‘ILO Helpdesk’ for companies and workers about its ‘approach to socially responsible labour practices’ (ILO, 2009).

A particular focus has been given to business behaviour impacting fundamental human rights, with the UN appointing Professor John Ruggie as Special Representative to the Secretary-General on Human Rights and Transnational Corporations in 2005. In 2008 he set out the Protect, Respect and Remedy Framework for business and human rights, based on the following three pillars:

the state duty to protect against human rights abuses by third parties, including business; the corporate responsibility to respect human rights; and greater access by victims to effective remedy, both judicial and non-judicial. (Business and Human Rights Resource Centre, 2011)

His 2008 report stressed the need for corporations to acknowledge and act on their responsibilities in the global context, and the role of states in ensuring this was made clear (Ruggie, 2008). His initial three year appointment continued and in 2011, his Guiding Principles for the implementation were published (Ruggie, 2011). This influenced other transnational codes and principles being developed or revised around

⁵³ See Burchell and Cook (2006) for discussion of the comments this paper received at consultation stage.

that time, particularly the UN Global Compact and the OECD Updated Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises. The latter includes responsible business conduct in a transnational context, with particular recommendations on human rights abuses and corporate responsibility for supply chains (OECD, 2011). These inter-governmental efforts promote human rights as part of CSR, and in their implications for business have become a topic of analysis and training for CSR networks and consultancies. Merk (CCC) believed that with such codes and the ILO International Labour Standards, the major issues involving labour rights are now quite accepted. So the clout of transnational codes can influence CSR content and understandings of best practice:

What we are seeing is a consensus on the principles that underline the concept... also through the big codes like the UN Global Compact and so on, I think they have built consensus around what we are talking about, whatever label we are going to use. (interview: Visser, CSR International)

At a national level, individual countries have approached the field of CSR with varying degrees of enthusiasm. Here I mainly consider the UK, both because it is where I am based and, as will be explained, because it has taken a leading role in CSR promotion. A change in emphasis can be identified after Ruggie's 2008 report, when the UK government switched from CSR to CR by removing the 'social' part; possibly to indicate a more rigorous, if still voluntary, approach to ensuring responsible practice (BERR, 2009: 5). There is also a developing sense that governments should be leading by example in CSR. In the UK for example, some councils and public bodies have supported the Living Wage campaign by becoming accredited employers. This includes the Greater London Authority (GLA), with Mayor Boris Johnson calling for Central Government to join (The Guardian, 6 November 2012). Also, at both UK and European levels a debate is taking place about ethical public procurement practices (see for example Amand-Eeckhout, 2012; Beuter, 2011). Such practices can involve responsible management of suppliers and contracts, and prioritising sources that offer guarantees - usually including minimum labour standards.

Political 2: Acting responsibly is good for competitiveness and business growth

Study of the UK Government's engagement with CSR (and later CR) since the 1990s, demonstrates how helpful it has been at times of political difficulty. A major element of this engagement has been the Government's role in establishing the influential business-led CSR initiative, Business in the Community (BITC). In 1982, just after the Brixton

and Toxteth riots, the Conservative government organised a conference to bring together US business leaders involved in regenerating Baltimore and Detroit in the 1970s with UK businesses (Moon, 2004). BITC developed as a result of this and continues to benefit from government support, with a usual funding ratio of 60% business – 40% government. The attraction is clear, as its International Projects Director explained how, for policy engagement work for the Government, they are always ‘able to pull the businesses in’ (Subiela, BITC). Describing itself as ‘business-led’ and not-for-profit, it is a Prince’s Charity, and has become a major player in CSR globally, with 850 corporate members and 10,700 companies engaged in activities (BITC, 2012).

CSR promoting politicians have also used it to enlist business support for tackling unemployment. Both Conservative and Labour governments have subsidised CSR in the UK, through initiatives on economic development, regeneration and unemployment, particularly that affecting youth (Moon, 2004). This governmental push for CSR encourages business to take a more socially orientated role at the exact moments when the Government has been struggling to deal with unrest or economic problems. A point frequently linked to the pro-CSR environment is that the UK had the world’s first Minister for CSR, created by the Labour government in February 2000.⁵⁴ I asked ex-CSR Minister Stephen Timms⁵⁵ if he had ever had to defend the role:

No. It struck me that it was a very good thing for that Labour government to be doing, because it provided a very good area of common ground, between government on the one hand and businesses on the other. It was an area where the interests of government and companies were completely aligned and you know we were introducing the minimum wage, we were increasing the climate change levy. We were doing all sorts of things that businesses weren’t terribly pleased about and so this CSR was a good area I thought to bring people together... I thought it was a very valuable and rather unusual opportunity that CSR provided us with.

Promoting CSR as good for the economy, competitiveness and growth can also be seen at a European level. The European Council and Parliament called on the Commission to develop its CSR policy further between 2007 and 2011, resulting in the *Renewed EU strategy 2011-2014 for Corporate Social Responsibility*. Within this the economic crisis

⁵⁴ Seven MPs held this position during its existence until the 2010 coalition government. Chris Howell was first, but interviewee Stephen Timms MP is most associated with the role having held it three times.

⁵⁵ Please note this is not a family relation, although I did refer to the coincidence of us sharing the name when trying to secure an interview with him.

was seen to make ‘renewed efforts to promote CSR’ vital for creating conditions ‘favourable to sustainable growth, responsible business behaviour and durable employment’ (European Commission, 2011: 4). The resulting strategy contains initiatives on employment and a section on ‘enhancing market reward for CSR’ (European Commission, 2011: 10-11).

Political 3: CSR is important for national business profile and reputation on the world stage

Government effort to promote CSR is regularly justified by a need to be a centre for global trade and at the forefront of best practice. Significant initiatives, such as BITC and the CSR Minister, were frequently part of narratives in which the UK, especially London, had a formative influence on the development of CSR globally:

London and UK are very very advanced in the [CSR] field.... Also you have lots of headquarters of big companies here... and there is the ‘big society’... (interview: Subiela, BITC)

We were seen as the leaders in CSR. We were the place where the interesting ideas were being developed. (interview: Timms, MP)

Although the CSR Ministerial post no longer exists, two parliamentary groups still actively focus on promoting CSR as good for the country, to MPs, the House of Lords and business, in quite different ways. One is the All Party Parliamentary Group on International Corporate Responsibility (APPGICR) started by MP Lisa Nandy, which has links to the Corporate Responsibility Coalition (CORE) and is funded by a number of social justice groups, including Christian Aid, Amnesty and Oxfam (Haigh, APPGICR). The other is the Associate Parliamentary Group on Corporate Responsibility (APGCR) which includes business representatives as members. When interviewing the APGCR Chair, Baroness Greengross, I found that her family links to BITC were of note as BITC supported the group’s creation; she is also CSR advisor to Fujitsu who sponsored some educational material produced to ‘help MPs understand what CSR is all about’. The same people being involved in developing CSR agendas in corporate and political contexts can be likened to a ‘revolving door phenomenon’ (Dinan & Miller, 2009).

In addition to promoting the country in terms of CSR leadership, a desire to protect the reputation of national business interests operating overseas is evident. This drew rhetorically on a sense of ‘British fair play’, charity and sense of responsibility. For example, the UK Foreign Office provides guidance on the Ruggie principles and a ‘business toolkit’ to encourage good conduct by UK listed companies, and also a Overseas Business Risk service to identify potential human rights issues. It claims:

The UK is committed to promoting responsible corporate behaviour by UK companies operating, or considering operating, overseas. This includes respect for the human rights of people involved in or affected by their operations. (FCO, 2012)

As well as encouraging MPs to speak in debates and raise questions on CSR issues, the APPGICR can initiate inquiries, calling corporations and others to give evidence, and coordinator Haigh told me of its current inquiry into the Government’s UK Export Finance activities. She saw the APPGICR inquiry into UK policy as vital:

The Government has put that department at the heart of its export-led recovery strategy... we are looking at how it can be a key agent of growth whilst setting standards for responsible business practice and whether those two objectives are mutually exclusive. (interview: Haigh, APPGICR)

Miller (Northumbria University, interview) claimed export policies should be used more to make companies comply with standards and to penalise those that do not. He saw the threat of removing an export licence as ‘the ultimate sanction in terms of CSR’ and had seen ITGLWF General Secretary Neil Kearney involved in the successful use of this for a company in South Korea. In the UK context, export licences are only necessary for restricted products (such as weapons), but the Government’s Export Credit Guarantees Department offers insurance to UK exporters against non-payment by overseas buyers. This could possibly offer scope for political pressure to be applied to companies to ensure labour standards, withdrawing support for businesses involved in abuses.

Haigh saw the APPGICR taking an important role in publicising issues and in bringing business and NGOs together ‘at the same table thrashing out solutions’. Political agendas can then include a liaising role for promoting a responsible reputation on the world stage, and the need to remain independent to be able to facilitate this was clear:

One of the things that shocked me in starting this role was how little NGOs' views are respected in here [Parliament]. You go out into the real world and you tell people that Amnesty or Oxfam say this and people sit up and listen because they are respected organisations...[but] people would just think you are naïve for being duped by them. If you stand up and say business says this, then people will sit back and listen. (interview: Haigh, APPGICR)

Political 4: Voluntarism offers a tool for negotiation with business

As well as claiming to create a positive business environment, which can help alleviate economic problems as well as promote a national reputation for ethical business, CSR is also mobilised as a tool for negotiation with business. As discussed, the power of governments to hold corporations to their responsibilities, however they are defined, varies both in terms of willingness and ability. The predominant model of CSR promoted by political discourse is one of voluntarism, exemplified in this official definition from the Department for Business Enterprise and Regulatory Reform:

We see Corporate Responsibility – which was previously described as Corporate Social Responsibility – as the voluntary actions that business can take, over and above compliance with minimum legal requirements, to address both its own competitive interests and the interests of wider society (BERR, 2009: 5).

This definition draws in both the ‘business case’ claim that CSR is in a company’s own interest (Zadek, 2007: 17-18), and the social role element. The prescription of voluntarism is in-keeping with efforts in other countries (see for example Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Finland, 2006; US Department of State, 2012), and was reiterated by interviewees involved in promoting CSR in political arenas. For example:

It was entirely about an urging... by definition CSR was not about regulation in my view. (interview: Timms, MP)

It is spreading the philosophy of it really, and certainly the approach here has been totally voluntary... (interview: Greengross, APCRG)

These efforts to ‘urge’ and ‘spread the philosophy’ of CSR were seen as vital for unlocking its potential as a tool to gain significant benefit for society and government. Baroness Greengross explained with passion how CSR could be used to get businesses to provide social goods, with the APCRG trying to facilitate these linkages:

...if members of parliament realised the leverage they had and used it, they could benefit enormously... they need to know what can be done, if they are in an area where there is a lot of need, if they get the corporate involved and enthusiastic, they can get a lot of benefit. So it is important to educate MPs... So it is really a very exciting story.

An example shows how CSR can be used in business-state negotiations more directly. Change4Life was a Department of Health anti-obesity marketing campaign launched in 2009. Miller and Harkins (2010: 278-280) show how business had a strong involvement through funds contributed and through the company links of M and C Saatchi, the marketing agency employed by the Government to design the initiative. However since Miller and Harkins' research was published, further developments show the extent to which business was setting the policy agenda and the role of CSR in this. In July 2010 it was announced that due to budgetary pressures the Government could no longer fund the Change4Life programme. Instead, an explicit agreement had been reached whereby the Government would not impose stricter regulations on the fast food industry in exchange for businesses funding the £75m shortfall for Change4Life as part of their CSR. Describing it as a 'new partnership' with industry, the Health Minister shocked health campaigners by claiming businesses now 'understand the social responsibility of people having better lifestyles' (Ramesh, 7 July 2010: The Guardian). In this way the political use of CSR as a negotiation tool facilitates the 'corporate capture' of public policy (Sklair & Miller, 2010), when the very businesses involved in a problem become responsible for controlling the solution due to lack of state capacity.

Corporate

Corporations promote ideas about CSR through many means, including their CSR policies, codes of conduct, product advertisements, company reports, recruitment literature, and less visible participation in industry events and engagement with policy and regulatory bodies. Particular approaches to CSR can be dependent on company type, places of operation, public profile and any past scandals. However, the research found several common messages promoted.

Corporate 1: Business has a positive social role

In July 2001 I presented preliminary results from the first year of my PhD at a Global Studies Association conference in Manchester. My study of CSR discussion on *Fortune*

Global 500 company websites found a degree of convergence in the importance placed on ‘corporate citizenship’ and business taking a positive social role, but divergence in the actual behaviours companies associated with this role (Timms, 2001). Burchell and Cook reference my conference paper to support their own finding that actual impacts of CSR for business and civil society remain unclear (2006: 130-131). Two examples from the early data illustrate this. The first highlights the random events that were being included to represent the CSR of huge TNCs, this one being from the company at the top of *Fortune’s* list - General Motors. Its CSR section, *GMability*, included a news story in March 2001 celebrating the fact that one of its female engineers was in the top 10 contestants of a USA beauty pageant (Figure 12).

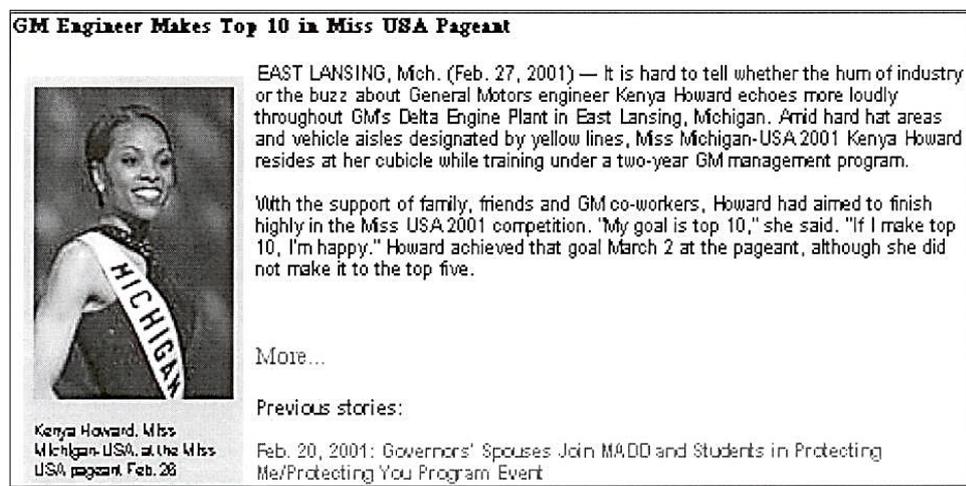


Figure 12: CSR news from General Motors (GM.com, March 2001)

It is unclear why this story was presented as CSR, except perhaps as they had been a good employer allowing time off? It is interesting that the *GMability* programme was seen as cutting edge in the field of CSR and corporate communications by PR experts at that time, who claimed General Motors to be ‘a global leader in corporate transparency, accountability and social responsibility’ (The Holmes Group, 2002).

A second example is from Wal-Mart, the second largest TNC in 2001. Its CSR programme *Good.Works* demonstrated its commitment to supporting the local community by reporting a \$500 grant in the name of Sam Gromowsky, described as having an entrepreneurial spirit and charitable nature. This \$500, it should be noted, did not go to Sam but to the local Chamber of Commerce – rather a small gesture to evidence the CSR contribution of a company with \$5.3bn profits (Figure 13).

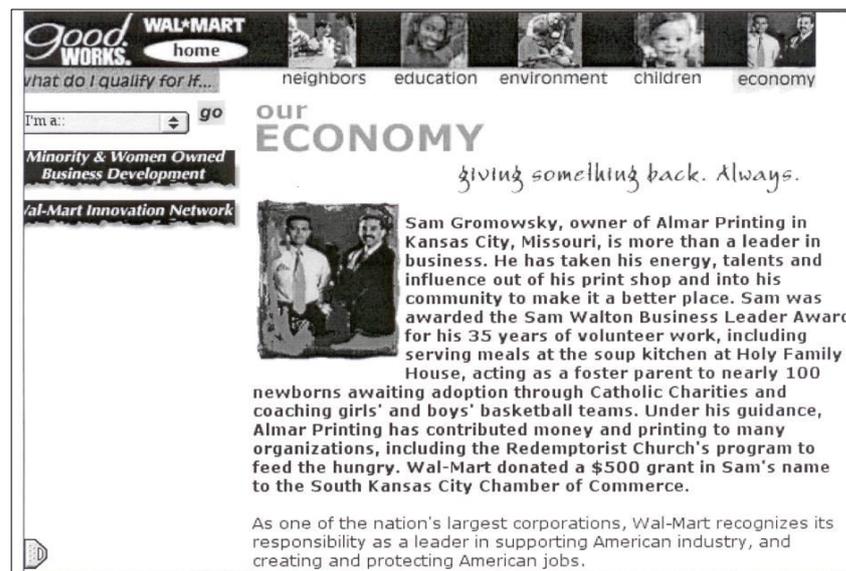


Figure 13: Story of Wal-Mart's CSR contribution to the economy (Wal-Mart.com, 2001)

So although the initial research suggested CSR was being included on corporate agendas,⁵⁶ the actions relating to it often seemed random and inconsequential, and so supported the big CSR claims poorly. However change has been observed during the course of the research. Increased investment and professionalisation is resulting in a markedly more coherent message, delivered in ever sleeker ways to promote commitment to CSR and the significance of the corporate social role.

Often, though, the social role being promoted has little relationship to the core activities of the particular business. Indeed, CSR initiatives can be used to claim identity as a 'good citizen' without reference to any of a company's most risky practices:

Sometimes businesses will say, oh yes CSR, and actually it means doing something that's maybe a good thing to be doing but it's not actually related to their operation. So for instance like a mining company setting up an education project. Like fine but, you know, the mining might still be having the impact and them not doing anything to mitigate that and they say, ah yes as part of our CSR strategy, you know, we are setting up a primary school project. (interview: Crosser, CORE)

CSR seems to me to be an edifice by which companies give as many concessions as are not detrimental to their interests (interview: Cranshaw, People and Planet)

⁵⁶ Other studies, many more comprehensive and recent, support this. Examples include ones that focus on corporate websites in particular countries or industries (such as Chaudhri & Jian Wang, 2007; Fukukawa & Moon, 2004; Robertson & Nicholson, 1996; Snider, Hill, & Martin, 2003).

The motivation for promoting this social role for business was seen to not only help protect company image, but to actively improve it. Greenham (nef, interview) saw the business case for CSR having two layers:

One is of course defensive, making sure that you are not the one that has a reputational disaster, it being discovered that you have kids painting jubilee flags or whatever it was that Banksy⁵⁷ painted the other day... The positive business case is that you actually sell more products because people are attracted to your story... that is where you get your, you know, Coca Cola sponsoring children's football and that sort of utter nonsense. And to me, I mean you know I would rather they did that than didn't, but the idea that it adds up to anything that will fundamentally get us towards a high well-being, low carbon, social justice future is, if anything, is a distraction...



Figure 14: Alleged Banksy on wall of Poundland
(cc) DeptfordJon

The promotion of a positive social role then is taking the transnational practices of corporations further into the realms of public life, presented in ever slicker ways. This relates directly to the next key message, that not only can corporations play a social role but that they are the best or only possible actors to solve some societal problems.

Corporate 2: CSR offers a sensible solution to problems being faced globally

This claim often draws on companies being the sensible option for solving social problems when other sources to deal with this are limited – as in developing countries – or are eroding, as in developed countries in austerity. Through this approach to CSR, corporations can be involved in social policy and social provision. The case of businesses funding the Change4Life programme illustrates this, as funding cuts meant the Government was unable to. This can serve to distract from the actual impacts businesses have, as discussed above, and also to shift power-relations of who controls certain areas of social life, such as education and health. Initiatives then done in the name of CSR can contribute to neo-liberal agendas whereby private enterprise pervades more and more spaces globally.

⁵⁷ This appeared on the side of a Poundland shop in London, days before the Queen's Jubilee celebrations and is thought to be a protest against the use of child and cheap labour (see Figure 14).

The wealth, global reach and infrastructures of TNCs are used to justify the claim that it makes most sense for corporations to provide solutions to planetary problems, such as climate change, inequality, food and water shortages, and environmental destruction. This is where CSR is increasingly being linked to development policy (Adanhounme, 2011; Blowfield, 2005; Khan & Lund-Thomsen, 2011). Alliances such as Business Action for Africa claim states' weaknesses mean corporations have a vital role to reduce poverty, usually through promotion of enterprise (Scholte & Timms, 2009: 84-85). This is also seen in the close relationship between the UN Global Compact and the promotion of the Millennium Development Goals. Corporate CSR agendas can then involve working more closely with governments and international institutions in social policy areas, as observed by Sklair and Miller (2010).

Ethical investment expert Edward Mason supported this in his interview, claiming increased trade is the only way poor countries will be helped. For him, globalisation is unstoppable and 'business is the engine of change' with so much power that it is 'more important than governments in some areas of life' (interview: Mason, EIAG). For employment this corporate message implies that states are unable to ensure fair treatment and so businesses can and should protect human and economic rights through CSR policies and codes. The role of business in development and shifting patterns of trade is explored further in the case studies, both in terms of corporate restructuring to take advantage of cheaper labour markets and corporations' responsibilities for outsourcing workers when they do.

Corporate 3: Through self-regulating CSR, corporations are already go beyond what is expected of them

This third key message promotes the rigorous nature of corporate self-regulation and claims the impossibility of workable transnational legal frameworks. The efforts put into developing soft regulation and investment in continual monitoring of codes, suggest the commitment many corporations have to this message. As previously explained, corporate reluctance to accept transnational legislation has created barriers to many efforts, and goes some way to explain how CSR can be used to get corporations to the negotiating table for discussions of private labour standards that are voluntary and they can have some control over.

The CSR clubs, associations and networks that many corporations belong to can provide a collective platform for strengthening the promotion of self-regulation, such as shown in the overlapping memberships identified by Sklair and Miller (2010: 489) and their relationships to lobbying work. Lobbying ‘masterclasses’ and training were promoted through CSR networks, and many corporate award ceremonies are now held to highlight and celebrate how well businesses are responsibly going beyond what is required of them. For example, the APCRG is now funded by its corporate members paying fees to belong with MPs and Peers. The Chair explained how corporate members:

... like it as they get the chance to meet the politicians and so on, and it’s not corrupt, and it is not in danger of being one of the things that everyone is very wary of at the moment. It is all very open. (interview: Greengross, APCRG)

She explained it was BITC who wanted the group to exist, and that it was instrumental to its establishment. It is also of note that the secretariat of the APCRG is provided by the specialist consultancy, Central Lobby Consultants.⁵⁸ The value corporations place on presenting themselves as responsible already going beyond what is expected of them, can be seen in these concrete demonstrations of their interest in CSR and their keenness to develop private social standards. The development of the business-led CSR standard ISO 26000 Guidance on Social Responsibility (International Standards Organization, 2010), is a good example of such effort aimed at the transnational level.

Corporate 4: Businesses with strong CSR are good to buy from, invest in, work for, and live near

Another important message of corporate CSR relates to self-promotion. CSR in this context becomes not only part of the marketing efforts of a company trying to sell its product, but also part of its investor and community relations programmes and its HR policies. CSR was particularly related to direct employment in corporate agendas in three specific ways. Firstly, it is evident from the forums studied, career advisors spoken to and relevant websites, that working for a responsible company is becoming an increasingly important criterion for some job hunters.⁵⁹ This suggests that for corporations CSR is also becoming a recruitment issue:

⁵⁸ APCRG have over 100 MPs and Lords as members and 70 corporations, including banks, British American Tobacco, Ikea, Marks and Spencer, Shell, Coca Cola and McDonalds. See www.apcrg.org.uk.

⁵⁹ For example www.ethical-jobs.co.uk; www.ethicalcareers.org; and www.ethicaljobs.net.

Increasingly people are waking up to corporate responsibility as an employee engagement tool, but also as a means for attracting the best people... If there is not a great deal to separate the offers, then corporate responsibility is very high up on the stuff that will be considered... it is a swing. (interview: Pierce, Communicate)

An example is the regular 'ethical careers' events put on at London School of Economics, with speakers working in CSR, social entrepreneurship, and NGOs (including interviewee Buttle, MADE-BY). Another participant I discussed this with, though, asked whether 'unethical careers' events are also put on, seeing it as rather ridiculous (interview: Greenham, nef). Secondly, as well as being used to attract the best candidates, CSR has been used by some companies to overcome recruitment problems. MP Timms described one such scheme whereby the National Grid went into young offender's institutes to train engineers when there were too few applicants, with the initiative portrayed as a positive example of CSR. Then thirdly, CSR is used by some companies to improve relations with existing employees:

Staff engagement is absolutely essential... [for the] big issues around the workplace itself, diversity, work-well, life/work balance, health and safety, and of course the whole thing about how those people working there make the business responsible. (interview: Subiela, BITC)

This might involve employee participation in CSR by being given time off to volunteer or deciding on the allocation of funding. These may have positive motivational impacts for productivity, creativity and the organisational culture more generally (Glavas & Piderit, 2009; Walton & Rawlins, 2011), but ultimately the practices involve employees doing work to promote the CSR profile of a company.

However, the negative image that can be created by poor employee relations was also highlighted by communications consultant Sverjensky (Futerra, interview). She spoke about her company's dilemma in being approached to promote the sustainability and community CSR initiatives of a company accused of labour abuses, which has been the target of labour rights campaigns. Pressure from anti-corporate campaigns and the rise of ethical consumption also play a role here in challenging any claims that a business is good to work for, to live near, to invest in or to buy from. So there is much at stake for corporations in presenting these positive messages and version of CSR.

Professional

The professionalisation of CSR is one of the most interesting aspects of its development. An expert field has been created and professional boundaries are being established. Career structures in CSR are becoming formalised, bodies of knowledge and models of action defined, professional networks and leading figures recognised, and specialist areas within the field are becoming demarcated.⁶⁰ This all takes a lot of work and is being done for the benefit of those involved. The impression created is that CSR is now a specialist management area that is crucial for contemporary global business, and the key messages presented here promote a professional agenda for CSR. However as a profession it is very young and disparate, with uneven relations of power between those involved. Later in this chapter I consider the timing of this professionalisation.

Professional 1: CSR is an expert field essential to business survival

Professions need to create and maintain bodies of knowledge that can be owned (MacDonald, 1995: 157-163). For CSR this can be seen in its establishment as part of business school curriculums, the growing management CSR literature and specialist publications, and the corporate positions created, as well as in the training and consultancy services offered by CSR experts. Defined qualifications are particularly important for professionalisation (MacDonald, 1995: 195-197), evident in the specific degrees, professorships, and research centres for CSR.⁶¹ Field leaders are established and different models developing. This is all happening fast, as Subiela (BITC, interview) observed:

When I joined BITC in 2000 I don't think there was anyone in BITC who would have taken a masters in CSR. Today for each position we get applications from lots of people who have got masters in CSR from Nottingham University and MBAs that have specialised in CSR... If you are going to talk about professionalisation I think this is a very clear indication.

⁶⁰ This is illustrated by the directory of CSR Professional Service Providers available through Ethical Performance, a CSR trends specialist. The latest version included 590 organisations offering 57 different categories of CSR related services (Ethical Performance, 2012).

⁶¹ These grow rapidly, and are regularly promoted and reviewed on CSR networks. Examples include: Masters and PhDs in CSR at University of London, Stirling, London Metropolitan and Nottingham Universities; degree modules on CSR and related areas, one of which is taught at Harvard by John Ruggie; professionally orientated courses in CSR by organisations such as the ETI and BITC; and research centres such as at Warwick and Nottingham, with others specialising in specific areas, such as sustainable business practice at Ashridge Management School and Leeds University.

Promotion of such courses, advertisements for CSR jobs requiring this expertise, and requests for internships from CSR students, have become a regular feature of network mailings. The role of networks was seen to be particularly important by Sverjensky (Futerra, interview) as in this field new ideas are shared very quickly. By following these networks I saw the role they take in forming professional identities and how they help to create a world of CSR that pervades lifestyle too, such as through regular CSR drinks and lunches, requests to meet with other CSR people when in a new country, offers of accommodation, and requests for experience and information sharing (that are then shared back to the whole group), and a sense of on-going debate. So a sense of professional identity is created and used to sell the business case of CSR. The claim is that to do CSR well you need an expert, and that doing CSR well is essential to survival.

However competition within the CSR marketplace is strong. Professionalisation was seen as a benefit by Subiela (BITC, interview) as it meant people did not have to ‘reinvent the wheel’, but she also saw a danger of ‘over-professionalisation’ as there can now be too many events, where you see the same faces. When I questioned another interviewee about her use of the term ‘CSR community’, she questioned the legitimacy of the term and whether there is any professional unity between those involved:

I think I probably used that [CSR community] as a derogatory term as to me the idea of having a sustainability and/or CSR community is a bit silly because yes there are people who are practitioners like me that work in sustainability and they come from government and NGOs and consultancies, and it is kind of this weird mash up of people with completely different lifestyles, backgrounds and some people care about values and some don't they just care about the money...(interview: Sverjensky, Futerra)

Professional 2: Competitive advantages can be gained by being at the cutting edge of CSR

The CSR industry is successfully creating competition between companies, challenging them to be the best at CSR and suggesting this will bring benefit. This taps into the business case for CSR and the corporate claim of companies with good CSR being good to work for, invest in, live near and buy from. Top TNCs take part in the event circuit to present their own CSR programmes, whatever they may be labelled, as case studies of best practice. An interesting practice to promote this message is the development of industry awards, celebrating the best CSR scheme (as opposed to the most responsible business). These are designed to offer inspiring case studies, but also confirm who are

the CSR leaders and also provide important social networking opportunities for the organisers, sponsors and participants. An interesting link can be made here with political discourses as the ‘Agenda for Action’ in the EU’s CSR Strategy 2011-14 included the launch of a European award scheme for CSR stakeholder partnerships, so also using competition to influence voluntary CSR initiatives (European Commission, 2011: 8-9). I asked one professional awards organiser why they had developed a scheme:

[It is] great in terms of raising awareness and providing opportunities for people to talk about the things they are doing in their companies... the award ceremonies are a great way for us to get close to that industry and also to talk about aspects of CSR that go beyond environmental awareness... it is about the way that businesses are pairing up with other businesses and seeing where the synchronicity of ideas is.(interview: Pierce, Communicate)

Some of the professionals involved in CSR provide certification and assurance for codes of conduct, however the range of services is vast. At one level there is the idea that CSR is a box that must be ticked. For example, Greengross (APCRG, interview) spoke of how it could be learned and that an indicator could then be offered to show that the company had good CSR:

The Good Corporation,⁶² that is quite nice,...[they] will teach you how to be a good corporation and then you get a sort of certificate.

For others CSR has moved through a number of stages and needs to be about complete business transformation, that is when it is seen to become cutting edge. At BITC the terminology has changed from *CSR* to *CR* to *Responsible Business* to *Transformative Business* (interview: Subiela, BITC); Sverjensky (Futerra) told me that it has only been in the last two years that clients have been prepared to accept more transformative work, as they were now under pressure and saw its benefit. Two examples show how businesses have developed CSR services to provide a unique selling point. SEDEX has gained market share by developing a facility for member businesses to share auditing reports. Membership of SEDEX is often advertised to enhance a company’s CSR profile, however the organisation itself recognised that this can wrongly suggest some guarantee of ethical standard when SEDEX is actually only an information sharing

⁶² The interviewee referred to this organisation, I am not commenting on the certificate’s value. The standard includes responsibilities to employees and details can be found at: www.goodcorporation.com.

vehicle (interview: Smith, SEDEX). For purposes of ethical procurement McCarthy (CSL) described this to me as:

...an incomplete solution. You know SEDEX is almost like Facebook for corporate responsibility... suppliers can register on SEDEX and they can put their stuff up on there, audits or whatever it might be, but SEDEX don't actually provide any assurance over that information.

Another interesting example is that of MADE-BY, which works with fashion designers to allow customers to track the supply chain of an item of clothes. By entering a number from the clothing label a website provides customers with information about the workers involved and the ethical guarantees from each supplier, as a selling point.⁶³

Professional 3: CSR is important for relations with stakeholders

Company image is vitally important in a world of instant access to information through the web and social media, so CSR is sold as an opportunity to enhance relations with a wide range of stakeholders. Consultancies offer services to promote a company's CSR to customers, employees, local communities and the wider public, governments, trade bodies and investors. For example, Haigh (APPGICR, interview) told how:

Whenever companies come to give evidence [at inquiries] they come with their CSR and communications guys.

Industry publication *Communicate* describes itself as 'the single voice for stakeholder relations' and the editor Pierce, explained:

CSR is definitely a target area [for us], it is becoming an important part of corporate communications as often it is tied into your investor relations.

She went on to discuss new tactics being used to engage with different stakeholders to raise CSR profile, including the use of social media. The magazine had recently carried a feature on the use of images to communicate certain messages, and she spoke of 'the growing language of imagery' used to promote CSR profile. Themes I regularly noted during the research have included smiling children and workers – suggestive of hope and good relations with the community and happy employees; water, wildlife, fauna and pristine forests – suggestive of renewal and growth; and development and charity work

⁶³ This can be seen at <http://www.made-by.org/content/tracktrace>.

– suggestive of doing good and having a positive impact. Together the net effect promotes the social role of these businesses in a vision of a ‘better world’.

Greenwash is the term used by critics to discredit CSR claims not lived up to in practice, with some alternative award schemes developed to highlight the ‘best’. An example is the Greenwash Gold 2012 project I encountered when researching PlayFair 2012. This involved voting for the company deemed to be covering up the most negative impact on communities and environment whilst presenting itself as a ‘good corporate citizen’ as Olympic sponsor.⁶⁴ I found it surprising that one of the consultancies I spoke to tackles this issue head on. Futerra produce its own ‘Greenwash Guide’ on how to recognise it and avoid it (Futerra, 2010). I asked a senior strategist there about its approach, being a corporate communications consultancy but so publicly critical of greenwash. Her response demonstrates how market position and creating a niche for services is important, but also indicates levels of disagreement about CSR:

That is a very interesting question and what you have hit upon is a very controversial issue for all of us, which is where does Futerra sit? And we have critics that say we are too corporate, and we have critics that say we are too NGO-like. (interview: Sverjensky, Futerra)

This often plays out in terms of who consultancies will do business with. Sverjensky described how Futerra has regular debates about where lines should be drawn, so client lists are limited. In contrast, BITC work with ‘all legal businesses’, including arms, gambling, tobacco and destructive industries, describing their aim as to encourage CSR from whatever position a company starts (interview: Subiela, BITC).

Professional 4: CSR is performed by individuals with good ethics and gives a ‘moral’ identity

This final claim recognised within professional discussions of CSR helps to form professional identity, but also helps sell the expert version of CSR to individuals in corporations. In terms of working in CSR, many interviewees discussed job satisfaction. For example, Stephen Timms (MP) described his experience of being CSR Minister:

When Gordon Brown became prime minister [2007] I was in the cabinet at that stage..., Gordon decided not to put me back in the cabinet and I think as a sort of consolation prize he wanted to give me a job that he thought I

⁶⁴ Final contenders were Dow Chemical, BP, and ‘winner’ Rio Tinto, see <http://www.greenwashgold.org>.

would enjoy, so he said I want you to go back and do CSR, at what by that time was called BERR...I loved it, absolutely loved it.

Many of the CSR professionals I spoke to had been disillusioned in previous careers and so moved to CSR as they wanted to ‘make a difference’. For others it offered the opportunity to unite passions, such as Steele (Improvise) who explained in interview how his jazz playing inspired his corporate responsibility consultancy to be able to respond and innovate according to circumstance. Younger people I interviewed had often made huge personal sacrifices to pursue this, by taking on unpaid internships to get the CSR experience now required in the profession’s competitive market. There was a sense that your reward is the potential to do good. Indeed, one of the most work-related discussions on some CSR lists concerned unpaid internships. The most aggressive exchanges observed concerned whether the group should ban adverts for unpaid internships, seeing them as bad examples of CSR when professional networks should be leading by example.⁶⁵ It was a recurrent debate as the adverts kept coming. For example, Beth Murray (Coethica, interview) had worked several internships saw this as a necessary part of getting the experience and connections needed. This relates to the rise of ‘ethical careers’ previously discussed:

You know very bright young people, of course they want to do well in their careers and be well paid and so on, but they also want to do something that they would regard as socially valuable... That is a very powerful driver. (interview: Timms, MP)

However, Visser (CSR International, interview) warned that as CSR becomes more of a structured career path, by only employing those with formal CSR qualifications, companies might miss out on the ‘missionary zeal’ of those in it for their passion.

Activist

Activism in the area of CSR is often assumed to mean anti-corporate campaigning. For example, Soule's (2009) history of anti-corporate activism in the United States is titled 'Contention and corporate social responsibility', but the book provides little discussion about how CSR is used by activists and it is only referred to sparingly. I found activist

⁶⁵ This was claimed to be exploitation as voluntary, but others claimed training and mentoring were part of the reward. It was interesting to note that an LSE Student Union campaign against unpaid internships resulted in the Careers office no longer advertising them.

discourses of CSR to be more nuanced. Amongst those working to improve corporate behaviour there is no unified position on what CSR should be. Approaches range from rejecting the concept outright in favour of enforceable laws, to encouraging deeper and better engagement with CSR. Furthermore, distinctions between types of activists are also problematic. For example, Merk (interview: CCC) questioned my differentiating between NGO groups and trade unions, as the CCC is made up of many members including unions. Also, it was pointed out that activism can come from within corporations and from CSR professionals, as well as from campaigning groups:

I guess also what you shouldn't ignore is that activists do exist within companies as well...they are the ones who do struggle the most to survive in a corporate environment, because they rock the boat and nobody likes that. They ask the awkward questions and a lot of them do end up dropping out. And either they join an NGO or start a small consultancy, or they go and study. And so a proportion of CSR professionals, whether inside a company or as consultants, do see themselves as activists. But what they have to do and what they learn to do often is to translate their deep and sometimes hidden passion into a language or a package that will be understood and taken up as acceptable. So they became CSR or sustainability champions, but often very frustrated activists. (interview: Visser, CSR International)

Despite this complexity, key messages were derived from activist discussion of CSR. These are presented briefly here, but also feed into debate on timing in the next section.

Activist 1: CSR demonstrates the failure of voluntarism and the need for regulation

Central to activist visions of CSR is the need for corporations to be held directly accountable for the responsibilities they are seen to have. Many found the terminology of CSR objectionable because of this, and preferred the term ‘corporate accountability’; this was the official line of WoW, CORE, and People and Planet, for example:

It is about controlling and regulating them, not asking them to do nice stuff. (interview: Cranshaw, People and Planet)

Self-regulatory and voluntary schemes were often criticised as ‘toothless’ (interview: Crosser, CORE), and effort put into highlighting when these fail strengthens the case for legislation. The central argument is that commitment to voluntary CSR will always be limited by its impact on profit. This was exemplified in a CSR Thursday lunch advertised by CSR Chicks in May 2011: ‘Human Rights? Fine... but how do they help a company make a profit?’.

CORE and its counterparts in Europe, the European Coalition for Corporate Justice (ECCJ) work specifically to improve legal redress for those impacted by corporate activity, including workers.⁶⁶ Coordinator Haigh (APPGICR) told me how they are working together with CORE on amendments to the Legal Aid Bill as these might prevent cases being brought against corporations if victims, including workers, have no funding to prosecute the corporation. A long-term campaign for a Groceries Code Adjudicator Bill is also relevant to workers' rights and comes up in two of the case studies. This aims to hold UK supermarkets to account for the operations of businesses contributing to their supply chains, whether in the UK or overseas (see: UK Parliament, 2012).⁶⁷ There is also pressure for this type of mechanism to be adopted at a European level, with Traidcraft and others promoting regulation to ensure responsibility in food supply chains no matter how transnational these are (Stefanelli & Marsden, 2012). This version of CSR then involves hard legislation or at least a movement away from voluntarism. Whether or not this is CSR matters less than how CSR is being used by activists to promote campaigns and to raise questions:

I think it is unlikely that CSR, that label and that discipline if you want to call it that, will be the vehicle, because the transformation we need is far more fundamental... There is no way we will get to the scalable solutions we need without legislation playing a much bigger role, and then the question becomes is it CSR anymore, and probably not but I don't care. (interview: Visser, CSR International)

Activist 2: CSR can be a tool for engagement and leverage

A degree of pragmatism is evident in some activist approaches to CSR, recognising legislation as 'the long game' (interview: Worth, WoW). This can involve activists using CSR as leverage to enter discussions with corporations, to get a place at the table, so they can to influence policy and practice. This can take many forms. A forum for such engagement is Transparency International's annual International Conference on CSR, in its fifth year, which brings together CSR experts, corporate leaders and NGOs.⁶⁸ Other initiatives can involve activists with corporate CSR through informal

⁶⁶ CORE has a wide range of NGO members, as well as academic groups, trade unions, faith-based organisations and some businesses. It originally focused on improving the Companies Bill 2006 when in its drafting stage, particularly so social reporting and transparency would be legally required.

⁶⁷ The Adjudicator would oversee the Groceries Supplier Code of Conduct, but debate continues over who can complain and what penalties can be imposed (interviews Crosser, CORE, and Worth, WoW).

⁶⁸ The latest took place in Berlin, 5-7 October 2012.

See www.transparency.org/news/event/5th_international_conference_on_corporate_social_responsibility

relationships, consultancy work or actual partnership, with those willing to take part shifting:

From our point of view it is interesting to see some of the partnerships being built with some businesses and I see an evolution there, while some of the most active organisations such as Greenpeace would not have touched business with a stick 5-10 years ago, and now they understand that they can help their own cause by working with certain businesses. (interview: Subiela, BITC)

However, some interviewees criticised multi-stakeholder initiatives as ‘too timid’ with ‘too much corporate input’ (interview: Cranshaw, People and Planet). War on Want had pulled out of the tripartite Ethical Trading Initiative (ETI) - involving corporations, trade unions and NGOs - for this reason. Klier (WoW) spoke of their frustration at the lack of progress, and as corporations used such memberships as a badge for publicity. This tension from whether NGOs should engage with corporate agendas of CSR is seen to play out particularly in the PlayFair 2012 and flower cases, with differing approaches taken. There is clearly a growing market for these types of engagements in the name of CSR, such as the Responsible Business Show initiative to ‘match’ corporations with NGOs. This is also a role some specialist CSR consultancies offer, and NGOs themselves share contacts and experience on how to make best use of partnerships, as well as the guidelines and multi-stakeholder initiatives that come from them.⁶⁹

Activist 3: CSR greenwash provides ammunition for personal and corporate embarrassment

Whether activists work in some way with corporations on their CSR or not, a frequent theme of discussion about CSR was its potential as a target. Corporate claims about responsibilities and commitments provide opportunity to question and disprove them. Publicising these claims as greenwash and presenting clear evidence of CSR code violations, pressurises companies to change behaviour and shifts the balance of power in negotiations, as well as providing evidence of the failure of voluntarism. Efforts to embarrass corporations or even the individuals within them can make CSR a useful tool, and in the case study research this was particularly so for companies which have invested heavily in their CSR profile, such as Burberry.

⁶⁹ For example, CORE offered a one day event free of charge to any activist organisation that might be able to use the revised OECD guidelines in their work to hold corporations to account.

Watchdogs have been monitoring CSR throughout its rise, whether focused on particular issues, companies, or the industry as a whole. An example is the Corporate Watch 2006 report 'What is wrong with corporate social responsibility?' This sets out arguments against CSR, in terms of corporate benefits, the legitimacy and access CSR provides companies with, and the role of corporate power (Corporate Watch, 2006). Activists monitoring specific CSR initiatives include Global Compact Critics and OECD Watch, offering regular critiques of developments.

For trade unionist Szymonek (Solidarnosc, interview), CSR means an opportunity to publicly question specific cases of corporate irresponsibility. She told how some campaigns had been most successful when they targeted a company's CSR, even when other avenues were open such as existing International Framework Agreements (IFA) between the company and the trade union. An example given was that of Ikea, when there was a problem with contracts for security staff. Campaigners embarrassed the company into changing its policy by taking out newspaper adverts criticising the discrepancy between Ikea's claimed CSR and its treatment of workers. This resulted in near immediate change of policy. In common with some other activists, she told how when mounting a campaign relating to a specific company she would 'check whether a company has a CSR policy and how it is implemented and communicated' (interview: Szymonek, Solidarnosc).

Research by interviewee Doug Miller (Northumbria University) into the fatal fire at the Spectrum Sweater Factory in Bangladesh showed that appealing to the CSR of companies who had contracts with the factory, brought unprecedented response by some and limited success in the form of a relief scheme; however whether this could be replicated was questioned (Miller, 2012). At a more personal level, Cranshaw (People and Planet, interview) told of his surprise at the willingness of top executives to meet with him when a student boycott of Fruit of the Loom was organised, over labour issues in outsourcing factories. Cranshaw and a group of students met the European Chief Executive, who was keen to defend his own ethics and stance on labour abuses:

He also said, which really made my jaw drop, that 'I used to be a union leader you know, I've brought my men out on strike before' and we were just kind of shocked. And one of the students said to me after that she had felt like saying 'what happened?' ... We told them what we were going to do, and they completely caved in in the end. They reopened the whole factory, they

reemployed all the workers who were out of work, they allowed the union to get organised throughout the country. It was fantastic, yes.

I was surprised to find an excellent example of CSR greenwash exposure came from a consultant, Sverjensky (Futerra), rather than an activist group. In a personal capacity she runs the ‘Eco-gems’ blog collecting examples of the worst greenwash. She explained she needs this outlet when ‘everyday you are seeing the same businesses get away with the most unbelievable things’.⁷⁰ Her response to the BP oil spill and knowledge of its CSR claims, motivated her to collaborate on the bpgulfcsr.com website. This presents a timeline of 10 years of BP CSR awards comparing it to BP's ‘irresponsible activities’ during the same time. Each box reveals the details when scrolled over (see Figure 15). A second presentation focuses on the BP Deepwater Horizon oil spill in April 2010, claiming this must be ‘a wakeup call for the CSR community’. It highlights defensive tactics used by BP and the perceived shallowness of CSR expert commentaries, some of which continued to praise and reward the CSR achievements of BP.

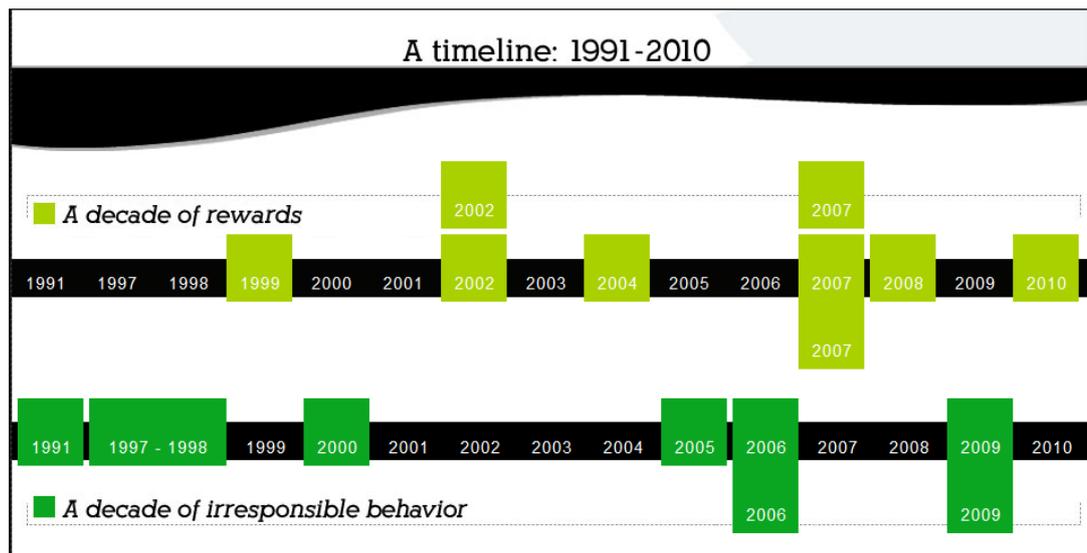


Figure 15: Timeline comparing BP's CSR achievements with ‘irresponsible behaviour’ (bpgulfcsr.com)

I was interested in any conflict of interest with Sverjensky’s work at the communications company, but she saw it as completely separate and positioned Futerra as having quite a radical approach anyway. However her activism had resulted in a call from the head of CSR at Monsanto. This was described as ‘strange’ and ‘intimidating’, full of ‘misinformation’ and giving the impression ‘we are watching you’ (interview: Sverjensky, Futerra). Since our interview the timeline has been (temporarily?) taken down.

⁷⁰ This can be found at: <http://ecogems.blogspot.co.uk>.

Activist 4: CSR can be a tool to question corporate-political power relations in global capitalism

As discussed in Chapter 1, features of globalisation which facilitate the spread of capitalism can also facilitate those questioning it. Figure 16 captures the potential of critique and solidarity shared in the created spaces and networks. It is the transnational nature of social movements and the response to exploitation they can mobilise, that means their power is taken seriously. Indeed, Miller (Northumbria University, interview) saw CSR itself growing out of outsourcing policies and the decline of organised labour and collective bargaining, which makes new alliances and forms of unionism essential for challenging exploitative global labour market practices. Merk (2009: 607-612) suggests that in an ‘era of CSR’ being able to ‘jump scale and bridge space’ is vital for transnational labour struggles, offering the urgent appeals systems of CCC as an example. Merk (CCC, interview) also spoke of the role civil society groups can play in facilitating the dialogues and agreements between corporations, formal unions and governments. This not only shows the importance of civil society in debates regarding responsibility but also how relations of power can shift.



Figure 16: Drama criticising World Bank and networking at WSF, Mumbai 2004

In sum, although what can be considered activist approaches to CSR are divergent, their impact can make space for questioning fundamental issues of power within capitalist globalisation. CSR can be seen as an opportunity to engage different actors, from government, consumers, workers, investors and corporations in dialogue over who is responsible for corporate impact and, further, how socially responsible the current system is. The next section elaborates on this by considering the relationship between CSR and debate about notions of responsibility in global capitalism, in which activist agendas play a large part.

3.3 Timing: CSR and the questioning of ‘responsible’ capitalism

The timing of all this activity and contestation over CSR is significant. Why has so much effort been put into these competing versions of CSR, and why has CSR been established as a profession now? This is particularly interesting given the occurrence of the global financial crisis during the key decade of CSR’s rise (Sun, Stewart, & Pollard, 2010). If CSR was only an ‘add-on’ and not essential to business, this would surely have been the moment of its demise. Instead, many corporations are investing heavily in CSR initiatives and communication of them, civil society is partnering with corporations in their CSR efforts, and the professional ranks of the CSR industry swell.

Capitalism has of course always had its critics, but globalising processes have spread its logic transnationally, and serious corporate interest in CSR has coincided with unease at the dominance of TNCs, as discussed in Chapter 1. Corporate scandals have long been associated with calls for business to be more responsible (Oliviero & Simmons, 2002; Rajak, 2011a), however high profile cases and prosecutions have highlighted the scale and transnational nature of corporate activity, as well as difficulties in holding TNCs accountable (Burchell & Cook, 2006: 121).⁷¹ The financial crisis and these scandals are often framed as individual aberrations rather than recognised as an integral part of the current global system (Sklair in Sprague, 2009: 502-503). However the concurrent rise of alterglobalisation movements,⁷² which have particularly gathered pace since the ‘battle in Seattle’ WTO protests in 1999, critique corporate power by questioning the actual system of capitalism that fuels them. The social forum movement, particularly the World Social Forum (WSF), is often referenced as exemplifying the spaces for debate being created by this questioning of capitalism (Glasius & Timms, 2005). Particularly in relation to debates about employment in global capitalism, the 2004 WSF in Mumbai was the first to have a significant focus on work; involving seminars, panels, workshops and marches, coordinated under the banner of ‘Labour at the WSF’ (Waterman & Timms, 2004: 196).

⁷¹ Notable cases have involved human rights abuse, environmental destruction, and large-scale financial crimes, such as the McLibel trial, Transfigura, the BP oil spill, Shell in Nigeria and Enron.

⁷² Descriptions vary, including anti-globalisation, anti-capitalism, anti-corporate and global social justice. The disparate causes within need to be acknowledged, but a common feature is criticism of the current capitalist system and the desire for an alternative. For discussion of terminology, see Pleyers (2010: 6-7).



Figure 17: Labour at the WSF 2004 Mumbai, poster of speaker and event

I attended many of these events and the participation of the ILO and global trade unions, including the ICFTU, demonstrated their desire to be part of this global civil society arena to ensure labour issues are prioritised. This was evident in the professionally-styled labelling and promotion of events (see Figure 17), in contrast to the makeshift nature of the forum as a whole.⁷³ Addressing an audience of 8000, the Secretary General of the ICFTU stressed the importance of working together for global justice:

The trade unions are here, want to be here and have everything to gain from working with civil society who share the same values and visions... The unions are internationalists by instinct and practice.

Sharon McClenaghan (Christian Aid) saw these linkages between labour activists and wider civil society as vital. As Senior Private Sector Advisor she took part in a session on corporate accountability at the WSF in Porto Alegre, Brazil (2003) and told me how on joining Christian Aid she had been surprised and pleased by how strong a line it took, particularly regarding business in developing countries. When participants at the Mumbai WSF told me of their motivation to attend, there was a sense of momentum and optimism that they were taking part in a global debate and together could change things, develop alternatives and make their voices heard:

We support trade union activities and work on issues of unemployment and migration in India, but we're part of a worldwide organisation which allows us to coordinate the things we do much wider. (interview: Periera, International Young Christian Workers)

⁷³ Many venues were temporary tents with limited power, to promote access and less impact on resources.

For us the World Social Forum is an opportunity to pull together to be able to fight imperialist globalisation and poverty together. (interview: Chandra, New International Initiative)



Figure 18: Union presence at WSF spaces of encounter

However, debates about whether the practices and system of global capitalism is fair for workers and others are not just being held within activist circles. Wider recognition of the problems to be addressed is evident in political arenas, through the attempts to regulate TNC activity discussed, and in more public spaces. This has involved the media, such as in debates on possibilities for a ‘caring capitalism’ and the need for ‘ethical living’ (see for example The Guardian, 2012a, 2012b); cultural spaces of literature, film, music, and comedy (for example Bakan, 2004; Capitalism: A Love Story from Michael Moore; the music of Billy Bragg; and the comedy of Mark Thomas and Josie Long); think tank and political discussion (for example the public interest report on the potential of ‘responsible capitalism’: Kippin, Hauf, & Shafique, 2012); and the corporations and CSR industry (for example the Lifeworth consultancy’s annual review of CSR focused on ‘Capitalism in Question’: Bendell, et al., 2010). CSR can be seen as a means for promoting such debates, but also as a response to them.

Being seen as leaders in this debate can benefit corporations, as discussed, and CSR professionals in terms of competitive advantage. For example, the radical positioning of consultancy Futerra was underlined by its participation at the Glastonbury music festival and European Social Forum in London, when they offered participants the opportunity to enter a ‘confessional’ to admit their ‘sins’ and commit to an ethical and sustainable lifestyle.



Figure 19: Futerra ‘Confession Box’ at the European Social Forum

An evolving example is Royal Dutch Shell's efforts to engage the public in debate about responsibility and sustainability, to position itself as open and cutting edge. Their first CSR type report, 'Principles and profit – does there have to be a choice?' is often referenced as a key moment for corporate-public engagement in this area. This included a 'Tell Shell' postcard initiative and began by explaining (in handwritten text):

We care what you think about us... this report is part of a dialogue and we will continue to seek your views (Shell, 1998).⁷⁴

In common with most public-facing TNCs, Shell uses social media for such purposes, currently having Facebook, YouTube, Twitter and Flickr accounts. These were targeted by activists in 2012 to criticise irresponsibility, when Greenpeace and the Yes Men made a fake Shell website and pretended Shell was the victim of campaigners posting accusatory photos regarding its Arctic drilling (Forbes, 2012).⁷⁵ Those taken in believed it a PR disaster (which it was but orchestrated), especially as a fake film of a press conference was included where oil accidentally spilled from a model. The fake was tweeted repeatedly (see Figure 20).⁷⁶



Figure 20: Campaign against Shell in the Arctic (arcticready.com)

⁷⁴ For further analysis see Sklair (2001: 185-191).

⁷⁵ The convincing site includes a chance to vote for animals Shell will try to avoid 'harassing' and a children's section explaining why it is good for ice to melt in terms of the toys they will be able to have.

⁷⁶ Others included an oilrig, captioned 'Turn on the power, it's time to melt some ice. Let's go'; a bird, 'Birds are like sponges... for oil. Let's go'; and an arctic fox, 'You can't run your SUV on cute. Let's go'.

So the professionalisation of CSR has taken place at a time of instant communications and in the context of global inequality, when the earth faces environmental crisis and when capitalism driving consumerism is globalising. These factors are difficult to deny, but CSR can provide an opportunity for corporations to demonstrate engagement with the issues on their own terms, promoting the corporate agenda of CSR discussed. In this way, corporations have become CSR's biggest cheerleaders. As Rajak puts it. 'the moral high-ground once occupied by NGOs has been usurped, so to speak, by the former targets of their campaigns' (2011a: 8). Greenham (nef, interview) suggested that CSR corporations might be doing some good things, but that this will not address the 'fundamental questions'. He spoke of his experiences studying sustainability:

You are absolutely not allowed to challenge the primacy of consumption as that is what our modern current system rests on. And you actually can't suggest that there are ecological limits to this consumption, because if you do that, then all of a sudden you are forced to have this debate about equity... a conversation that they absolutely want to avoid at all costs.

The tactics used to direct and control debate are elaborate. Corporate 'astroturfing' refers to the practice whereby corporate initiated groups present themselves as grassroots campaigns, to influence agendas and even restrict potential legal sanctions by appearing to sue themselves (see for example Deal & Doroshov, 2003). In a similar vein, Shamir (2004:680-685) discusses the role of what he terms MaNGOs (Market-orientated NGOs). These are corporate sponsored or orientated NGOs aiming to promote corporate visions of CSR, such as the BITC. Through such initiatives, and the professionalisation of CSR and lobbying practices, the powerful influence of corporate voices is understandable. What is interesting, though, is that CSR can also provide activists with opportunities to question corporate claims and practices. Critique of the current system continues and takes new forms.

The Occupy movement has been a fascinating development in relation to this. Having joined some of the initial events at the St Paul's camp in London, it was clear to me that corporate accountability and power were high on the agenda, even if formal agendas are avoided in this horizontally-styled movement (See Figure 21).



Figure 21: Occupy camp, daily notices and cube of wealth inequality ratios from anti-austerity march

Interviewees picked up on this too, with one seeing the debate around inequality between the 1% and 99% having implications for CSR within a company as well as in relation to capitalism generally:

The other thing on employees, the lost issue which CSR is just starting to pick up on is the intra-corporate equity...the income gaps that exist within companies, so the fairness or lack of fairness within companies. So you know we spent 50 years pointing the spotlight on how the gap between rich and poor countries is terrible and getting wider and that is true. But too many companies and even their critics have conveniently forgotten that that gap is getting wider within the companies, and this is especially in developed countries. (interview: Visser, CSR International)⁷⁷

As with the social forums, the Occupy movement might mainly involve activist circles but its transnational nature and publicity efforts have provoked wider public debate. Issues of corporate power and global inequality have been brought to the fore, even if in a limited way, and some claim this as part of the labour movement ‘in the broadest sense’ (Lewis & Luce, 2012: 43). Protests against welfare cuts and austerity measures resulting from the crisis have also been framed in terms of the majority having to suffer for the irresponsibility of corporate activity, creating an environment where discussion of regulatory reform has had to be public, even if serious change is yet to be seen (see discussions Sun, et al., 2010). Such protests regularly target corporate symbols of wealth and establishment, illustrated in Figure 22 showing the luxury department store Fortnum and Mason being occupied and De Beers jewellers defaced.

⁷⁷ Pay inequalities in the public sector were recently investigated for the Government by Hutton (2011).



Figure 22: Occupation and protest during anti-cuts march, London 2011

These may be blunt (and illegal) manifestations of critiques of globalising capitalism, but as part of a wider movement for a different system, they engage with issues of corporate responsibility. The case study research I turn to next investigated how mobilising CSR can help advance campaigns to change corporate practices in relation to labour relations. As such, they demonstrate the potential for activist agendas of CSR.

Chapter conclusions

CSR is a field of practice and discourse that merits analysis. The argument made in this chapter is that, rather than being a worthless term due to overuse, CSR is actually highly valuable to those trying to influence ideas about responsibility, good practice, and regulation in the global economy. These voices are not only corporate. Political agendas can support the corporate version of self-regulation, but CSR also provides an opportunity for states responding to economic and social pressures, and for negotiating benefits from business for this. Professional agendas protect the newly forming territory and identity of a CSR profession, whilst also creating a marketplace for selling CSR industry wares based around the voluntary and private regulatory model of responsibility. Finally, activists engage with CSR for the opportunities it can provide for furthering their cause, whether by providing evidence to disprove the worth of voluntarism or by getting them a place at the negotiating table.

Each category of CSR has been linked to issues of work, and the different ways CSR is framed has implications for how employment relations are understood. ‘Framing’ can determine how events, behaviours and expectations are perceived, interpreted and labelled (Goffman, 1975), and so the categories presented here are helpful for analysing the role of CSR in the case studies. The framing concept is then returned to in Chapter 7, where comparisons and implications are discussed. All this activity and effort over defining and engaging in CSR has gathered momentum in a context of growing corporate power and spread. Debate that CSR could provide space for is limited in scope by the version of CSR pushed most aggressively, currently the corporate self-regulatory model.

The discourse frames presented in this chapter are artificially created and of course overlap in some ways, just as individuals engaged in CSR cannot be perfectly categorised into discrete groups. However, the messages promoted by each help us to understand how the CSR remit is being defined and contested. This directly relates to how socially responsible employment is being set and contested. The key themes that emerged for each category indicate the value that promoting CSR in certain ways has for different groups. The resulting consequences for others, including workers, ensure battles over CSR continue to play out. In the next three chapters I focus on the campaign case studies, investigating how these CSR agendas are mobilised in real-life disputes over responsibility for conditions of work.

CHAPTER 4

FACTORY-FOCUSED CAMPAIGNING: KEEP BURBERRY BRITISH

On 30 March 2007 a clothing factory in Treorchy, Wales, was shut down. Workers were joined by family, friends and supporters, as well as a contingent of world media, as they marched from the factory gates through the town on one last journey together. Union banners, a jazz band and local male voice choirs created a type of carnival atmosphere, but this was more funeral than festival, marking the loss of the area's biggest employer and the end of a hard-fought battle to save it. Tears, anger and disbelief were all reported from that day, not only for the personal tragedy that redundancy brings, but for the future of the community and others like it when corporate interests and globalisation are perceived to win out, no matter the consequences. There was though, also an element of pride and dignity in narratives told. The workers had not just accepted the fate delivered down to them from the global headquarters 'on-high', but had shocked them by fighting back and by drawing worldwide attention to what was happening to them. They had made the company, Burberry, defend itself, and as a result had got recognition, as well as better compensation for themselves and their community. So the day of the closure was part celebration and part sadness, like most rites of death.

Two years later, I was in the home of Glynis,⁷⁸ a 'stone's throw' from the ex-Burberry factory where she had worked for over 25 years. She showed me how you could see it from her kitchen. A sense of bitterness and betrayal was still palpable, and her situation typical of many after the closure, as she had only been able to find temporary, part time and unskilled work since. Glynis had been a Shop Steward when the announcement came, and her role in the campaign and continued media interest still astonishes her. She spoke candidly about her anger, the unfairness, arrogance and greed, that arose as key themes in the research, but what surprised me was the link Glynis made between what happened to her a few streets away and the consequences for workers globally. She spoke with concern about the poor working conditions in Chinese factories, about

⁷⁸ As noted in Chapter 2, all ex-Burberry workers interviewed have been given pseudonyms.

how some of them had to sleep on shelves, and asked where Burberry's social responsibility is out there.

Indeed, a reason the campaign was able to appeal beyond the local community was the case it built for this closure exemplifying all the campaign considered was wrong with corporate globalisation. The prioritising of profit at the expense of all other considerations, a lack of loyalty to workers and community due to the 'footloose' nature of production, the exploitation of the poor worldwide, and hiding behind complex supply chains and insincere glossy corporate commitments, were all themes drawn on by campaigners. In this way the case illustrates the activist agendas of CSR discussed in the previous chapter. Keep Burberry British successfully connected to widespread concerns about corporate power and globalisation, directly challenging the CSR claims made by Burberry, but also questioning how socially responsible the trend of global outsourcing is. They created a David and Goliath scenario through their campaign, but importantly fostered a sense that this was a small example of a big problem, so they must stand up to stop it, not just for themselves, but for everyone.

As the first case study, the Keep Burberry British campaign provided an interesting opportunity to investigate a dispute between the workers at one factory and the corporation which employed them. My focus was not on the case as an example of a factory closure or industrial dispute, although it involved both of these.⁷⁹ Instead I was interested specifically in how the concept of CSR was mobilised in campaign strategies, corporate responses and eventual outcomes. It was found that Keep Burberry British was able to access a transnational audience and to draw on popular concerns about globalisation and corporate power at local, regional, national and transnational levels. Campaigners and politicians were able to discuss Burberry's responsibilities to workers in terms of CSR, and used Burberry's CSR profile to leverage improved outcomes. Campaigners also mobilised a language of corporate social *irresponsibility* (CSI).

Presenting the responsibilities of Burberry in terms of CSR had two main consequences. Firstly, the campaign drew on Burberry's own definitions of its responsibilities in its CSR policies to question the closure, the treatment of workers, and the proposed

⁷⁹ As such, it can be viewed as part of the decline of UK manufacturing and the changing economy of work resulting from intensified and universalised competition (McGovern et al 2007).

outsourcing strategy. Outcomes included improved compensation packages for workers and the local community, and campaigners claimed to have influenced the global CSR and HR strategies employed by Burberry since. Secondly, the campaign was able to highlight the limitations of such voluntary approaches to responsibilities, providing evidence and experiences useful to on-going campaigns for labour rights and regulation.

This is a transnational case, as although centred on one factory, the solidarity, protests and media interest achieved, the issues contested, and Burberry's operations and strategies, all had transnational dimensions. Section 4.1 explains my data sources and sets out important details about the field site and campaign context. As this case study deals with a campaign that has already finished, it has been possible and useful to develop a chronology of the main events. This is presented in Appendix 7, showing the myriad elements to the story and how campaigners utilised overlapping strategies. Section 4.2 focuses on how Burberry's CSR profile was promoted by the corporation and targeted by activists, raising particular questions about where limits to responsibilities lie. Section 4.3 then analyses the language of CSI mobilised, and Section 4.4 focuses on the impact of CSR targeting on campaign outcomes.

4.1 Researching the Rhondda

I had followed coverage of the campaign as it happened in 2006 and 2007. Although during my interruption, I collected a portfolio about events because of its relevance. When I restarted the thesis and reviewed the research plan, the campaign was a prime candidate for my adaptation to a case study approach. Here I explain how I did this.

Records and interviews

Using the documents I already had as a starting point, additional texts were collected systematically to provide a more complete portfolio and to confirm the appropriateness of the campaign as a case study. Appendix 3a details the data sources used and their format. All materials directly relevant to the campaign were sought. This was possible as the campaign lasted for a specific period so data generated were finite. Publicly available sources included key websites, particularly those of the Keep Burberry British campaign, Burberry, the GMB trade union, and various media that covered the

campaign. It is acknowledged that media sources provide a very specific type of discourse (Richardson, 2007), but for this study the media analysis focused on how it was used by Burberry, campaigners and politicians to further their cause. Data also included images, film clips, and parliamentary documents.

I was also able to gain access to significant data outside the general public realm in four ways. Firstly, I established that a BBC reporter had made a Freedom of Information (FOI) request to the Welsh Assembly Government (WAG) in April 2007, for all materials relating to the Burberry factory closure. I applied for access to this material and was successful. This included internal memos, emails and letters between Ministers, Assembly Members (AMs), Burberry executives and trade union officials, and minutes of meetings held. Secondly, I was offered access to the official Keep Burberry British archive, held at Leighton Andrews' Welsh Assembly office. I spent two days researching this in the Member's Library. Despite some overlap with my existing data, additional material gave an insight into the campaign's internal organisation, including: handwritten drafts of press releases and strategy notes, letters and emails to and from celebrities and supporters, a petition, calculations and reports regarding productivity and the closure's impact, as well as campaign stickers, banners and photographs. Thirdly, I was offered access to the personal campaign archive of ex-Burberry worker, Glynis. This included documents collected or given during the campaign, press cuttings, photographs, letters and a poem. Finally, my research and interviewees identified several other sources I pursued, including documents for the Rhondda Trust and the script of the verbatim play written about the campaign, which provided further data and comparison with my own transcripts (Harris, 2007).⁸⁰ I continued to conduct regular searches for fresh materials throughout the project and occasionally found additional reports which reflected back on the campaign or reported development of the factory site or the Rhondda Trust. As a corpus these data sources ran into the hundreds, and together were able to offer a relatively complete set of texts.

⁸⁰ 'Burberry: A Welsh Campaign' was performed at Cardiff's Sherman Cymru Theatre on 12 and 19 April 2008. Harris' motivation was telling, 'I was interested in the responsibility that an employer has in such circumstances and what happens to the workers when the employer, which has been the bedrock of the community financial stability for years, moves away. There was also the aspect of moving jobs to other countries where labour costs are cheaper' (pers.comm: Harris, 12 May 2010).

To build on and explore the analysis further, interviews were conducted with individuals connected to the campaign. I was able to gain access to nearly all the key players in the campaign, and Appendix 3b presents details of the 16 research participants. Access was aided as I have a family base in the Rhondda, where most interviewees were based. As will be set out, this is a close-knit community so being able to draw on local knowledge and to stress area connections, helped to secure interviews as well as providing me with a base from which to conduct this fieldwork.⁸¹

I had been in contact with one of the central organisers during the campaign, AM Leighton Andrews and so I began by renewing this contact.⁸² He agreed to be interviewed at his constituency office in September 2009, and this successfully led to him taking the role of gatekeeper (Gilbert, 1993: 159-160). I was given details for other campaign organisers, including ex-Burberry workers, union officials, MP Chris Bryant, and Rhondda Trust trustee. This connection was particularly helpful in securing my interview with GMB trade unionist Mervyn Burnett, who was instrumental to the campaign. He offered significant details of official meetings and lasting consequences for GMB members in other places. David Taylor, Press Officer to AM Andrews, offered an insight into the practical workings of the campaign. Guy Clarke, the lawyer who set up and administers the Rhondda Trust⁸³ offered an understanding of the Trust and its on-going relationship with Burberry. He took my additional queries to Trustees meetings, providing useful follow up information and contacts to some beneficiaries.

I had to work hard to convince MP Bryant (Minister for EU)⁸⁴ and MP Dr Hywel Francis (Chair of the Welsh Select Committee), that it was worthwhile fitting me into their diaries.⁸⁵ I stressed my connection to AM Andrews, local links, and the unique contribution they could make. MP Bryant began by saying he unexpectedly only had 15 minutes, but we had an engaging interview of nearly 45 minutes. He was pleased to have his assistant know about the campaign and so covered events in a candid and detailed way. I knew MP Francis had a doctorate, so I drew on his understanding of the

⁸¹ Particularly so as I have a Northern English accent so these connections are not obvious.

⁸² Previous contact has come about as the campaign's transnational simultaneous protest was included in a chronology of events I coordinated for the Global Civil Society Yearbook (Timms, 2008).

⁸³ This Trust was secured as a legacy from Burberry, as will be discussed.

⁸⁴ Any status referred to relates to their post at the time of the interview unless otherwise stated.

⁸⁵ Diary commitments, travel plans and schedule changes prevented an agreed interview with Rhondda MEP Jill Evans.

difficulties of research. This was a longer interview than planned as we discussed details of Rhondda's industrial history, a specialism of his (Francis, 1984, 2009; Francis & Smith, 1980). A degree of diplomacy was needed when interviewing different political party members. The politicians mentioned above are Labour, but I was able to interview local Plaid Cymru AM Leanne Wood.⁸⁶ AM Andrews was not appropriate for this contact, but I had previously met her at a local fundraising event. She offered an alternative perspective from outside the official Labour-dominated campaign.

With each interview done, I was able to encourage other potential interviewees by stressing those who had already taken part. This was particularly important for securing interviews with ex-Burberry workers. They had been contacted by journalists during the campaign,⁸⁷ but seemed unsure about taking part in research, especially when trying to move on from redundancy. Through my gatekeeper and follow up I was able to secure a meeting with ex-worker and GMB Shop Steward, Glynis, at her Treorchy home. None of the other contacts given bore fruit, but I tracked down some of those interviewed in the press.⁸⁸ This led to an interview with Sarah, who requested we meet in a public house and with another ex-Burberry employee, Bethan. Although not ideal, this joint interview was an opportunity to observe the interaction between two ex-workers reflecting on the campaign as they reminded each other of events and their order. I am aware that their responses were likely to be impacted by the presence of the other.

Four other participants were less involved with the campaign, but I was keen to have a range of perspectives. Edward Mason is an expert on ethical investment as Secretary to the Church of England's Ethical Investment Advisory Group (EIAG), which responded to the closure as a Burberry shareholder. He was able to give an insight into decision-making processes for ethical investments, the approach taken to CSR, and EIAG's role when controversy relates to an investment like Burberry. Glynis put me in touch with Sian Weston, organiser of a Craft Council Funded project for ex-Burberry workers in Treorchy, and I was able to question Alan Harris about his play dramatising the campaign. He had personally interviewed key campaigners, so it was helpful to compare data. Similar themes and stories came up, however I was aware interviewees could have

⁸⁶ She has now been elected leader of Plaid Cymru, on 15 March 2012.

⁸⁷ I found that by the end this had become an annoyance due to the volume of media interested, with one reporting being pursued for interview even in the hairdressers (interview: ex-worker Bethan).

⁸⁸ As this is a relatively small area, misdirected letters were passed on by family members.

been influenced by their interviews with Harris and by having seen events dramatised.⁸⁹ Finally, I later became aware of another research project involving the Burberry closure being conducted by Jean Jenkins and Paul Blyton at Cardiff Business School. From an industrial relations perspective, this focused on worker motives during the campaign (2012b) and experiences of work and non-work since redundancy (2012a). Jenkins had taken part in campaign activities and ex-workers had been followed up in the years since. She was interested to hear of my work and to give feedback on a presentation of preliminary findings.⁹⁰ I was able to interview her as a result.

The interviews not conducted must also be mentioned. The way every potential interviewee responds to an invitation has implications for the research, particularly as regards their decision to share information or not (Feldman, et al., 2003: 33). Three main strategies were used to include Burberry and its representatives. The first involved targeting individuals at Burberry directly involved with the factory closure. The second involved contacting the departments and teams relevant to the company's CSR policies, and the third involved attempting to contact Burberry's PR company, the Brunswick Group. Contact was attempted over several months by different means,⁹¹ and met by total silence, without even acknowledgement. This lack of response from all individuals and departments might be seen as telling in respect of the 'silence of their discourse' (Tonkiss, 2004: 379).

It became clear that Burberry had been very reluctant to discuss the closure both during and after the Keep Burberry British campaign. In particular, they did everything possible to avoid engaging with the 'Globalisation and Wales' Parliamentary investigation and only did so when threatened with being held in contempt. It was also the experience of playwright Harris that requests for input remained unanswered. His increasingly pleading letters formed part of his play about the campaign, (Harris, 2007: 14, 21 and 39). This reassured me that it had been unlikely Burberry would discuss the case with me, when they tried so hard to distance themselves from it at the time. I had

⁸⁹ He told me that it was 'quite an emotional experience for some of the people who saw themselves on stage and brought home exactly what they had gone through' (pers.comm: Harris, 12 May 2010).

⁹⁰ This was presented at the 50th Anniversary Conference for the British Journal of Industrial Relations, 12-13 December 2011 at LSE, and was attended by another of my interviewees (for the PlayFair 2012 case), Doug Miller. I also took the opportunity to present findings from this case to the annual conference of the Welsh Institute of Social & Economic Research, Data & Methods (WISERD), 'Changing Wales: Social, Economic and Political Perspectives' in Swansea on 28-29 June 2011.

⁹¹ Some letters were even hand delivered to the Burberry headquarters to be certain they were received.

planned for this, and expected that any interview would not have offered much more than the official line set out in Burberry's reports and press releases. Therefore it was felt that these, together with the rare press interviews with company representatives conducted during the campaign, and their written evidence and appearance before the Welsh Select Committee, presented sufficient data for the research goals.

Field site: The Rhondda as an iconic brand

As set out at the beginning of this thesis, time and place are often seen as key to defining societal expectations of business, in a context of bounded cultural values. A central aim is to understand how such expectations are defined and discussed in a context of transnational economic processes and organisation. This is not to say that place and culture are no longer of consequence. Rather, locations are multiple and their relationships complex, especially in defining responsibilities.

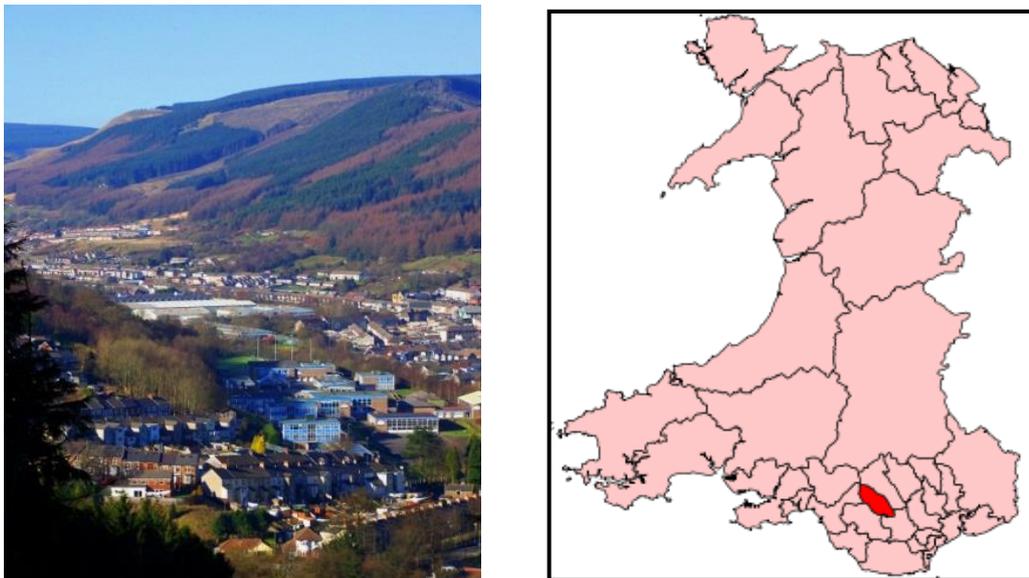


Figure 23: Burberry factory (middle) in valley setting of Treorchy, Rhondda © Ian Price and Rhondda Valley within Wales (Wikipedia, 2010)

Place is an important theme within this case study, as labour geographies often are (Herod, 2001). Firstly, this worked in terms of the distinctiveness of the factory location in the Rhondda, its industrial and political heritage, and how these are reflected in current community relations. Secondly, place was important in terms of the transnational reach of the campaign and of Burberry's 'global' employment and CSR strategies. Also important was the contradiction of Burberry as a global brand based on an identity of 'Britishness'. It is useful therefore to set out the context of the field site.

The distinctive character of the Rhondda as a place and community directly influenced how the campaign was run, the expectations workers and the community had of Burberry's responsibilities, and the outcomes gained. The Rhondda Valley is in south Wales, made up of two valleys, Rhondda Fawr and Rhondda Fach, with Treorchy in the former. This is 22 miles from the Welsh capital of Cardiff, connected by a main road and rail route through the valley; it is the major populated area and is quite self-contained. Such spatial issues can be seen as important for motivations and influences on community based campaigns (Soja, 2010). The former Burberry factory lies in the northern part of Treorchy and is made up of several large buildings, one of the most distinctive features in the townscape (see Figure 23).

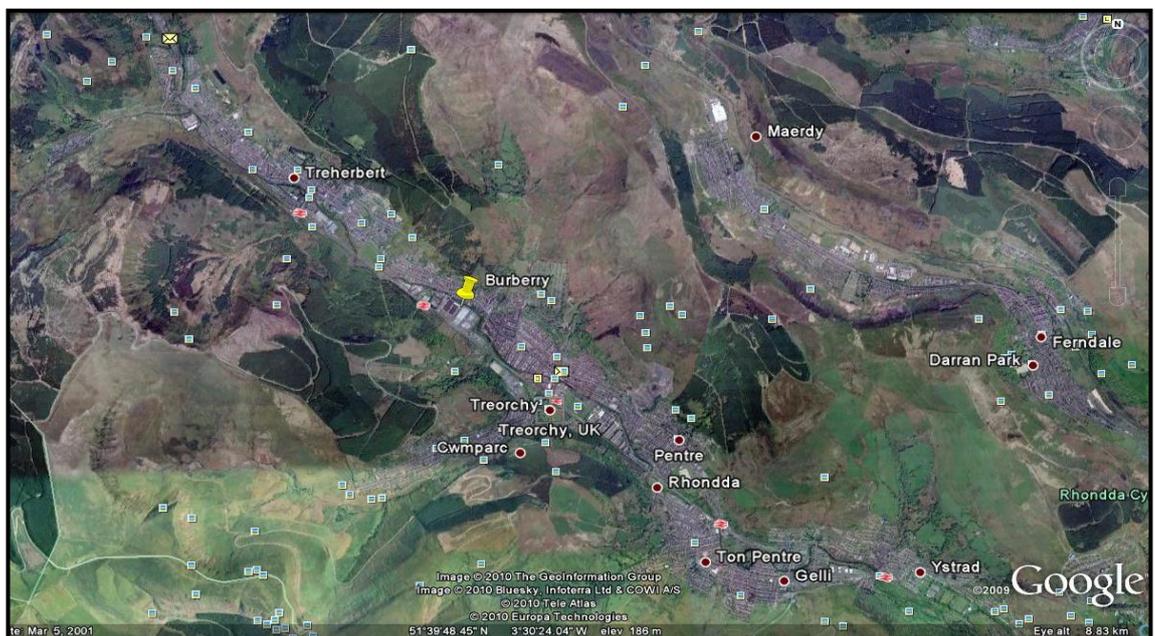


Figure 24: View of Burberry factory within Rhondda © Google Earth 2010 (pin added)

Many of the former workers lived in the town. This is an area that grew from coal mining, so has a significant and particular industrial past (Hopkins, 1974: ch 3-5). Connections to this were made throughout the campaign, for example:

For us, it feels like another pit closure. Uniquely amongst UK coal fields, south Wales, including Rhondda, hasn't yet recovered from the great pit closure program. (FOI Disclosure Log 1362, 2006-7: email from AM Leanne Wood to Enterprise Minister)

This industrial past continues to inform the current political context. A local woman commented in one press report that 'it used to be known as Little Moscow around here' (Cadwalladr, 2007). At the time of the campaign, the Welsh Assembly Government

(WAG) had been in operation for seven years, with Rhondda politicians involved in Keep Burberry British playing a significant role in the ‘Yes’ campaign for a devolved Welsh Assembly (interview with Francis MP; Andrews, 1999). Labour were in majority both in the WAG and locally in Treorchy.

The Treorchy factory was built as part of a government scheme for deprived areas between WWI and WWII, which stresses the significant political and economic role it played in the area for nearly 70 years since 1937. The area has been described as ‘yesterday’s China’ because of the sudden population increase from 2,000 to 150,000 when the 52 coal mines became active (Cadwalladr, 2007). However decline was also dramatic, as pit closures and lengthy strikes brought poverty (Francis & Smith, 1980). At the time Burberry announced the factory closure in 2006, Rhondda was struggling still from the final round of pit closures. There was continued decline in manufacturing and higher than average levels of unemployment and poverty; with the Index of Multiple Deprivation data ‘paint[ing] a familiar picture of deprivation in Rhondda Cynon Taf [the relevant local authority], with the most acute deprivation being centred upon the northern parts of Rhondda Cynon Taf, and the Rhondda Valleys in particular’ (Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council et al., 2006: 6-9). The GMB reported 46,000 jobs in Welsh manufacturing had been lost since 1994, part of 1.1 million nationally (GMB, 2006), and more specifically, jobs in the Welsh textile industry fell from 13,000 in 1991 to only 4,000 in 2006 (BBC News, 2007a).

Campaign context and strategies

How did this local context impact the campaign? Firstly, Keep Burberry British was able to draw on a heritage of activism. This provided useful skills, a culture of protest, and proved to be motivational as campaigners related their actions back to the ‘heroic’ campaigns of the miners (Smith, 1974; interviews with ex-workers Bethan, Sarah and Glynis, and Francis MP):

There is a tradition of active trade unionism, and of not sitting back and taking the redundancy cheque if there is a threat to your source of employment. (interview: Clarke, Rhondda Trust)

Secondly, the campaign drew on community solidarity. Although the campaign was to a large degree union-led, a need to go beyond the union was recognised (Shaw, 2004), in

line with labour strategies towards community unionism (Wills, 2001). Solidarity started at the family level as most in Treorchy had one or more family members working at Burberry. For example, one of my interviewees also had a mother, aunt and daughter who had worked there, and this embeddedness was frequently referred to in my interviews and the press coverage.⁹² Solidarity developed at the community level as local businesses and people offered support, and it was also mobilised at the national level through the support of WAG, national press, and the contribution of campaigning celebrities with Welsh roots, including singer Tom Jones and actor Ioan Gruffudd – who emphasised his national roots by sending appeal letters to Burberry in Welsh and English (Keep Burberry British Archive, 2006-7), stating news of the closure:

...saddens me immensely. As you know I was raised in nearby Aberdare, and the experience of being immersed in such a vibrant and happy community has informed my life... I can only imagine the effect the loss of so many jobs would have on this great community.

Finally, the local context was used to stress the responsibilities Burberry was perceived to have to Treorchy, and government's responsibility to hold them to these. In a letter to Prime Minister Tony Blair, workers complained that other industries get government support, typically male dominated ones. They stressed how important Burberry was as an employer and pointed out that 'in this valley community most of the female work force is either the main or sole wage earner' (Keep Burberry British Archive, 2006-7). This gender issue was picked up in interviews with ex-workers and in press coverage: 'the opening of the factory transformed the life of women in this valley.... if we keep women we keep the families' (local activist Geraint Davies in Cadwalladr, 2007). What was not mentioned was whether Burberry's plan to subcontract could bring any sort of improvement to women in different places.⁹³ However, Blyton and Jenkins (2012a) found that lasting impacts on the closure locally related to the gendered nature of the low paid, part-time and irregular work predominately available in the area. So although the campaign was not a 'women's protest movement' and involved men and women, themes of family, community need for stable employment, and Burberry's responsibility and duty to this, were drawn on (Blyton & Jenkins, 2012b: 42).

⁹² 'It is like one big family here – everybody is friends with each other and everybody knows each other' (Employee with 47yrs service, wife with 22yrs, daughter with 6 yrs, BBC News, 2007f).

⁹³ Whether TNC activity in developing countries can bring improvements for some workers and communities, is a contested area, as are questions relating to TNCs and poverty alleviation strategies (Blowfield & Frynas, 2005; Jenkins, 1987; Scholte & Timms, 2009; Sklair & Robbins, 2002).

To help contextualise the analysis, here I set out four main strategies employed in the campaign.⁹⁴ The first involved formal negotiations, undertaken between the trade union and Burberry management immediately after the closure announcement. The plant had a history of union membership, with the majority of workers belonging to the GMB. Membership actually increased during the campaign, rising from approximately 220 to 260, supporting the perceived potential of formal solidarity relations (Wills, 1998: 111).

A second strategy involved legal challenges. MEP Jill Evans questioned whether Burberry were in contravention of an EC Directive on employee information and consultation,⁹⁵ by announcing the decision to close Treorchy before consultation with workers (Europarl, 2006a). The response was that although consultation needed to be ‘in good time with a view to reaching an agreement’, it is up to national authorities to ensure correct and effective application of rules (Europarl, 2006b). This highlights the problem of multiple regulatory frameworks and the complexities involved when implemented differently (CORE & LSE, 2009; Lipschutz & Rowe, 2005; Vogel, 2008), despite an EC-wide agreement about the necessity of consultation. Concurrently, the GMB began investigations to test employment legislation relating to the closure, focusing on lack of consultation during Burberry’s year-long review, failures to provide information to the union, and the attempt to start the mandatory 90 day consultation period before the union had a chance to prepare. This was later dropped as part of negotiations, demonstrating how the different campaign approaches linked.

A third strategy developed a political profile for the campaign. This involved liaising with politicians at different levels of government to generate support, which contributed to the public profile and threatened Burberry’s reputation within the political arena. The relationships between TNCs and politicians are important for furthering their interests, including issues of regulation, with many companies investing heavily in lobbying which is rarely done transparently (Dinan & Miller, 2007; Hertz, 2001; Miller & Dinan, 2008; Sklair & Miller, 2010). Therefore the campaign’s pursuit of political support was particularly threatening for Burberry, and brought interesting results. The campaign was raised several times at different levels of government, namely the Welsh Assembly, the

⁹⁴ Further details of events and their order are provided in the chronology in Appendix 7.

⁹⁵ Specifically the 2002/14/EC⁽¹⁾ Information and Consultation Directive.

House of Commons, and the European Parliament. Of particular note is the fact that Burberry executives and the GMB were called as witnesses for the Government's Welsh Select Committee inquiry into 'Globalisation and Wales', chaired by interviewee Hywel Francis MP (WAC, 2009). This involved offering written memoranda and being questioned about the closure before the committee.⁹⁶

Finally, a fourth strategy involved creating a high media profile. Quite dramatically, celebrities were persuaded to support the campaign. A breakthrough occurred when Ioan Gruffudd, film star and Burberry model, joined. He was significant as he was a 'face of Burberry' and from the locale. It was evident from several interviews, press coverage and the archive, that Gruffudd's support was seen as a turning point, upping the profile to the global level (see for example Katie Jones, 2006).



Figure 25: Poster adapted for the campaign (campaign archive)

In interview, the campaign's Press Officer, David Taylor, explained that after this the strategy 'got easier', with celebrities 'contacting us by the end'. He told how a different newspaper was given exclusive access to each story and these were spaced out to maintain maximum media coverage. Celebrities were targeted for their link to Wales or Burberry, or for other reasons - such as Alex Ferguson, being well known in Burberry's biggest market of Japan, and Mohamed Al Fayed, as his Harrods store was a major retailer of Burberry. This contributed not only to the media pressure on Burberry but also helped to link to consumers and to motivate the campaigners. Added to this, Prince Charles (significantly the Prince of Wales) was reported to have 'contacted government ministers to ask if there is anything he can do' (Cracknell & Leake, 2006).⁹⁷

⁹⁶ The witnesses were: for Burberry, John Peace (Chair), Angela Ahrendts (CEO), Michael Mahony (Director of Corporate Affairs), and Stacey Cartwright (Chief Financial Officer); for GMB, Allan Garley (Regional Officer) and Mervyn Burnett (Senior Officer).

⁹⁷ Interestingly, when Burberry's new 'global' headquarters opened in London in 2009, Prince Charles performed the ceremony and received a donation to his Foundation, (PrinceofWales.Gov.uk, 2009).

The transnational dimension should not be underestimated. The campaign website reported ‘supporters across the world’ and news coverage in Germany, Austria, Canada, India, Taiwan, Romania, China, Moldova, the Netherlands, Ireland, New Zealand, Greece, USA and Japan, helped by a volunteer Japanese translator (Keep Burberry British, 2007). Solidarity was publicised, for example from Visteon car plant in Swansea, also threatened with closure (BBC News Wales, 2006), and members of global unions pledged support of members worldwide (ChinaCSR, 2007). A key element was the use of technology to create and maintain this transnational profile, seen as vital in movement responses to globalisation (Juris, 2008; Smith, 2008: 125-126). The campaign had a website and blog to update supporters and journalists, and also provided a tool for sharing publicity received. Links were posted to every story about the campaign, and additional materials such as YouTube interviews and copies of celebrity letters were also uploaded. The organisers spoke highly of its value.⁹⁸ So there are numerous elements to this campaign, but my analysis concerns how the concept of CSR was mobilised: in these campaigning strategies, the responses of Burberry, and the outcomes experienced. I focus next on the CSR profile Burberry had established.

4.2 Mobilising CSR

The social responsibilities of Burberry were discussed from the very beginning of the campaign, mainly in terms of employee and community relations (Bryant, MP). The analysis presented in this section shows how both Burberry and campaigners framed employment relations in terms of CSR, and then looks at the transnational dimension of responsibilities claimed.

Established corporate credentials

It is clear in Burberry publications at the time of the closure that substantial investment was made in CSR, and during the campaign Burberry engaged directly in CSR discourse as it attempted to establish and defend itself as an example of a socially responsible business and employer. Furthermore, CSR was an element of the corporations ‘global vision’ and identity (Sklair, 2001: 48), to demonstrate Burberry’s

⁹⁸ The website existed as an archive for information purposes until 2012 (Keep Burberry British, 2007), and is now redirected to the site of AM Andrews.

transnational and ethical nature. The annual report published prior to closure included a section dedicated to its CSR approach, and related activities stressed the business case to investors, as common in the corporate version of CSR discussed in Chapter 3:

For Burberry, corporate social responsibility (“CSR”) involves considering those social environmental and ethical issues that if managed improperly could pose a threat to the Group’s assets, reputation and the Burberry brand. Conversely, good management in these areas, for example the environment, has been proven to have direct financial benefit. (Burberry, 2006: 41)

Changes in governance were reported with a dedicated CSR Manager, and a Quality Assurance and Supply Operations Manager joining the CSR Committee. Overall responsibility was still with the Company Secretary, drawing support ‘from a team of external CSR advisors’ (Burberry, 2006: 41). At that time Burberry was already listed on the FTSE4Good Index (Burberry, 2006). An Ethical Trading Policy had been established in 2002, and an Ethical Trading Committee in 2006 (Burberry, 2006: 41). Burberry’s CSR report lists seven areas of focus, with an overview and results reported for each. These are: supply chain, product quality, customer service, health and safety, working environment, environment, community affairs (Burberry, 2006: 41). Of most relevance here, Burberry states:

Good workplace standards, health and safety, fair pay and fair employment conditions together with care for the environment are all elements of a successful and professionally run business. It is our responsibility to ensure that these expectations are also met in our supply chain, where both good and poor performance has the ability to impact on Burberry’s reputation. (Burberry, 2006: 42)

Burberry’s codes and report comply with the main themes and format of many other corporations (Jenkins, et al., 2002; McBarnet, Voiculescu, & Campbell, 2007). This supports the corporate category of CSR presenting Burberry as being good to work for, to live near, and to invest in. It also acknowledges potential reputational risk. Together with its memberships of CSR networks and use of professional CSR services, this shows how Burberry was engaged in corporate and professional discourses of CSR and socially responsible employment before the Treorchy events. Indeed, management referred to its social responsibilities during the actual closure announcement to workers:

The company is fully aware of its social responsibilities and if closure cannot be avoided will do everything possible to minimise the impact on employees and local community. Many of you have worked for us for a

long time. The proposal to close the factory is not a reflection on your workmanship, but is due to worldwide competition becoming increasingly fierce and our ability to match the competition. (Announcement sheet from Keep Burberry British archive)⁹⁹

Burberry continued to refer to its responsibilities throughout the campaign, but only in terms of closing the factory responsibly rather than whether it was responsible to close it. Burberry's Chief Financial Officer publicly stated that 'the most important priority for us right now having taken this decision is to now look after the employees, look after the community' (BBC News, 2007c).

CSR profile as a target for the campaign

Keep Burberry British campaigners engaged directly with CSR discourse in significant efforts made to highlight expectations of Burberry in terms of social responsibilities, and specifically targeted the CSR profile developed by Burberry, to hold them to account. Calls for Burberry to reconsider closure were regularly put in terms of CSR:

I and my European colleagues today urge Burberry to rediscover its sense of Corporate Social Responsibility and keep its Treorchy factory open. (MEP Eluned Morgan quoted in ChinaCSR, 2007).

Burberry's CSR was focused on by campaigners for a number of reasons. Firstly, they argued it was not socially responsible to close the factory to outsource the work overseas. Secondly, they did not accept that the way Burberry conducted itself with regards to the closure was responsible. This led to the claims of corporate socially irresponsible behaviour, as analysed in the next section. Finally, there was an assertion that the closure went against Burberry's CSR policy and that demonstrating this could be used in negotiations and contribute to the profile of the case.

However, campaigners found that Burberry's CSR policies were written in such a way that made it impossible to hold the company directly to particular points. AMs Woods and Andrews both told of how the policies had been closely studied and were frustrating in their lack of robustness. This was true of all CSR areas mentioned in Burberry's policies, but responsibilities to the environment, the community and to workers, were

⁹⁹ Although this was unverifiable, ex-workers interviewed believed they recognised it as the speech heard.

the sections mainly referred to by campaigners.¹⁰⁰ For example, the sense of Burberry's responsibility to the local and national community was a common theme:

Burberry have a responsibility. They have made very substantial profits from Wales as many other companies have – those companies have a corporate responsibility to their communities and the people they've employed'. (WAG's Enterprise Minister, BBC News, 2007b)

Campaigners claimed Burberry's treatment of the local Rhondda community broke its own commitment to communities set out in its CSR policy of the time, and went against the similar commitments in the CSR standards and associations Burberry was connected to. The lack of loyalty to the workforce and community was regularly criticised, and the significant and historic role the factory had played in the area was drawn on. This was supported by what Jenkins (Cardiff University, interview) found in her research:

I had a strong feeling from the interviews I did and the people I met, that they regarded Burberry as a trustee of employment because Burberry had always been a customer of that factory since the beginning [when originally Polikoff's] ... they felt that Burberry had no right to close the factory. It was their factory, if you see what I mean. It belonged to the people.

Campaigners challenged the assertion in Burberry's CSR that it was a good company to work for and live near, and the duty it had to community was commonly referenced:

The company's Corporate Social Responsibility policy states that they want strong relationships with the communities they work in. They acknowledge themselves that business means more than massive profit margins. But proof of whether this is a socially responsible company lies in their actions over the next weeks. (MEP Jill Evans quoted on JilleEvans.Net, 2007a)

The Observer campaign coverage pointed out that despite Burberry's CSR policy claiming to support communities, Rhondda must not be a 'chosen community', even though Burberry have been there for decades (Cadwalladr, 2007). Close inspection of the relevant CSR report shows that responsibilities to community were mainly referenced by Burberry in terms of the charities it supports. This is not clear when in its 2005/6 Annual Report Burberry lists as one of seven key CSR commitments:

¹⁰⁰ I focus on workers and the impact on community, but interesting arguments about environmental irresponsibility relating to the closure were noted. For example, MEP Elfyn Llwyd questioned the impact of transporting Burberry goods between China and the UK (BBC News, 2007e), and MP Bryant pointed out that 'The Prince of Wales has a strong environmental policy insistence for everybody who holds one of his [Royal] Warrants' and increased global outsourcing threatens that (House of Commons, 2007).

Community Affairs – developing strong relationships in our chosen communities, in support of our business objectives by using the Group’s unique assets to benefit society. (Burberry, 2006: 41)

Later in the report though, this community commitment is explained in terms of ‘charitable giving globally and regionally in line with policy objectives’ and set out achievements in terms of donations given and fundraising done (Burberry, 2006:43). Significantly, their commitment to ‘Community Affairs’ was managed by its marketing department (Burberry, 2006: 43). The only other reference to community in the report is positive, but limited to environmental protection:

Burberry respects the local environment and community in which it does business. As far as possible we will limit our environmental impact. It is the responsibility of the Burberry Environmental Committee to ensure this occurs. (Burberry, 2006: 42)

The notion of ‘respect’ was picked up on by campaigners, but again its vagueness meant it was only partially helpful in attempts to pressure Burberry to keep the factory and eventually to compensate the community. Their frustration is in line with critiques of voluntary codes lacking consequence (Clawson, 2003: ch 7; Lund-Thomas, 2008), and links to the activist agenda of CSR discussed in Chapter 3 to show voluntarism fails.

A deliberate strategy of focusing on CSR is clear in campaign archives, and was spelled out in my correspondence with AM Andrews during the campaign:

The CSR angle is one we are interested in. We believe that Burberry may be in breach of its FTSE4Good obligations. (pers.comm: 19 January 2007)

He wrote to Burberry’s Secretary specifically to question the closure in relation to its CSR and commitment as members of the FTSE4Good Indices. Andrews stated: ‘I have read the section on your website but this does not seem to amount to either a code or a policy’, and then goes on to ask nine specific questions to be addressed (Keep Burberry British Archive, 2006-7). Copies of the FTSE4Good Indices with scribbled notes were in the archive, and the only reply from Burberry was a covering note enclosing five copies of the CSR section of Burberry’s 2005/6 Annual Report. Andrews complained directly to FTSE4Good, but Burberry kept its place on its list of ethical investments (pers.comm: AM Andrews, 19 March 2007). This is in line with research by Collison et al (2009: 35-36) finding that membership of FTSE4Good had ‘significant impact on a

firm's reputation and on relationships with specific stakeholder groups', but little measurable impact on conduct other than reporting activity. Relatedly, MEP Jill Evans met Burberry managers specifically to discuss their CSR:

This will be a major test of how the company deals with reality in the Rhondda against its fluffy corporate profile. Like many multinationals, Burberry proclaims its ethical policy. They're proud to be included in the FTSE4Good Indices. But if it fails to retain Treorci¹⁰¹ jobs, that will dent their image. (JillEvans.Net, 2006)

Also approached were shareholders, particularly those linked to an ethical agenda. The Church of England held £2.5m in Burberry shares, and wrote to the CEO with concerns. The Bishop of Worcester said 'We've begun a process with the company to say that we need to talk about this' (Wynne-Jones & Kite, 2006). However, the Secretary of EIAG made clear distinctions in language. Mason (EIAG) stressed to me that the Church was an 'investor' not a 'campaigner', and talks with Burberry were 'discussions' not 'negotiations'; so engaging in corporate rather than activist discourse.

Finally, an example exchange from the Welsh Select Committee's inquiry 'Globalisation and Wales' is worth examining, as this provided a very public arena for disputes over Burberry's CSR policies and responsibilities, leading to confrontation in Parliament.¹⁰² Burberry used its submission of written evidence to draw attention to its CSR credentials and to set out their responsible approach to the factory closure (WAC, 2009: Ev 418). Extracts from the witness session demonstrate how executives were repeatedly asked about Burberry's CSR. A particular focus was the proposed strategy of outsourcing the existing work overseas, the conditions under which this work would be done and how this would be verified:

Mark Mahoney (Burberry) when questioned by Committee about child labour: As a company listed on the London Stock Exchange, we are concerned to ensure that we have appropriate standards of corporate social responsibility across everything we do... we make sure that the standards that our suppliers use are the standards that we expect in this country.

Committee: If I can return again to corporate social responsibility.... are you absolutely certain that your offshore or third party suppliers adhere to the same policy? [not employing under 16 years].

¹⁰¹ 'Treorci' is the Welsh spelling of 'Treorchy' and consistently used by Plaid Cymru campaigners.

¹⁰² For a list of all participants see previous footnote 96.

Mark Mahoney (Burberry): ...Burberry has its own employees, but we are talking about our suppliers' employees; our suppliers are not to employ people who are under the age of 16 and we monitor that and police that through regular audits.

Committee: Social responsibility would include paying a decent living wage?

Mark Mahoney (Burberry): Our overall policy is that there must be a living wage paid, but we look at both our policy plus local legal requirements and make sure both are met.

(Extracts from WAC, 2009: Ev 50-56)

The political agenda of CSR from Chapter 3 can be seen as mobilised here, keen to defend the idea that acting responsibly should promote best practice and that CSR is important for the national business profile and reputation on the world stage. Notions of CSR were then an integrated part of public and political engagement with the closure, and the inquiry provided a prime platform for this.

Transnational responsibilities: Questioning the limits of CSR

A key campaign feature involved making connections between the responsibilities Burberry had locally to workers and the immediate community, and the responsibilities it talked about and should have transnationally to workers and to a wider community, including consumers. This raises questions about the boundaries of CSR, which workers and which communities Burberry is responsible to in a transnational context. Workers will be considered first. Burberry was keen to establish themselves as a socially responsible employer, with globalising policies and vision:

Burberry is an example of a truly global company... we are in effect the embodiment of globalisation'. (WAC, 2009 Burberry Company Secretary: Ev 49-50)

The Treochy closure announcement was explained in terms of global restructuring, necessary due to global market pressures and the extension of global employment strategies. It was presented as a rational business decision, and was in keeping with trends of employment in TNCs (Amoore, 2002; Sklair, 2005; Tonkiss, 2006a) .

Burberry put considerable effort into presenting an Ethical Trading Policy. This was again global in scope, based on Ethical Trading Initiative (ETI) Base Code, the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and the ILO Fundamental Conventions (Burberry, 2008b: 7). Burberry's version includes qualifications:

Burberry is determined to achieve the highest standards of ethical trading throughout its extended supply chain. ...Burberry recognises that, within its supply chain, there are many different national cultures, with their own laws, norms and traditions, which Burberry must acknowledge and respect. Some Factories will therefore face more complex issues than others... Burberry is committed to working with all relevant bodies to deliver effective action plans for change.... where serious breaches of the Policy persist, Burberry will consider termination of the business relationship. (Burberry, 2008b: 1-3)

Under 'standards of conduct' the main areas covered related to employment being freely chosen, freedom of association and collective bargaining, safe and hygienic working conditions, child labour, living wages, limits on working hours, discrimination, regularity of employment, humane treatment, and protection of the environment (Burberry, 2008b: 4-6). As with the CSR reports, campaigners found these codes vague (interviews, AMs Wood and Andrews). Furthermore, the fact that Burberry will only 'consider' terminating contracts in cases of serious, persistent breach, suggested contractors could still be used even when Burberry's code was regularly contravened.

The GMB used transnational union links to help identify the potential workers Burberry might outsource to, so have future responsibilities to. When two proposed factories were found in Guangdong, China, the GMB threatened to publish their details, a move which proved to be a significant contribution to negotiations (interview: Burnett, GMB). GMB press releases also linked general information about work conditions in China with discussion of Burberry's plan, and local papers printed Burberry stories with pictures of unidentified Chinese textile factories, crowded with rows of machinists (such as Williams, 2007). The theme of global solidarity between workers was important.¹⁰³ Solidarity was also expressed to the Chinese workers who might in the future be engaged in the chain supplying Burberry. The GMB highlighted evidence of £1 a day being paid for 12-14 hours work, 7 days a week (GMB, 2007d). As previously

¹⁰³ This included support via written correspondence to campaign leaders, messages of support posted on blogs and the campaign website, and media reports of support in international and movement press (examples in Keep Burberry British Archive, 2006-7).

mentioned, ex-worker Glynis reflected in interview on her impression of, and concern for, these potential workers:

They don't live at home, they live in the factory under shelves and things you know, so I don't know where their social responsibility is out there.

The witness questioning by the Welsh Affairs Committee also prioritised a concern for potential contracted workers, as mentioned, mainly around pay, conditions and child labour (WAC, 2009). This transcendence of the geography that separated the threatened Welsh workers and the potential Chinese workers can be important in such campaigns (Herod, 2001; Wills, 1998). However, as is often a criticism of advocacy on behalf of subjects at a distance (Khan, et al., 2010), there was little attempt to engage directly with potential workers – although the lack of transparency concerning where the work would go complicated this. The Church of England ethical investment advisor, Edward Mason (EIAG), was the only interviewee to suggest that some benefit to developing countries might come from transnational outsourcing strategies. This is a complex and emotive issue that researchers recognise needs more attention, but is often not prioritised in campaigns focused on the worst conditions (Edwards & Wajcman, 2005; Elliott & Freeman, 2003; Gille & O Riain, 2002; Spilerman, 2009).



Figure 26: Simultaneous St Valentine's Day protest to 'Stop Burberry breaking our hearts', pictured in New York, Cardiff, Strasburg (campaign archive)

MP Francis pointed out to me that although the Rhondda is a very particular and small community, historically it developed a strong sense of its global connections as an exporter of the world's coal. In this campaign, as well as transnational trade union links, support was received from labour NGOs such as No Sweat and the United Students Against Sweatshops. This provided, for example, opportunity for simultaneous protests

held in different cities on St Valentine's Day 2007 (see Figure 26).¹⁰⁴ Although it was said that they were not all 'the most likely global activists' (Cadwalladr, 2007), campaigners followed a determined strategy of transnational resistance to pressure Burberry into recognising responsibilities locally and globally.

Secondly, transnational responsibilities were also discussed in terms of consumers. Burberry continually stressed the global, British and ethical nature of their brand. A major theme of Burberry's marketing to consumers, and top of the list when describing the nature of the brand to investors, is its 'authentic British heritage' (Burberry, 2010). This became a key focus for the Keep Burberry British campaign, reflected in the way slogans for the campaign evolved.



Figure 27: Early campaign logo (campaign archive)

Originally posters read 'Save Burberry jobs in the Rhondda' (Figure 17), but this was seen to be too parochial. The 'Keep Burberry British' theme was then focused on as a name and in publicity, then for international protests other tactics were found, such as the St Valentine's Day theme used in conjunction with the Elton John song 'Don't go breaking my heart':

So campaigners very consciously tried to widen their appeal. (interview: Jenkins, Cardiff University)

Through the campaign's very name they were able to promote the idea that closing the Treorchy factory and outsourcing production overseas threatened the Britishness of the brand and that it would be deceitful to still claim to be British:

Burberry's PR company, Brunswick, has sent us a statement pointing out that less than half of Burberry's workforce is based in Britain. So it's a luxury brand of almost 40% British sensibility then. (Keep Burberry British, 2007: Blog 01.25.07)

Most media coverage and campaign publicity included the 'Keep Burberry British' name, and strategies were developed to argue that Burberry would no longer be able to draw on their 'Britishness' if they cut their ties with Britain – this latter point being visually made by the cutting of a Burberry tie outside Parliament (Figure 28).

¹⁰⁴ Protests were held in Paris, Chicago, Las Vegas, New York, Strasbourg, London and Cardiff.

A further tactic questioned Burberry's two Royal Warrants. MP Bryant used unorthodox means to get this debated in the Commons,¹⁰⁵ suggesting that Warrants should only be available to companies that are both properly British and socially responsible, particularly in relation to employees. Again this drew on the political CSR agenda of national reputation:



Figure 28: Cutting Burberry 'ties' (campaign archive)

Any company wanting to claim that it is a “great British” company should do so not only because it makes great profits...including Burberry – but because it abides by British standards of fair play, one of which is a fair employment policy, which should be another criterion for being added to the list of Royal Warrants. (House of Commons, 2007)



Figure 29: Campaigners question authenticity of Britishness and Royal Warrant outside Burberry London store (campaign archive)

Targeting ethical consumers was a further strategy, claiming that the Treorchy closure not only challenged the authenticity of the product but also the ethics of its goods, drawing on discourses of ‘child labour’, ‘non-unionised super-exploited Chinese’ and ‘enforced prison labour’ (GMB, 2007a: Press release 2.2.07). This directly challenged corporate CSR discourse of the company being good to buy from and invest in. Boycott of Burberry was encouraged by activists handing publicity to shoppers outside Burberry stores and press releases increased pressure: ‘at a time when consumers

increasingly make choices according to company ethics, Burberry's actions are not only morally reprehensible but commercially unsound’ (MEP Glenys Kinnock quoted in ChinaCSR, 2007). This is in keeping with the rise of ethical consumerism being linked to conditions of production discussed in Chapter 1 and 3. Campaigners aimed to mobilise consumers as activists in terms of prioritising labour rights in buying decisions (Adams & Rainsborough, 2010; Sassatelli, 2006), as in the quotes below:

How does “Burberry – made in China” sound to you?... Are you still willing to pay the same prices while British workers are sacked and workers in China are exploited? Globalisation doesn't give companies the right to con

¹⁰⁵ Royal Warrants are seen as a matter for the Royal family so not discussed in Parliament since 1628, (Bryant, MP).

their customers. (Keep Burberry British Archive, 2006-7: Flyer given to shoppers on St Valentine's Day Protest)

When I buy clothes, I always check to see where they are made. When an item is so clearly branded as British (to the core) is “Made in China”, I’m afraid that I often put that article straight back, suspecting corporate greed and unacceptably low wage packages for the producers of that article. (Actress Emma Thomson quoted in BBC News, 2007g)

Burberry itself kept particularly quiet during the dispute but several key messages can be identified from their press releases and interviews, which stressed the company’s continued association with the UK. For example:

[Burberry] are proud to retain a strong manufacturing capability in the UK. We make our iconic trench coats in Yorkshire and have no plans to change this. (BBC News, 2007g)

The visible and luxury nature of the brand could explain the importance of this strategy. When paying a lot for goods, consumers may expect them to be ethically produced. This is recognised by Burberry itself, with the now Head of CSR, Ben Eavis stating:

For consumers there is the growing notion that if I’m paying this premium price for this product, I as a consumer expect that luxury brands will take care of the ethics behind it. (quoted in Bauser, 2009)

The importance of brand image can lead to what Bauser (2009) calls ‘supply chain taboos’ in the luxury goods sector. Thomas (2007: 231) found that as issues of exploitation, poverty and human rights are not ‘chic’, fashion houses want consumers to believe they are made in countries associated with a luxury image, such as fashion houses in London and Milan, leading some to resort to illegal factories in Europe. However Burberry’s UK Director of Manufacturing and Quality seemed to contradict this in meetings with unionists: ‘I am not sure that people really care where it is made’ (Evelyn Suszko quoted in Keep Burberry British Archive, 2006-7: Meeting 19 October 2006).

4.3 The language of corporate social irresponsibility

As well as mobilising CSR in terms of Burberry’s responsibilities to workers, value-laden language of corporate social irresponsibility (CSI) was also used. This was

heavily mobilised in terms of Burberry's treatment of workers and the community locally, but also drew on critiques of the globalising practices of TNCs and their impact on conditions of work transnationally. A sense of injustice was mobilised through this discourse. Three main themes were identified - the ethics of Burberry's actions during the closure; a lack of transparency; and corporate greed and vilification.

Unethical behaviour and arrogance

As pointed out by McGovern et al. (2007: 99), an effective employment relationship depends on the willingness of both management and employees to listen and respond to the concerns of the other; and although this process can be complex when involving large, hierarchical corporations, there was still an expectation on the part of workers and others that this relationship would be respected until its closure. This expectation was supported by Burberry's claims to be a socially responsible employer. However, this was not the reported experience of workers. Campaign material and interviewees stressed that Burberry had acted irresponsibly in the way the decision to close had been made, in how workers were told, and in their conduct in negotiations:

[workers] expressed their anger and rage at the way the Company conducted itself during the announcement and for a long serving, hardworking and dedicated workforce to be treated in this cavalier fashion is nothing more than downright disrespectful and un-professional and we would have expected far more from a Company with such high standards of quality and corporate image. It was evident that this was sadly lacking and our members were treated with total disregard and some disdain. (Keep Burberry British Archive, 2006-7: GMB letter to Burberry)

Ex-worker Glynis told me how it had been a complete shock the morning the closure was announced: 'a week before they had only just started six girls'; and Burnett explained: 'to add insult to injury they were still advertising for machinists'. Glynis, as a Shop Steward, was one of the first to know and asked the 'top managers down from London' to wait until workers had their breakfast break before telling them, 'so they had something inside them, as they wouldn't be able to eat after'. They were unable to get in touch with the GMB officer as he had no prior warning and was on a course. Managers refused to wait. Ex-workers Sarah and Bethan complained that Burberry Executive Evelyn Suszko began over the noise of the machinery, and this together with her accent meant it was difficult to understand her. The news had to be spread backwards through

the crowd, with panic and upset creating a chaotic scene. A lack of respect and caring was perceived. Jenkins (Cardiff University, interview) found this was made worse by managers then wandering the factory happily chatting on their mobiles completely oblivious to the devastating blow they had just delivered.

It was clear Burberry had not informed workers, union, or local management that they were going through a year-long review. MP Bryant felt ‘angered and betrayed’ as Burberry promised to consult him if it ever considered closure. Also, when questioned about the review, executives admitted to not consulting WAG about assistance available (WAC, 2009: Ev 54). Also, a WAG grant awarded to Burberry had only partially been claimed, with £90k overdue. Burberry had not responded to offers of this at a time it claimed to be losing profits in Wales (FOI Disclosure Log 1362, 2006-7).¹⁰⁶ Communication problems persisted, with Burnett (GMB, interview) complaining that correspondence to Burberry was unacknowledged and information requests delayed. Burberry’s PR was also criticised for a miscommunication when it publicly claimed most workers were happy with their redundancy offer; a claim strongly denied, with a letter printed in the Sunday Telegraph signed by 179 of the remaining 228 workers (Petition from Keep Burberry British Archive).

Another example exchange from the Welsh Select Committee’s inquiry shows how campaigners’ claims of irresponsibility were expressed. When it was the turn of GMB officials to be questioned they used the opportunity to discuss Burberry’s CSR. This again related to concerns over outsourcing, but also to Burberry not consulting with the trade union and WAG during their review period, as well as its conduct during the campaign (WAC, 2009). At one point a Conservative member of the committee questioned GMB criticism of the company’s behaviour, suggesting that the latest Burberry offer of donating the factory did seem to demonstrate social responsibility. He asked why campaigners thought this only a publicity stunt:

Mervyn Burnett GMB: The first we became aware of that was during a press release made by Burberry.... in my view it was a gesture. The object of the gesture was to divert attention away from the campaign.

¹⁰⁶ Burberry was later required to repay the first instalment of the grant.

Allan Garney GMB: Since September 6 the company has sought to advise us that the factory is worthless, that the factory needs over a quarter of a million pounds spent on it to make it in any way, shape or form viable to operate from. I repeat... that in the view of the GMB the offer of the factory, via the newspapers, was a publicity stunt.

(WAC, 2009: Ev 60-61)

There was also resentment at Burberry deliberately reducing the range of products Treorchy worked on to just one, with reducing training, then when the closure was announced claiming the factory was not suitable to do work from other plants. Jenkins (Cardiff University, interview) described how workers felt this was a ‘gross misrepresentation of them as unskilled’. This is recognised as a common strategy by companies intending to shift production (Blyton & Jenkins, 2012b)

The factory atmosphere was described as dreadful. Ex-workers spoke of what they saw as unethical management behaviour that unnecessarily made things worse. This included persistent pushing for order output, even though workers had officially been told to spend time ‘on the computers to try to find work’ (interview: Bethan, ex-worker). Glynis described with resentment how even on the last day supervisors demonstrated they were still in charge by keeping people at their stations rather than allowing them to gather in the canteen as had been promised; ‘that was really uncalled for’.

Lack of transparency

In addition to these various charges of questionable workplace and management behaviour, a persistent lack of transparency was highlighted and criticised by campaigners. As discussed, the campaign linked to concerns over outsourcing to countries with poor labour and human rights records, aiming to connect workers, campaigners and consumers transnationally. However, Burberry refused to confirm where the Treorchy work would be relocated to, which country or companies, so verifying the potential working conditions was difficult. The evasion was strongly criticised in terms of CSR discourse:

we know the two factories that Burberry are now getting their polo shirts sourced from; the company will not tell us but we know the two factories... We have asked the company as well how much are the workers in China

going to be paid in these two factories and they will not tell us. We have asked the company what hours of work are the workers in China going to work and they will not tell us. We have asked the company how many days a week do they have off and they will not tell us. We have asked the company how many holidays are they entitled to and they will not tell us. Either they do not know, in which case I just make the point that is not a very socially responsible company, or they do know and they will not tell us. (Garley, GMB witness in WAC, 2009: Oral evidence 62)

According to Neil Kearney of ITGLWF, ‘luxury goods run their internal operations like they do their stores: with security men at their doors. Everything is done behind the curtain’ (quoted in Bauser, 2009). This was a consistent theme. Professionals were brought from London to secure the factory on the day of the closure announcement, ‘not letting people in or out’; security specialists were also drafted to protect Burberry stores during the protests, and actually closed the Las Vegas store down (interview: Burnett, GMB). I experienced a hint of this when attempting to hand deliver requests to participate in this research to Burberry’s London headquarters. Two (well dressed) ‘bouncers’ would not allow me more than a step inside the lobby, even to deliver a letter. Figure 30 shows both the caged factory site in Treorchy, with surveillance cameras and alarm visible, and Burberry’s new ‘global’ headquarters ‘up in London’, described as a design icon in company publicity.



Figure 30: Treorchy factory through the security gate and Burberry’s ‘global’ headquarters, Westminster, London



In addition, more direct accusations were made that Burberry was being dishonest to customers by moving the work. This invoked the integrity of Burberry as a British brand again, but unions also criticised the consequences for other employees:

Burberry cannot expect our members, the sales staff in Japan or anywhere else, to lie or even to put their hearts into selling a product under false

pretences. (Philip Jennings, General Secretary of Union Network International, in ChinaCSR, 2007)¹⁰⁷

Furthermore, the lack of transparency regarding Burberry's potential outsourcing strategy is relevant here. This is a problem commonly raised by labour activists as it prevents verification of conditions and removes the potential linking of workers to others in the same chain, as well as to investors and consumers. It is a theme particularly relevant to the PlayFair 2012 case in the next chapter. Here Burberry distanced themselves from the workers who would ultimately be doing the work Treorchy used to, workers who would no longer be direct employees. As far as Jenkins (Cardiff University, interview) was concerned:

If they really were concerned about their responsibilities, they would still own their factories but they have chosen a different model.

Vogel notes how the increasing length and complexities of supply chains and the possibility of moving production between contractors, hides layers of ownership (2008: 274). As in the case of Burberry, a tool then available to activists involves investigating the complex relations within chains, to pressure corporations by exposing or threatening to expose these (Clawson, 2003: 190).

Corporate greed and attempts to vilify

The perceived 'irresponsibility' of Burberry's actions were often expressed through the vilification of the company and particular executives. This relates to activist CSR agendas, using it to provide ammunition for corporate and personal embarrassment. Corporate greed was referenced repeatedly in media reports, for example: '[Burberry] will brand itself as greedy, unethical and – perhaps most importantly for the profile of the company – inauthentic' (Actress Emma Thompson quoted in BBC News, 2007g). This was explicitly discussed in several of my participants, often angrily so (interviews: AM Andrews, MP Bryant, GMB Burnett, and ex-worker Glynis).

Firstly, this greed was linked to the justification given for closure. The GMB calculated that the factory made £22m a year so was profitable. However Burberry claimed they could make an extra profit of £2m a year (more once Treorchy was sold) by moving to

¹⁰⁷ UNI changed its name in 2009 to UNI Global Union.

China; so presented this as the factory losing money, whilst quoting their duty under law to maximise shareholder profit (Cadwalladr, 2007). In letters between Burberry management and the Welsh Minister for Enterprise, the company made it clear that although it would consider WAG's suggestions for keeping a Treorchy base, any saving from current production costs would have to be substantial enough to compensate for £4.3m profit to be made annually if it was moved overseas. The financial benefit was therefore presented as their focus, (FOI Disclosure Log 1362, 2006-7), and campaigners framed the financial motivation of Burberry in terms of greed:

as far as we were concerned it was pure corporate greed to increase the profitability of a company that made £165 million last year and their sales were up by 25%. There has been no investment in the site for a number of years either in terms of the factory itself or in terms of training in relation to workers. (Mervyn Burnett, GMB witness, WAC, 2009: Ev 58)

Accusations of greed were exacerbated when it emerged that Burberry experienced a 22% increase in revenue in the three months following the closure announcement. Sorell (quoted in Cadwalladr, 2007), differentiates this case from other factory closures as 'Burberry's case is not a survive-or-die sort of case. It's an icing-on-the-cake sort of case'. The corporation was also criticised for the pay outs proposed for Treorchy staff. One redundancy offer was £1000 per employee, but campaigners claimed 'this would not even buy one of the new range of [Burberry] quilted handbags called the Beaton which retails at £1095 per bag' (GMB, 2007c). The Christmas bonus received by workers that year comprised a Burberry scarf and £30 Burberry vouchers. This was seized on as demonstrating 'insensitivity', 'meanness', and Burberry's 'lack of Christmas spirit'. The company responded to say this was consistent with other years.

Individuals were also vilified: 'We made them out to be such awful people...The very top woman [Ahrendts] said it was the worst Christmas she had ever had' (interview: ex-worker Glynis).¹⁰⁸ Local papers reported that Evelyn Suszko, Burberry's UK Director of Manufacturing and Quality, had been involved in the closure of two Laura Ashley factories in Wales in 1997, when 109 workers had lost their jobs. At the time AM Andrews publicly suggested 'perhaps she should be known as the axe queen' (Shipton, 2006). Further, in a rare media interview Stacey Cartwright, Burberry Chief Financial

¹⁰⁸ Interestingly Ahrendts was later listed by a popular woman's magazine as an 'inspirational women of the year' for her work at Burberry and its charitable work (Women & Home, 2010).

Officer, expressed her attitude towards the campaign: ‘well, it’s just slightly perverse...all we were doing was consolidating manufacture into other locations’, with the journalist picking up on her choice of words - ‘bemused’, ‘perverse’ ‘only’ (Cadwalladr, 2007). Interviewees also found management ‘arrogant’, suggesting they could not mount a campaign and treating them as an annoying waste of time. MP Bryant also reported that towards the end of the campaign Burberry tried to ‘get nasty’ about individuals, however the press refused to print the stories. The attitude described was exemplified in MP Francis’s recounting to me when Burberry executives were called to be witnesses for the inquiry he chaired:

It was an exercise, to put it at its politest, in awareness raising of their social responsibility... they were not prepared to come... we had to remind them of their legal responsibilities... that we had the power to summon them, we can summon anyone other than the Queen... they can be arrested and brought before the Bar of the House of Commons... we wanted the highest possible and they were wanting to send underlings and then they tried to negotiate times... and we said, ‘no, no, you come when we tell you and we tell you who to come as well’.... they thought they were too powerful, they were too important.

4.4 The impact of CSR targeting

Was the campaign a success? This depends on what was seen as the aim and what expectations were held. In terms of the focus of this research, the CSR framing involved contributed to three types of outcomes considered in this section. For workers, ultimately ‘at the end of the day we had no jobs’ (interview: ex-worker Bethan). Interviewees Andrews AM, Bryant MP, Burnett GMB and Press Officer Taylor (noticeably not ex-workers), admitted to having been sceptical over the prospects of stopping the closure. Although they had remained optimistic, they saw their efforts focused on improving the outcomes for employees and the community, and were generally pleased with the results. They were also united in continued criticism of Burberry. A statement on the day of the closure ended ‘we will never accept the business or moral case for the closure of this factory and we will continue to argue for its continuation’ (Keep Burberry British, 2007: Blog 3.3.07).

Burberry's global CSR and employment strategies

Significantly, despite Burberry's lack of transparency regarding supply chains, several interviewees claimed the campaign directly impacted on the company's global restructuring. The GMB, AM Andrews and ex-workers all felt Burberry had intended to close all three UK factories (Treorchy, Rotherham, and Castleford). Burberry's PR during the campaign repeatedly denied this, stressing Treorchy was a 'one-off'; suggesting the company was perhaps sensitive to the claim. Feelings of regret were voiced by ex-workers and MP Bryant that Rotherham and Castleford employees failed to support the campaign. Jenkins (Cardiff University, interview) thought they had perhaps been frightened for their own jobs, but had seen the disappointment of campaigners that workers in other Burberry plants 'didn't even put a poster on their noticeboards'.

However there was a commonly held view that other factory closures were prevented or at least postponed because of the Keep Burberry British campaign. The cost to Burberry had been significant. In commercial terms, MP Bryant estimated the campaign cost Burberry £10-15m, not including the significant time and energy of executives. This could be seen to support professional CSR claims of it being essential to business success, and to managing investor relations. More generally, marketing press reported Burberry suffered a drop in the expected brand 'buzz' during the campaign (Johnson, 2006). A study by King and Soule (2007), found campaigns have the most impact on stock price returns when concerning a key stakeholder, such as employees, and when a high media profile is achieved, as in the Burberry case.

As Burberry declined to take part in this research, and as its global restructuring plans are not publicly available,¹⁰⁹ it is difficult to assess the campaign claims of protecting other UK Burberry workers. It is possible though to reflect on events since the campaign, and at the beginning of 2009 Burberry did announce the closure of Rotherham. It was keen to stress that this work was to be done at Castleford instead, so maintaining its UK connection. The local GMB made immediate links to the Treorchy campaign when responding to the announcement, 'the GMB have been around the block

¹⁰⁹ Neither were they available to employee representatives, shown in the secrecy surrounding Burberry's year-long review prior to the closure announcement.

with Burberry before as they sought to move jobs from the UK to China – we want to make sure nothing like that happens this time’ (GMB, 2009b: Press release 20.1.09). Burnett (GMB) was clear that the Rotherham workers received improved redundancy packages as a result of the Keep Burberry British campaign. In particular his counterpart in Rotherham had informed him that Burberry only offered substantial redundancies on the condition that no campaign was raised.

Although it is difficult to prove a direct link, an increase in Burberry’s CSR activity is observable since the dispute. Burberry reports joining additional CSR groups, including SEDEX and Business for Social Responsibility network (where it is an active member of three working groups), and is signatory to the UN Global Compact (Burberry, 2007, 2008a, 2009b). It was reported that CSR management now includes a dedicated Head and full-time team of nine, with additional subcommittees (Burberry, 2009a). There is also evidence of a growing transnational CSR team, particularly in Asia, (Business for Social Responsibility, 2008), suggesting efforts to develop an integrated and global approach. Burberry now actually positions itself as a leader in the CSR field:

We hope to lead by example and to be transparent about what we do. That is the difference between companies that are serious about looking at their business and operations and trying to act responsibly, versus those who are looking at corporate social responsibility as a PR exercise. (Ben Eavis, Burberry Head of CSR quoted in Bauser, 2009)

Coming from Burberry’s resident CSR professional, this deploys the expert agenda of CSR promoting competitive advantage. An industry review supports its positioning:

most notable is the high level of transparency for a luxury brand. Unlike other companies, virtually all of Burberry’s corporate responsibility efforts are detailed on its website, and it does not shy away from addressing human rights. (Bauser, 2009)

Therefore it is observable that Burberry sees value in significant investment in CSR, and is keen to employ corporate CSR discourse that promotes competitive advantage for leaders in social responsibility. Burberry could be seen as what Utting (2005: 378) describes as the ‘proactive players... shaping and disseminating the CSR agenda’. Although a direct causal link with the campaign cannot be made, several motivations are suggested. The costs Burberry incurred and the potential damage to brand and company reputation, in terms of opinion leaders and potential regulators as well as

consumers, could provide financial incentive.¹¹⁰ Even if savings from outsourcing the Treorchy work override these costs, an awareness of activist abilities to highlight working conditions and gaps between CSR policy and practice could incentivise a robust approach to supply chain management. Finally, the personal experiences of Burberry's top executives during the campaign, in terms of media attention as well as the Parliamentary inquiry, could provide motivation to prevent such events in the future, as seems to have been avoided in Rotherham.

Recognised responsibilities to workers and the local community

As well as keeping the factory open for an additional three months, two direct outcomes of the campaign were improved redundancy packages¹¹¹ and the legacy of a £1.5m community fund. These were negotiated by the GMB and MP Bryant, and underline the activist agenda of CSR as a tool for leverage. According to interviewees Burnett GMB, MP Bryant, MP Francis and AM Andrews, major factors in securing these outcomes were seen to be the threatened identification of Chinese factories, the questioning of Burberry's CSR policy, and the taking up of executives' time and energy.

Firstly, ex-workers were particularly clear on what the improved redundancy deal meant. The topics of money, mortgages, and campaign-related costs were some of the practical issues prioritised in interviews. Research by Blyton and Jenkins (2012a) shows that since the closure many had to take less-skilled, part-time and temporary work, often in service and care industries. This fits the experience of my interviewees. The impact on community and friendship was drawn on by ex-workers and local AMs Woods and Andrews. The factory had structured the lives not only of workers, but their families, local businesses and future generations. As one ex-worker reported in interview:

I miss the girls. We don't get to go out much together now cause of the shifts... a lot of part-time and caring work.

Blyton and Jenkins discuss in detail how the change of lifestyle forced by redundancy from such a big employer can entail a dramatic shift in work/life balance. Even though work taken on might be part time, ex-Burberry workers reported having less control

¹¹⁰ Burberry's attempts to protect its brand is evident in a move to buy out its Chinese business partner in July 2010, 'pushing through a restructuring plan to keep a tighter rein on its global image' (Wood, 2010).

¹¹¹ This included more money and assistance with skills.

over their time due to the unstable and irregular patterns of part-time shift work. Being unable to plan ahead, having to be willing to take a shift at short notice and difficulties in fulfilling family roles due to unsociable hours were all reported (Blyton & Jenkins, 2012a: 31-37), and were consistent with the experiences of my interviewees.

Secondly, there is the trust fund Burberry eventually offered for the community. The Rhondda Trust receives £150,000 annually from Burberry, secured for 10 years. Jenkins (Cardiff University, interview) enthused to me how it was ‘an absolute triumph when they got it’. Solicitor Guy Clarke helps administer this voluntarily, interestingly as part of his law firm’s CSR programme, and it was arranged by the Prince’s Trust. I wanted to know about Burberry’s on-going link to the fund, and this was reported laughingly as minimal: ‘they write the cheques!’ (interview: Andrews, AM). I also queried how the Trust’s name had been decided, as it does not contain ‘Burberry’ in the title and the company does not reference it in CSR reporting:¹¹²

Apparently they did not want to have an ongoing association – perhaps they did not want to draw attention to themselves or what they had done in Treorchy in case it was regarded as a precedent. (pers.comm: Clarke following a Trustees’ meeting, 8 November 2009)

The first pay outs were made in 2008 to individuals and local charities, such as Valley Kids which works with disadvantaged and deprived families in the local area. This organisation was awarded £7,500 over 3 years and many project users have been ex-Burberry (pers.comm: Julie Spiller, Penyrenlyn Project Coordinator). It is striking that awardees have been keen to direct thanks to the campaign rather than Burberry. Jessica Lewis, a newly trained lorry driver, stated ‘I am thankful to everyone who pushed Burberry to give us what they have given us’ (quoted in BBC News, 12 December 2008). Matthew Davies (awarded £4000 for a Legal Practice Course) claimed that it should be a legal obligation for a company withdrawing from a community to provide a trust such as this, and also went on to aim his gratitude at the campaign:

It is not good enough to rely on the ‘good will’ of the company.... Technically I owe this chance to fulfill my dream to Burberry via the trust fund board. In reality I am in debt to the people who stood up against Burberry.

¹¹² It is unclear but likely the amount is included in the annual accounts of total charitable donations, without being specifically named.

There have been other local benefits. Economic development in the area has received increased priority. A £3.6 million investment was announced for the factory itself, including grants obtained through WAG, partly as the Heads of Valley regeneration scheme was expanded to include Treorchy during the Keep Burberry British campaign. The campaign legacy was used to promote a policy of supporting local small business: ‘a perfect example of how the public and private sector in Wales can work hand in hand to re-vitalise sites abandoned by multinationals in favour of cheap labour overseas’ (investor Robert Kearns, quoted in BBC News, 12 November 2009).



Figure 31: Factory still to let with Burberry sign partially visible and road sign remaining, August 2012

There was, though, criticism of the campaign too, for causing damage to Welsh business. David Yelland, PR consultant and ex-Editor of *The Sun*, accompanied Burberry executives in a rare press interview during the campaign. He suggested the main victim of the campaign was the Welsh economy as investors would avoid it: ‘I know of more than one company that has already made that decision’ (Cadwalladr, 2007). Similarly, CBI Wales claimed Wales was now less attractive to investors (BBC News, 2007d). It is difficult to quantify whether such predictions have proved accurate.

On a more individual basis, AM Andrews and MP Bryant were named joint campaigners of the year in the 2007 BBC Wales political awards, and several ex-workers have been involved in a Craft Council-funded project ‘Can craft make you happy?’, examining ‘the politicisation of cloth’ (pers.comm: Sian Weston, 12 May 2010).

Contribution to future campaigning on CSR

Campaigners were aware of being part of a growing protest movement against corporate power and greed: ‘multi-nationals know that people are turning against rampant

globalisation' (JillEvans.Net, 2006). The first major contribution of the campaign to such a movement is one of methods:

[This is] a stunt-happy, web-friendly, celebrity-savvy campaigning style that has left the overpaid suits of City PR looking tired and lazy by comparison. (Lynn, 2007)

The first time that I've heard of workers doing it this way, of utilising new technology to appeal over the heads of the company. (Professor Tom Sorell, quote in Cadwalladr, 2007)

Through this use of new media, humour and celebrity, together with support through political and labour activist solidarity, the campaign was able to take on 'a global dimension which follows Burberry's own globalisation moves' (GMB, 2007b: Press release 13.2.07). The use of technology in particular for global networking and activism is recognised as of growing importance within social movements more generally, adapted to the needs of each campaign and facilitating interaction with virtual spaces of transnational solidarity and promotion (Naughton, 2001; Smith, 2008: 125-126).

It is also interesting that the campaign brought together individuals with a particular awareness of and experience in CSR. AM Leighton Andrews had previously been involved with the BBC, PR and CSR companies in London, and Guy Clarke (Rhonda Trust) was awarded the OBE for campaigning work, whilst his work for the Trust was part of his employer's CSR activity. Personal commitments were evident:

I woke up some mornings and had to pinch myself... my phone, you were on the phone from seven in the morning till ten at night with newspapers. (interview: Burnett, GMB)

You'd wake up every morning thinking well what can I do today to help the Burberry Campaign and you did, you know. It was relentless, and it lasted. (interview: Andrews, AM)

Secondly, the campaign and its limited successes contribute a valuable example for future CSR battles, both to motivate activists and to caution against CSI. During the annual St David's Day Speech which marked the 5th anniversary of the Welsh Select Committee, Hywel Francis proudly listed as an achievement the moment 'when we called senior Burberry executives to account' (House of Commons, 2010). And importantly, reinforcing the activist agenda of CSR as a tool to demonstrate the failure

of CSR, the case of Burberry has been used to promote increased legislation for CSR and labour rights in on-going campaigns:

The example of Burberry in Treorci has quite plainly shown that voluntary Corporate Social Responsibility does not work. Their Corporate Social Responsibility policies which spoke of working closely with the community were worthless and have been ignored. This demonstrates with absolute clarity the need for measures to be legally binding.... We must make companies accountable to their workforce and answerable for their actions. (MEP Evans before European Parliamentary debate on Howitt CSR report, JillEvans.Net, 2007b)

This achievement is not to be underestimated. According to Clawson 'even unsuccessful struggles create the basis for future actions' (2003: x). The value of such models for the labour movement is in the network, solidarity, and profile developed, and the experiences, knowledge and strategies developed. The Keep Burberry British case is a modest example of how CSR discourse can be mobilised as an integral part of labour rights campaigning.

Chapter Conclusions

The aim of this chapter was not to present Burberry as significantly more responsible or irresponsible than other companies. The situations of each corporation and economic sector will differ, and the spotlight placed on luxury brands like Burberry can help ensure more CSR investment compared to less visible industries (Bauser, 2009; Thomas, 2007). Rather, the analysis of this campaign provides an empirical example of how the disputed employment responsibilities of a nationally-identified TNC were framed in terms of CSR and the impact on outcomes. Within this campaign, corporate agendas of CSR were challenged by both activist and political mobilisations.

Although the CSR angle was only one part of the Keep Burberry British campaign, an emphasis on CSR was evident throughout. This contributed to the political and public profile of the campaign and to the outcomes for workers and the Treorchy community. The local campaign was able to build a transnational platform in terms of solidarity, and media and political interest. Campaigners used Burberry's existing CSR profile as leverage and its failures as ammunition. Although Burberry's CSR policies and codes were found to be weak, enough momentum was built to enable activists to highlight

gaps between corporate CSR promises, and worker and community experience. Discourses of irresponsibility were also used to challenge the boundaries of acceptable corporate behaviour. As Rodriguez-Garavito points out, embarrassing corporations for not keeping to codes or promises can be very powerful (2005: 223).

It is observable that Burberry's employment strategies have been impacted by the public scrutiny they were put under, as is evident in the redundancies achieved for Rotherham workers. Burberry has since been investing to protect and develop its CSR profile, spreading the scope of activities and attempting to position itself as a leader in the CSR field. This suggests Burberry considers CSR to be best approached as an integrated part of global employment strategies, which increasingly involve supply chain management. This linking of responsibilities and HR is reflected in a developing managerial literature (Cohen, 2010; Preuss, Haunschild, & Matten, 2009; Winstanley & Woodall, 2000) . At the same time, labour activists can build on the example of this campaign to strengthen transnational networks resisting 'irresponsible' employment and to contribute to political debates on regulatory frameworks. Through prioritising CSR, corporations attempt to establish the terms of debate regarding what is expected of them as a company and employer, and also how they should be held to account for these responsibilities. By framing employment relations in terms of CSR, the Keep Burberry British campaigners attempted to question and influence this process.

Whereas this case has focused on the defence of existing jobs threatened by outsourcing, the remaining two cases involve mobilisations around dispersed workers, often with less direct relationships to the corporations that benefit from their labour. The PlayFair 2012 and cut flower case studies build on the findings of this chapter to enter more deeply into the complexities of employment relationships and responsibilities in a context of transnational production, and compare the role CSR plays in campaigns for the rights of distant workers. The findings of the PlayFair 2012 case are presented next.

CHAPTER 5

EVENT-FOCUSED CAMPAIGNING: PLAYFAIR 2012

I was one of the first to arrive for a PlayFair 2012 protest in April 2011, always keen for the chance to talk to people before the action started. I had already been following the campaign for over a year and so knew quite a few of the faces, but it was good to get updates and to find out the motives of new people there. It was a mid-week morning, so difficult for many, but necessary as it was the day of an international sports industry conference. This trade event was planned to coincide with the visit of the International Olympic Committee (IOC), in London to check on progress for the 2012 Games, and so was being held at their hotel. PlayFair 2012 and its partners had put a call out to their supporters for a gathering, and to generate press interest, a giant deodorant can had been made – calling for a ‘Sweat-free London 2012’. Placards and leaflets explained their demand to end exploitation in the industry and for workers making Olympic merchandise and supplies to be assured safe and fair conditions.

The hotel permitted 2-3 campaigners to distribute leaflets at the hotel doors, but security moved the main protest group to the opposite side of the road. Protesters still managed to make their presence felt, offering media interviews and raising curiosity from passers-by and those heading to the conference. I was thrust a pile of leaflets and so took my turn giving them out to the delegates, but as usual I refused any interviews, explaining my role as researcher rather than spokesperson. Despite spending time reflecting on the issue of participation and where a line should be drawn, I found that when at actual events the practicalities of the situation usually made this much easier in practice than in theory. Giving out leaflets was a useful role, as I knew the aims of the campaign more than most and it often provided an opportunity to observe reactions, here of sports industry attendees, and to note the type of questions asked. On this occasion, one of my fellow leafleters was an International Play Fair organiser from Brussels, just back from launching the newest chapter in Brazil. She was also here for a different event that afternoon.

In contrast to the street protest across the road from the hotel, PlayFair 2012 organisers had secured a meeting for that same day with representatives of the IOC itself, inside the hotel. On the agenda were concerns raised by campaigners about working conditions in Olympic supply chains, and demands for better practices and systems of licencing to ensure future labour standards. This one day symbolised Play Fair's approach to commitments for improved workers' rights from Olympic officials and the sportswear industry, making themselves visible at all levels to ensure this resulted in change. Activist agendas of CSR were mobilised to generate reputational risk and pressure from its public campaigning, alongside the targeting of corporate CSR and ethical claims to create opportunities for engagement and leverage.

As a second case for the thesis, Play Fair¹¹³ builds on the study of Keep Burberry British. It is an on-going campaign, so contributes an insight into how such efforts develop over time, and involves dispute over responsibility for the rights of distant workers – such as those Burberry outsourced to. The case is particularly useful in the way the Olympics provide a symbolic global arena. This chapter explores why, how, and with what consequences, this labour-rights coalition uses the global platform of the Olympics to influence agendas and raise standards of socially responsible employment. I mainly draw on my research on PlayFair 2012, the London chapter of the campaign.

A number of works have previously offered interesting, yet brief, reference to Play Fair (Cappatto & Pennazio, 2006; deLisle, 2008; Harvey, Horne, & Safai, 2009; Lenskyj, 2008; 2008; Sluiter, 2009), and are drawn on in this chapter. My contribution considers developments in the campaign to date, focusing specifically on how CSR has been mobilised and responded to. It was found that PlayFair 2012 has built on the established Play Fair strategy of utilising the Olympic ethos of fair play to highlight the poor conditions of work in Olympic supply chains, and has gone on to exploit particular London 2012¹¹⁴ corporate discourses of 'ethics' and 'sustainability' to gain significant, if partial, victories in its mission to promote a 'sweat free' Games. This case study develops further the research done on the mobilisation of CSR in the factory-focused

¹¹³ For an explanation of name variations, please see previous footnote 38 on page 50.

¹¹⁴ *London 2012* is used to refer collectively to the official bodies associated with the London 2012 Summer Olympics and Paralympic Games, including the London Organising Committee of the Olympic Games (LOCOG), the Olympic Delivery Authority (ODA), and the Commission for a Sustainable London 2012 (CSL).

Keep Burberry British campaign, as PlayFair 2012 connects the production of a major corporatised sporting event to wider issues of global inequality, poverty in distant outsourcing centres, and structural problems in global labour markets.

I begin by explaining the documentary, interviewing, participant observation, and experimental work done. Section 5.2 situates the campaign within a tradition of using the Olympics as a platform for protest, and considers how protesting the Games can involve protesting corporate globalising practices. Section 5.3 focuses on the particular context of the London ‘ethical’ Games, setting out how a CSR legacy was planned and promoted, and how PlayFair 2012 has targeted it. Finally Section 5.4 analyses the competing efforts made to define and claim a CSR legacy from the Games.

5.1 Researching the use of a global platform for protest

I was aware of this campaign since its inception for the Athens 2004 Olympics, through a number of networks I monitored. It was during my interruption that the London bid to host 2012 was successful, so on resuming my research I was in a good position to make the campaign a key case. I secured access to the PlayFair 2012 chapter from its launch. I was working in the host city, with a major base for the PlayFair 2012 campaign being the Trade Union Congress (TUC), only a short walk from my research room. Additionally, the timing of the study led into the year the Games were held. The aim of this section is to set out how I became close to the campaign and the sources drawn on.

Records and interviews

The main organisations relevant to this campaign made a vast range of documentation publicly available. Appendix 4a summarises major sources used and types of documents analysed. When monitoring key websites I analysed site content, structure and the diverse documents posted. As this was done over a number of years, I could identify changes to how information was offered to the public and changes in focus over time.

In addition to publicly accessible data, I was fortunate to be given access to three other documentary sources from key Play Fair organisers. Interviewee Doug Miller prepared me a copy of his own archive of Play Fair documentation up to 2009, when he had been

most active in the campaign. This included more than 80 files. Secondly, organisers offered access to PlayFair 2012's own research on its success to date. Finally, I was sent documents relating to the plans for Play Fair Brazil, by ITUC Play Fair Coordinator Kristin Blom on her return from launching that campaign.

Together these sources generated a corpus of data that ran into hundreds. Once the main discourses, strategies and events described had been analysed, new sources were considered in terms of whether they could add to the analysis, allowing the research to reach a point of saturation (Richards, 2005: 135). The majority of data were analysed by April 2012, however I continued to monitor sources until submission of the thesis.

A summary of the 16 key research participants is presented in Appendix 4b. I was able to interview seven PlayFair 2012 organisers and supporters, some of these multiple times as the campaign progressed and good relationships were nurtured. As participants learned about my research they were keen to alert me to new developments. I began my interviewing plan with the two central PlayFair 2012 coordinators, Sharon Sukhram (TUC) and Anna McMullen (Labour Behind the Label - UK branch of the international CCC). Sukhram and McMullen then acted as gatekeepers for securing other interviews.

Sam Guerny had been involved in Play Fair since 2003 as TUC International Policy Officer. Jeoen Merk was involved through his role at the CCC, and mainly contributed to the international campaign. Doug Miller had also been involved early, but less so for recent campaigning. He had a dual academic/trade union role, having had most involvement whilst on sabbatical with the ITGLWF. As he is based in Newcastle with a busy teaching and research schedule, this was a difficult interview to arrange. However it transpired Miller had been hoping a researcher would show interest in the campaign, and so was keen to share as much detail as possible. This was the longest interview, lasting nearly three hours, with follow ups in person and by email. Ashling Seely (ITGLWF) was interviewed during the TUC's Women's Conference, where she was speaking with Sukhram about PlayFair 2012. My interview with Turkish trade unionist Asalettin Arslanoglu, (TEKSIF) was also conducted prior to a campaign event, by invitation from campaigners, who also provided an interpreter. Sabastian Klier from

WoW was interviewed as an official PlayFair 2012 partner,¹¹⁵ and Kirstin Blom as ITUC Campaigns Officer coordinating the international Play Fair campaign in Brussels.

A further seven interviewees were selected due to their particular role or experience. A key Olympics-related interviewee was Shaun McCarthy, important due to his professional background in CSR and as Chair of the Commission for a Sustainable London 2012 (CSL). Julie Hawkins (ETI), Samantha Dormer (Fairtrade Foundation), and Tom Smith (SEDEX) were interviewed due to their organisation's involvement with LOCOG in developing London 2012 procurement policies. The remainder were interviewed due to their participation in labour campaigns and PlayFair 2012 events. Attempts to invite CSR people from involved companies, failed. Some campaigners had specific contacts to offer, but there was a nervousness in case this strained their on-going negotiations. Although these could have been interesting, they were unnecessary given the publicly available material and the campaign focus of my research.

The majority were in-depth semi-structured interviews conducted face-to-face, with a few points to note. First, interviewing Arslanoglu via interpreter held challenges. I have no Turkish, was reliant on organisers for selecting the translator, and the normal processes of anticipating and steering the interview were difficult (Liamputtong, 2010: 149-151). However, the pauses for translation allowed reflection before the next question, and the interview provided data from someone directly experienced in countries of production and factories supplying the Olympics. As noted by Alcoff (2009), whenever possible it is important to give voice to those from the areas being researched, rather than only those championing their cause. Secondly, two interviewees were not face-to-face. McCarthy was interviewed by telephone after he cancelled previous arrangements to meet five times.¹¹⁶ An unexpected consequence was that I interviewed him as public controversy broke over Dow Chemical sponsoring London 2012,¹¹⁷ and was able to refer to this in the interview. Blom was interviewed by Skype from Brussels after hopes to meet in Brussels and London failed. Using videoconferencing as a research tool required special considerations - such as privacy,

¹¹⁵ His successor Murray Worth was also interviewed, as drawn on in Chapter 3.

¹¹⁶ An interview with LOCOG's Head of Procurement, Gerry Walsh, was similarly problematic to arrange and was eventually abandoned. He gave his team's increasing workload as the reason.

¹¹⁷ Protests related to Dow's ownership of Union Carbide and the Bhopal industrial disaster. Dow eventually withdrew its name from the Olympic stadium wrapping, however its continued sponsorship led one CSL Commissioner to resign (The Guardian, 25 January 2012).

presentation, and equipment quality (King & Horrocks, 2010: 79-85). As I was not able to see McCarthy or Blom during the interview, visual prompts and clues were lost.¹¹⁸ However, in both cases I had met them in person at previous events, so a foundation for rapport, believed vital by Rubin and Rubin (1995), had already been established. The use of interpreter and technology therefore facilitated three key interviews that would not otherwise have been possible.

In addition to these key interviews, I met a number of people during my time investigating PlayFair 2012 who contributed more informally to the research. At events I was keen to speak to people about their involvement, background and opinions. In a similar way to pilot interviews, these discussions provided background for the main interviews, and a way of checking and updating information given (Gilbert, 1993: 137). I was careful to explain my researcher role and to offer contact details. I was also in correspondence with a labour rights group in alliance with PlayFair 2012 and responsible for research in Chinese factories.

Events and experiments

I attended the public launch of PlayFair 2012 at a speaker tour in April 2010, and have since been to as many related events as possible. These can be divided into three categories. Firstly, official PlayFair 2012 events have included speaker tours involving workers and trade unionists from countries of merchandise production, campaign organiser meetings, day-long workers' rights workshops, comedy night, gallery showings, street protests, and panel discussions. Most took place in London, but also Bristol and Eastbourne. The second category can be described as official Olympic ones, including professional association events and conferences organised around the theme of the Olympics or including speakers from Olympic bodies. The third category involved events organised by academic networks focusing on or related in some way to the campaign and/or the Olympics.

¹¹⁸ Although Skype can allow two-way video, Blom was using equipment that only allowed her to see me. King and Horrocks (2010: 84-85) also point out the slight delay in communication that can occur and how disconcerting these issues can be, but found Skype to be the best service available to date. I also found that presentation of self as an interviewer extended beyond my attire to my room as the backdrop. Home was used to ensure privacy and good connection, and the setting made to look as professional as possible.

It was important to be clear about the nature of my participation (May, 1997: 138-141). This varied slightly depending on the event, but nearly all were public forums so access was unproblematic. Where appropriate I was clear about the nature of my interest, and I prepared for attendance by researching who would be taking part. In most cases I saw my role as observer and took care to impact proceedings as little as possible. I was interested in what questions the audience asked, rather than using this as a forum for asking my own. Simply observing was not always possible, as discussed with the leaflets, especially as campaign organisers got to know me. For example, during a day-long workshop on workers' rights to promote PlayFair 2012, I found myself leading a group because I mentioned a knowledge of 'carrot-mobbing'.¹¹⁹ My position was therefore in constant negotiation depending on circumstance. Reciprocity was involved due to obligations felt for the time and access organisers gave me (DeWalt & DeWalt, 2002: 141-142); however I attempted to balance this against the complication of overtly 'taking sides' (Hammersley, 2000). Wherever possible, I was guided by my data needs. Throughout I kept records of my experiences, decisions made, and rationale so not as to rely on memory (Gilbert, 1993: 161-162). This also allowed me to follow up any contacts, leading to some of the interviews described.

I also conducted a series of small experiments. The idea arose from a PlayFair 2012 event, when organisers suggested anyone buying Olympics merchandise should use the chance to question where the item was made and under what conditions. I decided to try this when the London 2012 official shops were opened, with the first being at St Pancras International Station (Figure 32).



Figure 32: The Flagship London 2012 store opened July 2010, St. Pancras International

Table 2 presents the details of stores visited and items purchased. The aim was to see whether London 2012 retail employees had been informed of the 'ethical' procurement

¹¹⁹ This form of consumer activism encourages change towards responsible behaviour by getting companies to compete for a potential reward or 'carrot', usually in the form of increased sales.

policies used to obtain the goods for sale, and to establish whether consumers questioned the origin of goods or the conditions under which they have been produced.

Table 2: Summary of experimental purchases of official Olympic merchandise

Location	Item purchased
London 2012 shop, St Pancras International Station	Olympic mascot
London 2012 shop, Heathrow Terminal 5	Olympic children's set of cars
London 2012 concession, John Lewis Oxford Street	Olympic Top Trumps set of cards
London 2012 shop, Stansted Airport	Olympic children's boomerang

As pointed out by Gray (2004: 68), ethical issues need to be considered within the two stages of planning and operationalising experiments. On each occasion I surveyed the merchandise on offer, checking labels for country of origin and any other production information. After selecting an item for purchase, the encounter with the shop assistant was used to engage in a discussion about where the item had been made, their knowledge of production conditions, and whether London 2012 customers ever ask about this.¹²⁰ I was careful to keep this casual, so as not to make the assistant uncomfortable. To protect anonymity, no identifying information is used when referring to these. Although only a small part of the research strategy, these experiments offered an additional insight to complement the body of data collected for the case.



Figure 33: Official merchandise at London 2012, Stansted

5.2 Mega-events as opportunities to improve business practice

In considering event-based campaigning, I am interested in how activists utilise or hijack for their own purposes a platform that has already been created (at great cost) by others. As pointed out by Price (2008: 86), this type of platform is a 'relatively unexplored vehicle for systematic communication', and the value and reach of the Olympic platform offers a very particular opportunity for those able to mobilise it. I

¹²⁰ This was found to be inappropriate for the John Lewis outlet as goods are paid for with its own staff rather than London 2012 employees.

argue here that contemporary mobilisations of the Olympic platform for protest, contribute to wider alterglobalisation critiques of the globalising processes the corporatized Olympic Games both involve and promote. As part of this, Play Fair targets the mega-event of the Olympics to raise standards of employment practices globally. This section situates the origins and development of Play Fair within the tradition of anti-Olympic and Olympic watchdog campaigning.

Protesting the Games, protesting globalisation

The Olympics have long been used to promote specific causes, however it is claimed that the types and methods of protests utilising this platform have changed over time and reflect different historical phases of the Games. Tomlinson offers three such phases (2005b, 2008). The first (1896-1928), saw the Olympics as a grand socio-political venture with only a minor economic interest; in the second (1932-1984) the Games were at the centre of the international political system. Roche (2000) points out that in this period the Olympics, as well as other mega-events such as world fairs, played an important role in building the institutions necessary for developing a nation-state system. At this point the Olympics were most utilised as a platform for politically motivated boycotts and actions associated with disputed national interests and identities (Cornelissen, 2011; Guttmann, 1992; Houlihan, 1994). The current third phase (1984-onwards) sees the Olympics as now 'fuelled by the global reach of capital' (Tomlinson, 2005b: 60).

Corporate involvement in the Olympics is not new; even in 1896 the Games had an official travel agent in Thomas Cook (Boykoff, 2011: 43). A step change in its significance was evident at the 1984 Los Angeles Games, followed by the 1985 launch of the TOP programme for global corporate sponsors (Close, Askew, & Xu, 2007: 19). The growing importance of financing from sponsorship, licensing and broadcasting rights, and the resulting sport-business-media alliance, is well documented (for example Forster & Pope, 2004: 51-56; Horne & Manzenreiter, 2006: 3-8). It is interesting to note that for the latest Games, the discourse of partnership dominated, with companies associated named 'London 2012 Partners, Supporters, Suppliers and Providers' (for analysis of levels and companies, see Rogers, 2012). The more valuable the Olympic global brand becomes, the more dangerous groups who seek to challenge it are seen to

be - including Play Fair. As a consequence, corporate interests are increasingly protected through heightened security, legal controls, and PR efforts (Lenskyj, 2000; Price, 2008: 89; Sugden, 2012).¹²¹ Lenskyj (2000: 195) likens the International Olympics Committee (IOC) to a TNC, and the interlocking elites Roche (2000: 233) discusses as central to such mega-events, fulfil the criteria of the transnational capitalist class as set out by Sklair (2001) and discussed in Chapter 1. The fractions of this class clearly correlate with Olympic organisation: the owners and controllers of TNCs; globalising politicians and bureaucrats; globalising professionals; and merchants and media. Therefore, following Lenskyj, it is appropriate to use the concept 'Olympic industry' to 'draw attention to the characteristics it shares with other global corporations', whereas the more benign labels favoured by officials of Olympic 'movement' or 'family' serve to 'promote mystique and elitism whilst obscuring the power and profit motives that underlie Olympic-related ventures' (Lenskyj, 2008: 1-2).

The current phase of the Olympics then is characterised by corporate finance, commodification, and global consumerism. In this, the Games reflect (as well as promote) wider processes of globalisation. Relatedly, the current phase of utilising the Olympics as a platform for protest is characterised by contestation over the prioritising of corporate interests. In this, protests can be seen to reflect (as well as promote) wider alterglobalisation critiques of globalising capitalism. Protesting the Olympic Games, can involve protesting globalisation. This means the Games provide an interesting context for the study of CSR and contested claims over where responsibility lies. Roche (2006) recognises the impact of complex processes of globalisation on the Games, and calls for more study of the corporate and political roles the Olympics now play in building notions of global society. UK social science interest in the London Games has generated specialist conferences and journal issues (for example Silk, 2011). However, globalisation studies rarely draw on the Olympics when exploring macro theories of contemporary social change, even though they illustrate how the 'practices and ideologies of global capital and transnational corporations' are operationalised (Tomlinson, 2005b: 49-50). Indeed, Tomlinson (2005b: 49) points out that Sklair makes

¹²¹ For example, Vancouver passed a by-law for the 2010 Winter Games to criminalise anti-Olympic placards, with Boykoff describing a visit to Olympic areas as 'like entering some sort of immaculate repression zone' (2011: 41). Fears of 'ambush marketing' also increase (Tomlinson, 2008: 79-80), with the UK Government 'tweaking' laws so individuals can be fined up to £20,000 for stunts to promote a company during 2012 coverage (BBC News, 14 October, 2011).

no mention of the IOC when discussing the transnational capitalist class, although as discussed above, IOC members meet the criteria well. Furthermore, attempts to understand the relationship between global social movements and sport are, as yet, limited.¹²² This is two-way, dynamic, and evolving.¹²³ A relevant contribution is the typology of alterglobalisation and sport presented by Harvey et al. categorising the different organisational forms and motivations involved; interestingly they include PlayFair 2008 and position this as a non-sport based reformist group working for social change (2009: 393-394).

Focusing specifically on Olympic protest, Boykoff (2011: 45) compares the Games to the global summits of the WTO and G20. Like these, the Olympics is becoming a focus for alterglobalisation activists, with protests around the Games seen as similar to the parallel summits and activism targeting the meetings of these global institutions. A review of recent Olympic Games shows that anti-Olympic campaigns and grassroots watchdogs often focus on local impacts in host or bid cities, such as: threats to civil rights and press freedom, housing crises such as the criminalisation of homelessness, forced evictions and rising prices, and environmental degradation – all costs disproportionately borne by the least advantaged (Boykoff, 2011; Lenskyj, 2000, 2002, 2008; Powell & Marrero-Guillamón, 2012; Shaw, 2008). For example, campaigns focused on the Vancouver Olympics included: No Games 2010, Olympic Resistance Network, and No 2010 Winter Olympics on Stolen Native Land (Boykoff, 2011; Shaw, 2008); and for Beijing included: Free Tibet groups, Falun Gong supporters, a Global Human Rights Torch Relay, freedom of the press activists, and those working to highlight human rights abuses in Darfur and China's involvement with the Sudanese regime (deLisle, 2008; Jarvie, Hwang, & Brennan, 2008; Price, 2008). Campaigns that focus beyond one Olympic event have been more limited to date, such as the International Network Against the Olympic Games, and the Anti-Olympics People's Network - which initially focused on the 1998 Nagano Winter Games in Japan but continued (Lenskyj, 2000: 119-124); as well as examples on specific issues, such as Play Fair and labour rights. In addition, some local coalitions in bid and host cities draw

¹²² Examples include Goldblatt's study of football and global civil society as odd 'bedfellows' (2007).

¹²³ This is true of many areas working out relations to a dynamic global civil society, see for example Waterman and Timms on trade union internationalism (2004).

in transnational civil society organisations, such as Greenpeace in Sydney and Amnesty International in China.

However anti-Olympic campaigns do not constitute a 'social movement' in itself, and according to Boykoff are better understood as 'event coalitions', bringing a convergence of movements around the Olympic event (2011: 46). In the case of Play Fair this is a continually renewing coalition, able to learn and develop from each Olympic chapter. The need for dynamism and variety of organising forms is recognised as important for all areas of civil society (Anheier & Themudo, 2002), and organising at the global level brings both particular challenges and benefits (Bandy & Smith, 2005; Scholte & Timms, 2009). Utilising global platforms is one of the ways that groups can try to promote their cause at the transnational level (Price, 2008: 88). I now consider Play Fair and its use of the Olympic platform to promote the cause of labour rights.

The evolution of Play Fair: Each event a new chapter

As introduced in Chapter 1, the Play Fair campaign was officially launched in March 2004 to target the Athens Summer Olympics. Sam Guerney (TUC) explained in interview that this came about after successful collaborations at the 2000 Sydney Games, aiming to:

...use the hook – unashamedly – of the biggest sporting event in the world, to try to focus people's attention on supply chains in what is obviously a very exploitative industry.

Strategies have included: public awareness raising through events, educational materials and protests; investigations into factory conditions, press releases and accessible reports; liaising with other campaigns; and negotiations with the IOC and NOCs, companies, governments, and standards associations. Simultaneously at the national level, coordinators were asked to target NOCs and B brands – those that had so far been subjected to less attention than the biggest sportswear companies. Umbro was one; Miller (Northumbria University) told of their early influence on its CSR approach:

The interesting thing is that at that time they didn't have a CSR function, so their global sourcing person came [to meeting]. Then one of the immediate things they did was to appoint a CSR person...

Guerney (TUC, interview) also explained how this early campaign resulted in the British Olympic Committee (BOC) changing its uniform supplier for the Athens Games as, to the surprise of the BOC, the country of production had been misrepresented.



Figure 34: First official campaign in Athens with Acropolis in background (Play Fair)

The campaign built on the experiences of Athens, with some campaigning at the 2006 Winter Olympics in Torino. According to Cappatto and Pennatto, the Torino Organising Committee 'initiated a dialogue in a climate of mutual openness' with Play Fair (2006: 15). The campaign then evolved into PlayFair 2008 focused on the Beijing Olympics. This involved similar groups, although Oxfam made a political decision to withdraw as a formal partner in case its fieldworkers in China were compromised (interview: Miller, Northumbria University). 2008 was a particularly significant opportunity for the campaign because of China's poor human and labour rights record, and due to the region's influential role in the growth of global outsourcing. A report on labour violations in four Chinese factories by PlayFair 2008 (2007) was reported internationally (for example Fong & Zhou, 2007; Mei & Sue, 2007), and pressurised authorities to act.

The campaign capitalised on China's desire to use the Olympics to improve 'global perceptions of the quality of domestically produced goods' (Price, 2008: 102). A great deal of publicity and campaign material was generated, building on previous campaign experiences and the securing of resources. An example is presented in Figure 35, where images and language are used to highlight alleged irresponsible treatment of workers before setting out where lines of responsibility can be drawn: i.e. with the Olympic officials, companies, athletes, teams. An appeal for action is included, so those

responsible could be pressured. Miller (Northumbria University, interview) told how there was a change a strategy at this point, to focus investigation and publicity of IOC supply chains for the Games rather than only sportswear sponsors, so including all official merchandise (such as in previous Figure 33).

<p>BEIJING 2008: TIME FOR CHANGE</p> <p>It's Olympics time again.</p> <p>The Olympics brings to mind sports, the five rings... a spirit of fair play.</p> <p>But not only is it time for sport, it's also time for profit. Big profits.</p> <p>The Beijing Olympics may become the most profitable Olympics in the Games' history. The marketing income of the Beijing Organising Committee of the Olympic Games has been pegged at over US\$1 billion. It's estimated that the sale of official Beijing Games mascots alone will bring in profits of more than US\$300 million.</p> <p>The sportswear industry, valued at some US\$3 billion in 2005 and continuing to grow, is also a key player in the Olympic "industry", ready to shell out big bucks to link their brands to this much-anticipated sporting event.</p> <p>According to reports, sportswear giant Adidas paid some US\$70 million just to sponsor the Beijing Olympics.</p> <p>Meanwhile the workers that actually make the goods that bear the Olympic logo aren't profiting at all. Research into conditions at factories producing Olympic-licensed products turned up numerous serious rights violations. The same goes for workers at factories making sportswear.</p>  <p>Play Fair 2008 is an international campaign taking place in the lead up to the 2008 Olympic Games to push for respect for workers' rights in the global sporting goods industry.</p>	<p>WHAT TO DO ABOUT IT?</p> <p>Support Positive Action: Play Fair 2008 has proposals for concrete steps that sportswear and athletic footwear companies, the International Olympic Committee, National Olympic Committees and national governments should take to follow up on their responsibilities to improve conditions in the sector. Help push them into action! Start off by sending the postcard in this leaflet to IOC president Jacques Rogge.</p> <p>Get Involved Now: See www.play-fair2008.org for other ways that you can take immediate action to demand better conditions for the workers who make our sportswear and Olympic souvenirs.</p> <p>Play Fair Near You? The Play Fair 2008 campaign is supported by a diverse coalition of organizations worldwide. To find organizations in your community that support Play Fair, see the campaign's supporters list at www.playfair2008.org</p> <p>Play Fair 2008 is organized by   </p> 
<p>WHAT'S THE PROBLEM?</p> <p>Long hours, low wages, threats to health and safety – a range of serious issues that need serious attention.</p> <p>Play Fair 2008 research documents serious violations of basic labour standards by several Chinese factories supplying goods under license for the Beijing Olympics, including adult wages at half the legal minimum, employment of workers as young as 12 years old, and employees made to work 12-hour shifts seven days a week in unsafe and unhealthy conditions. With freedom of association banned in China, the workers lack any effective means to defend their rights. Research into conditions at factories producing sportswear show that paying workers a wage they can actually live off of and ensuring that their basic right to organize is respected remain urgent issues for industry to address.</p> <p>"We're so exhausted, trying to get the 'Olympic bags' done in time! Everyone of us works till very late. And the following day we still go to work at 7:30 a.m.! What sort of life is this?"</p> <p>– Worker at Chinese factory producing Olympic logo bags</p> 	<p>WHOSE PROBLEM IS IT?</p>  <p>These problems aren't just something for the women and men who make sportswear or Olympic souvenirs to sort out, it's industry's responsibility (factory owners, brand name sportswear companies, and retailers) as well as the Olympic movement's. As the main coordinating body for the Olympics, the IOC has the primary responsibility to ensure that national Olympics committees and the country hosting the Games ensure their licensees and sponsors uphold the Olympic ideals.</p> <p>The IOC has been reluctant to take any concrete action to address the problem of basic labor rights violations where their branded goods are produced. They, like all brands, have the power to push for positive change but thus far haven't addressed these problems in any meaningful way. Organizations participating in the Play Fair campaign have been urging the IOC to take action since 2003! The sportswear industry also needs to do more to ensure respect for the rights of workers throughout their global supply chains.</p> <p>There's also a role for athletes and teams who are sponsored by sportswear companies to play in cleaning up the industry. It's also important that regular consumers who buy this gear speak out against the violation of human rights in the workplace. The sportswear industry and profit-making organizations like the IOC need to know that the people aren't interested in buying anything made in conditions that are harmful and unjust to workers.</p> <p>Take Action Now! Detach, sign, and mail the postcard that appears on the next page to the president of the IOC to make clear your feelings that workers' rights violations have to stop.</p>

Figure 35: Example of PlayFair 2008 campaign materials (Play Fair)

Also on the agenda was working towards a sectoral framework agreement to involve key brands focusing on four key areas - freedom of association (FOA), living wage, precarious workers and purchasing practices – in one particular country of operations,

Indonesia (interview: Miller, Northumbria University). Merk (CCC) told how for this Indonesian initiative, NGOs were there as supporters to trade unions as the negotiation partners, showing how relationships and strategies have been continually adapting over the course of the campaign dependent on need. As will be seen, FOA held most success and was seen as exemplifying the power inequalities of global labour markets:

The two-facedness of it... employers have the right to freely associate with other employers, but when it comes to FOA they always say give us the business case. (interview: Miller, Northumbria University)

The campaign was less visible at the 2010 Winter Olympics in Vancouver, although some specific initiatives built on the work done for Beijing to increase the pressure on sportswear companies and the IOC. These included the launch of the 'Clearing the Hurdles' website, which scores companies on their response to demands concerning their labour policies (Maquila Solidarity Network, 2010).¹²⁴ Therefore each Olympic event and the associated Play Fair activism represents a particular chapter in the overall, on-going Play Fair campaign. Blom (ITUC, interview) explained that each chapter was organised and run by local campaigners from the partner organisations, with worldwide national affiliates and the international Play Fair team providing strategic and practical support, as well as a means of communicating to transnational audiences. However Guerney and Blom were both keen to point out that the local context for each Games has had specific consequences for each campaign chapter. For example, PlayFair 2008 was run from outside of China due to the political environment and system of worker organisation within the country, so input from local activists was vital. Relations with these allies continue as China remains a significant production site for merchandise, and are particularly important for factory research such as that by SACOM (pers.comm: Debby Chan, SACOM, 24 January 2012).

On 27 February 2010 when the Olympic Torch passed from Vancouver to London, PlayFair 2012 was officially launched to campaign for 'an ethical London Olympics' (PlayFair 2012, 2010b).¹²⁵ However what became PlayFair 2012 actually started when London first considered bidding to host the Games, and it is the unique context of PlayFair 2012 and the setting of the London Olympic Games that are considered next.

¹²⁴ The rating system can be found at www.clearingthehurdles.org.

¹²⁵ The first public event to launch the campaign was the first I attended, in April 2010.

Obviously if it was going to be here [London] it was going to be even more of a hook for us. So we talked to the bid team even before they were successful about what they would do. (interview: Guerney, TUC)

It is of note that the funding of PlayFair 2012 has been more institutional and secure than in previous chapters. This includes a significant grant coordinators were awarded to cover three years of a PlayFair 2012 project, from the UK Government's Department for International Development (DFID), aiming to 'increase trade union members' awareness of the need for ILO core labour standards to be implemented in global supply chains' (TUC, 2009). With these feature of PlayFair 2012 in mind, the next section focuses on the context within which this campaign chapter developed, and in particular, the elements of the London 2012 environment that relate to CSR.

5.3 CSR at London 2012: Targeting the 'ethical' Games

Understanding the particular setting of London 2012 helps to explain why themes of CSR were used to promote this as the 'ethical' Games, and why PlayFair 2012 gained significant success from targeting these official claims. Each Olympic event is played out within, and impacts on, local, national and global political relations (Burbank, Andranovich, & Heying, 2001). In a similar way to global capital, Olympic structures are free to move around the world (and be welcomed) where they deem to be the most favourable legal as well as 'political, financial and social regimes' (Forster & Pope, 2004: 9). Countries sacrifice a great deal of time and expense in bidding to be a host nation for the 'greatest show on earth'. There is much literature about this process, and research into the costs and benefits of hosting is contested (Auld, Lloyd, & Rieck, 2011; Barclay, 2009; Rose & Spiegel, 2011). Media, national and local businesses, potential sponsors, sports associations, local communities, and of course governments, have much to lose or gain in the outcome of a bid. Indeed, 'celebration capitalism' coming to town is an alternative description for hosting an Olympics, with one activist against the Vancouver 2010 Winter Games describing the Olympics as 'a corporate franchise that you buy with public money' (quoted in Boykoff, 2011: 51, 58-59).

The London 2012 bid coincided with a general election and the Labour Government succeeding to its third term. Key politicians, celebrity sports people and royalty were involved in its promotion (Tomlinson, 2012). The announcement of its success on 6

July 2005 was hailed a national victory, although celebrations were cut short by a terrorist attack in London the next day.¹²⁶ Since that time London 2012 has consistently been high on the political agenda, especially for the London Mayoral election in April 2012. The context within which the London Games would be run can be understood at a number of levels, and it is worth briefly acknowledging these. At a global level, in 2012 the world economy was still affected by the 2008 global crisis. Relatedly, at a national level, the UK was in a time of austerity with high unemployment, reductions to welfare, and cuts imposed throughout the public sector. At the same time, some reforms of financial regulation were being worked on and calls for more responsible corporate behaviour and questioning of the current capitalist system receiving a degree of mainstream attention – illustrated perhaps by critical questions focused on by both Occupy London protesters and the 'occupied' St. Paul's Institute.¹²⁷ At an institutional level, London 2012 followed the Beijing Olympics, which was not without its controversies - particularly over human rights, for example with protests held to disrupt the Olympic torch relay as it passed through many countries worldwide (Rowe & McKay, 2012).

Importantly for this thesis, the particular economic, political and cultural context of the Beijing Olympics influenced not only the Games (Close, et al., 2007; Jarvie, et al., 2008), but also the protests utilising it as a platform. At a local level, Olympics campaigning can reinvigorate activism in bid and host cities, creating new communities of resistance (Boykoff, 2011: 58-9). The groups campaigning around London 2012 were diverse. These included Games Monitor, No London 2012 (protesting the original bid), Free Hackney, No to Greenwich Park Equestrian Events (NOGOE), The East London Communities Organisation (TELCO), Manor Garden Allotments (evicted for construction), No Olympic Levy for Londoners, Counter Olympics Network (CON) and of course PlayFair 2012. A number of these groups were concerned with the rights of Londoners living near Olympics facilities, many of which are in low-income areas and

¹²⁶ Sudgen examines the impact of the perceived terror threat on London 2012, involving one of the largest security operations ever, and also highlights lasting implications for freedoms from heightening of surveillance (2012: 236-239).

¹²⁷ For details of occupy protests started outside St. Paul's Cathedral in London, see: <http://occupylsx.org>. For details of St. Paul's Institute programme on questioning morality in the financial industry run inside St. Pauls, see: <http://www.stpaulsinstitute.org.uk/Mission>.

so the concepts of 'regeneration' and 'legacy'¹²⁸ have been particularly important politically in promoting London 2012 as a positive event for all (Lindsay, 2011; Raco, 2004). Most relevant to this thesis though, was the promotion of London 2012 as the 'ethical' Games and the business legacy planned to result from it.

Planning a socially responsible business legacy

From the time of the bid, London 2012 officials prioritised offering a sustainable and socially responsible Games as a major selling point, including a 'commitment to ethical business transactions' (One Planet Living, 2005: 4). Promoting London 2012 as the first 'sustainable Games' and prioritising ethical corporate behaviour appealed at a time of austerity, when corporate behaviour was being questioned due to economic crisis and banking collapse, when the unsustainability of our consumption is more widely acknowledged, and when protest groups can present reputational risk. Association with ethical behaviour was also attractive in the wake of bribery and drugs scandals involving sporting bodies, including the IOC and FIFA (Lenskyj, 2000; Price, 2008). Three illustrations show how official discourse mobilised themes of CSR to promote London 2012 before and after the bid's success.

The first theme is sustainability, with a major development being the establishment of a Commission for a Sustainable London 2012 (CSL). This is the first ever official but independent watchdog organisation created for an Olympic event, or indeed any other sporting mega-event. CSL was tasked to monitor and assure the activities of LOCOG in meeting its promises and was part of the bid team's stated commitment to delivering a sustainable games (CSL, 2007). In addition, a Sustainability Sourcing Code was developed for suppliers contracted through the 'Compete For' system (LOCOG, 2011).¹²⁹ However an immediate problem is the usual lack of clarity over how 'sustainability' is being used, particularly what is meant by it in relation to sport and the Olympics. Lindsey explores this difficulty in relation to 'sustainable sports development' (2008), and Jenkins (2011) in her study of sustainability in premier league football. Both show how limited and contested 'sustainability' still is in relation to sport, but my interest was in whether its promotion by London 2012 included consideration of

¹²⁸ It is recognised that 'legacy' is a problematic term, applied to the Olympics in relation to many different issues (Vigor, Mean, & Tims, 2004). Sustainability and CSR legacies are focused on here.

¹²⁹ See: <https://www.competefor.com> for details of the system.

responsible employment. PlayFair 2012 activists told me they worked very hard in the early part of the campaign to convince LOCOG that it should:

[LOCOG] tended to focus a lot more on sustainability on the environmental side, which obviously we do care about.... but we spent quite a lot of time trying to carry through the fact that sustainability has a number of pillars, and that actually labour rights and social and economic impact is one of the pillars of sustainability. (interview: Guerney, TUC)

Some evidence can be found in promotional literature to suggest LOCOG listened, with all business behaviour associated with the Games expected to be sustainable in terms of ethical as well as environmental concerns (CSL, 2010; LOCOG, 2011; One Planet Living, 2005). I also questioned the Chair of CSL directly about the scope of the 'sustainable Games':

Certainly from my perspective and from the Commission's perspective we look at the widest possible definition of sustainability and we certainly see labour standards and worker rights and human rights more generally as being very much part of the agenda of what we look at... no matter what you call it, it is definitely in there. (interview: McCarthy, CSL)

This is backed up by McCarthy's concern from observation in Beijing, noting on his blog the 'horror stories coming from China about labour' and how 'excessive profiteering' would damage the Olympics' reputation (McCarthy, 2010). In interview he told me how this is an unsustainable way of doing business and of his determination to avoid it for London. The professional discourse of the business case for CSR is clear, and it is interesting to note that McCarthy is an established CSR professional himself, having worked in a number of CSR roles and being the current director of CSR consultancy Action Sustainability.

The second CSR theme is 'fairness', evident in LOCOG's involvement with the Fairtrade Foundation. There was originally hope of London being the first 'Fairtrade Olympics', with the ethos of the Games and the fair trade movement having much in common (interview: Dormer, Fairtrade Foundation). However this was impossible due to the complexity of suppliers and range of goods involved, the reputational risk involved with intense media interest, and due to existing sponsorship deals with non-fair trade brands – which are protected to such an extent that other brands were not physically allowed on site (Dormer, Fairtrade Foundation). LOCOG did agree, and insert in the Sustainability

Sourcing Code, that a limited range of products had to be fair trade certified - including bananas, tea, coffee, and sugar. Dormer acknowledged that consumers often assume the Fairtrade label provides some guarantee of working conditions, but that the issue is complex and varies by product and agreement. Therefore in relation to labour rights, the inclusion of some fair trade goods within the mass of products supplied for London 2012, went little way to promoting or ensuring ethical employment practices.

A third CSR theme is ethics, illustrated by an early commitment to act responsibly to the local community - including workers involved in the Games. London's unique political environment prompted Raco (2004) to warn prior to the bid that for a sustainability legacy to have any meaning, the Olympic process would need to prioritise 'bottom up' involvement from Londoners. Evidence to suggest London 2012 heeded this, or set out to, is in its pre-bid engagement with East London community groups. Citizen concerns about the impact of the proposed Games and London 2012's desire to demonstrate commitment to social responsibility, resulted in the bid team signing a 'People's Guarantees for an Ethical Olympics' in 2005. This included promises on affordable housing, local facilities, jobs and – importantly for promoting ethical employment – a commitment to a living wage (Citizens UK, 2011).

However mobilisation of these CSR themes as part of a London 2012 business legacy has been contested, and not only by Play Fair, with campaigners publicly highlighting the difference between promises and practice. For example: SACOM (2012) criticised 'LOCOG's empty promises' on using ethical supply chains; fair trade advocates found it necessary to campaign for promises on the use of fair trade products to be adhered to (Fairtrade London, 2010); and Lindsay and Armstrong (2011) show the difficulties Citizen UK have faced in holding LOCOG to the 'People's Guarantees'. Indeed, the ethnographic work of Lindsay (2011) suggests the 'Olympicisation' of a city often involves the encouragement of 'community solidification' during the bidding phase, to then be dismantled during the delivery phase. Official London 2012 corporate discourses of social responsibility and the reaction to these then, provide a rich environment for PlayFair 2012 in its mission.

Campaign mobilisation of Olympic ethical discourse

PlayFair 2012 built on the alliance's established tactic of highlighting the differences between official Olympic humanism – claiming universal principles of world peace (Forster & Pope, 2004: 9), and the reality experienced by workers contributing to the production of the Games, but they particularly targeted the London 2012 ethical agenda. This gap between rhetoric and reality was stressed in reports, on its website, at events and in letters to brands and officials. Two examples illustrate this. The first, compares the ideal of universal ethical principles in the Charter to the exhaustion of a worker making Olympic bags:

The ideal... “Olympism seeks to create a way of life based on ... respect for universal fundamental ethical principles.” (The Olympic Charter, 2007)

The reality... “We are so exhausted trying to get the Olympic bags done in time! Every one of us works till very late. And the following day we still go to work at 7.30am! What sort of life is this?” (Worker at a factory producing merchandise for the 2008 Olympics)

(PlayFair 2012, 2010a)

The second compares the world record attempts of Olympic athletes to a race to the bottom for cheap labour to supply the Games:

As athletes put in long hours of training and battle it out to beat world records in their respective sports, workers around the world are forced into a race to the bottom on wages and conditions. (Play Fair, 2012: 5)

The campaign directly targeted the corporate CSR discourse of the 2012 bid team, and those of LOCOG and CSL since, also drawing on the CSR claims of companies associated with the Olympics through sponsorship or supply – particularly sportswear producers. Themes of ‘fair play’, ‘ethical business’ and ‘sustainability’ were regularly identified in campaign documents. For example, a campaign update posted in December 2011 and sent to all supporters and press, described LOCOG's efforts on ethical supply chain management as ‘paper promises’ – setting out the difference between what officials claimed had been done and the actual impact for workers (PlayFair 2012, 2011). Images of exploited workers, children and poor conditions are often included (such as in Figure 36).



Figure 36: Campaign illustrations of exploited workers (Labour Behind the Label)

In this way, PlayFair 2012 presented what Price describes as 'a subversive narrative' and legitimised its claims 'by bringing them into the world of the IOC's own documents' (2008: 100). Such comparisons not only served to question the claim of London 2012 as the 'ethical' Games, but also promoted the idea of the 'unethical' Games, involving corporate social irresponsibility (CSI). In this way the campaign can be compared to that mounted against Burberry, drawing on value-laden discourse to embarrass officials and expose corporate claims they see to be greenwash. The importance of the London bid's ethical promises for strengthening PlayFair 2012's position was recognised by campaigners and directly referenced in public statements:

The point of us being able to hold them to account was that the bid was made on ethical business principles, sustainability, the One Planet idea. (interview: Sukhram, TUC)

Delivering a legacy for London was at the heart of our government's successful Olympic bid. This legacy should extend to protecting the rights of all the people involved in bringing this to fruition, from people constructing sports facilities through to those assembling official Olympic pens, mouse mats and key fobs, right through to those who mine and process metals for the medals and produce cut flowers for the prize winners' bouquets. (ETI when supporting PlayFair 2012 in LOCOG negotiations, Hawkins, 2010)

Strategically, these narratives were mobilised in a parallel approach, involving public campaigning and private negotiations. The former included press releases, reports, speaker tours, factory investigations and protests. PlayFair 2012 made full use of its solidarity networks, press relations, and new technologies. Public work also had an educational aim to increase both awareness and activism amongst wider groups. The important role of education in promoting the Olympic Games is explored by Lenskyj (2008), describing a deluge of propaganda and how children and youth have become an accepted target and resource for bid cities, Olympic officials, and their sponsors.

Lenskyj also identifies radical Olympic education as fighting this trend by challenging official narratives and presenting alternatives, referencing early attempts by Play Fair as a good illustration (2008:127-128). The more recent and comprehensive efforts of PlayFair 2012 go a long way to further this strategy.



Figure 37: Play Fair Unfair Factory Game (PlayFair 2012, 2010b)

Resources included a Fair's Fair teaching pack, a student's toolkit, and a teacher's resource pack - containing case studies, summaries, interviews, games, lesson plans, and videos - to help students question where the things they buy are made and under what conditions. For example, Figure 37 shows the Unfair Factory Game, where players put together components of sportswear goods repetitively and under increasing pressure from the Boss. Constant interruptions inform players of alleged conditions, lack of rights and penalties workers can face in producing Olympic merchandise. This has a similar aim to the 'Step into her trainers' resource pack, to help imagine work in a sweatshop and to create a sense of outrage, so someone must be held responsible.

Student activists Mundim and Parsons, who took part in a PlayFair 2012 workshop, felt this was important and achieved. Links were also made to other 'sweatshop' campaigns, with this workshop being co-hosted by People and Planet to promote its 'Buy Right' campaign to get universities to commit to ethical procurement. Gerade (LSE, interview) told how these connections were vital as many similar issues were being addressed, and much could be gained by sharing experiences, tactics and support.



Figure 38: Boxes of postcards from supporters delivered to London stores during protest

PlayFair 2012 wanted its campaign to go beyond awareness raising, so materials include concrete ways to support, such as postcards to brands and officials, petitions, and events. The campaign conducted research on its impact, and results showed that of those who have come into contact with the campaign 30% deem the conditions of workers who have made a product as 'important' and 51% as 'very important' when selecting a purchase (pers.comm: Sukhram, TUC, 3 October 2011).¹³⁰ The campaign was described as being about:

critical engagement, not just awareness building. It goes beyond that, a questioning of the sorts of systems that are in place around supply chains, multinationals, where the power lies, those types of things. (interview: Sukhram, TUC)

I was interested in whether these types of questions were being asked by consumers purchasing Olympic merchandise, and so initiated discussions with London 2012 shop workers as explained in Section 5.1. None of the assistants could tell me anything about the conditions under which products were made. Most were surprised at the question and none had ever had other customers wanting to know. Two told me that some customers were surprised so much was produced in China. However this was mainly because they expected London 2012 products to be made in Britain for authenticity reasons, rather than due to any concern over working conditions. Most London 2012 outlets are located at international transport hubs (see Figure 39), and I was told that many customers purchase merchandise as presents to take overseas.



Figure 39: London 2012 outlet at Heathrow Airport

¹³⁰ This is interesting in itself, but not rigorous and no comparative data were provided.

A second, parallel approach, of negotiation involved targeting brands, buyers, factories, and Olympic bodies directly. This could particularly be seen in the campaign's official correspondence with these groups (websites and Miller's archive). PlayFair 2012 used LOCOG's own focus on ethical business as leverage to create opportunities for meeting with LOCOG, CSL, the IOC, BOC, and Olympic suppliers and sponsors, and then as leverage within these negotiations. This involved highlighting IOC and London 2012 commitments to ethical practice, as well as questioning the claimed CSR policies of corporations sponsoring and supplying the Olympics. However, holding organisations to account for their claimed commitments and more specifically for the conditions of workers was described as challenging. It was seen as necessary to initiate negotiations with different bodies at the same time:

There is in all of this a constant kind of merry-go-round of people going 'well this is not our responsibility, it's the IOC's responsibility' and the IOC going 'it's not our responsibility, it's the Games organisers at the local level's responsibility', and the Games organisers say 'well it's the company's responsibility', and the companies say 'it is the IOC's or LOCOG's responsibility'. So we need to intervene in all that and so we are targeting every one of those... as they've all got a role to play in improving conditions. (interview: Guernsey, TUC)

For example, Guernsey explained how PlayFair 2012 had been instrumental in pushing LOCOG to develop the Sustainability Sourcing Code. Campaigners even devised scenarios to work on with LOCOG to highlight the need for systems to protect reputation if or when problems in the supply chain were identified. This illustrates the use of CSR as a tool to promote engagement between NGOs and corporations, as well as appealing to the management of stakeholder relations agenda.

Another tactic was to present evidence to the brands involved in Olympic production, highlighting how poor conditions, harassment and lack of correct pay, violated the company's own CSR code as well as the CSR requirements of London 2012's Sustainability Sourcing Code. However Turkish trade unionist Arslanoglu (TEKSIF, interview) told me how attempts to communicate evidence directly with the brands regularly met barriers. For example, some, such as the Adidas office in Istanbul, refused to communicate with him in Turkish, and he described a general approach of not wanting to hear or see what is going on. PlayFair 2012 saw themselves as providing more strength as a coalition to overcome such barriers, and the transnational nature of

the campaign also provided more opportunities for negotiating with both Olympic officials and brands beyond the national level – involving the IOC and the Global CSR teams of companies (interview: Seely, ITGLWF). Campaigners found this to be important in pushing for sector-wide improvements in conditions, as TNCs claimed the need for a ‘level playing field’ necessitates a call for ‘change for everybody’ (Sluiter, 2009: 242).

PlayFair 2012 campaigners spoke of how important concepts of CSR were for their work. However it was clear that most had a sceptical approach and that direct reference to CSR was used selectively and strategically. Sukhram (TUC, interview) explained that the terminology used depended on the audience, as within the campaign they are trying to 'engage people at different levels, different levels of knowledge' and CSR can seem like a 'very distant concept'. Campaigners were unlikely to use the term CSR with students, community groups and grass root trade union members, as it could put them off. More specific rights issues would be discussed, but still in terms of the responsibilities brands needed to recognise towards workers. In contrast, campaigners pursuing dialogue with brands and Olympic officials recognised the benefit of engaging in CSR language with corporate professionals. Framing responsibilities to workers in terms of CSR spoke to the priorities of brands and those responsible for protecting the Olympic brand, as supply chain management was recognised as an area of potential reputational risk (interviews with Seely, Blom and Miller). The public face of the campaign added to this risk and so increased the leverage of PlayFair 2012 in meetings and dialogue with officials, however balancing these two approaches was seen to create some tensions.

As with all coalitions of groups with different commitments to members and funders, the particular circumstances of PlayFair 2012 had implications for campaign strategies and relationships. Tensions were identified in the responses of a number of interviewees. Miller (Northumbria University, interview) told of pre-existing distrust between NGOs aiming to work on behalf of workers and unions working on the ground with affiliates, and how his role as academic sometimes aided his negotiation of relations. McMullan (Label Behind the Label, interview) acknowledged the difficulties:

[PlayFair 2012 has been] a difficult campaign to run and a slow process, and that is partly to do with the TUC being such a massive organisation and us being such a tiny one.¹³¹

She reported that the education work has been fine to date, but the campaigning had been more difficult and had not gone as far as Label Behind the Labour would have liked. Media work was seen to be particularly difficult, as this had to be agreed with the TUC which slowed things down, as well as the fact that the TUC had a working relationship with LOCOG and its processes involved a certain amount of bureaucracy. Such frictions and pressures from organisational forms and methods are common in event coalitions (Glasius & Timms, 2005: 222-225).

Those campaigners who prioritised spaces for dialogue were wary of public actions going too far. They saw a need to be 'mindful of negotiations'; with direct action seen more as a helpful threat - there was always the 'option of making PlayFair 2012 a higher profile campaign if needed' (interview: Seely, ITGLWF). Complications can also arise when working in alliance with other groups. For example, Blom explained that a planned media strategy for releasing research done with SACOM was undermined when a freelance journalist they were working with broke a story in The Sun newspaper without consultation, causing them many problems (pers.comm: Blom, ITUC, 26 January 2012). The report did not mention PlayFair 2012 and claimed that Olympic mascots were being made by workers earning 26p per hour, without days off (The Sun, 19 January 2012). Official 2012 retailer John Lewis, who trades on its social business model of partnership, was reported as 'furious' with headlines of 'Olympic mascots made by Chinese slaves' (The Sun, 23 January 2012). Interestingly, PlayFair 2012 planned to hold a press conference jointly with LOCOG to release its own report soon after.

CSL Chair, McCarthy, confirmed in interview that there was a willingness to work with campaigners, but belittled the 'immature' tactics of some public facing campaigning:

Play Fair are a loose association of many different NGOs and so they are quite difficult to deal with sometimes, they are not very consistent in their approach or their method ...they were doing really gimmicky things like

¹³¹ Labour Behind the Label has a small office in Bristol run by four part time staff and a number of volunteers. The TUC employs more than 300 people and has a central London office at Congress House.

postcards at Glastonbury so that everyone could send a card to Seb Coe to say we should have a sweat free Olympics... OK it is a way of drawing attention to your cause, but I think that if you look at an organisation like LOCOG and the fact that we exist as a Commission, we have a much more mature way of engaging with that.

Evidence showed that Play Fair's two strategies could be simultaneous and complementary, as with the events described at the start of this chapter (Figure 40). Public action presented a credible reputational risk for the Olympic brand and those associated with it, so increased pressure on the IOC, LOCOG, CSL and companies, to engage in the prized spaces for dialogue. Most acknowledged a need for both, with the historic role of direct action for workers' rights acknowledged frequently: 'if it wasn't for campaigns we would not be where we are' (interview: Hawkins, ETI). It was where the balance lies that was contested. Despite tensions, the groups involved used PlayFair 2012 to invigorate, extend and develop their work on labour rights, and Seely (ITGLWF, interview) told that relations between the main partners have been improved for other collaborations. Miller (Northumbria University, interview) noted this as one of the campaign's successes:

In terms of global relationships it has put organisations on the map more, and it's even established forms of relationships, but I'll qualify the word form, between the multinationals, and the global unions and NGOs. For all the teething problems it has led to a working relationship between the NGO community and the labour movement.



Figure 40: PlayFair 2012 protest for 'sweat free' Games at IOC hotel, 5 April 2011

5.4 Competing efforts to define and claim a CSR legacy

London 2012 intends to leave a 'sustainability legacy', and as part of this a 'learning legacy' which includes the hope of a lasting impact on the priority given to sustainability and CSR, and establishment of benchmark policies and processes (McCarthy, 2011). The research identified significant efforts by Olympic officials and brands to capture the initiatives that PlayFair 2012 sees as its successes, presenting them as part of their London 2012 CSR legacy – to benefit London, the UK, the CSR profession, the business community more generally, and future Olympic events. This section shows how this is being attempted, the challenges faced by PlayFair 2012 in countering this, and how the campaign is taking forward its own legacy from London. I begin by setting out how PlayFair 2012 strategies described above, and the mobilisation of CSR within these, have worked to ensure labour standards are part of the agenda for Olympic organisers. The partial victories they claim together demonstrate some limited recognition of responsibility for working conditions, from Olympic officials and brands.

Olympic CSR 'firsts': Recognition of responsibilities for workers

The early contact that PlayFair 2012 campaigners had with the London bid team, was seen to contribute to the initial emphasis placed on ethical and sustainable business in the 2012 proposal, leading to the development of the first ever Olympic assurance body – CSL. The adoption of the ETI Base Code¹³² as compulsory for Olympic suppliers, as part of the Sustainability Sourcing Code, was also seen to be a significant achievement. No such standard had been compulsory for any previous Games. The ETI played a supporting role at the beginning of PlayFair 2012, and was key to negotiations over the Base Code. However the robustness of the Code's approach for ensuring labour standards was criticised by campaigners. PlayFair 2012 supporting organisation War on Want had already pulled out of its partnership with the ETI, as discussed in Chapter 3. In contrast, the ETI saw its role as providing opportunities to encourage change and attempted to contribute this to the development of Olympic procurement processes.

Our role was to get LOCOG to understand the importance of a continual improvement approach, rather than having a sort of, banning child labour

¹³² The ETI is a tripartite body of companies, trade unions and NGOs, working to promote ethical trade and employment. The Base Code includes minimal rights for workers on ours worked, security, safety, FOA, discrimination, child labour and pay. See: <http://www.ethicaltrade.org/eti-base-code>.

sort of thing. That is our whole approach as an organisation, incremental change over time rather than saying "you must not have this" and trying to come up with guarantees of perfect conditions. (interview: Hawkins, ETI)

The Sourcing Code required some contractors to use the Supplier Ethical Data Exchange (SEDEX) for audit results, including labour standards (LOCOG, 2011: 11), with LOCOG itself becoming a member. Limitations were again acknowledged though, and not only by campaigners. As discussed in Chapter 3, both Smith (SEDEX) and McCarthy (CSL) recognised there were misapprehensions that the scheme provides some guarantee of standard.

The difficulties faced in using the ETI Code to ensure working conditions were immediately apparent to campaigners. Firstly, it was unclear how suppliers would be able to implement the Code for operations producing Olympics goods when their usual (lower) standards would be active in the same production chains. Seely (ITGLWF, interview) offered the example of Adidas. The ETI Base Code includes the provision of a living wage, but Adidas do not include this in their own policies, 'so how are they going to for those involved in Olympics materials?' (interview: Seely, ITGLWF). She explained how the 'brands stonewalled on a living wage', and corporate responses did not argue they were already paying a responsible wage, but that they were compliant with local legislation.

A second problem relates to transparency, as arose with Burberry. Guerney (TUC, interview) saw this as a key area for PlayFair 2012, as if it is not disclosed who suppliers are and where work is being done, there is no way to verify that standards are being upheld. Seely (ITGLWF, interview) explained campaign efforts to identify factories specifically making Olympic merchandise, involving leaflets with the Olympic logo being translated and distributed via union affiliates worldwide, asking workers to report if they see it in their factory. It was acknowledged that this could be risky for workers; however attempts to identify factories so suppliers could be held accountable were desperate. Thirdly, it was unclear how conditions of workers supplying Olympics suppliers would be safeguarded.

...suppliers have the ETI Base Code, fine, but how is it implemented in practice and where is the responsibility down the supply chain? (interview: Sukhram, TUC)

This was a problem highlighted in by Arslanoglu (TEKSIF). He had seen new and well-designed factories that are often the main suppliers for big brands; these are audited regularly and have above average conditions, although low pay and barriers to union membership remain. But just one step back in the chain reveals significant abuses. One of several examples Arslanoglu told me of included workers being sacked for joining a union, in a company supplying thread and elastic to a factory for the making of socks for Olympic endorsed brands. This relates to the fourth problem, access to a complaint mechanism for violations to be dealt with.

Campaigners claimed they argued from the outset of discussions with LOCOG that any responsible system of ethical procurement needs an integrated complaints mechanism, which is well supported and publicised. Without this, workers have no official line of recourse for violations of the ETI Base Code, and there is no transparency regarding how well the Code implemented. LOCOG were reluctant to take action initially as it claimed any problems experienced by workers needed to be dealt with on a case-by-case basis, and so denied the need for an overall system (interview: Miller, ITGLWF). After continual pressure and negotiations LOCOG agreed.¹³³ This announcement in July 2010 was 'one big battle' won by the campaign; however it was also acknowledged that, again, 'the devil will, of course, be in the detail' (Hawkins, 2010).

LOCOG outsourced this to a company called Ergon, which could be described as a CSR consultancy specialising in assurance, with PlayFair 2012 having some input. As pointed out by Ergon, this is 'the first time an Olympics or any major sporting event has sought to operate such a process' (Ergon, 2011). However even when set up, PlayFair 2012 argued that this was not fit for purpose, as no systems were put in place to inform suppliers let alone workers of its existence or the procedures necessary to make a complaint. So towards the end of 2011, LOCOG could report zero complaints. Indeed, at a PlayFair 2012 meeting in October 2011 it became clear that even the campaign speaker Arslanoglu was unaware of the mechanism. Plans were made for Arslanoglu and his colleagues to submit their numerous complaints urgently, so the campaign could try to demonstrate that violations were endemic. A 2011 CSL report on merchandising issues did acknowledge some of these problems, but the report and press release mainly

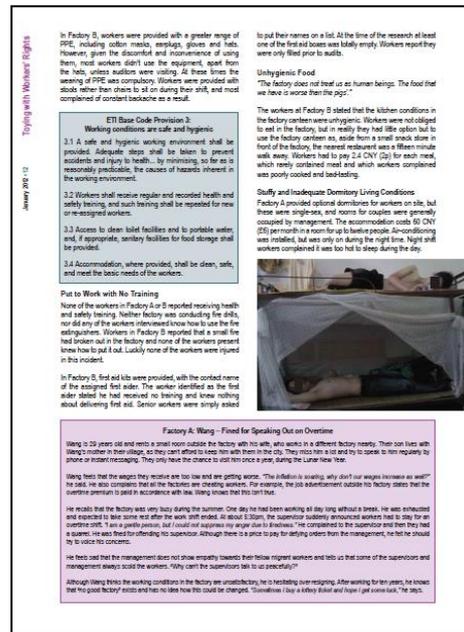
¹³³ For the complaint form and guidance notes see: <http://www.london2012.com/sustainability>.

praised the cutting edge ethical approach being taken, stressing that London 2012 is creating a unique legacy for sustainability and CSR (CSL, 2011a, 2011b).

The situation moved on quickly in February 2012, when Play Fair released its own report, ‘Toying with the rights of workers’ (2012), based on research within two factories in China - one making Olympic pins and the other mascots. As an example of activist use of CSR as providing ammunition to prove the failure of voluntary systems, the report takes every element of the ETI Base Code (in boxes) and alleges how each is



Figure 41: Report of each ETI Code violation (Play Fair, 2012)



being violated (Figure 41).

Significantly, at the same time the report was released LOCOG signed what has been described as a ‘ground breaking agreement’ with PlayFair 2012, to immediately address its main concerns (PlayFair 2012, 2012). This includes promises to publish factory locations, training for workers in China and the UK about their rights and how to complain, a telephone helpline for complaints, and a commitment to work with the IOC and future Games to ensure lessons are learnt. In addition, funding commitments and deadlines were secured, so workers still making merchandise for 2012 benefited (LOCOG & PlayFair 2012, 2012).

Finally, in describing what has been learnt and gained from the campaign, organisers discussed the importance of focusing efforts on brands associated with the Olympics. The efforts of PlayFair 2008 for Beijing were seen as instrumental for pressuring brands

to meet with campaigners, and this process has been taken up by PlayFair 2012 and international Play Fair:

Things are globalising. It's kind of, part of the campaign for us is saying that responsibility lies with the brands. Because say we call for a living wage, the brands say that's the supplier's responsibility. For us it lies with the brands. We are calling [them] to pay a living wage and brands will say suppliers can resist that, and we say you have to pay suppliers enough for them to be able to pay a living wage. (interview: Sukhram, TUC)

The brands who are giving the orders for production have the main responsibility. Locally it might look like the owners and managers, but if there are no orders then no factories... I can tell you the sentence said by the manager of [a] textile factory "my customers are my boss". (interview: Arslanoglu, TEKSIF)

Seely (ITGLWF, interview) explained that key brands agreed to meet with the campaign and at an initial first big meeting they agreed to start a dialogue with campaigners about issues with suppliers in one country. The brands identified Indonesia to focus on first. These efforts led to the signing of a 'historic pact' in June 2011 (Figure 42). This agreement sets out a Protocol on FOA, with signatories including Adidas, Nike and Puma (ITUC-Play Fair, 2011).



Figure 42: Nike, Adidas and unions sign the Indonesian Protocol (ITUC-Play Fair, 2011)

[it is] like a framework agreement, between the brands, the suppliers and the unions. One of the main points of that is to give unions access to non-union workplaces. (interview: Seely, ITGLWF)

Seely also explained how PlayFair 2012 helped to keep the pressure up on brands to cooperate. Negotiations were at a standstill in June 2010 when a UK speaker tour featuring Indonesian trade unionist Lilis Mahmudah was arranged. This was an occasion calling for strategic balance. On one hand she needed to be mindful of delicate negotiations with brands, but on the other hand campaigners were able to refer to the

tour in these negotiations to strengthen their position (interview: Seely, ITGLWF). What has become known as the Indonesian Protocol and Process is still on-going, with campaigners hopeful it will serve as a pilot to be rolled out (interview: Blom, ITUC).

Corporate capture and professional advancement

The London 2012 Olympic Games has been the most significant occasion yet for promoting a business legacy of social responsibility from a mega-event. A review of London 2012 legacy programmes promotes its potential contribution to a 'new sustainable economy' in line with a model of 'responsible capitalism', which is not 'solely focused on financial throughput' (CSL, 2012: 26). This shows the use of the discourse of 'responsibility' to demonstrate engagement with issues of ethics and sustainability in the global economy, as discussed in Chapter 3. As part of this agenda, London 2012 aimed to create a 'learning legacy' (CSL, 2012: 4), including hope of lasting impact on the priority given to sustainability and CSR, and establishment of benchmark policies and processes (McCarthy, 2011). At the same time, PlayFair 2012 attempted to communicate its role in forging these and to pressure officials to commit to long term change, but faced significant challenges due to vast imbalances in access to resources and the media.

Vigor et al. point to the particularly problematic concept of a 'sustainability legacy', describing it as a 'slippery term', with the danger of all groups 'telling their own story' (2004: 8). London 2012 is ensuring it is their story that is heard, by attempting to shout the loudest, the longest, and in as many places as possible. As of January 2012, the main London 2012 website provided 227 publications, with 20 of these relating to sustainability.¹³⁴ CSL also provided a plethora of documentation via its website, including 11 review reports, 3 annual reports, 2 snapshot reports, as well as media alerts and press releases, meeting notes, letters and statements.¹³⁵ Two of these explicitly review procurement policies (CSL, 2009, 2010), and the latest focused on the sustainability of merchandise supply chains (CSL, 2011b).

¹³⁴ See <http://www.london2012.com/about-us/publications>.

¹³⁵ See <http://www.csllondon.org/publications>.

As further dissemination of this 'legacy', key players are collaborating with professional groups to promote the successes of London 2012 and to secure its reputation as the 'ethical' Games. Three examples are useful. In the first, McCarthy, Chair of CSL was a keynote speaker at the 2011 Corporate Responsibility Research Conference.¹³⁶ He explained that the Olympics is an unsustainable thing to do and can only be sustainable if you make a difference to practice generally. The 2012 Olympic 'firsts' of a Sustainability Source Code, the complaints mechanism, and the establishment of CSL were all claimed as evidence of cutting edge progress.

A second example was organised by the Chartered Institute of Purchasing and Supply (CIPS) and Institute of Directors (IOD), 'Inspiring World Class Procurement – The 2012 Games'.¹³⁷ Here LOCOG's Procurement Director Gerry Walsh described his team's success in setting up ethical supply systems. In thanking him, Andrew Coulter of CIPS, described Walsh as a 'leader and visionary', an 'ambassador' for the profession, claiming 'we can all be very proud'. LOCOG was later shortlisted for Best Contributor to Corporate Responsibility for the 2012 CIPS Supply Management Awards (CIPS, 2012). Both Walsh and McCarthy used professional video presentations to begin their talks, designed to communicate the positive spirit of the Olympics, a common theme within Olympic PR (McDonald, 2012). Through this tactic Tomlinson (2005b: 46-47) claims they attempt to appeal beyond economics to 'something transcendental', and Lenskyi (2000: 192) suggests that Olympic spirit rhetoric is used to pre-empt or suppress information on the negative social, economic or environmental impacts of the Games.

In addition to events aimed at professional bodies, political support has been given to encourage local business networks to promote learning around Olympic delivery, with a strong theme being CSR. This provides a third example, in the London Business Network series of events which included advice sessions for potential suppliers on delivering sustainability; and the London Sustainability Exchange with Heart of the City (the City of London Corporation funded CSR advisory), 'Playing your Part' breakfast seminars series for businesses in Tower Hamlets, the City and Hackney. This aimed to

¹³⁶ His paper was entitled 'Lessons from sustainability assurance of London 2012', and he was also the after dinner speaker. This was held at Leeds University, 12-14 September 2011, organised by the Business and Organisations for Sustainable Societies Group (BOSS).

¹³⁷ This ticketed event was held on 10 October 2011 at the IOD, London (CIPS, 2011).

'look at how to leverage the Power of the Games to kick start CSR activities in your business' (Heart of the City, 2011). Topics included ethical employment, environmental sustainability, and CSR in procurement, with speakers including Olympic officials.

These examples demonstrate corporate attempts to capture the victories of campaigners, serving to promote the Olympic industry and companies and professions involved in the London 2012 Games as being at the forefront of a responsible business movement, mobilising the professional agenda of CSR as providing competitive advantage. In addition, the governmental support mobilised can be linked to the political agendas of CSR being good for business growth and for national reputation. However it was recognised explicitly by McCarthy that without PlayFair 2012 and Play Fair campaigning at previous Olympics, his Commission, the responsible procurement policies, and worker complaint mechanism, were unlikely to exist:

The very fact that I am doing this [working as Chair of CSL] means that Play Fair have been effective. (interview: McCarthy, CSL)

These efforts to create a positive spin from the impact of campaign pressure, leads back to the close relationship between CSR and PR as discussed by Miller and Dinan (2008). Certainly PR and the Olympics have a long history, in keeping with most mega-events that wield huge publicity machines, drawing on politicians, sports elites, corporate leaders, opinion makers and academics, as well as professional PR companies, to promote a whole range of positive impacts and to avoid 'known' negative ones (Horne, 2007; Horne & Manzenreiter, 2006:13). However Lenskyj (2000) identifies 1998 as a key moment for the stepping up of PR campaigns by the Olympic industry as the IOC attempted to restore the image of the Games after public scandals.

Current efforts to 'intensely manage narratives of the Games' (Price, 2008, 89), can also be seen partly as a response to experiences in Beijing, the threat of the platform being hijacked by groups such as PlayFair 2012, and the impossibility of influencing all media. Considering this London context and the city's key role in the professionalisation of the CSR industry, it is clear that Olympic officials and related businesses recognise substantial benefits from seeking to control CSR agendas relating to the Games. This could also be said of individuals involved, as investment in this Olympic experience potentially provides future professional CSR opportunities. For example, McCarthy was

frank about his contract with CSL being short term, and discussed how TNCs such as Unilever had already shown significant interest in employing lessons learnt from London 2012 within its own CSR and sustainability initiatives:

There are real applications in the corporate world... I've been talking to fund managers in the city, and there are lots of opportunities to replicate the type of model that we've invented. (interview: McCarthy, CSL)

Much is at stake then, in how the London 2012 CRS legacy is portrayed, and in trying to tell its own narrative PlayFair 2012 faced significant challenges from aggressive protection of the valued Olympic brand.

The challenges of globalising a Play Fair legacy

In her studies of previous Olympics and campaigns around them, Lenskyj (2008) sees social responsibility as the key issue and a key failure of the Olympic industry to date. She proposes that social responsibility should be established as the fourth pillar of the Olympic movement, however she warns against the power of the Olympic industry to pay 'lip service' to principles and codes and to co-opt NGOs in their efforts, whilst still firmly prioritising the interests of corporate partners (Lenskyj, 2008: ch.8). In trying to ensure workers' interests are paid more than 'lip service', PlayFair 2012 was recognised as key to ensuring LOCOG might 'live up to its promise of creating an ethical legacy for the London Olympics' (Hawkins, 2010). Getting its message across to a global audience was deemed by campaigners as vital for generating the necessary pressure on Olympic officials and companies. From his experience of representing workers in factories with poor conditions, including Olympic suppliers, Arslanoglu claimed that that companies will only change working practices if they think people in other places will hear of them (TUC meeting 11 October 2011). This need for exposure drives the priority placed on media relations by the campaign. Merk (CCC, interview) explained the value particularly placed on getting press coverage in the UK, and Klier, of official PlayFair 2012 supporter WoW, told me that for them the campaign offered:

a) a massive media opportunity [and] b) something that we can build on to show that it's not just a Primark issue I suppose¹³⁸... people sort of point to their one sort of pariah figure, and in recent years Primark have become

¹³⁸ Clothing retailer Primark has been the target of prolonged criticism over conditions in supply chains, for example Alam and Hearson (2006).

*that. Whereas we would argue that it is much more of a pandemic problem across the industry, and there isn't just one company to boycott and the others are OK, and I think the Olympics is quite a good example of that because it is seen as something above kind of high street fashion and yet it is still using sweatshop labour and doesn't have properly regulated supply chains.*¹³⁹

The challenge of using the media to promote such messages is great, particularly in relation to the Olympic industry. The economic interests of the media can encourage them to promote a positive environment for the Games (Lenskyj, 2000), so journalists covering such mega-events can turn from 'potential whistle-blowers into cheerleaders' (Horne & Manzenreiter, 2006:14). There is also a documented tendency for the press to demonise or ridicule protesters, for example describing them as 'whiners and grumble-bunnies' (Boykoff, 2011: 45). This attitude has also been experienced by researchers (Tomlinson, 2005b), although it can stretch to more direct obstruction (Lenskyj, 2000). Exposés do exist (such as Jennings, 1996; Shaw, 2008), however the Olympics has not yet been subjected to the same degree of media or academic scrutiny as other drivers of global capitalism, particularly TNCs (Lenskyj, 2008: 2-3).

Even when campaigners have put forward specific claims of irresponsible behaviour, London 2012 developed structures and procedures to quickly protect the image of the Games and the CSR legacy being created. Two examples illustrate this: firstly when MP Tessa Jowell publicly questioned the decision for TNC Dow Chemical to be involved in sponsoring equipment for London 2012 (and as a global sponsor), and secondly when The Sun published SACOM's research on workers making Olympic mascots (19 January 2012). In both examples, and others seen, London 2012 swiftly responded, stating how serious it was being taken and that investigations were underway. It is of note that official responses came from CSL rather than LOCOG, and full disclosure was promoted, with original correspondence, updates on progress and final reports being posted publicly.

This strategic approach to managing the ethical image of London 2012 has benefits. The Commission was able to take all the attention that suggestions of irresponsible behaviour create, giving LOCOG somewhere to refer campaigners and press to. Analysis of the London 2012 website and press releases, particularly around the time of

¹³⁹ PlayFair 2012 was a central 2012 campaign for WoW (pers.comm, Dave Tucker, WoW).

controversies, shows that LOCOG remained focused on positive news. CSL was able to absorb negativity, especially important in the London climate of critical civil society. McCarthy recognised publicly and in interview that CSL had become a target for 'the plastic bag parade', meaning the numerous and diverse groups who want to use the Olympic platform to promote their own cause, such as allotment holders, air quality and environmental groups (in interview and McCarthy, 2011). He stated how these types of groups mainly wanted to be listened to and to feel that their points had been heard, and that they were often happy to get a reference or footnote in one of the Commission's reports.

PlayFair 2012 were part of those targeting CSL for a response, and were certainly not content with a footnote or even a whole report about sustainable supply chains (CSL, 2011b). The campaign was careful to acknowledge progress made, highlighted its own role in this, but attempted to get across to the public what it saw happening in reality – the gap between rhetoric and reality again. An example is their public statement 'Paper promises, more to be done' (PlayFair 2012, 2011). This mobilisation of CSR to highlight the 'gap' is similar to the Keep Burberry British attempts to target the TNC's CSR policies and the CSR associations it was member of. However Smith (SEDEX, interview) pointed out that SEDEX had not been approached about any labour issues and were rarely contacted by campaigners – which he found surprising as there could be scope for them to raise issues with members.

PlayFair 2012 claims of 'paper promises' that 'look good in sustainability reports' (2011) can be likened to the 'hollowed-out form of sustainable development' accusation made by Hayes and Horne (2011: 749) regarding London 2012 approaches to environmental stewardship. Indeed, the more radical of the CSL Commissioners who eventually resigned and then led the 'Greenwash Gold' campaign, felt officials defended the Olympic partner's image at all costs:

I was shocked to see that the result of our investigation was a public statement from the commission that essentially portrays Dow as a responsible company. I had been providing information about Bhopal to commission members and I was stunned that it publicly repeated Dow's line that it bears no responsibility for Bhopal. (Meredith Alexander quoted in *The Guardian*, 26 January 2012)

PlayFair 2012 did go beyond most groups' efforts to target CLS, as on-going relationships were built. For example, whilst still a CSL commissioner, I met Meredith Alexander (ActionAid), as she attended some PlayFair 2012 events and listened to complaints made; and Guerny (TUC) contributed to the development of the complaints system with Ergon. He also reported that an independent committee had been set up to oversee its implementation including members recommended by PlayFair 2012. I later discovered interviewee Doug Miller was one, and he told me of his continued disappointment in progress after its meeting in December 2011. These developing relationships could place campaigners in risk of what Lenjky terms 'co-option' (2008: Ch 8); however trade unionists in particular prized such opportunities for dialogue, and as has been shown, multiple strategies were utilised at the same time.

CSL not only responded efficiently on behalf of London 2012, but further utilised the CSR legacy by promoting positive press. Official responses to criticisms of the ETI Base Code implementation illustrate this. The PR strategy acknowledged the problems briefly, claimed restricted responsibility due to corporate confidentiality and commercial sensitivity in supply chain management, and went on to again emphasise the positive ethical legacy London 2012 is generating. For example, as mentioned above, CSL's (2011b) report on merchandise did include recommendations on communicating details of the complaints mechanism and improved transparency. However the headline finding reported and issued in the press release was that 'LOCOG's sustainability merchandising efforts are, to date, the best the Olympics and Paralympics have ever seen' (2011a); and again the legacy for business was explicitly referred to:

We recognise that there are some sustainability issues which LOCOG can't solve on its own; however, we believe that by fully engaging with LOCOG's sustainable and ethical sourcing codes, London 2012 licensees can adopt more sustainable behaviour on a permanent basis. This will create a lasting legacy for UK and international brands and will have commercial as well as environmental and social benefits. (CSL, 2011a)

The promoted CSR legacy of London 2012 then, further supports the idea that CSR is playing an increasingly significant role in bridging 'the gap between the rhetoric and reality of corporate conduct' (Sklair & Miller, 2010: 472). Campaigners face significant challenges in trying to highlight gaps, particularly given the vastly different resources available to groups competing to tell their own story of London 2012's CSR legacy.

In its attempts, PlayFair 2012 made full use of its solidarity networks, relations with the press – particularly through the National Union of Journalists (NUJ) - and new technologies, including social networking sites such as Facebook, websites, blogs, email groups, and tweets, with some interesting results. For example, when Arslanoglu left Turkey to participate in a PlayFair 2012 speaker tour, PR representatives from Nike got in touch with him directly to ask what he would be discussing in relation to their operations. Nike knew of his planned visit as they monitored PlayFair 2012 tweets. The Beijing Games were the first played out within this global media context, and did present some opportunity for more diverse voices to tell their own rather than official stories, including human rights groups (Price & Dayan, 2008). The full impact of new media technologies is still to be experienced, as in the case of Shell discussed in Chapter 3, but Play Fair is already capitalising.¹⁴⁰ In fact, Play Fair’s contribution of methods to transnational activism was seen as part of its success:

There has been some very imaginative campaigning, which in itself is a tremendous learning experience. (Miller, Northumbria University)



Figure 43: PlayFair 2012 public 'award ceremony' for corporate Olympic 'winners' and worker 'losers'

¹⁴⁰ The role of new media seen as an important research area by Maurice Roche, in his paper 'Olympics, mega-events and modernity: Changing models of Olympic mediation' at the BSA workshop 'Social Science and Olympic Games 1: Around the Leisure Dome', at the British Library, 11 January 2011. I presented findings from my study at the third in the series 'Beyond the Leisure Dome', 27 February 2012.

I asked each campaigner what they wished PlayFair 2012 could do that it was not currently doing. The main theme of responses was 'more of the same', with Merk (CCC, interview) seeing the very fact Play Fair still exists as 'one way of telling it has been successful'. Limited resources were lamented, but experience showed the campaign, including its strategy of targeting official discourses of responsibility, could be built upon to create PlayFair 2012's own legacy for spreading impact ever more globally. As trade unionist Arslanoglu (TEKSIF, interview) saw it:

Working conditions are deteriorating internationally, and so the need for solidarity through such campaigns has never been more needed.

Importantly, at present the IOC itself bears little responsibility for procurement policies, and related supply chain, sustainability and employment standards. Instead these are the responsibility of host nations, so any gains made by Play Fair at one Olympics, need to be fought for again at the next. For example, there is no requirement for Brazil 2016 to adopt sourcing codes, complaints mechanism, or an assurance body such as CSL. Miller (Northumbria University, interview) expressed regret that attempts to get the IOC in Lausanne to appoint its own person to oversee an IOC code for all countries, failed, although it did secure an extra paragraph on standards in host country contracts. Play Fair continues to vigorously lobbying the IOC to commit to internationally accepted labour standards at an institutional level, so defining what is required of business regardless of place.

Changes to Play Fair's structure, implemented during the time of this study, demonstrate a long-term commitment to using the platform of mega-events to raise standards in business practice. Play Fair has now widened its scope, to firstly include all major sporting events - so also targeting the football World Cup - and secondly to campaign for all workers who contribute to these, onsite as well as in supply chains. A campaign legacy therefore involves Play Fair now organising for all mega-events, for all workers. It has formalised at the international level, coordinated by the ITUC, the ITGLWF, the CCC, and now also the Building and Wood Workers' International (BWI), with dedicated officers allocated to Play Fair from each. PlayFair Brazil has been launched and plans are being made to target the specific labour issues relevant to Russia and Qatar where future events will be held (interview: Blom, ITUC). An umbrella website now facilitates connections between the campaigns, providing

updates, history and contacts;¹⁴¹ and the solidarity, strategies, and experience gained contribute to an evolving legacy for transnational activism aimed at raising business standards.

Chapter conclusions

This case study found that the increasingly corporatised Olympic Games provides a global symbolic arena for contested notions of CSR to be played out, and the London 2012 Games were the most important yet for promoting a CSR agenda. Official corporate discourses of responsible, ethical and sustainable business practice have been both encouraged and questioned by activist language of corporate irresponsibility. CSR has been described as an ideological movement, contributing to shifting and contested relations of power between major societal institutions, at the levels of business, states and civil society (Banerjee, 2008; Bendell & Bendell, 2007; Habisch, 2005); and the Olympic industry has a key role to play. It is argued that the 'ethical' promises of London 2012 reflect the growing practice of participation in global corporate agendas of CSR. The transnational practices of the corporatised Games, now fuelled by global capital, contribute to how responsibility is being defined in a global economy. Fractions of the transnational capitalist class influence these agendas through the systems and structures of Olympic organisation, sponsorship and purchasing; and attempt to resist activist challenges. Official efforts to create and protect a CSR legacy from London 2012 demonstrates the importance placed on CSR meaning, with the value of the Olympic brand, and also political, professional and corporate reputations, at stake.

The relationship between the Olympics and capitalist globalisation is very much two way, in that the Olympics is a global brand within the system as well as a driver of it. Sport itself can be seen as an advanced case of globalisation, and the power of global sporting institutions (including the IOC) needs to be acknowledged and investigated (Allison, 2005). Close et al. identify an Olympic Social Compact, within which the collective power of the IOC and their partners (both governmental and corporate) 'steer the process of globalisation' (2007: 2 and ch 4). This was distinctly apparent at the Beijing Olympics which acted as 'a catalyst... for the expansion of capitalist and

¹⁴¹ This can be found at: www.play-fair.org.

consumer markets in the post-communist world' (Tomlinson, 2008: 79). It is argued that contemporary mobilisations of the Olympic platform can reflect wider critiques of this globalising capitalism – including critiques of transnational production practices - and the role of the Games in promoting these. PlayFair 2012 needs to be seen as part of this movement, as the Olympic platform is used to link the rights of workers involved in the production of the Games, with wider issues of global inequality and structural problems in global labour markets.

In attempting to influence discourses of socially responsible employment, PlayFair 2012 have had some success. This can be seen in the prioritising of ethical procurement policies and procedures by LOCOG – particularly the adoption of the ETI Base Code and eventual development of a complaints mechanism. Whether these measures bring change to worker experience remains to be seen, however contribute to the campaign strategy being taken forward. Building on its own campaigning legacy, Play Fair has now formalised its overall structure and scope to mobilising activist agendas of CSR to pressure transnational sporting bodies and TNCs to take responsibility for workers' rights. At the same time, Olympic officials have become ever more astute and prolific at utilising the corporate version of CSR to proclaim these developments as evidence of their own ethical commitments. This demands of Play Fair increasingly innovative ways of promoting its own message, but also provides more ammunition to highlight gaps between discourse and reality. This is in keeping with the efforts of other Olympic campaigners 'minding the gap' between promises and delivery (Armstrong, et al., 2011; Fairtrade London, 2010; SACOM, 2012; Vigor, et al., 2004: ch7).

Through event-focused campaigning Play Fair also created spaces for dialogue with Olympic officials and companies employing global supply chains, and have secured their commitment to work towards resolving key labour rights issues through the Indonesian Protocol. Whilst rightly described as 'historic', the related negotiations created a need to temper public strategies. This is a difficult tightrope for activists to tread, and within this, selective use of CSR language depended on audience. The willingness of officials to participate in meetings could be seen as a strategy to keep campaigners at the table, rather than on the street. However Play Fair's awareness of this led them to use actions strategically, at key points in negotiations, even if this was frustrating. These tensions continue to be played out.

Study of PlayFair 2012 has proved to be particularly fruitful due to the access gained, the timing and location of the research, and the prioritising of CSR by Olympic officials. The case also involves a campaign that has progressed through different chapters, is on-going, and collaborative. In the previous chapter, the theme of responsibilities to distance workers was touched upon in considering where Burberry's work would be outsourced to. The case of PlayFair 2012 identifies the complex nature of these transnational lines of responsibility for distant workers, and how a global platform can help utilise a CSR frame to pressure officials and brands to recognise them. This research is built upon in the next chapter to consider how CSR is mobilised by multiple campaigns for the rights of workers in supply chains for one particular product, that of cut flowers.

CHAPTER 6

PRODUCT-FOCUSED CAMPAIGNING: CUT FLOWER WORKERS

This final case study proved to be complex, as it considers CSR within an industry-wide context. It was also fascinating. Its timing was unexpectedly useful and brought some surprising findings. Moreover, it connects to central themes of inequality, development and responsibility in the global economy. The study was done at a time of significant change for a number of major flower certification standards, with the future of some in the balance. This allowed me to observe very clearly the different power relations involved in attempting to control and shape how CSR is expressed in the industry. I entered this research field in the midst of these battles, and found those involved keen to set out their claims and challenges to me.

I also discovered a curious disconnect between the explicit efforts put into CSR at the production end of supply chains – mainly through investment to achieve certification – compared to the lack of promotion or even information on these achievements available to consumers at the end of the chain. Farms invest heavily and are involved in continual assessment to be able to stamp their flowers with the right standard. However further down the line this is lost, with many wholesalers and consumers not receiving information or not understanding what the standards mean. Exceptions were found, particularly relating to fair trade, and whether flowers are sold via an auction or directly, also makes a difference. The role of auction houses was found to be significant and under-researched, showing them to be fighting to protect their position in the industry as supply structures change. One way this is being done is through promoting themselves as leaders and guardians of CSR in the industry.

I was able to attend an international trade fair at the biggest of these auction houses, FloraHolland in Naaldwijk, Holland. The massive exhibition space was filled with the displays of farmers and wholesalers, and was quite an attack on the senses. I had already done the tourist trail at several auctions, interested to see how they present their role and to get a sense of how the system works. I had interviewed FloraHolland representatives

about this and its own CSR, as well as the related certification body MPS – based just across the road. I was repeatedly told that CSR is a priority for cut flower businesses, always expressed in terms of certification and how essential this was for farms and for the future of the sector. I had spent the previous days with activists in different parts of Holland who were also working to promote flower certification, but facing great challenges in having an input into how schemes should work and be controlled – despite sometimes having had leading roles in their original development.

However, what really puzzled me, as I wandered the FloraHolland trade fair, was how difficult it was to identify which stalls were promoting certified flowers. Most of those I spoke to saw certification as necessary but were surprised at the suggestion it could be a selling point and did not even always pass details of certification on to potential buyers. This was evident later when I made one of my visits to the New Covent Garden wholesale flower market, the UK's largest. Most stall holders, as well as florists, did not know if the flowers they sold were certified and had not been asked by clients. In fact whenever I searched the flower packaging and pointed out certification marks, most had never noticed them and could not tell me what they meant. When I discussed this with interviewees from florist associations, campaigns, certification bodies and other researchers in the area, few had thought about it or could offer an explanation. This seemed extraordinary and made me keen to investigate more.

I argue that this disconnection can tell us something interesting about the expression of CSR. Pressure is coming from labour rights campaigners, and businesses and industry bodies are investing time and money into CSR initiatives focused on certification. However, the benefit is not seen to come from end consumer demand; as will be shown, it is often difficult for customers to make ethical purchasing decisions because of a lack of, or misrepresentation, of information. Rather, motivation is more complex, involving competitive forces and power relations in an industry expanding into some of the poorest regions of the world, as well as issues of reputational risk and beliefs in future consumer trends related to the work involved in cut flowers. This chapter focuses on the campaigns to improve these working conditions, in a sector heavily criticised for exploitative and dangerous practices (as discussed in Chapter 2, and for example Hale & Opondo, 2005; KHRC, 2012; Morser & McRae, 2007). Developing countries are increasingly competing for a share of the annual global trade in flowers - which has

risen steeply from \$5 billion to \$40 billion in the last 50 years (Woodward, 2012) - particularly Kenya, Ethiopia, Tanzania, Uganda, Ecuador and Columbia, whilst the largest consumer markets remain Northern (Sherelle Jacobs, 2012: 15).¹⁴² The changing dynamics of the industry and emerging relations between established and new actors provide a rich terrain for investigating how debates about responsibilities are being engaged in and influenced.

In completing the case study set, investigation of product-focused campaigning builds on the analysis of Keep Burberry British and PlayFair 2012. The aim was to consider how CSR is mobilised in relation to the conditions of a particular set of workers involved in the production of one product type. As no umbrella campaign exists to coordinate the different initiatives, the case offers an opportunity to explore the role of CSR agendas within an environment of multiple campaigns. The interactions of a wider range of actors, strategies and collaborations were studied to understand how CSR is being mobilised in one industry.

In contrast to the previous two case studies, a strategy was designed for investigating multiple campaigns. I wanted to understand the connections between linked activists and their organisations. How I went about this is set out in Section 6.1. The chapter is then structured around the main findings. Section 6.2 demonstrates how CSR is being wielded within current industry power struggles. Section 6.3 considers geographies of production and the importance of place in how CSR is mobilised, particularly in terms of transnational trading relations and the contested role of business in development. In Section 6.4 linkages between NGOs and academics in the campaigns are explored, together with the influence of these networks on how responsible employment is understood. Finally, Section 6.5 sets out the interesting finding that farm investment in CSR is mainly communicated at the beginning of supply chains, but not to end consumers. Possible reasons for this are considered as well as their consequences for future mobilisations of CSR in cut flower campaigns.

¹⁴² The largest markets are Germany (22%), US (15%), France (10%), UK (10%), Netherlands (9%).

6.1 The case study scope and research process

The nature of this third case study makes it important to consider the boundaries set for the research, and the opportunities and challenges it contributes to the thesis. As set out in the introduction to the case study set in Chapter 2, the cut flower industry was selected due to the particularly problematic nature of working conditions, industry response to campaigns for improvements, and the prevalence of independent but overlapping product-focused campaigning. It is important to note that the cut flower industry is closely related to other agricultural and plantation work, particularly plant and seed production (Tallontire, Opondo, Nelson, & Martin, 2011). Cut flowers as a product are defined as:

parts of plants, characteristically including the blooms or ‘inflorescences’ and some attached plant materials, but not including roots and soil’ (USITC, 2003: 4).

Wherever possible the investigation was limited to flowers and the workers responsible for preparing these for dispatch, however some initiatives and growers were involved in flowers and plants. The campaigns researched mainly focus on workers in developing countries, but it is recognised that the flower industry has global and transnational linkages in terms of trade, power and solidarity have been important. This section sets out the scope of the case study, how the research was done and the sources drawn on.

Researching multiple campaign initiatives

Including a product-based case study presented both opportunities and challenges to the research strategy. The fact that multiple campaign initiatives exist with differing degrees of relevance to cut flower workers, meant decisions had to be made about which to explore and in how much detail. Research was first done to gain an overview of relevant campaigning and the main organisations involved. This entailed documentary analysis of the websites and related materials, with particular attention paid to organisational aims, strategies, network memberships, and links to other organisations. From this it was possible to distinguish four main categories of campaigns.

The first is organisations specifically set up to campaign for the rights of flower workers. An example is the Columbia based Corporación Cactus, campaigning for

workers there and throughout Latin America who process flowers mainly for export to the US. The second and largest category is organisations with a wider human or labour rights remit, within which the cut flower industry serves as one of the campaigns or themes. Examples include WoW, Women Working Worldwide (WWW), the Humanist Institute for Development Cooperation (HIVOS), the International Labor Rights Forum (ILRF), the Organisation for Latin American Activities (OLAA), and trade unions that include in their membership agricultural workers. Many of these individual unions, such as the Tanzanian Plantation and Agricultural Workers' Union (TPAWU), form part of the International Union of Food, Agricultural, Hotel, Restaurant, Catering, Tobacco and Allied Workers' Associations (IUF) which has flower workers as a priority campaign. The third category is organisations involved in the promotion of flower certification schemes. As will be discussed, these vary widely in format and whether developed from trade associations or multi-stakeholder initiatives involving NGOs, so differ as to whether they have a campaign aim. Examples that include a significant degree of campaigning include Fair Flowers Fair Plants (FFP), the Flower Label Programme (FLP) and fair trade associations such as Max Havlaar. The fourth category is organisations more loosely connected to flower campaigns through work on labour or human rights issues, rather than through any specific programme. This can involve participation in meetings to share experience between sectors or solidarity work to support campaigns; examples include Traidcraft, the CCC, Oxfam and Christian Aid.

The overview gained provided a significant corpus of data from which to investigate CSR agendas. Potential interviewees were approached from these organisations to provide a range of representations from the campaign categories detailed above. The initial research participants secured were used as a basis to select the campaigns focused on in more detail, in a network approach which allowed the connections between activists, organisations and campaign initiatives to be explored. This resulted in a particular focus on campaigns for cut flower workers producing for the European market, largely from the expanding markets in East Africa. However, the initial research and on-going monitoring of the range of campaigns, allowed this more detailed work to be understood in the context of the wider campaigning environment. It should also be noted that campaigning work on the flower industry is dynamic, and to some degree can be seen as seasonal like the industry; consumer focused campaigns often target key dates in the year associated with the giving of flowers, such as St Valentine's and

Mother's Day (see Fisher, 2012; ILRF, 2009; War on Want, 2009). Therefore the research included campaigns that had finished, on-going ones, and others that were only at the planning stage, with the overall aim being to explore the ways CSR has been mobilised by different groups in relation to the rights of cut flower workers.

Records and interviews

It was possible to access organisations geographically dispersed through documentary sources, mainly through websites. Appendix 5a details the main sources. Limitations are acknowledged, particularly the resulting bias towards materials in English, as only limited translation was possible. Also, the analysis was mainly limited to organisations that have a web presence and relied on the materials being up to date, however this was supplemented by additional reports and training materials supplied directly by participants. As shown in Appendix 5a, documents were analysed from five types of groups engaged in CSR as it relates to cut flowers: campaign organisations, whether directly or indirectly focused on cut flower workers as explained above; research groups and networks, mainly academic in nature with funding for programmes involving the cut flower industry; certification bodies, which may also be involved in campaigning work; trade associations, cooperatives and collaborations; and media sources, with articles covering specific campaigns or related employment and consumer issues.

Interviews with those engaged in campaigning for flower workers were particularly important for understanding relationships between different groups, which documentary research can only partially offer. 21 interviews were conducted for this case. Through a combination of travel and Skype I was able to include participants from a range of European and African countries. The interviews can be divided into two groups, key individuals specifically sought out and minor participants that were encountered during the research, particularly at trade events, auctions and markets.

The key participant group included individuals engaged with cut flower workers in different ways, with specific details provided in Appendix 5b. A substantial proportion were chosen due to their direct experience of campaigning to improve conditions in the industry, and included activists from WWW, HIVOS, OLAA, Traidcraft, and national and global trade unions. Interviews were also conducted with the ETI coordinator for

Flower and Horticultural Programmes, and the campaigns coordinator of React Africa, as both organisations work with these campaigns and with industry bodies. It was found that several academics had connections to these campaigns through related research or funding, so several were interviewed to understand these relationships. The remainder were representatives of the trade associations, flower certification schemes, and the international FloraHolland auction.

I conducted a series of short interviews with growers and their sales representations, wholesalers, and employees of FloraHolland; these formed a second group of participants. These were gathered on fieldtrips to events and locations, with field notes and photographs used to record observations (May, 1997: 144). Visits were made to two of FloraHolland's auction houses in Naaldwijk and Aalsmeer, where self-guided tours of warehouses and auction rooms are possible. Each provided an opportunity to see the auctions and FloraHolland operations first hand, and to observe how the industry and selling process is explained to the public (such as in Figure 44). Literature was obtained and discussions with the staff encountered, proved useful.



Figure 44: Flowers awaiting sale and tourist explanations at FloraHolland, Aalsmeer

Also at the FloraHolland site in Naaldwijk I attended an International Flower Trade Fair involving over 700 growers (Dutch and international), their sales representatives and wholesalers.¹⁴³ I was able to contact some prospective interviewees before the event, however most were selected after touring the fair and identifying which stalls displayed information regarding CSR, ethical sourcing or membership of certification schemes. A total of twelve short interviews were conducted during the event and details of the

¹⁴³ This was held at Naaldwijk, 14-16 March 2012, involving 700 growers exhibiting on 300 stalls. A programme of events took place each day and a daily newsletter was produced (FloraHolland, 2012d).

participants are included in Appendix 5c. Participant approached were later contacted to reiterate the aims of the research and thank them for their contribution. These interviews focused on motivations for certification and CSR initiatives, impacts from changes in market distribution, the role of the auction houses, employment practices and campaigns, and changing trends in ethical consumerism.

I also visited the largest flower market in the UK, New Covent Garden in London to gain a sense of how these issues were approached by wholesalers selling to florists. Here I was interested in where the wholesalers bought their stock, whether certification or country of origin contributed to decisions, and levels of interest in these issues from



Figure 45: New Covent Garden, largest UK flower market

their customers. The eight businesses that participated in the research are listed in Appendix 5d. More ad hoc information was sought throughout the project by observing what product and certification information was available to consumers in independent florists and supermarket outlets whenever encountered in the UK or overseas. Any opportunities to discuss the issues with florists were taken up. This helped build up an understanding of and to monitor the levels of information available to end consumers, and also served to inform the interview schedules for the main research participants.

It is acknowledged that this mix of data sources does not cover the situation in all countries, either of flower origin or consumption, nor was it possible to identify and include all campaigns with relevance to cut flower work. However, the purpose of this case study was not to provide a comprehensive analysis of the cut flower industry or of every campaign. Rather, data were selected to investigate how CSR was mobilised when lines of responsibility for the conditions of cut flower workers are disputed. For this purpose, the amount and range of data forming the corpus were sufficient. The next four sections focus on the main findings from this research.

6.2 CSR in flower industry power struggles

The global flower industry is undergoing significant change, largely resulting from processes of capitalist globalisation. Up until the middle of the last century cut flowers from around the world were a luxury only enjoyed by the very wealthy (Ziegler, 2010: 73). They have historically been associated with times of ritual, imbued with their own 'language' and involving practices of gift-giving (Berroterán, 2003). Their lasting cultural symbolism is relevant to campaigns for social responsibility, but most significant have been changes facilitated by technological advancements in farming, selling and transportation, trade liberalisation policies, and the rising power of buyers in TNCs. Previously the short shelf-life of flowers meant they were cultivated near consumption sites, allowing the Netherlands to establish a central position as producer and supplier to dominant European markets (Sherelle Jacobs, 2012: 15). The development of auctions in the Netherlands as central to flower sales, and more recent coupling of their role with provision of distribution services, has helped to protect the country's position in the industry and created FloraHolland as the world's largest auction – with an annual turnover of almost \$5bn (Sherelle Jacobs, 2012: 15). However new production centres developed in the last 20 years, take advantage of good growing climates and lower costs in less developed countries, particularly for labour (Riisgaard, 2009: 328).

Supply chains in the cut flower industry can be divided into two main models. I summarise these in Figure 46. The first is the auction chain, where flowers are sold from the growers to buyers via the Dutch auction houses owned by FloraHolland, with the involvement of any number of agents along the chain. Auction house buyers include large retailers, mainly supermarkets and flower and garden centre chains, or wholesalers who go on to sell to smaller retailers, sometimes via the involvement of further agents. This had been the main model until supermarkets chains and some wholesalers became large enough to develop direct relations with growers, a second type of supply chain. Although this might involve an agent, the auction houses are removed from the chain. Approximately 40% of the global flower market is sold through the auction house model; of the non-auction route, the market share of the largest retailers buying direct from growers without the aid of any intermediaries is increasing, estimated to be between 25-30% (Riisgaard, 2011: 444).

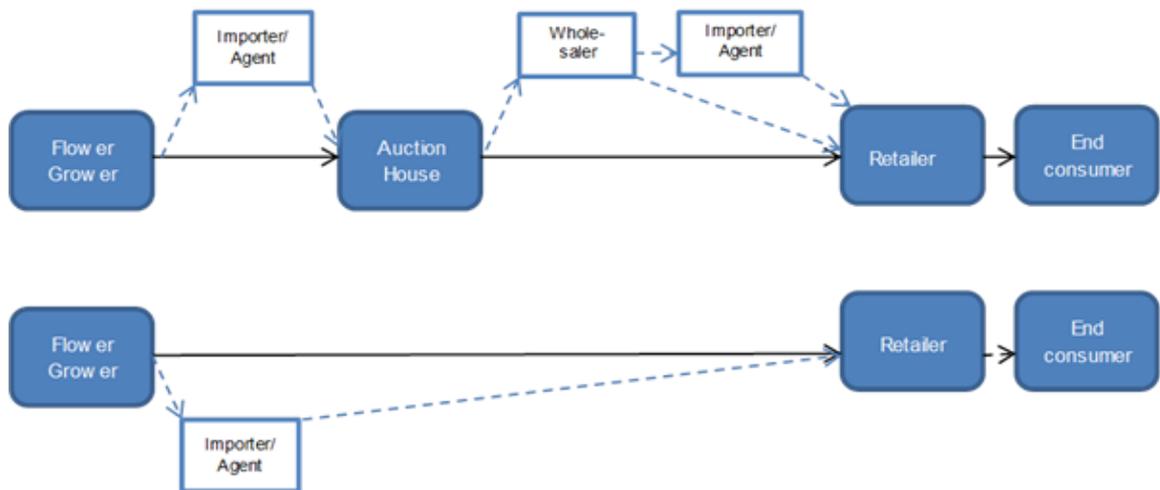


Figure 46: Two basic models of cut flower supply chains

Producers may trade via both supply chain models (Tallontire, Dolan, Smith, & Barrientos, 2005: 562), and some growers aiming for the direct buy model initially use the auction house to 'test the waters' regarding the pricing of their flowers (Evers, WWW). Despite their differences, both these models can be described as 'buyer-driven' in the sense put forward by Gerreffi (1994). Analysis of global value chains can capture the networked complexity of chains today, and the 'buyer-driven' concept is useful for understanding where power resides within it and where pressure for CSR initiatives can be most effective. Most research into global flower supply chains and CSR has been focused on the second direct buy model. The auction house model is relatively underexplored, but my research found the auction to be a key player within current industry struggles and so their mobilisation of CSR is included in the case.

Certified flowers as socially responsible flowers

The proliferation and importance of certification schemes within the cut flower industry and the equating of these to CSR was a major theme of the research findings. Various campaign attempts to highlight exploitative environmental and working practices in the flower industry have contributed to the development of codes of conduct (Barrientos, et al., 2003; Tallontire, 2007), which is in keeping with experiences in other customer facing industries during the 1990s (Jenkins, et al., 2002). This was particularly so for the garment industry as found in the Burberry and PlayFair 2012 case studies. What is interesting is that in the cut flower industry, corporate responses have gone beyond these codes to instigate certification schemes whereby flowers produced under the codes

can be awarded a label to guarantee this to the buyer. Simone Heenskerk (MPS, interview) Research and Development Officer for the MPS certification body explained:

I think because of certification they can show their responsibilities to the world, I think that for a lot of companies it is a tangible object.

This relationship is also demonstrated in academic literature where private standards in flowers are discussed in terms of CSR (see for example Blowfield & Dolan, 2008; Opondo, 2005; Tallontire, 2007), and also in corporate and trade discourses that equate responsibility with certification. For example, Ethiopia's largest flower farm describes its achievement of Fairtrade certification as the 'highest recognition of corporate social responsibility within the industry' (Golden Rose, 2011).¹⁴⁴ This is also expressed in the 'Growing Responsibly' motto of the Kenya Flower Council, which provides certification services (Figure 47). Not only do certification schemes claim to be part of a CSR movement, but growers, agents, auctions and those dealing in certified flowers do, too.



Figure 47: Linking flower certification to responsibility and community (KFC, 2009)

The majority of research participants, whatever their background, discussed the certification schemes as soon as they were asked about CSR within the industry. A certified flower was seen to be a flower grown in a socially responsible way, or at least should have been. I wanted to understand the motivation for these certification schemes, how they developed, who initiated them, and how agendas were set. I found that changes in the positioning of different schemes reflect the dynamic relations at work within transnational production networks and the changing power relations between

¹⁴⁴ Golden Rose also has MPS-A, MPS-SQ and FFP certifications (explained in Table 3).

growers and trade bodies, buyers and intermediaries, labour activists and unions, governments and consumers.

Two main reasons are usually offered to explain why certification schemes have proliferated for cut flowers. Firstly there have been a number of damning exposés of environmental and employment abuses in the flower industry (Hale & Opondo, 2005: 308; Ziegler, 2010: 78); examples include the War on Want publication ‘Growing pains’ (Morser & McRae, 2007) and the Kenyan Human Rights Council report ‘Wilting in Bloom’ (KHRC, 2012). Consumer focused campaigns often draw on the nature of the product and its cultural symbolism of love, celebration and commemoration related to the fact that flowers are often used or given at socially significant times (Berroterán, 2003: 22; Riisgaard, 2011: 308). Many of these have targeted events such as St Valentine’s Day and Mother’s Day to take advantage of this and the media interest generated (Hale & Opondo, 2005: 308; Ziegler, 2010: 79), but also as these are crucial times for the flower industry and moments when workers can be put under most stress (Hughes, 2001: 394; Morser & McRae, 2007: 2-3).

Secondly, there have been relevant regulatory changes in some countries of origin and countries of consumption. For example, in 1990 the UK Food Safety Act made it necessary for retailers to demonstrate traceability in their supply of flowers along with all other horticultural products (Hughes, 2001: 394; Ziegler, 2010: 76). This led several retailers to develop direct relationships with growers, such as documented by Hughes (2000) of Tesco with Kenyan growers. These offer buyers more control over production practices and prices. The power of buyers to influence work conditions is of increasing interest to policy-makers and researchers (Tallontire, 2007: 777), with the detrimental impact of irresponsible buying practice documented by field-researchers (TPAWU, 2011; reports from WWW, 2011). Particularly problematic are short-term contracts, order variability and lead times, and payment systems (TPAWU, 2011: 13-25).

Of course exposés and increased regulation are often directly related. For example, this can be seen in Kenya, where a high profile campaign publicising abuses against flower workers got international press coverage, and was seen to have motivated increased labour laws and an industry focus on the problems (interview: Hoek, OLAA). This included the ETI’s involvement in a Horticultural Ethical Business Initiative with NGOs

and Kenyan growers (DFID, 2004), and the Kenya Flower Council became an important actor in facilitating debate and related certification schemes, with several researchers reporting connection useful to it for their work. The Columbian and Ecuadorian governments also developed more stringent legal protection for flower workers as a result of exposés, but campaigners claim that the capacity or willingness to enforce such laws mean they do not always make a difference to workers (Ziegler, 2010: 76, and interviews with campaigners Alikuru, Gema, Hoek, and Mosha).

The role of trade unions is another important consideration, as their weakness in many countries reinforces the problem of existing law not being understood by workers or enforced. Riisgaard and Hammer (2011) consider the prospect of private social standards enhancing labour agency, but acknowledge the challenges faced by organised labour in the developing countries. Indeed, the lack of trade union strength in Kenya has led to the Human Rights Commission attempting to build a network of grassroots organisations to build capacity to engage with workers in campaigns for their rights (interview: Gema, React Africa; KHRC, 2012). Several NGOs and trade unionists interviewed discussed weak or complicated labour movement relations as a reason why campaigns and certification schemes were so necessary in cut flowers, with those involving local civil society seen to work best (interviews with campaigners Gema, Alikuru, Medusa; see also Riisgaard, 2009; Tallontire, et al., 2011: 434). As Barrientos and Kritzing (2010: 236) put it, local trade unions and NGOs can be ‘more agile in assessing the rights of different types of workers’.

The two issues of exposés and regulatory change raise familiar themes of reputational risk and fear of further regulation, often associated with investment in CSR. The response in the flower industry has not only been to develop codes of conduct but also to establish certification schemes so the product can be labelled as verified. Labelling has played a role for a limited range of products as yet, often those involving the most criticised environmental and social conditions or where particular concern by consumer groups has been expressed – including tea, coffee, toys, and some agri-foods (O’Rourke, 2006). Certification is of particular interest here as they represent an opportunity to promote the CSR claims of all those involved in the supply chain, and control over the schemes can tell us something of how responsibility for working conditions is being influenced in different parts of the chain.

Labelling socially responsible employment

The field of certification in flowers is complex, dynamic and confusing, but is highly relevant for this thesis as a result. Even those employed in the industry or involved in the development of the schemes admitted or demonstrated confusion about relationships between schemes, the procedures involved, and the current status of some initiatives. This is also true of the way schemes are marketed and discussed in the media, with Ziegler finding muddled accounts from journalists that conflate different standards and confuse terms such as ‘fair trade’ and ‘organic’ (2010: 89). Some studies attempt to analyse these private social standards and their impacts (see for example Dolan & Opondo, 2005; ETI, 2005; KHRC, 2012; Riisgaard, 2011; WWW, 2011; Ziegler, 2010), however these need constant updating and scheme organisers are not always able to provide recent data or can provide conflicting information.

My interest for this chapter is limited to understanding how flowers that receive certification become defined as a socially responsible flower and how this is promoted as an expression of the CSR credentials of those involved in the supply chain. Up to 20 schemes can be operating at the same time, with Riisgaard detailing at least 13 in 2011 that included a social element. Of flowers imported into the EU, between 50-75% adhere to one or more of these standards (Riisgaard, 2011: 442). Some schemes are complementary and some in competition. Table 3 provides details of key examples.

Industry initiated certification schemes originating with Northern growers and retailers include GLOBALGAP (Good Agricultural Practice, developed mainly through supermarkets), MPS (developed with the growers associated with the Dutch auction houses) and Veriflora (mainly involving American growers and retailers). Those by Southern flower grower associations include FlorVerde of Asocoflores (Colombia), FlorEquador of Expoflores (Ecuador), and the Kenya Flower Council (KFC) Code of Practice. This last one is a good example of how the codes can cross-over as KFC is a certification body for GLOBALGAP, and any member achieving a Gold or Silver KFC certificate achieves automatic certification with the schemes it is benchmarked with or has a mutual recognition agreement with.¹⁴⁵

¹⁴⁵ These are FFP and FLP, MPS-SQ, MPS-Social, MPS-ABC, Tesco Nature, and Rainforest Alliance.

Table 3: Summary of major flower certification schemes promoted as CSR initiatives

Scheme	Organisations involved	Description	Example label
Trade association standards			
FlorEcuador	Expoflores, Ecuadorian growers association	Started in 2005, includes social and environmental certification	
FlorVerde	Asocolfores, Columbian grower association	Started in 1998, includes social and environmental certification benchmarked to GLOBALGAP, mainly supplied to US	
GLOBALGAP	Originally supermarkets, mainly British, now a broad coalition of retailers and producers	Begun as EUREGAP in 1997, became more international as GLOBALGAP in 2007	
Kenya Flower Council (KFC)	Kenyan growers association	Started in 1998, with gold and silver certification equivalent to six other schemes	
Milieu Programma Sierteelt (MPS)	Dutch auctions (FloraHolland) and growers that make up the cooperative, with FFP having more recent connection	Started in 1995 as an environmental standard (MPS A, B and C), now including a social element (MPS-SQ, MPS Florimark and MPS GLOBALGAP), with MPS A and MPS-SQ together equating to FFP	
Veriflora	American flower growers and retailers	Started in 2005, includes environmental and social certification	
NGO involved initiatives			
Fair Flowers Fair Plants (FFP)	International Floricultural Trade Association (Union Fleur) with NGOs and trade unions	Developed from 1998 NGO initiated International Code of Conduct for Production of Cut Flowers (ICC), started 2005, now cooperating with MPS and IDH to secure future through a Floriculture Sustainability Initiative (FSI)	
Fairtrade Labelling Organisation (FLO)	Networks of fair trade producers and labelling organisations, including Max Havlaar in Germany, France, Netherlands and Switzerland, UK Fairtrade Foundation and Fairtrade USA- previously TransFair	Development organisation, only available in developing countries, with 10% premium allocated to social projects in farms by management-worker committees, added flowers in 2006, but no minimum price guarantee	
Flower Label Programme (FLP)	Mainly German based NGOs, trade unions and traders	Started in 1996, linked to ICC, remained separate to FFP and partially suspended whilst reorganisation is negotiated	

The second category is schemes developed in conjunction with NGOs and trade unions, often referred to as multi-stakeholder initiatives. These also developed in other industries where practices have been criticised (Fransen & Kolk, 2007; Jenkins, et al., 2002; O'Rourke, 2006). Here initiatives involve groups pressuring the flower industry to act in a more responsible way by encouraging certain certifications. These include the related Fair Flowers Fair Plants (FFP) and the Flower Label Programme (FLP), and also fair trade schemes organised via the Fairtrade Labelling Organisation (FLO).

Interviewee Harmsen has been involved with the original fair trade label, Max Havlaar, since its inception in 1988. He explained how this was the first fair trade label to include flowers in its product range in 2006, but now includes own brand fair trade flowers and several national labels. Two main differences compared to other schemes are that firstly, fair trade flowers are not sold through the auctions, and secondly FLO is based on development goals. For this reason, only developing countries can apply and a fair trade premium is included as 10% of the price. This money goes to committees of management and workers who decide what social initiatives should be funded. Examples include educational grants, purchasing equipment for local schools and childcare facilities, funding healthcare initiatives and access to clean water (Fairtrade Foundation, 2008; interview: Harmsen, Max Havlaar).

I was most interested in the way these certification initiatives have influenced definitions of responsible employment for flower workers. Some of the schemes, such as the earliest – MPS, began as environmental standards due to concerns over the use of processes and chemicals that impact the environment (MPS, 2012b). These issues could never be fully separate from labour rights as they involved worker exposure to dangerous substances (Morser & McRae, 2007; Riisgaard, 2009: 330). However more emphasis was gradually placed on the incorporation of social standards, particularly labour rights (Barrientos, et al., 2003). Study of the content of major codes and criteria for different certification schemes shows that minimal rights for workers have become central to the production of 'responsible' flowers.¹⁴⁶ However as also found by Ziegler (2010: 83), some initiatives are more rigorous in terms of social aims than others.

¹⁴⁶ This analysis was conducted on the certificates in Table 3 and the codes on which they are based.

The most useful example is that of the International Code of Conduct for Cut Flower Production (ICC), given that it has been used as a basis for several schemes as explained in the next section. The code is presented in a four page document, requiring companies to ensure all suppliers, contractors and subcontractors also adhere to it (ICC, 1998). The ten elements of the code set standards on FOA, equality of treatment, living wages, working hours, health and safety, pesticides and chemicals, security of employment, protection of the environment, and the avoidance of child labour and forced labour (ICC, 1998). These connect closely with the ILO's fundamental conventions for minimal standards of employment (ILO, 1998), with the majority focused directly on working conditions.

It is a code developed for the whole cut flower industry, compared to others focused on specific issues or chains. The emphasis on FOA and living wage are the two areas covered least in other initiatives, and are also areas where labour rights groups reported serious problems in securing progress (interviews with campaigners Alikuru, Gema, Moshu). Indeed, all ten areas reflect criticisms made in industry exposés and academic research (Morser & McRae, 2007; Riisgaard, 2009; Women Working Worldwide, 2006; Ziegler, 2010). The ICC goes on to set out five steps for implementation: the use of an independent overseeing body, independent verification, regular reporting, a complaints mechanism, and communication of the code to workers (ICC, 1998). Campaigners and certification bodies told me that contestation over certification schemes centred mainly on this latter aspect, implementation, rather than the topics covered. This is demonstrated well in the example of the certification scheme FFP:

There is a general agreement about the standards internationally and they are the ICC standards. There is not much discussion about that. Where the discussion starts is with the auditors and the marketing, who is in charge (interview: Hoek, OLAA)¹⁴⁷

The exemplar battle and confusion over FFP certification

How FFP developed is a complex story and continues to be, as at the time of writing, several parties wrangle over its ownership and future format. This has been a difficult

¹⁴⁷ He gave an example of how implementation can be interpreted very differently in that a 'responsible' employer reporting every accident, such as cuts from thorns, can appear to have a poor safety record compared to an employer not bothering to report any or only major accidents (interview: Hoek, OLAA).

but revealing time to be doing the research, with several of the key campaigners involved keen to explain their case to me in the form of significant personal narratives (particularly interviews with Hoek, Langeveld, and Longley). Much checking and rechecking was necessary via interviews, follow-ups and available materials, partly because the current situation is developing fast and partly because different parties had conflicting interpretations of what was happening. My aim here is to focus on what these developments can tell us about how CSR initiatives and understandings of socially responsible employment are influenced and the power struggles involved.

Crucial to the development of FFP was an alliance of development, labour and human rights groups that came together in the 1990s to improve industry-wide standards.¹⁴⁸ The NGO motivation for building a coalition on cut flower workers' rights came from first hand reports by employees and their advocates in affected countries (interview: Hoek, OLAA). Investigations identified shared problems and challenges, and so a network was developed to work on strategies for improving conditions. The network involved was informally known as the International Flower Coordination (interview: Longley, IUF). By then this group had developed the International Code of Conduct for the Production of Cut Flowers (ICC, 1998). FFP was directly developed as a vehicle to deliver the ICC, through collaboration of many of the NGOs originally involved and the International Floriculture Trade Association, Union Fleur, whose members account for 80% of the value of world flower production (Union Fleur, 2012). This was quite an achievement, as Wildeman (HIVOS, interview) noted 'industry is very cautious about working with campaigns'.

A key idea behind FFP was that it would serve to harmonise existing standards, which could be benchmarked against the ICC and reduce consumer 'bewilderment' (Ziegler, 2010: 89). This could result in a single, recognisable certificate – the FFP label in Table 3. However the process has been fraught with difficulties, as Hoek (OLAA) explained:

Multi-stakeholder has its advantage in being more accepted by the partners. The disadvantage is they all have different interests. So it is a continuous fight... We didn't trust the industry and the industry didn't trust us.

¹⁴⁸ These included the IUF, Bread for the World, FIAN, IGBAU, FNV, OLAA, INZET project of Both ENDS, Fair Trade Center, Sweden, Flower Coordination, Switzerland, and Christian Aid, UK.

The harmonisation goal aimed to benefit producers as well as purchasers, so the complex array of certification schemes would be simplified. Any existing scheme that met the criteria of the ICC could be benchmarked to FFP and join the scheme. In reality many of the different schemes were reluctant to give up their own certificates and conflicts over control of the content, the parties involved, and auditing processes have persisted. There have also been struggles between the different civil society groups:

Within the FFP members ourselves we had to fight amongst the NGO members and the trade union members so that is the reason that in Germany they preferred to work with its own label. (interview: Hoek, OLAA)

This refers to the German based Flower Label Programme (FLP), which broke away from FFP after disagreement over the roles trade associations and NGOs would play. A major issue was how the label should be marketed (interview: Hoek, OLAA), relating to the PR potential of being seen as a socially responsible company or product. For FLP it was vital to have control over how the certification scheme was presented, so they were reluctant for traders to be involved. Indeed, an early interview with an FLP representative showed how it organised publicity itself with a campaigning agenda, but often ‘on a shoe string’ and via volunteers visiting florist associations and relevant shows (interview: Arman, FLP).¹⁴⁹ However, in 2011 many farms withdrew membership and by January 2012, FLP was in financial crisis. Many participants thought the scheme had finished. Interestingly Arman (pers.comm, FLP) reported to me in April 2012 that traders have played a role in preventing this, ‘they even founded a working group in order to save FLP and discuss its future’. So she confirmed that despite ‘many bumps in the road’:

..the current board is now working on a reorganisation of overall structure, including its financial basis. We hope to be able to present the new concept, FLP 2.0 so to speak, by the end of June 2012.

FLP is not the only scheme to encounter challenges. The Horticultural Ethical Business Initiative (HEBI) developed by the ETI with Kenyan growers and NGOs in 2003 made early progress, but the ETI does not currently have a programme focused on the flower industry except for a Supervisory Training Programme (interview: Barbato, ETI).¹⁵⁰ In

¹⁴⁹ I interviewed her at such an event, the biennial Kirchentag (Munich 2010), which attracts over 160,000 people for discussion of theological, social and political issues.

¹⁵⁰ For a report on HEBI’s development and initial fears of slow progress see ETI (2005: 5).

fact FFP itself is currently going through a time of considerable change and uncertainty, the consequences of which provided useful data for this study. Originally funded mainly by the Dutch Horticultural Commodity Board and the European Community, questions over how to continue FFP when this funding ceased came to a head in 2010. Negotiations with trade associations since then have been problematic, with ownership of the label, and control over the content of the code and associated practices being the main elements that have been fought over. This uncertainty jeopardised the continuation of the scheme, and as with FLP, there were conflicting rumours over FFP's current status and future, as Langeveld (FFP) told me:

The industry had many opinions... they thought we would collapse. They were just waiting for us to finish, but they don't know the NGO world.

FFP campaigners and the related websites stressed the importance of the FFP Board consisting of equal numbers from the South compared to the North, and the significance of innovative auditing practices. Audits are participatory, including workers, and involve shadowing, whereby a locally based NGO or trade union representative has to be part of the process. This participatory approach offers more than a snapshot view of the situation. It moves away from 'formal top down compliance' and can potentially 'change the mindsets of employers' and facilitate worker 'empowerment', (Auret & Barrientos, 2006: 146). Such aims separate the FFP NGO-initiated certification scheme from the majority of trade association certificates, and are fiercely defended by FFP and its advocates, causing difficulties in negotiations for the scheme's continuation (interviews with Hoek and Langeveld). For current FFP Chair, Langeveld, essential to its continuation is that it be 'truly international', involving leadership and participation from developing countries, and for it to be 'trustworthy' and involve 'true cooperation':

If we talk about CSR, one of the main things is about power and might. They [the Dutch traders] want to do everything that produces sustainability only if they are in the driving seat.

FFP's relationship to MPS was a particularly controversial issue, with many key respondents (including growers, certification and auction house representatives, and campaigners) describing the situation in vastly different ways, some understanding that MPS was taking over FFP or that they were merging, or believing that FFP had been completely shut down, with others just confused and unsure. In reality it seems that the

future of FFP is only now emerging from the negotiations and within these, control over how responsibilities are defined and regulated is prized:

At the moment it is a power game, very much so. (interview:Langeveld,FFP)

Langeveld explained a solution had been found and how this was being championed by Herman de Boon, a man he described as ‘very much for CSR and very much for the sustainability field’ and very influential in the industry. In March 2012 it was announced the Dutch Sustainable Trade Initiative (IDH) was expanding the products it focuses on to include flowers. The resulting Floriculture Sustainability Initiative (FSI) aims to ‘create a mainstream baseline for sustainable production in the global floriculture sector’ and overcome ‘fragmentation’ of standards (IDH, 2012). Further probing revealed this related to a press release declaring commitment from MPS and FFP to explore new ways of working together, issued shortly before my visit to them in January 2012 (MPS, 2012a). At that time no one could confirm the outcome, but it has since become clear that through the involvement of IDH, FFP will continue to own its label, but will be marketed by MPS who have been keen to use the ‘good name’ of FFP. Langeveld expressed frustration that FFP efforts to coordinate with IDH since 2008 were not taken up until Herman de Boon was involved. This important player was Chair of the Dutch Association of Wholesale Trade in Horticultural Products (VGB), and in April 2012 was announced as the Vice President of the International Flower Trade Association, Union Fleurs (HortiNews, 2012). Langeveld’s exasperation was clear:

If you could see my letters and discussions and meeting with IDH. There were many since 2008 and before I met Herman de Boon... then for the first time they were listening to my questions... so anyway Herman de Boon said bring me to IDH and we went there and since that time things are moving.

Langeveld explained that it was necessary for FFP to now ‘accept cooperation with MPS’ but under the condition that MPS change their structure to include more international actors on the Board, including NGOs. However he acknowledged that a key question would be ‘will civil society want to be involved with MPS?’ One group that already announced involvement with the new initiative is HIVOS (2012, 4 April). As expressed below, great significance is placed on having control over how FFP will work as a potential expression of CSR within the industry and campaigners continue to protect and negotiate the leverage they have achieved by engaging in these discourses:

When it was clear that we had to cooperate, I thought well I have to go to meet [Herman de Boon] to get to know him and when I came into his house he said 'I'm in the driving seat and I will stay in the driving seat'. Those were his first words.... 'we will see' I said. (interview: Langeveld, FFP)

CSR as a strategic tool to protect the power of auction houses

An interesting element in flower industry power struggles is the role of auction houses, an actor relatively neglected in research on horticulture CSR and certification.¹⁵¹ Every year 12 billion flowers from 7867 suppliers are sold through FloraHolland's five sites, the world's largest auction house organisation (FloraHolland, 2012b, 2012c).¹⁵²



Figure 48: Huge FloraHolland warehouses at Aalsmeer (with bikes) and Naaldwijk

Although the direct model of flower supply has been increasing, the auction supply model remains significant, particularly in Europe. Regarding CSR, it was found that both country of origin and country of consumption influenced certification practices. Tallontire (University of Leeds, interview) suggested that 'it partly relates to different structures of retail in the different countries and the differences of their discourses'.

Earlier research suggested a lack of market pressure for adopting social certification for flowers sold via auction, possibly due to loose trading relations involved (Riisgaard, 2009: 330). Those flowers that were certified and sold through auction were seen as targeting 'niche markets' (Tallontire, et al., 2005: 563). Research for this case study suggests the situation is changing, and that FloraHolland is using CSR to protect its position in the industry whilst facing increasing threats.

¹⁵¹ Tallontire (2007: 777) notes that the power of supermarket buyers in the North and the consequences of their procurement practices have become an increasing focus for researchers, campaigners and policy-makers. An example that briefly considers the role of auctions is that of Riisgaard (2011).

¹⁵² FloraHolland's merger with Bloemeneveiling in 2008 was significant for its position within the industry, with 'globalization' given as a major reason (Ingenbleek, Ederer, & Christenson, 2007).

These threats to FloraHolland relate to the changing nature of the flower industry, mainly in terms of rising imports from developing countries; environmental concerns over flowers being flown to auction and then flown or trucked to the purchaser; increased direct buying; and fast changing technologies impacting the way auctions are conducted. Indeed the very nature of the auction model can be questioned in terms of CSR, as putting so many links in the supply chain uses more resources, both environmental and financial. From her work on social and economic upgrading, Evers (WWW, interview) pointed out that:



Figure 49: Flowers being trucked from FloraHolland

One of the interesting things is in terms of implications for workers, if you're looking at the living wage, the more people you have in the value chain the more you are dividing up the value. So if you shorten the chain, then there is potential for redistributing value to the workers.

It used to be that buyers and flowers had to be physically present at the auction for inspections to be done in the early hours. Competing buyers would then gather in the same room to see the flowers paraded through, before having the opportunity to place a bid (see Figure 50). In a unique system the price starts on a huge 'clock' at the highest level, then drops until a buyer bids. The longer a buyer waits, the cheaper the flower but the greater the risk of losing the sale. This system is still used, but technology means buyers can take part from their own trading room at FloraHolland or even remotely as live images of the flowers can be offered. Only a few communal auction rooms remain.



Figure 50: Quality inspection room and flowers being shown in the trading room

These new possibilities, together with concerns about the carbon footprint and the detrimental impact on quality from flying flowers in and out (increasingly from distant countries), raise questions about the future role FloraHolland will play. Discussion of this with FloraHolland employees was met with resolute insistence they are at the cutting edge of technical and industry developments, particularly in my interview with Loek Barendse, responsible for coordinating FloraHolland's sustainability programme.¹⁵³ Although he acknowledged its role may need to adapt, FloraHolland's place in shaping the future of flower sales and distribution was adamantly seen as secure (interview with Barendse, and discussions with FloraHolland staff at Aalsmeer and Naaldwijk). Most relevant to this thesis is the CSR element of the role FloraHolland is currently establishing for itself. This has four aspects.

Firstly, FloraHolland claims a unique position in being able to keep its members informed of current trend developments in CSR. An example is FloraHolland's news report on how several German retailers buying through the auction (including Aldi) will only purchase certified flowers from 1 January 2012, concluding that 'Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) is becoming an increasingly hot topic when it comes to public opinion in Europe' (FloraHolland, 2011b). Barendse (FloraHolland) explained further:

We have been supporting this for a long time, and what we now especially do... is for the last few months we have made special publications about what is happening in retail and some of our buyers are telling stories that 'my customers are demanding [certification] from growers, and if you don't have it we don't buy it...

Secondly, FloraHolland is attempting to 'lead by example' through investment in its own CSR strategy, including gaining MPS certification of its own auction practices:

When you are part of the chain for these types of products you also have to be certified yourself. It is not logical to growers that we say you must take care to be certified and not do it yourself. (interview: Barendse, FloraHolland)

It was clear FloraHolland is creating a platform for itself as at the cutting edge of sustainability and CSR. Its role in developing one of the first flower standards, MPS, was repeatedly stressed as proof of how FloraHolland has taken a lead in CSR since 1995 (interviews, Barendse and Heenskerk). Although MPS is now officially

¹⁵³ He has worked at FloraHolland more than 20 years and was involved in developing MPS from its start.

independent of FloraHolland, close links remain obvious. The MPS offices in Naaldwijk are only across the road from FloraHolland, and it continues to subsidise MPS membership:

We pay about 40% of the costs to support growers and make it attractive to join the MPS programme... We think it is very important for the flower business to also bring the message outside that we work in a good way and if we are asked then we can provide good information about how the flowers are produced. (interview: Barendse, FloraHolland)



Figure 51: MPS in Horti Business Centre (right) with FloraHolland behind

The growing importance of its CSR strategy is reflected in the increasing space given to the topic in FloraHolland annual reports. The 2007 and 2008 versions had no mention of CSR, with the closest reference being a single mention of ‘sustainability’ linked to energy issues and government policies encouraging sustainable practices (FloraHolland, 2008, 2009). The 2009 report had a section: ‘Sustainable and socially responsible’. Topics covered related to energy use and environment, but certification, FFP and social issues were mentioned (FloraHolland, 2010: 21-23). The most recent report had a whole section, and was overtly linked: ‘FloraHolland and CSR’ (FloraHolland, 2011a: 26-31). Topics discussed include environmental ones, such as energy, transport and emissions, but go beyond these to cover training and sustainable supply chain issues, including certification, and others such as charitable donations. My interview with Barendse emphasised this increasing CSR focus. He was also very keen to know of my research findings and to discuss the latest CSR trends and its role in other industries.

Thirdly, FloraHolland promotes itself as having a unique position from which to offer a sales mechanism encompassing the provision of reliable information about social (and environmental) conditions of production. The trustworthiness of FloraHolland’s system was stressed by staff at Aalsmeer visitors’ centre, and seen as increasingly important to buyers because of increasing numbers of new growers from overseas. They explained how each grower has to provide detailed information about quality and any standards of social responsibility adhered to through certification. Growers are scored on the

reliability of this information and discrepancies discovered are penalised by a reduced score. This score is displayed on the auction clock, so contributes to buyer decisions.



Figure 52: FloraHolland hi-tech auction clock and trading room that faces it

I found that several wholesale customers of the auction told me that because they buy from FloraHolland they ‘knew’ they were buying certified flowers ‘as the auction house takes care of that’ (interviews at New Convent Garden). This is not true, as non-certified flowers are also sold, but shows how buyers see FloraHolland as a ‘trustworthy’ source, and this is encouraged by FloraHolland’s promotion of CSR discourse.

Finally, and relatedly, FloraHolland is using its unique position to influence the field of flower certification. The company has complete control over which certification schemes can be registered on the auction clock. To the lay-person the certification information on the clock is difficult to identify. Visitors to Aalsmeer are given a copy of the clock with some explanation, however I had to ask where certification was displayed (see Figure 53). This is important as until 2007 the only standards information allowed on the clock for buyers to see was if growers had MPS, the scheme developed with FloraHolland (Riisgaard, 2011: 444). The relationship between MPS and the auction has been key to how CSR has been promoted and how MPS has become such a successful scheme. By 2008 Riisgaard estimated up to 80% of all flowers sold via auction had MPS (2009: 330), however most authors discuss the profile of MPS without mentioning FloraHolland’s key role in its development (see for example Ziegler, 2010: 77).

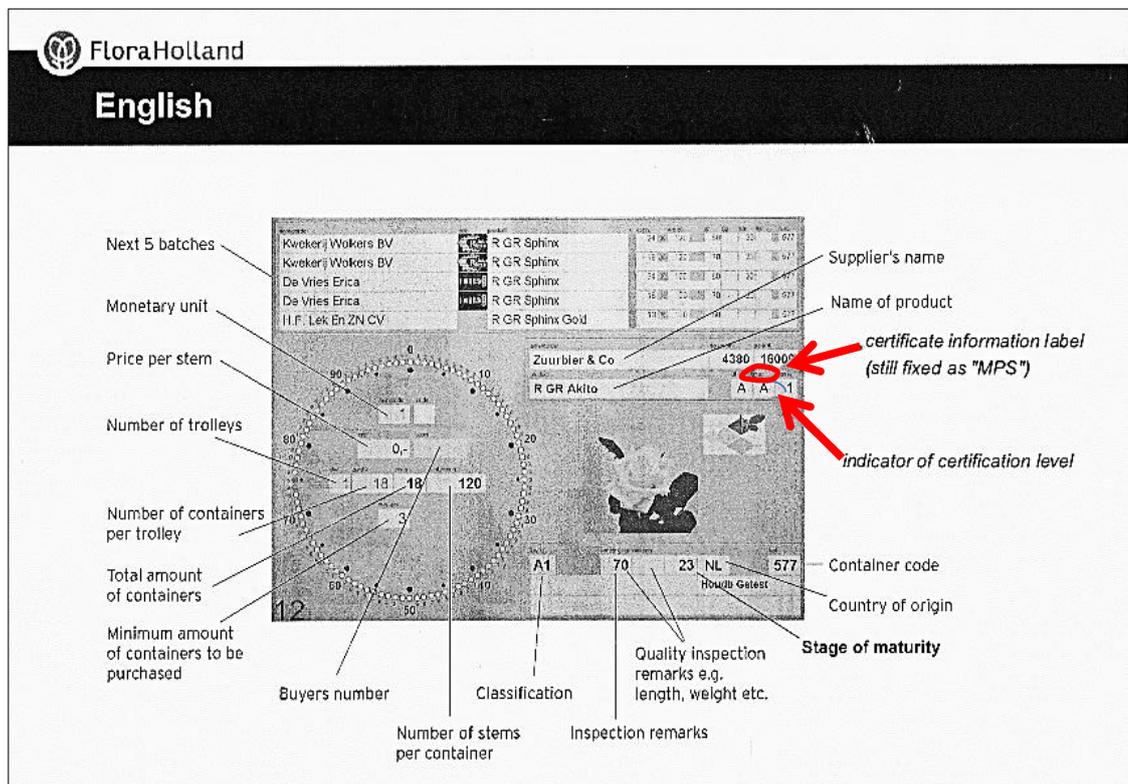


Figure 53: Auction clock explanation for visitors with arrows and italics labels added

After considerable negotiations, FloraHolland allowed FFP to also be displayed on the clock for sellers achieving this standard (Riisgaard, 2011: 444). This was described by NGOs involved in the development of FFP as a significant victory, and was related to the benchmarking of MSP-A and MSP-SQ to FFP (interviews, Hoek and Langeveld). Since January 2012 it has also been possible for growers certified by GLOBAL GAP to have this displayed (FloraHolland, 2011c). This means FloraHolland favour three specific certification schemes and have been able to negotiate the terms of entry for each, with many other schemes still unrecognised. This provides FloraHolland with significant influence over the terrain of standards. As yet, there is still only space for one certification to be displayed on the clock for each lot, but FloraHolland might change this and again its decisions will impact the relevance and value of different standards and associated CSR approaches for farmers (FloraHolland, 2011c). Interestingly, the fixed label under which the certificate information is displayed remains 'MPS' (see Figure 53), then if flowers are MPS certified this is indicated by displaying in the box which level - either A, B, C, or S; if GLOBAL GAP is achieved - P appears; if FFP is achieved - F appears. FFP is seen as the highest standard so is used if all three certificates have been gained.

In considering the role of the auction house in influencing certification within the industry and FloraHolland's efforts to use CSR strategically to protect its position, it is important to note FloraHolland is a cooperative made up of over 5000 growers. These are predominately Dutch, but with increasing numbers from beyond. The financial contribution made by each member is partly dependent on levels of sales and dictates the grower's level of influence on FloraHolland policies (staff at information desk, Aalsmeer). Therefore when discussing the influence of the auction house, this largely involves the influence of established Dutch growers. They described the position they occupy through membership as offering 'unprecedented power' (FloraHolland, 2012a). Riisgaard (Roskilde University) told me how her latest research indicates a movement back to selling through auction houses as compared to direct selling.¹⁵⁴ This suggests the effort FloraHolland is putting into promoting itself as guardians of good quality and practice is of benefit. Yet, one activist was adamant FloraHolland is not yet fulfilling the social responsibilities resulting from its position:

The fact that the Dutch auction is a platform through which suppliers are able to access the market, that in itself puts them on the spot... they are in a position to influence how companies access markets... I don't think they have done much... I don't even think they have demonstrated willingness to do more. (interview: Gema, React Africa)

6.3 Geographies of production: CSR as missionary work

Place was found to be an important theme for understanding how CSR was mobilised in debates and campaigns for cut flower workers. Geographical context is recognised as significant in understanding global commodity chains (see for example Hughes & Reimer, 2004). As has been discussed, flowers are becoming an important export market for several less developed countries and this continues despite negative impact from the global economic crisis (Sherelle Jacobs, 2012).¹⁵⁵ Although the Netherlands still dominates with 55% of total global exports, Columbia now contributes 18%, Ecuador 9% and Kenya 6% (KHRC, 2012: 7). As the Kenya Flower Council describes, the sector's importance for exporting countries can be significant:

¹⁵⁴ This is being done with Peter Gibbon, not yet published.

¹⁵⁵ Flower exports from developing countries are particularly vulnerable to market volatility, with Tanzania experiencing a 30-50% price reduction in 2009 and flower farmers earning less than 50% of what the Ethiopian government had projected in 2008-9 (Sherelle Jacobs, 2012: 15-16).

Floriculture is estimated to employ over 50,000- 60,000 people directly, and 500,000 people indirectly through affiliated services to the industry e.g. farm inputs, transport, packaging, banking etc. If each has four dependents, the total beneficiaries are 2.0 million people or about 7% of the population! The fact that these opportunities in employment are in the rural areas is very important, as it not only stems rural urban migration but also contributes to poverty alleviation, a major focus of the Government. (KFC, 2009)

For this chapter, place was important for understanding how responsibilities are related to the historic context of transnational trading and political relations, and approaches to the role of business in development.

The rooted nature of flowers and responsibilities rooted in place

The nature of the cut flower product is important for understanding the role of place. Unlike the supposedly ‘footloose’ corporations able to flit to wherever in the world offers the best conditions (Klein, 1999; Starr, 2000), flowers are an agricultural product literally rooted to the earth. Wildeman (HIVOS, interview) made an interesting comparison:

In the textile industry the company can move from country to country, but the flower industry is stuck to the environment. It takes a number of years before you can harvest your roses so you have to stay put in one place.

This contrasts with the Keep Burberry British campaign, criticising the company for cutting established ties with a longstanding community to pursue cheaper production in China. Similarly, PlayFair 2012 tried hard to establish transparency in supply chains because of the complex nature of changing corporate allegiances driven by a desire to engage the cheapest production costs globally. With flowers, the need for certain growing conditions limits the places in the world that different types of flower can be grown, or at least limits where this is most viable given financial and environmental costs of artificially reproducing climates.¹⁵⁶ In the competitive market of cut flowers and with the prevalent use of outsourcing, buyers still have the option of moving contracts to whatever farm offers the best deal. However potential options are limited to certain parts of the world, and within these places the farms able to produce on the scale necessary for big buyers, further limits choice. Some movement is possible, with

¹⁵⁶ Although the impact of flying flowers is often criticised, the carbon footprint of growing crops in heated greenhouses closer to the point of sale can actually be more detrimental (Wildeman, HIVOS).

Wildeman (HIVOS, interview) reporting companies moving production to Tanzania and Ethiopia to avoid a current focus on standards by Kenyan authorities. It was also reported that infrastructure problems in some developing countries mean high costs for starting business there, meaning community relations matter and ‘it needs to be an investment in the long term’ (interview: Barendse, FloraHolland). Riisgaard (Roskilde University, interview) had found owners and managers of farms in Kenya to be ‘very explicit about their CSR’, recalling:

One of the audit assurance managers was really clear that one of the most positive outcomes of private standards was that it had boosted their CSR standing in the community... their recognition in the surrounding community.

Therefore the rooted nature of flowers means it is more likely that corporations investing in flower farms, as well as those buying from them, will be willing to invest in longer term relationships compared to other industries. CSR can be part of strategies to facilitate this, setting out responsibilities and expectations on both sides. Contributing positively to local communities was seen to be an important element in activist discourses of responsibility, and standards criticised for neglecting this:

We have been focusing on the workers, we have been focusing on the farmers, but we haven't been thinking about the communities around where company's production happens.... It would not be fair to look at workers, most of who are migrants, without looking at the community. And this is what the certification systems completely ignore. (interview: Gema, React Africa)

This is similar to the community duty drawn on by Keep Burberry British campaigners in getting the company to recognise responsibility to the local people. Cramer (FTEPR, interview) reported that some flower farms encountered on fieldwork in Ethiopia had been keen to display the results of their paternalism, such as schools and hospitals. However, activists expressed concern over whether these types of CSR initiatives should be the responsibility of the farm, such as Alikuru (IUF, interview):

It is of concern to us as trade unions about what percentage of the profit is to be used for the CSR work vis-a-vis improving workers conditions and wages? What should be the priority, working conditions or CSR? What is the role of local government on the surrounding villages, as the workers and villagers are taxpayers? I am not all that comfortable with the terminology as it has become a Public Relations issue, thus for the company to get recognition from the political hierarchy of the country or the market.

As discussed, one argument made for the proliferation of private social standards is that laws in developing countries are too weak or there is an inability to enforce them. Private standards are put forward as an alternative where the power of the industry can be used to ensure responsible practice. This proposition gets to the cusp of one of the most contested elements of CSR, and these flower certification processes in particular: how standards should be implemented and monitored, and by whom. As seen in Chapter 3, this is one of the key criteria separating approaches to CSR. In this particular case study, the issue rests on two factors. The first is the methods used for implementing and auditing certification standards, and the second is the voluntary nature of the schemes and their relationship to enforceable legislation.

Regarding the first, as previously mentioned, the format of auditing standards is a key point being struggled over for the future of flower certification schemes, including the current battles over FFP. Participatory methodology is seen by some as a vital way forward to ensure genuine assessment of employment practices wherever codes of conduct are employed (see for example Bendell, 2001). Labour activists, and academics working with them, have claimed this to be vital in the cut flower industry where high levels of exploitation have been seen, and particularly for tackling gender discrimination and sexual abuse (Hale & Opondo, 2005: 313-315). Furthermore, Blowfield and Dolan (2008: 2) claim that how the 'globalisation project' affects the South can be partly understood by examination of the ethical values of CSR initiatives, expressed through certification and labour standards. From their study of the African horticultural industry they argue that CSR and the possibility of ethical trade promotion 'is a form of governmentality that advances the global project of neoliberalism, not by force but rather through the technologies of voluntary regulation – standards, audits and protocols' (Blowfield & Dolan, 2008: 3).

Secondly, regarding the balance of self and governmental regulation, it is clear that one reason for the expansion of flower exports in developing countries has been neoliberal policies that reduce trading barriers, and governmental policies attracting foreign direct investment (FDI). As discussed in Chapter 1, the inclusion of developing countries in transnational production networks often rely on enticing government policies waiving or reducing levels of taxation and regulation applicable to corporations willing to invest, with countries being in competition (Klein, 1999; Tonkiss, 2006a: 72). Those involved

in promoting these policies can be seen as among the globalising bureaucrats that Sklair (2002) describes as one of the elements of the transnational capitalist class, facilitating the spread of global capitalism. This is exemplified by the Kenya Flower Council's explanation of why the flower industry has been successful there, listing:

a liberalised economy over the years with the removal of exchange control and other constraints... [and] minimum government involvement, but mainly facilitating trade through the provision of incentives in the form of nil or reduced duties and other taxes...(KFC, 2009)

A related development is the growing trend of land grabbing, where massive areas are being bought or leased by corporations – often valuable in agricultural terms for surprisingly small fees. A common discourse to justify such policies is 'feeding the world' through application of large-scale farming. However as found by Pearce (2012), the companies involved often sell to rich countries and grow non-food products such as profitable bio-fuels. Whilst the immediate impact for communities is apparent when land is sold on condition it is uninhabited,¹⁵⁷ how arrangements will affect workers within these lands is less clear. It is of note that one of biggest land grabbers is the owner of the world's largest rose-growing business, Sai Ramakrishna Karuturi, with plans to have a million hectares of land in Africa (Pearce, 2012: 10).

Alikuru (IUF) also told me that because the flower industry attracts FDI, governments are 'very protective over it'. Furthermore she explained that in Uganda, many high ranking politicians and government officials themselves owned farms or had investments in them (interview: Alikuru, IUF). However the assumption that only less developed countries need certification due to the inability of governments to enforce regulation is also questioned by evidence of exploitative conditions on cut flower farms in rich parts of the world. Again this can be related to changes in employment practices that arise from trends towards more flexible labour and precarious types of employment contracts (Amoore, 2002). Extensions of outsourcing have included an increase in the use of third party labour contractors, such as recruitment agencies, intermediaries and gang masters, that can exploit vulnerable workers. Barrientos (2011) sees this as resulting in 'new forms of slavery', with the horticultural sector being a particular case affected in her comparison of the UK and South Africa.

¹⁵⁷ Pearce (2012) reports on mass clearances and villagers moved to live beyond fences marking off lands.

Certification and the business of development: Raising the bar or barrier to entry?

In keeping with criticism of codes of conduct and CSR initiatives based on Western values (Banerjee, 2008; Khan & Lund-Thomsen, 2011), flower campaigners spoke of the danger of labour standards being set by corporations and certification bodies based in the global North (interviews with Hoek, Langeveld, Harmsen). As found by Khan et al. (2010), where CSR initiatives are imposed rather than developed in collaboration with their supposed beneficiaries in developing countries, the actual benefits brought and possibilities for implementation can be limited. This was a major reason given by those involved in the promotion of multi-stakeholder flower certification schemes as to why local third party participation in auditing was essential, and why the NGOs involved in FFP insisted on a board structure that included equal numbers from the South and North (interviews with Hoek, Langeveld, Wildeman).

The issues raised by campaigners reflected wider criticism made (such as by Blowfield & Dolan, 2008; Blowfield & Frynas, 2005), of the role CSR is portrayed to have in promoting a development agenda. Blowfield and Frynas (2005: 499) argue that the increasing tendency of policy-makers, governments, business and civil society to ‘discuss CSR programmes in terms of their contribution to development’ needs to be questioned. Indeed, the relationship between development and CSR is a theme already explored. However for this case study it proved particularly important. Several European growers I interviewed blamed the rise of African exports for themselves having to seek certification, with exposés of working conditions in poor countries bringing the whole industry under scrutiny.

From this perspective flower certification is a way those in developed countries impose standards which developing countries need to match, supposedly for the reputation of the sector, but which can also serve as a barrier to market entry. Barendse (FloraHolland, interview) told how ‘the image of production outside of Europe is not very good’ and how some buyers (such as Aldi) require different certification levels from non-European growers compared to European ones. These findings support Adanhounme’s (2011) claim that CSR in Africa is seen by some as part of a ‘civilising process’, and underlines the need to recognise the postcolonial context of these transnational business relationships. The way the European growers and their

representatives I interviewed discussed this, ranged from at one extreme, anger at being brought down by undeveloped countries that need to be taught how things should be done – suggestive of the Orientalism that Sklair and Miller (2010) associate with some CSR approaches, and at the other extreme, pride at being able to improve conditions in a ‘missionary’ way – suggesting a paternalism towards developing country growers and their employees. In company and certification promotional materials the benefits were stressed in terms of their CSR bringing benefit the world over. Mosha (TPAWU, interview) was keen to highlight how this can work well, offering me a list of ‘examples on the practice of corporate social responsibility’. These included construction of water tanks and schools; road maintenance; orphanages, widowers and the disabled being given plots to grow crops; and loans to villagers. A prominent image from the Kenyan Flower Council’s website also illustrates this, linking responsible growing to healthcare benefits (Figure 47), linking to the ‘social role’ of corporate CSR agendas discussed in Chapter 3.

An interesting example was provided during discussions with a Danish company that has operations in Kenya (interview: PKM). When asked about the CSR initiatives detailed in the company’s literature (MPS certification), the representative was keen to explain all they have done for the workers and community living around their operations – such as building facilities and help to school children through the setting up of a charity. I was told with pride how when the company’s owner had his 60th birthday, instead of gifts, he requested donations to their community projects in Kenya. This again evidences a paternalistic approach to CSR in developing countries, suggestive of the findings of Khan and Lund-Thomsen (2011: 73) where CSR is experienced ‘as part of the wider historic project of Western imperialism’ that extracts economic value from the developing world ‘while their perceptions of what constitutes socially responsible behaviour are delegitimized’.

At the same time, other European growers interviewed expressed annoyance at being excluded from fair trade initiatives that are only open to growers in developing countries. This meant European growers are unable to access the market for fair trade flowers, putting developing country growers at an advantage. This was a reason given for the importance of alternative certification schemes, with FFP founders explaining that for the trade body Union Fleur to consent to being involved it was essential the

scheme be open to European growers too (interviews with Hoek and Langeveld). Indeed, Barendse linked FloraHolland's support for FFP to the fact that it was 'open to all'. However, campaigners pointed out that from the perspective of developing country growers, the need to demonstrate compliance with standards was essential for entry into some export markets, a point substantiated by Tallontire (2007) for agri-goods generally. Indeed, Ziegler (2010: 86) reported 'resentment of the increasingly burdensome nature of the requirements imposed on developing nation flower growers by distant institutions'.

Of the work being done to evaluate whether these certification schemes improve the conditions of workers, some progress has been found but limited to certain areas (Barrientos, 2011; Hughes, 2001; Tallontire, et al., 2005; Women Working Worldwide, 2006). Barrientos and Smith (2007) found that standards aiming to protect rights had some effect, but enabling rights that involved workers in the improvement processes were not yet effective and failed to engage the most vulnerable sections of the workforce. Interviews with activists in Uganda (Alikuru, IUF) and Tanzania (Mosha, TPAWU), did tell of some worker benefits from certification and for farmers too:

I wish all farms could be certified... Those that are certified, they observe their CSR more than the others... when we compare the situation now and five years ago we say things are improving. (interview: Mosha, TPAWU)

The same activists pointed out that improvements are limited to the certified farms and industry-wide improvements have not yet resulted. Those able to get work on certified farms are described by Ziegler as 'the fortunate few' (2010: 88). Campaigners also reported that the improvements seen are limited to certain issues. Gooch (Traidcraft) recognised most of these as being related to health and safety, with wage levels remaining problematic, and regarding sexual harassment, Evers (WWW) told me how shocked she had been on field visits by the size of the farms and how vulnerable this makes women working far apart from each other. So more assessment work is needed and this should involve workers (Hale & Opondo, 2005: 307-308).

These findings on the importance of production geographies and related power relations demonstrate how competitiveness is a key issue for how CSR is conceptualised within the flower industry. Access to initiatives which allow businesses to promote themselves and their products as responsible have been aggressively pursued.

6.4 NGO and academic network influence on responsible flower work

It became apparent in the preliminary stages of researching this case that interesting relationships between academics and NGOs play a significant role in efforts to improve conditions for flower workers, and so in defining responsible employment. I was keen to explore the role of academics in these networks and the contributions made to how CSR is mobilised, so invited relevant academics to participate in the study. It later became clear that these network connections could not have been avoided, such is their density. As in any academic field, key researchers were regularly referred to. What was particular about this in the cut flower industry though, was the frequency with which academics were involved with NGO projects, and the frequency with which NGOs were involved with academic projects. It became a regular occurrence in interview to be told, ‘you must speak to...’ and ‘you’ve got to meet...’, with the same names repeatedly mentioned. Many campaigners and academics felt it important to share the history of their connections, the relationships that had developed, plans for future collaborations, and the difference this had made to their achievements.

A small industry at an intersection of civil society and research specialisms

My interest in these networks focused on their role in defining what socially responsible employment in the flower industry is, and how discourses of CSR are mobilised in efforts to improve conditions. Campaigning in the area emerged as ‘a very small world’ (interview: Evers, WWW), with key individuals from both academia and civil society regularly working together or being drawn on for input and support. Academic participants agreed with this finding and recognised work on the flower industry as quite unusual in this respect (for example Cramer, Evers, Riisgaard, and Tallontire). Many of the connections between NGOs and academics were informal or only formal for the duration of certain projects, but interviews and analysis of reports showed that paths crossed often, involving activists and academics in the North and South.¹⁵⁸ In consequence, the approach of key individuals to CSR was of particular interest due to their influence over campaign strategies and research focus.

¹⁵⁸ For example, three independently organised workshops held by the ETI (April 2007), WWW (April 2011) and WoW (September 2011) involved several of the same individuals and organisations, including a mix of academics, NGOs, trade unions and some corporate representatives.

It was found that cut flower work brings together several key themes of shared interests. In particular, the flower industry involves precarious work, gender issues and inequalities, ethical (such as fair trade) production, transnational supply chains and developing countries (especially African and South American). Therefore cut flowers brings together those researching and campaigning on these themes, including researchers and NGOs specialising in one of the issues or running projects and campaigns relevant to it. At a practical level, it was pointed out that the cut flower industry is relatively small and focused on a particular product compared to some others such as garments, and this could also contribute to the dense networks of academics and activists focused on it (interview: Medusa, WWW).

Collaborative projects to improve cut flower workers' rights

Although no umbrella campaign has emerged to coordinate campaigning for flower workers, the importance of long-term academic and civil society relationships is not to be underestimated. Three examples of these efforts highlight the types of relationships involved. The first is the work of Women Working Worldwide (WWW). This was started in 1985 out of concern for the lack of gender sensitivity in approaches to the rights of workers in supply chains, and aims to empower women to gain the rights at work they are entitled to by law and through codes of conduct (WWW, 2010b). It describes itself as 'a small and nimble, feminist, women-only, anti-imperialist, trade justice, anti-poverty, labour rights organisation' (WWW, 2010a). Its main focus had been garment supply chains, but connected academics and WWW activists saw common issues between this and cut flowers,¹⁵⁹ and a three- year horticultural project started in 2008. From the beginning WWW has had significant links with academia, with university researchers having key organisational roles and contributing to projects and output. Of the three WWW interviewees (Brahic, Evers, Medusa) two also had academic profiles. WWW's work on the ground in African farms clearly correlates with academic output from researchers who have had some form of connection with it (see for example work on gendered approaches to supply chains in African horticulture, Barrientos, Kritzing, Opondo, & Smith, 2005; Hale & Opondo, 2005; Tallontire, et al., 2005). It is also interesting to note that the organisation's current offices are in the Sociology Department of Manchester Metropolitan University

¹⁵⁹ Namely Barbara Evers, Maggie Opondo and Angela Hale (interview: Evers, WWW).

A second example of the projects that have created or helped to foster these links is the HEBI project, previously mentioned, involving the ETI in conjunction with local partners and input from academic researchers. As acknowledged in their final report, principal researchers Barrientos, Dolan, and Tallontire had Department for International Development funding to investigate ethical trade in African horticulture as HEBI was being developed (DFID, 2004). The results of this experience contributed both to the work of the ETI and to academic outputs (Dolan & Opondo, 2005). It is also interesting to note that WWW have a representative on the Board of the ETI.¹⁶⁰

The third example is the current Fair Trade Employment and Poverty Reduction Project (FTEPRP), another DFID funded initiative. This aims to collect micro-level data on the impact of certification and codes of conduct on poverty levels amongst those dependent on wage employment in rural areas (FTEPRP, 2012). The field sites are in Ethiopia and Uganda, and horticulture is one of three products focused on. In terms of collaborations, this is certainly an academic project (interview: Cramer, FTEPRP), but has some civil society input. For example, interviewee Sue Longley (IUF) is a board member (and has also taken part in WWW and WoW initiatives on flower workers and was involved with the development of the ICC). Then a minor input lay in the valuable trade union experience of an Ethiopian local who contributed to the fieldwork (interview: Cramer, FTEPRP). Interestingly, the level of certification gained by flower farms was a major criterion for distinguishing the three field sites chosen – one being fair trade, one MPS and one uncertified – to examine the potential impacts of poverty in the surrounding communities (interview: Cramer, FTEPRP).

Interconnections between some of these projects and others were also noted. This was particularly true of HEBI and WWW, but also of the active Capturing the Gains project focusing on economic and social upgrading in global value chains. Research on cut flowers is a project theme, with involved academics with links to WWW and WWW publications being recommended as useful resources (Capturing the Gains, 2011). Opportunities for sharing experience, work and connections are also enhanced by the use of technology, such as the Gender in Value Chains learning network run along the

¹⁶⁰ See: <http://www.ethicaltrade.org/in-action/people/maggie-burns>.

lines of a social networking site, facilitating discussions, collaborations and publications (GVC, 2011). Finally the role of funding bodies is also of interest, for example with DFID having been involved with several academic projects that have engaged NGOs, including work with WWW, the ETI, Capturing the Gains, FTEPRP, with the Dutch equivalent having a similar role with HIVOS campaigns and the FFP labelling programme. These support a political agenda of encouraging best practice.

A variety of views were expressed regarding these academics and NGO connections, with different approaches taken to the negotiation of roles and alliances. It was clear that for some academics, their work is motivated by wanting to address concerns of labour rights and injustice, and the collaboration of campaigning work and academic research makes sense for pursuing their connected goals. For example, when describing the history of WWW, Evers explained that academics, trade unions and activists had a shared interest in the feminisation of the workforce, as addressed in the seminal paper ‘Nimble fingers make cheap workers’ of Elson and Pearson (1981). The socialist feminism associated with WWW has remained collaborative and focused on key questions such as the one repeatedly asked by WWW’s late founder Angela Hale: ‘what is it that women workers want?’ (interview: Evers, WWW). One participant believed the closeness of ties between academics and NGOs engaged in the flower industry was ‘not always a good thing’, seeing it as of paramount importance to conduct research from an independent position. Another made it very clear they would never describe themselves as an ‘activist’ or ‘campaigner’ despite regularly working with NGOs. Academics then, particularly in this case study, need to be considered as an actor influencing debates concerning CSR. As I discussed with Tallontire (University of Leeds), their complex links to the voices of civil society groups need further exploration. Whether wanting to work from a position of independence or as an academic activist, all described the practical benefits gained from such alliances.

6.5 The conspicuous absence of flower consumers in CSR promotion

One of the most interesting but puzzling findings from this case study was the lack of information provided to consumers about flower certification. For other products, a major motivator for corporations to improve employment and purchasing behaviour has been sensitivity to consumer demand and benefits from CSR promotion. This can

involve avoiding reduced sales from bad publicity, but also the incentive to increase market share by differentiating a product as ethically produced through responsible employment practices. For cut flowers, although many growers have committed investment to certify their flowers and publicise the product and their company as being socially responsible to their first-line buyers, this is not promoted to the end consumer. Intermediaries such as wholesalers can also be completely unaware that the flowers are certified. The CSR profile is then promoted unevenly along the supply chain, with the majority of pressure for evidence of social responsibility being at the start of the chain.

The uneven promotions of CSR within different stages of the supply chain

It is acknowledged that some consumer interest in ethical flowers exists. It is also acknowledged that there are differences in consumer demand for certification in different countries (Ziegler, 2010: 79, and interviews with Hoek, Wildeman, Harsem). However demand for certified flowers remains a niche market, such as brides wishing to choose 'ethical' flowers as part of a 'green' wedding - as was the subject of a query to The Guardian's ethical living feature (Siegle, 1 April 2012). In this and other advice on buying flowers ethically (see for example the flower buying guide in Ethical Consumer, 2008), labour rights are usually mentioned in terms of certification. However the main advice usually relates to environmental concerns, promoting locally grown flowers. This is also a focus for the British Florist Association (BFA), which supports florists wishing to satisfy consumer demand for ethical flowers by developing a directory of British growers (interview: Wills-Pope, BFA). As with the garment industry in previous chapters, this brings us back to debates about the role of transnational production chains in development agendas, the contested impacts of boycotts, and whether CSR and certification could or should aid responsible development through trade.



Figure 54: Fair trade roses in a Netherland's supermarket, with narratives of workers

For consumers there can be major differences between flowers purchased at a supermarket compared to those from a florist. It was found that consumers wishing to

buy certified flowers can usually do so most easily from a supermarket (in the UK mainly limited to Fairtrade, see Figure 54 for a Dutch example) or less easily from specialist florists.¹⁶¹ The lack of consumer information was observed on regular visits to florists, in the UK and beyond. This was reported as similar in most European countries (Riisgaard, 2011; Tallontire, 2007; interviews with Harmsen, Hoek, and Wildeman), and Ziegler reports the same for the USA (2010: 79), with some fair trade flowers also available via web sales.¹⁶²

Moving one step back in the chain, I also found many florists lacked awareness and knowledge about certification. When flowers remained in their packaging and boxes I was often able to see evidence of certification from the logos stamped on. However most florists were unable to explain these accurately and reported a lack of interest from consumers. The Vice-President of the BFA, a member of the International Florist Association (Florint), who had been the chair of Interflora for twenty years, also told me of a lack of demand for this information. He also pointed to practical issues facing florists (interview: Wills-Pope, BFA). Unlike some other certified products, cut flowers are often repackaged into bouquets by florists, whether for use at home or for a special occasion. This can involve the mixing of flowers from different sources, which might include some certified and some un-certified products - especially as the variety of certified flowers is limited (interviews with Wills-Pope and Harmsen).¹⁶³ This makes including a certification label difficult:

In flowers it is very special. All these small flower shops they are making their own bouquets from all the different flowers and so the fair trade roses may only be 20-30 % and so how do you decide on the label? (interview: Harmsen, Max Havlaar)

A further practical issue is that flowers are usually stripped of all packaging once purchased. Therefore even if it was possible to include a label detailing certification and limited explanation of this, it would be unlikely to remain with the flowers through to

¹⁶¹ For examples, UK florists specialising in or including ethical sourcing in their product range include <http://flowersbyjulieb.co.uk> (mainly environmental impact); <http://www.thinkingflowers.org.uk> (includes a campaigning aim to raise awareness and promote industry improvements); and <http://www.arenaflowers.com> (the first British florist to be an FFP member).

¹⁶² For example, a small proportion of flowers available via the e-business of Interflora, Waitrose, Marks and Spencer and Postal Bouquets are Fairtrade. For a full range of UK Fairtrade suppliers see http://www.fairtrade.org.uk/products/retail_products/product_browse.aspx?comps=FLOWERS.

¹⁶³ Although product ranges from developing countries are becoming more diverse, varieties such as roses and carnations dominate, with US Fairtrade flowers being limited to these two kinds (Ziegler, 2010: 80).

their end use. This is particularly problematic for those wishing to display their own values through ethical purchasing decisions, whether for themselves or in the gifts they give (Timms, 2012a). Cramer (FTEPR) told me how different this is to say certified coffee, where the consumer is reminded, through overt marketing, of the ethical nature of their purchase each time they return to the cupboard to use it.

Another step back in the chain to the flower wholesalers found a similar story. Of those questioned at New Covent Garden Market, only one stall holder told me that certification was a consideration when buying his stock. Others either claimed it was not of importance to their customers or misunderstood the schemes. Two respondents wrongly believed that as they sourced from FloraHolland, the certification was guaranteed and so all their flowers were certified. Those that claimed to have heard of the schemes were unable to name any except Fairtrade, even though I was able to point out other certification logos on their stock. Sample responses include:

In more than 20 years working here, no one has ever asked me about it [certification] before.

No I don't look for that. I'm just looking for whatever I can make a living from, that's what my customers want. What they can make a living from.

It's about the flowers being right, it's about filling orders. I wouldn't look for that [certification] as I would never be asked.

The auction does that for you, it's all taken care of.

The last step back in the chain, to the growers, was investigated during my research at the FloraHolland International Trade Fair. I searched out the stalls of growers who actively promoted CSR credentials, and asked others why they did not. Of over 300 stalls involving approximately 700 growers, less than ten obviously displayed information about certification. Only four of these growers saw promoting certification as an integral part of their business plan.



Figure 55: A rare display of standards at a Trade Fair stall

Singel Roses (Figure 56) was the most keen, claiming that their FFP and MPS certification was important and a competitive advantage. However they also acknowledged that consumer interest was limited as not many ask about it and when it is a consideration, it is only after price and quality (interview: Puk van den Bulk, Singel Roses). Interestingly, flowers from this company bought via FloraHolland were seen at New Covent Garden Market (Figure 57), where the wholesaler was unaware of the certification and had never had any customer interested in this. In criticising the auction houses for not taking a lead in CSR, Gema (React Africa, interview) described FloraHolland as the ‘black hole’ in the supply chain. This seems apt as it is where much of the information on the CSR profile of the flowers goes in, but does not come out.



Figure 56: Trade Fair stall of Singel Roses listing certifications



Figure 57: Singel Roses for sale at New Covent Garden via FloraHolland

The majority of other growers at the trade fair reported the same lack of interest and importance as New Covent Garden wholesalers. Most viewed certification as something which needed to be done, and for those based in Europe this was seen as a stamp to confirm what essentially they were doing anyway. However, they reported it was not important to end consumers, who do not understand or ask for it. It was associated with costs and additional paperwork, but information about the certificate was only reported to first-line wholesalers or exporters, not to consumers, and was often not mentioned in publicity materials at all. For example, the Clayrton company was marketing a new line using the franchise brand of Hello Kitty to appeal to female flower customers, and even though the growers have MPS certifications, this is never mentioned in publicity and the sales representative displayed a typical surprise at my suggestion it might be (interview: Janssen, Clayrton). As explained by MPS, this was not how the label was designed and no benefit has been seen in offering this; however the reason given is again puzzling if consumers needed reassurance:

It is not a consumer label... not something to communicate with the consumer... even if they wanted to, there is no material for that... in the beginning everyone was very critical of the flowers and so with MPS they can be sure about it. (interview: Heenskerk, MPS)

Corporate mobilisation of CSR as protective and proactive

In sum, the research found that even though growers were investing in CSR strategies through the achievement of certified standards, promotion of this was mainly evident at the beginning of the supply chain and even then was not regularly used in marketing. Towards the end of the supply chain little interest was evident in the need or benefit to promote the CSR credentials of the product to florists or end-consumers. As it is the product that is certified, in theory the socially responsible profile of the certified flower could be promoted at all stages in the supply chain, whether using the direct or auction house route. However consideration of the end consumers was particularly absent from the potential CSR promotion chain:

Nowadays with all this movement of CSR, it is the traders and retailers who themselves want the label and they are not waiting for any demand from the consumers. (interview: Harmsen, Max Havlaar)

I was interested in the reasons for this gap and why information about the CSR achievements of the flower might be lost or valued differently by different groups within the same chain. Although motivations are complex, two possible main ones are suggested by the research. The first is that demonstrating CSR within flower supply is being driven more by power posturing and an industry need to influence and protect systems of self-regulation, rather than by demand from end-consumers. This directly relates to corporate CSR agendas promoting voluntarism and professional agendas of CSR for competitive advantage. In anticipating possible future calls for more legislation, CSR can be used to claim legislation is unnecessary as the industry already goes beyond what is expected. Related to this is the current power-play going on between established actors within the market and the entry of new ones, particularly from developing countries. Desire for control over how CSR is defined and monitored can be seen as a response to the threats from changing market conditions. Recognition of these corporate priorities can be seen in how campaigns, such as by WWF's, have heavily focused on pressurising growers and larger buyers to engage in certification or

to work directly with farms and workers to improve conditions. The work done to target consumers to influence buying decisions has been much more limited to date.

The second reason suggested by the findings is an anticipation of future market trends. Several of those interviewed believed that CSR was going to become a central issue for the flower industry in the future. For some campaigners flowers were seen to be in the early stages of an ethical consumption trend being resisted by the industry so far, yet prepared for by certification promotion at the start of the chain:

They say there is no need [for end labels] as the consumer market in the Netherlands is very good for flowers... then we say that we know when we started the coffee [campaign], it was exactly the same argument. (interview: Wildeman, HIVOS)

Although ‘we are not there yet’ (interview: Wills-Pope, BFA), it was believed that demonstrating a commitment to responsible practices would become an essential criterion for consumer choice at some point. Gaining certification now or contributing to debates about how schemes should work, was seen as a way to get in on this early, to be at an advantage for the future trend. This connects to corporate agenda of protecting CSR as self-regulatory and promoting the idea that they already go beyond what is required, as well as appealing to the advantage to be gained by being cutting edge.

They start now to switch all the product they buy to MPS, not only I think because they think it is socially responsible... but also as they see and expect that within a few years all the retailers will be demanding the MPS product and so they only buy their product... to make the market ready when they know that this is coming. (interview: Barendse, FloraHolland)

Some expressed the belief this time would come through increased focus on the industry by campaigners and so reputational risk was seen to be a motivating factor. Interestingly, a reluctance to put their business on a pedestal for fear of attracting investigation was also suggested as a possible explanation for why achieved certification was not promoted, as it showed the rest of the industry in a bad light:

Still they [flower farmers] find it very touchy, because they say that as soon as you raise up the good flower, people start questioning the bad flower... as soon as you start promoting a label it also raises questions and you get journalists digging into the background and they always find producers that do not comply. (interview: Wildeman, HIVOS)

This relates to findings in the previous two cases, where campaigners were able to mobilise CSR as a useful strategy for leverage due to the emphasis Burberry and Olympic officials had put on their CSR credentials and ethical discourse relating to their practices and values.

Furthermore, the notion of preparing for a future need to demonstrate CSR can be related to a need for supply chains to be sustainable in terms of profit viability. In this way CSR in the industry needs to be about more than certification and how audits are done, as suggested by Evers (WWW, interview):

If people aren't going to stay on the farms [because of bad conditions], it doesn't matter if you're verified or not.

Consequences for future campaign mobilisations of CSR

These two corporate approaches to CSR, protective and proactive mobilisations, have consequences for those attempting to improve the conditions for cut flower workers. Firstly, to move away from the emphasis on self-regulation, more engagement with legislation and the role of governments is necessary and CSR can have a role in this. It was reported by several sources that the most significant improvements experienced by workers have resulted from greater understanding, strengthening and enforcement of labour laws (for example KHRC, 2012; interviews with Alikuri, Cramer, Evers, Gema and Medusa; Women Working Worldwide, 2006).¹⁶⁴ This supports emphasis placed on the continued importance of governmental roles in developing countries (such as Graham & Woods, 2006), although lobbying work was seen as needing to target initiatives at a transnational rather than only national level. Activist approaches to the voluntary versus statutory regulation issue do differ. Interestingly, for some such as FFP and Fairtrade, a voluntary approach to CSR is necessary to get companies engaged, but as complementary rather than instead of existing laws, and as an additional way to ensure companies comply:

We chose to have it as a voluntary system [FFP]. Why? Because if you force the producers to become certified, they will look at the absolute bottom of the criteria, and you will have a constant fight on your hands about how to interpret the criteria. So we try to avoid this by making it a voluntary system. That means that one of the most important things of the code is the

¹⁶⁴ Conferral of maternity rights was a positive example of improvements.

preamble, stating that whatever regulation or law is most strict should reign. So if our code is most strict then our code applies. If the labour law is most strict then the law applies. (interview: Hoek, OLAA)

Indeed some campaigners saw mobilising debates about social responsibility in terms of certification as a way to strengthen and increase regulation at the national and international level, with CSR acting as a precursor for legally-binding standards. Political agendas of CSR promoting growth and national business image can be drawn on here, as CSR was seen as a way to engage policy makers:

Ideally the national government should protect the workers and set the rules for the industry... With weak governments, I think the industry can profit from them.... in campaigns we also help organise legal teams to lobby their own governments... We are learning by doing in fact. It is not that we want to have pre-cooked recommendations and then confront policy-makers. We try to attract policy-makers on this issue of CSR. (interview: Wildeman, HIVOS)

We've got to show how you can make money out of it so the voluntary approach really makes sense and can also lead to changes in regulation at the European Union for instance or government regulations, for sure, but that is always coming later when it is seen as already normal, so it is a consequence let us say of a new thinking in society. (interview: Harmsen, Max Havlaar)

Secondly, the absence of the consumer in CSR profiling needs to be addressed if pressure is to be applied throughout the chain. The responsibility of the consumer to make buying decisions that will support labour rights and pay a higher price to enable this, was stressed (interviews with Gema, Harmsen and Mosha). For example:

The consumers of the flowers are also responsible for the conditions of the workers. If they will buy products at reasonable price and without complications the producers may be able to pay better wages and improve the working conditions of the workers. (interview: Mosha, TPAWU)

However, consumers can only buy ethically if they have enough information to base their choices on. Without consumer awareness of the issues and problems, growers will continue to quote a lack of demand, which has resulted in some having to sell certified flowers unlabelled through alternative sales routes (Ziegler, 2010: 91-92). The nature of the product is again important here, as flowers have embedded cultural meaning related to notions of love and celebration and as they are often gifts (Berroterán, 2003). This can be likened to the importance of the CSR profile for luxury goods noted in the

Burberry case study, where consumers buying a non-essential product as a treat want to assume that ethics are taken care of (Thomas, 2007). Therefore reputational risk can be greater if bad publicity would counter the motivation for the purchase, i.e. not wanting to give a loved one a gift to celebrate a happy occasion that is linked to exploitation. This was an angle used in some campaigns, but not in a sustained way as mainly linked to publicity around a single day such as Valentine's (see for example Fisher, 2012).

Wanting to purchase or give flowers defined as ethically sourced is not possible or lost if the end product is not labelled as such. Ziegler (2010: 90) found that even when bouquets were specifically marketed as certified, on delivery there was often no information to convey this information to the recipient. Therefore, as found important by Hughes et al. (2008) for ethical campaigning more generally, knowledge flow concerning the CSR profile of the flower needs to be embedded throughout the supply chain. Discussion with campaigners and certification bodies suggest this is becoming a priority (interviews with Brahic, Harmsen, Hoek and Wildeman):

I think that the last few years we have focused mainly on the retailers and traders to change their purchasing behaviour and maybe we have even forgotten, let's say the power of the consumers and so there is a discussion going on now as to whether we need to rethink that and reconsider it and go back to the consumer to put pressure on retailers etc. Because retailers... like having this CSR but in a cheap way... (Harmsen, Max Havlaar)

The plans for FSI and its use of the FFP label will be an interesting example of how this plays out. HIVOS has already committed to broadening the base of fair flowers by promoting FFP through florists and Fairtrade flowers in supermarkets. This is to be done through a high profile public campaign to increase consumer awareness and demand for ethical information, whilst simultaneously promoting awareness amongst flower sellers to influence the availability of certified flowers (interview: Wildeman, HIVOS). This was to be launched in October 2012, building up to a high profile event based on holding the industry responsible for workers' rights in February 2013. This again underlines the research finding that battles are in the process of being fought and their long-term impact are yet to be seen. What can clearly be seen is the significance of CSR mobilisation to these dynamic relations within the flower industry.

Chapter conclusions

The aim of this chapter was to contribute a case study of product-focused campaigning, and the cut flower trade has proved to be a particularly useful choice at this moment of change for the industry and flower certification schemes. Responsibility for the conditions of cut flower workers is not only in dispute but is the focus of current debate and campaigning, with many parties struggling to assert their position and influence over how and by whom agendas should be set. The findings of the chapter can be drawn together in four main statements.

Firstly, within the flower industry CSR has become synonymous with the certification of standards. As part of this, socially responsible employment is defined in terms of adherence to verifiable codes of conduct resulting in a label to ‘prove’ this. Mobilisations of CSR by labour activists aim to influence the scope and effectiveness of the certification schemes, for the benefit of workers, and to act as a possible forerunning of future legislation. CSR discourse is used to leverage engagement with industry bodies and policy makers, and to influence outcomes within these negotiations. Corporate agendas of CSR likewise have been used to leverage engagement with civil society organisations seen to present threats and opportunities for the industry. CSR is being used by some to strengthen their corporate profile within the industry, particularly evident in FloraHolland’s strategic use of CSR to protect the role of its auctions.

Secondly, geographies of production impact debates about how responsibilities should be defined in the context of transnational production and exchange. The rooted nature of the product and the backdrop of historical political and economic relations influenced how campaigners, growers and buyers approached CSR. The place of production and of consumption were both seen as significant for setting levels of expected behaviour in the flower industry, and where certifications were designed and who was involved in their implementation were also points of contention.

Thirdly, the role of academic and NGO networks is particularly influential in defining how socially responsible employment is understood and implemented for cut flower workers. The relative size of the industry and the fact it involves several key themes, such as gender, labour and development, has resulted in dense connections between key

academic researchers and activists. More research is needed on the impact of their approach to CSR on campaigns for improved working conditions.

Finally, corporate investment made to certify flowers as socially responsible is promoted unevenly along flower supply chains. Pressure has mainly been applied at the beginning of the chain to establish certification as good practice. The lack of information concerning social and labour standards provided to end-consumers and others at the latter end of the chain suggests corporate mobilisation of CSR is not about consumer demand but other industry needs. These include ensuring the sustainability of the supply chain, protecting against further regulation, and proactively preparing for future buying trends. However ethical consumption has limited potential for influencing conditions unless knowledge relating to the CSR profile of the flower is promoted throughout the chain. Current activist engagement with industry over the future of certification schemes, and related plans for public campaigns, suggest CSR could be promoted more evenly throughout the chain in the future. In terms of campaigns for workers' rights, this would give further opportunities for exerting pressure for change, and engagement in CSR discourse has contributed to this possibility.

In completing the case study set, these findings suggest that activists are not only mobilising CSR in specific campaigns where the relevant business has a high CSR profile, as in the case of Burberry, or when a particular platform can be used to draw attention to corporate behaviour, as in the case of Play Fair. Product-focused campaigning shows how collaborations over time have mobilised CSR to establish effective positions from which to influence how agendas for socially responsible employment are set and implemented. The relative power of civil society compared to corporations and trade bodies is also clear, so the flower industry provides a useful field of study for understanding how these struggles over CSR continue to play out.

CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSION

This thesis has explored how CSR is defined and mobilised in relation to the rights and conditions of workers. The practical and ideological struggles taking place over CSR are important, due to the consequences they have for power relations between workers, corporations and those who attempt to regulate them. Sociological analysis of CSR is a developing field and this research contributes by focusing on the relationship between emerging CSR agendas and working conditions in the global economy, and by offering in-depth case studies of how CSR can be mobilised when corporate responsibilities to workers are in dispute. The study has sought not only to discover the transnational practices involved in forming and maintaining the dominant corporate agenda of CSR and socially responsible employment, but by analysing processes of contestation, has also sought to understand the role and potential of other forces attempting to shape CSR discourse, particularly activist efforts, and their consequences.

In this final chapter I draw together the principal themes of the research as a whole. I began Chapter 1 by recounting my experience of the Responsible Business Show, where CSR professionals set out stalls and NGOs touted to attract corporate CSR teams in a marketplace for responsibility, whilst in a separate theatre senior CSR executives from leading businesses discussed trends, risks and best practice. This was one of many CSR industry events I could have drawn on, typical of the regular programme developed by CSR groups and networks, such as those I monitored. What they have in common is the endorsement of a particular understanding of CSR - as self-regulatory and generous - and the promotion of its desirability. CSR is presented and engaged in as a field of business practice in its own right, with accompanying behaviours such as code setting, stakeholder relationship management, auditing and communication. Questions addressed in such arenas involve how to become CSR leaders and how to gain most benefit from CSR, so predominantly focus on the challenge of being good at the management practices of CSR, rather than the fundamental challenge of how to conduct business and treat workers in a responsible way. These two challenges are not necessarily the same.

The study has shown the social construction of this slick professional portrayal of CSR to be a contested and on-going process of multiple encounters, with the case study work demonstrating the concrete ways labour rights groups are engaging with CSR to pursue improved conditions of work. I wanted to explore the more local experiences arising from corporate behaviours beyond CSR's glossy image and to investigate the production of alternative agendas. To do this I have sought the experiences of workers impacted, their representatives and advocates in different parts of the world; I have followed campaigns to hold corporations responsible; and I have questioned those involved in critiquing, developing and implementing CSR related policy and labour standards. Therefore in contrast to the professional CSR events, the research has also taken me to the homes of ex-workers, to the meeting rooms of trade unions and NGOs - sometimes via Skype to the locale of distant workers - as well as to solidarity rallies, workshops, and street protests. In these spaces, and many others, different agendas of CSR are being mobilised, sometimes directly, sometimes not, but often powerfully.

My aim in this chapter is to highlight the core findings that underpin my central conclusions. Firstly, the pursuit of workers' rights through CSR framing has secured employment as an important CSR issue, showing that responsibility for both direct and distant workers is perceived to lie at multiple points along supply chains. Secondly, the transnational context of emerging agendas of responsibility is significant for influencing not only relationships between states and corporations, but also between these and civil society and international institutions. Thirdly, although CSR is presented as a corporate response to criticism that companies' interests are increasingly put above those of all others, including workers, the efforts made to maintain the dominant model of self-regulatory CSR actually promote and protect these corporate interests. Fourthly, alternative CSR agendas can be radical, presenting opportunities for labour groups and wider social movements to question the limits of responsibility in global capitalism, to shape improvements and to promote alternatives.

To draw out the broader lessons from the thesis, I structure the conclusion around the three central research questions that guided the study, as set out in Chapter 1. Section 7.1 highlights the key ways employment and labour rights issues were found to be defined within current CSR agendas. Section 7.2 compares the strategies used to mobilise CSR in campaigns for workers' rights, and the themes that emerge from this

action. Section 7.3 focuses on the potential implications of employment relations being framed in terms of CSR, particularly for employment regulation, the relationship of states to corporations and the response of labour movements. Section 7.4 then draws together the theoretical implications that emerged from studying CSR sociologically, before I briefly return to my methodology to consider what has been learnt and the limitations of the thesis. Recommendations for further research are made, where my findings suggest future work would be fruitful and from topics that have been noted but not fully discussed in the study. Finally, I set out the importance of future struggles over where responsibility lies and reinforce the call for more sociological analysis of CSR.

7.1 Employment and labour rights within CSR agendas

During the course of this research I often encountered assumptions about my reasons for studying CSR. As previously discussed, in response I would explain that I did not begin with a set definition of CSR that I sought to promote. Rather, I wanted to understand how others act to develop and protect their own version of CSR, and particularly how this relates to conditions of work and workers' rights. Therefore my first research question asked, *how are issues of employment and labour rights defined within current CSR agendas?*

To answer this, the global industry of CSR has been presented as a site of contestation and struggle, with competing agendas identified. The three major dimensions of language, content and standards were put forward as a framework for exploring this contested territory of CSR. Through analysis of differing approaches to these and their relationship to employment, Chapter 3 presented a categorisation of competing CSR agendas as political, corporate, professional and activist. Although the categories are themselves socially constructed and overlapping, the case study research showed how these can be mobilised in terms of responsibilities towards workers. Three major themes are noticeable within this contestation. The first relates to a distinction between internal and external responsibility for workers; the second to the growing importance of procurement for norms of responsibility; and the third concerns the interaction of employment relations within wider CSR agendas.

The distinction of responsibilities to core and periphery workers

Issues of employment were found to be a fundamental part of CSR discussions. This is due to activists framing labour rights in terms of CSR, but also because politicians, CSR professionals and corporations see value in using a frame of socially responsible employment. However, as practices of labour market flexibility become more globally orientated, a distinction is noticeable in responsibilities recognised to internal, compared to external workers, despite the global vision claimed for CSR.

Firstly, with regard to responsibilities to those directly employed – internal to the organisation, *core workers* to use Atkinson's terminology (1984) – CSR agendas connect to the importance of employee wellbeing and work-life balance, working conditions and standards of employment. Within corporate and professional CSR agendas, issues of employee wellbeing, such as health, satisfaction levels, loyalty and engagement, can support claims that companies with strong CSR are good to work for, promoting their positive social role. Indeed, following a recent report on future strategies for employee wellbeing, HRM Magazine reported 'health and wellbeing will become the new CSR for companies' (Katie Jacobs, 2012; for report see Pruyne, Powell, & Parsons, 2012). Employee engagement with CSR programmes can mean workers themselves promote a company's CSR profile, so contributing to HR strategies aimed at attracting, motivating and keeping the best candidates. However, issues of employment are not approached homogeneously within corporate and professional agendas. The controversial issue of unpaid internships, for example, was found to be an on-going debate in CSR networks, with some wishing to ban their promotion.

Within activist agendas of CSR, discourses of decent work and fair work are drawn on. In the Keep Burberry British campaign the issue of employee loyalty being promoted through CSR was reversed, within claims that loyalty shown by workers' support for restructuring production and increased efficiency was disregarded by management in its abandonment of the factory despite its profitability. Burberry's disloyalty to workers and the community was framed as the actions of a greedy and irresponsible employer.

Secondly, regarding responsibility to external workers - all who contribute to the work of a business but are not directly employed, *periphery workers* in Atkinson's terms

(1984) - CSR agendas connect to the management and sustainability of contracting, outsourcing and supply chains. Lines of responsibility for external workers are complicated as they can include those employed via outsourcing agencies to work on-site, but also distant workers in disparate parts of the world employed in complex supply chains. For this reason, geographies of responsibility emerged as a theme significant for understanding these relationships, discussed in Section 7.2. Historically, governments and corporations have drawn a distinction between responsibilities to workers employed directly and indirectly, largely rejecting responsibility for the latter. As discussed, pressure has increased in recent decades to at least acknowledge some responsibility for the conditions of all workers who contribute to output, if not to disregard the distinction completely. The issues are usually the same as those for internal workers – such as health and safety, pay, freedom of association, security – but the level of standards required, how these are to be assured, and who is responsible for these, are major points of contention within competing CSR agendas.

As the employment relationship for distant workers does not involve a direct contract between the worker and end company, responsibility for conditions of work are often avoided by attributing them (or the responsibility for ensuring them) to another body – such as a contractor, agent, trade union, government, standards association, trade or institutional body. This passing of responsibility was seen in the PlayFair 2012 case, with campaigners having to engage with multiple institutions and corporations to gain commitment to minimal labour standards for those supplying the Olympics. In the Burberry case, a key point highlighted by campaigners was that the factory closure meant the replacement of core employees with outsourced workers, who would not have a direct employment relationship with Burberry. The move was seen to be motivated by profit potential with little regard of the consequences for the core workers who had been, and periphery workers who would be, making Burberry products. Where limited responsibility for external workers is acknowledged, this is often through the weak and non-binding language of CSR codes, as in the Burberry case, and is increasingly equated to adherence to voluntary private social standards, as found in the cut flower industry.

The research therefore suggests that distinctions persist in competing agendas of CSR in terms of responsibility for core and periphery workers. The challenges this presents for

the globally focused CSR industry need to be confronted, with Barrientos (2008) seeing contract labour as the ‘Achilles heel’ of CSR (see also Townsley & Stohl, 2003). Activist efforts claim this should be achieved by rejecting the core-periphery distinction so lines of responsibility are recognised whatever form employment relationships take.

The role of ethical procurement in changing employment practice

A recurring theme in the research has been the role of ethical procurement in defining socially responsible employment. This was seen to operate in the three related areas of consumer, corporate and public buying practices. The first, trends in ethical consumerism, was introduced in Chapter 1. Employment conditions have become part of the array of issues consumers may judge products on when making purchasing decisions, so shopping can bring the images and stories of workers into the lives of consumers. This is fuelled by a growth in companies seeking to benefit from green and ethical markets, and by labour rights campaigns highlighting abuses and the plight of workers making the goods consumed. It was seen in the Burberry case when potential consumers were asked to boycott the company in support of the workers; in PlayFair 2012 when supporters were encouraged to ask questions about working conditions when purchasing London 2012 merchandise; and in the cut flower case as a select group of consumers seek out certified products. These efforts contribute to the market for private standards and certification bodies, developing labels, guides and indicators by which consumers can compare the ethical credentials and employment policies of companies. Corporate communication of CSR policies is vital, not only for promoting these credentials to stakeholders, but also for navigating perceived reputational risks. For example, the Living Wage Foundation recently launched a logo for use by accredited employers. This appeals to corporations wishing to promote CSR claims:

Like Fair Trade, it represents a new standard for responsible business. We hope to see the living wage mark and symbol spreading further and further across organisations in the UK. (Director of Living Wage Foundation, Rhys Moore, quoted in *The Guardian*, 6 November 2012)

The perceived inadequacies of consumer power as a force for change meant limited activism was targeted at end consumers. This was particularly so in the case of cut flowers, but relevant to wider claims that lack of consumer interest, knowledge and power mean campaigns need other ways of instigating change. As discussed in Chapter

1, solving problems resulting from capitalism through a certain type of capitalism, is inherently flawed, at least in the long term. In the short term it may contribute to an awareness of responsibility, but is in danger of being exclusionary. For example, Miller (Northumbria University, interview) discussed the historical context of labelling schemes that promote ethical choice, seeing them as having ‘dubious beginnings, not very successful outcomes’ and as ‘riddled with the same kind of issues then as now, of class and gender’. Worth (WoW, interview) also noted difficulties of consumerism improving labour rights:

I think that relying on consumer choice to solve the problems can only provide a partial solution at best, and can also feed into all sorts of issues like for example whether you are charging a sort of undue price premium for it being an ethical product that isn't necessary all due to the increase in labour costs, but actually then makes buying ethically only something that the wealthy can do, which is very problematic...

Merk (CCC) told me how one of the most frequent questions his organisation is asked is ‘where should I buy from?’ He acknowledged that the issue is complex, but CCC mainly encourages consumers to ask questions. Indeed, several interviewees described how they now find their own personal buying decisions difficult and some have become obsessive in seeking certified goods:

It's awful. Once you get into this you can't buy anything! (interview: Haigh, APPGICR)

Miller (Northumbria University, interview) explained his dilemmas in giving buying advice to family, and had come to the view that it was through his work rather than buying that he aimed to make a difference. Visser (CSR International, interview) also claimed there was a more urgent need to create pressure further up the supply chain than the consumer level:

If you reach 10% of the market [through appealing to ethical consumerism] you are lucky... and what we need is a 100%. So how do you do that? You can only scale it up if companies begin to practice choice editing as Wal-Mart and others have started to do, or if the government steps in.

This links to the second key area, corporate ethical procurement. Within this, socially responsible employment is being defined in terms of the buying practices of corporations, both for the products and services they consume and for those they purchase to produce the goods they sell. This is evidenced in the agendas of CSR events

and consultancy work (see for example the 'Better Buying' section of Impactt's Annual Report, Hurst, Buttle, Lehrer, & Sandars, 2008: 22-26), and in professional CSR training courses, with the 'Buying Ethically' programme being one of the most popular currently offered by the Ethical Trading Initiative (interview: Barbato, ETI). There were found to be multiple drivers of corporate ethical procurement. One is clearly the work of activist campaigns, seen in the way PlayFair 2012 pressured Olympic officials to develop ethical procurement procedures that acknowledged some responsibility for workers in supply chains and required all suppliers to sign up to minimal labour standards. Related to this is the work of civil society groups to claim buyers share some responsibility for the results of irresponsible behaviour, as in the case of the Spectrum Sweater Factory fire (Miller, 2012). Another driver is the need for the production of component parts to adhere to a private social standard to be awarded to a final product, ensuring compliance throughout the chain. In this way, corporate ethical procurement also promotes the growing market for CSR certification and labels. Other drivers can be less clear, such as those for certification of cut flowers when they are communicated only to corporate buyers and not end consumers. Here the research suggested that protection of the self-regulatory model and preparation for future ethical consumer trends could play a part.

The third area is public ethical procurement, which has developed rapidly during the research. As with corporations, public ethical buying practices are increasingly seen as a CSR issue as public bodies, whether government departments or civic institutions, can influence conditions for workers in supply chains, especially given the scale and status of their purchases.¹⁶⁵ Influence can be exercised through selection of suppliers, but also through the details of contracts agreed. This might involve particular provisions, such as minimum wages or overtime, and could provide a long-term commitment to the purchasing relationship, avoiding changes in specification and ordering that can create unsustainable competition, pressure and insecurity for workers.

This supports the claim that political agendas of CSR can encourage best practice in terms of employment relations. Pressure for this and debate of whether government bodies should take this role has been developing intensely. At a European level, for

¹⁶⁵ Interestingly, the ETI have added an 'Ethical Public Procurement' option to its ethical buying courses.

example, the EU's Renewed CSR Strategy 2011-14 claims public bodies could be leaders in CSR by promoting socially responsible public procurement (European Commission, 2011: 10-11), with the strategy including a specific aim to 'facilitate the better integration of social and environmental considerations' into public procurement decisions. Campaigners point out the importance of this, given that the size of the public procurement market was worth 2300 billion Euros in 2009 and accounts for 19% of European GDP (Beuter, 2011: 37).¹⁶⁶ However, it had previously been claimed that building criteria of social responsibility into public tenders went against EU public procurement rules, designed to ensure the most economically beneficial tenders are favoured. This was brought to a head in 2010 when the European Commission took the Dutch Government to the European Court of Justice for listing fair trade as part of the criteria for a public tender to supply and maintain coffee machines (Fairtrade Foundation, 2012). In May 2012 the Court's ruling confirmed that public buyers could use ethical and social criteria, but particular labels (such as Fairtrade) could not be used as the basis of decisions, only the underlying social criteria that any label might be based on (European Court of Justice, 2012). As noted in a European Library Briefing, labour conditions cannot be included in technical specifications, but may be included in 'clauses on the performance of the contract' (Amand-Eeckhout, 2012: 3). The EU Public Procurement Directive is currently being revised and remains a focus for lobbying and campaigners keen to promote large scale procurement as a means by which to require ethical business practices, with employment in supply chains being a central issue.

A further example noted was the Buy Right student campaign of People and Planet, involving use of the Workers' Rights Consortium (WRC). This promotes responsible employment by influencing the procurement policies of universities and other public institutions. As Cranshaw (People and Planet, interview) explained:

Our campaign is about using public buying power to incentivise or disincentivise good corporate behaviour... trying to get universities to make institutional changes at top level... so they look at the labour rights impact and poverty impact of everything they buy.

¹⁶⁶ Others estimate this to be much higher, for example Henriques (2012) suggests public procurement accounts for 40% of the European economy.

Therefore ethical procurement has a multi-layered role in influencing norms of responsible employment practice. The promotion of good working conditions as part of ethical procurement, and the normalisation of ethical procurement as part of CSR, could go some way to closing the gap between corporate responsibility recognised to direct and distant workers. Certainly associations of procurement professionals, such as the Chartered Institute of Purchasing and Supply (CIPS discussed in Chapter 5), are keen to claim themselves at the cutting edge of responsible practice. The research suggests that CSR in consumer, corporate and public purchasing has the potential to influence labour standards on a transnational basis, but is so far limited by scale, restrictive economic priorities, and varying impacts of the voluntary private standards relied on at present.

The interaction of work with wider CSR agendas

CSR has been shown to be a vast and expanding field of discourse and practice, however my focus has firmly been on its relationship to work in the global economy. My rationale for this was established early, arguing that employment relations is an important arena for struggles over CSR due to how production networks and labour markets have been radically restructured by processes of capitalist globalisation. The transnational practices involved make lines of responsibility to workers complex and contested, with multiple interests involved in promoting ways of defining these.

It has, though, been important to understand relations of CSR to work within the context of wider CSR agendas. The early chapters of this thesis focused on this, with the case studies then providing an opportunity to see how CSR was mobilised in practice in relation to workers' rights. However the research has shown that although employment is now an established area of CSR, it is still not the central focus of most corporate CSR programmes. This is understandable as easier targets exist than tough questions of responsibilities to workers. As discussed in Chapter 3, the CSR areas corporations focus on, such as environmental sustainability and charitable giving, often distract from rather than prioritise the main gritty areas of potentially problematic responsibilities corporations may have relating to their type and circumstance. A reluctance to claim an outstanding CSR profile in relation to the treatment of workers was also noted, as this could put a company 'on a pedestal' that campaigners can then work to knock them from (interview: Wildeman, HIVOS). Indeed, all the campaigns researched in this thesis

seized on corporate CSR claims to try to disprove them in terms of how workers were treated.

So issues of employment and labour rights do form part of CSR, but the importance of their place is still being established in the interactions of competing agendas. In addition, I found many connections and overlaps exist in practice between socially responsible employment and other areas of CSR. In the Burberry study, CSR policy relating to community was important for pressurising the company to acknowledge commitment to its long standing relationship with the Treorchy community, which the workers were part of, with the Rhondda Trust victory (analysed in Chapter 4) resulting directly from this mobilisation. Community was also important in the case of cut flowers, as conditions in areas surrounding the farms in developing countries and the CSR projects to improve facilities directly impact the workforce drawn from there. Charitable giving can be a related category, but only when workers are also beneficiaries, or when workers provide the charity as in employer ‘matching’ schemes.

One of the most significant areas of interaction for CSR agendas was noted between employment and environmental concerns. At one level, worker security can be seen as threatened by changes in practice resulting from sustainability policies. For example, some CSR policies encourage recycling, such as Marks and Spencer’s ‘shwopping’ initiative. As part of its ‘Plan A’ initiative to be the world’s most sustainable retailer, the company is working with Oxfam to resell, reuse and recycle unwanted clothes.¹⁶⁷ It admits though that it is not trying to get customers to shop less, which could threaten production jobs, but to develop a ‘buy one, give one’ culture to reduce landfill. Indeed, many labour activists interviewed were keen to avoid action that could threaten jobs. Boycotts were a last resort, with more preferable action being to encourage consumers to question work conditions when buying products rather than not buying them. In fact, McMullen (Labour Behind the Label) advised a workshop on workers’ rights to still shop at Primark, but next time they protest outside it, to do so holding up their receipt, as companies are more worried when customers protest. As Worth (WoW) told me:

¹⁶⁷ Clothes are received in store or if a Marks and Spencer item is taken to Oxfam, a £5 voucher is given towards future purchases (Oxfam, 2012). See BSR Blog (2012, 24 October) for CSR professional analysis of communications ‘lessons to be learnt’ from this strategy.

What we want is for these companies to take responsibility for their actions and to be responsible for changing their practices in ways that prevents or ends labour rights abuses, rather than just cutting off relationships with these workers. It is about them taking responsibility rather than divesting themselves of their responsibility...

Pettinger (2012) highlighted a more negative example when a 'green' solar panels business replaced its full time staff with prisoners employed at £3 per day. In addition, if production involves potentially environmentally damaging processes, responsibilities to the environment are directly relevant to responsibilities to workers. Chemicals dangerous for end consumers, the land or water, are of course a threat to the workers encountering them. This was clearly seen in the case of cut flower workers, with CSR environmental and labour standards being closely related in certification development. Therefore, although this study has focused on how issues of employment and labour rights form part of current approaches to CSR, these have not been studied in isolation, but were seen to develop alongside and interact with wider agendas of CSR.

7.2 The mobilisation of CSR in labour rights campaigns

A central theme from my research of activist CSR agendas and the campaign case studies, involved critique of the prioritising of corporate interests above those of all others, including workers and their communities. These interests mainly relate to profit maximisation, but linked to this, the protection of market share and valuation, brand image, and competitiveness. It was found that labour activists engage with CSR agendas in ways that promote workers' interests and create opportunities for influencing debate over where responsibility lies. My second research question specifically asked, *how is CSR mobilised in campaigns where responsibilities to workers are in dispute?*

The campaign case studies responded to this question, and here I draw together and compare the main ways activists mobilised CSR. Some different, but recurring, themes were identified that cut across the research. Firstly, I summarise the strategies activists used to draw on CSR agendas, directly or indirectly, in the pursuit of their goals. I then highlight the significance of geographies of responsibility, including the transnational and messy nature of lines of responsibility, and differing commitments to place. Finally, I reflect on how different types of activism were seen to target different points along supply chains to pursue the best outcomes for workers dependent on the context.

Developing strategies

In each campaign studied, the activists involved were aware of the CSR profile and policies of the corporations and institutions being targeted. Engagement in CSR discourse was sometimes distinctly planned and sometimes evolved over time. More direct mobilisation of CSR within the campaigns commonly involved highlighting gaps between commitments made in CSR policies compared to actual worker experience. This was particularly useful for public facing work, as ‘corporate hypocrisy makes much better news than straightforward bad practice’ (Wills & Hale, 2005: 13). Less direct mobilisation of CSR commonly involved engagement with relevant language, including discourses of corporate social irresponsibility (CSI).

The Keep Burberry British campaign directly targeted the CSR profile and claims of Burberry, as a distinct part of its overall strategy. This involved direct reference to the company’s CSR policies in communications with them, in the Welsh Select Committee’s investigation into the closure, and in the media. Campaigners attempted to contact Burberry’s CSR Department to question the closure. Interested politicians appealed to the CSR commitments of the company, and Burberry’s failure to live up to policy claims was highlighted to government at regional, national and European levels. The campaign directly contacted some of the CSR associations and indices Burberry belonged to, asking for Burberry’s membership to be withdrawn as it no longer adhered to the necessary ethical values and standards. Campaigners also targeted the Church of England as a Burberry investor, knowing it to work to ethical investment policies which the campaign claimed Burberry now breached. Less direct CSR mobilisation centred around the use of language, particularly drawing on discourses of irresponsibility, lack of transparency, greed, and arrogance. In this way the campaign was able to make connections between the experience of workers and mainstream fears of corporate power and the negative impacts of globalisation.

PlayFair 2012 also connected to wider critiques of globalising practices and the prioritising of corporate interests above all others. The Olympics served as a symbolic arena to question where responsibility lies for workers. CSR was mobilised by drawing on the ethical profile of the Olympics, promoted as a universal ethos, but more particularly targeted London 2012 corporate discourse of ethical business and

commitment to a CSR legacy. Parallel public-private campaigning highlighted gaps between promises made and worker experience. This encouraged development of ethical procurement policies, so the Games hosts and suppliers recognised some responsibility for workers. PlayFair 2012 then built on this by targeting multiple parties to improve how the ETI Base Code was used in practice. The complaints system and worker training eventually agreed to by LOCOG showed how campaigners continually influenced what was defined as CSR as it relates to workers. Beyond 2012, this shaping of norms was seen in the signing of the Indonesian Protocol, which focused more on brand responsibilities and mobilising CSR to initiate industry-wide commitment to standards, albeit limited to one country and a single issue – freedom of association. It was also of note that Olympic officials did much to claim these developments as evidence of their own CSR legacy, mobilising their own CSR agenda to present themselves as cutting edge, good to buy from and live near, and through a commitment to self-regulation as already going beyond what is expected of them.

Campaigns that focus on flower workers are multiple and on-going, but a commonality is that mobilisation of CSR is nearly exclusively in terms of flower certification. Strategies developed by activists engaged with CSR discourse through the critique of, development of, and promotion of private social standards. In relation to flower farms, demonstrating responsibility for workers was equated with gaining and maintaining certification. In relation to auction houses, demonstrating responsibility for workers was equated with encouraging stringent certification and facilitating communication of this for flowers sold. Then in relation to buyers (corporate and consumer), demonstrating responsibility for workers was equated to selecting certified flowers. Discourses of CSR and CSI were engaged in to leverage opportunities to influence how certification schemes are used and the standards involved. As part of these efforts, academic and NGO networks were important in influencing how socially responsible employment in the industry is understood. A common campaign aim is to ensure the most robust standards and systems for monitoring are used, with those involving worker and local labour organisations being defined as the most responsible. Some campaigns had been involved in strategies to expose poor conditions, again employing the common tactic of highlighting the gap between corporate rhetoric and practice. This was mainly used as leverage in promoting the normalisation of private social standards for cut flowers, and to critique the weakest forms of these.

Throughout the research, some of the strategies of mobilising CSR used in the case studies were noted in other labour campaigns. Again, the critiquing of corporate interests being put above those of workers despite corporate CSR claims, was a recurrent theme. The example of Ikea presented in Chapter 3 demonstrated how publicly embarrassing a company by showing stark differences between its CSR policy and employment practices was more effective than mobilising a signed framework agreement (Szymonek, Solidarnosc). The fatal fire and collapse of the Spectrum factory provided an example of how NGO pressure could result in companies recognising some responsibility for workers and their conditions in supplier premises, even when these were past rather than current suppliers (Miller, 2012). This implies that buyers need to engage with indirect employment issues, as the consequences of any relationship can be long term. Buy Right and other public procurement campaigns also question whether purely economic factors should be used as a basis for buying decisions. Public bodies are targeted so they may lead by example, to show that social concerns – such as ensuring labour standards – should be considered by responsible organisations. The CSR or ethical policies and profiles of public bodies can be directly targeted in the same way as corporate ones, to encourage responsible procurement:

Public bodies usually have some sort of ethics code about sustainability or human rights, and so we actually call on them to live up to their stated commitments and make it more meaningful by affiliating to the WRC and starting to engage with corporations about what they are doing... I do believe that public sector bodies are more democratic than the private ones we'd struggle to persuade.... In the public sector they are more responsive and there are more formal ways in which you can engage, you know there are committees and sometimes votes on things...They can be a beacon... You can pioneer stuff... (interview: Cranshaw, People and Planet)

Two further points are of note. Firstly, where CSR agendas were directly engaged in, specific individuals with some sort of experience with CSR often played a key role. For example, Burberry campaigner AM Andrews had experience of CSR through his London consultancy and communications experience as Head of Public Affairs for the BBC, and Clarke of the Rhondda Trust set up and administered this as part of his employer's CSR practice. In the case of PlayFair 2012, the Chair of the CSL was an established CSR professional with his own consultancy. This could perhaps go some way to explain why CSR discourse and legacy were so forcefully engaged with.

Secondly, mobilisation of CSR was only one part of the overall strategy. How much it was used depended on the aims, the CSR profile of organisations involved, its relationship to other strategies, and success gained. Discourses of corporate social responsibility and irresponsibility were used strategically to fit the audience addressed, mirroring their own language. Engagement in agendas of CSR provided an additional tool for activists to gain specific outcomes for workers when corporate responsibilities were in dispute, but also to influence wider debate about responsibility in the global economy. Examples of responsible and irresponsible corporate behaviour served to encourage industry-wide, transnational improvements in responsibilities acknowledged and acted on. It is expected that as strategies of CSR mobilisation are practised, gain success and are shared, their importance will increase.

Geographies of responsibility

Much of the discussion in this thesis has concerned differences between competing CSR agendas. However, a significant point of commonality was also apparent – the global nature of the discourse. Corporate and professional approaches to CSR promote business as offering sensible solutions to global problems, claiming them to be a positive social force in the world, already going beyond what is expected of them. For politicians, CSR encourages best practice in standards to support reputation on the world stage, whilst activists call for responsible corporations to adhere to standards of decent work throughout operations worldwide. Given this emphasis on the globality of CSR, it is significant to note that geographies of responsibility emerged as a recurrent theme in two ways. The first relates to the transnational and messy nature of lines of responsibility, and the second to the importance of place for understanding differing levels of commitment to workers and the nature of campaigns fought for these workers.

In terms of transnationality a distinction is evident between responsibilities recognised to core compared to periphery workers. As more companies around the globe restructure and reshape their operations to take advantage of cheaper labour costs, connections between corporations and workers become more complex and obscure. The messy nature of relationships of responsibility arising from this can be likened to the puzzles that require children to follow mixed up lines to discover which one links the start to the end. The transnational context of the labour rights campaigns studied meant

a key aim for activists was identifying the line of responsibility that links workers to the company that ultimately benefits from their labour.

Activist framing of indirect and distant employment relations in terms of CSR has resulted in supply chain management becoming a CSR issue, with reports from the high profile BSR20 conference acknowledging that business discussions often forget that ‘supply chains are connections between people’ (Norton, 2012).¹⁶⁸ The transnational context of CSR framing is important here, not only as corporations can hide their connections to workers through complex outsourcing relationships and multi-sited chains of supply, but also as employment relations with indirect workers often operate beyond a single regulatory system. There is scope here for activist mobilisations of CSR to promote transnational standards, drawing on transnational solidarity to link workers, their advocates and also consumers. Both Play Fair (in the ETI Base Code and Indonesian Protocol) and cut flower campaigns (such as in the ICC) have had some success in this, also highlighting the relevance of industry structures for bringing about sectoral change (Schurman, 2004). Even though so far this has been very limited, the development of models and precedents is significant.¹⁶⁹

An example drawn on several times in the thesis is campaigns for a living wage. This exemplifies activist attempts to define responsible employment transnationally, with different campaigns focused on gaining a living wage for internal, external and distant workers. As the UK campaign gains ground, particularly in London, it works to establish the convention that practising CSR necessitates paying a living wage, with some success. For example, Lloyd’s of London presents its accreditation to the Living Wage Foundation as part of its CSR strategy (Lloyd's, 2012), and the Head of CSR at KPMG (a Living Wage employer) called for living wages to be a ‘requisite’ for CSR, which should be included on indices measuring CSR performance (Kelly, 2012). As discussed in Chapter 3, the campaign is supported by different levels of government in line with political CSR agendas promoting best practice but only through voluntarism.

¹⁶⁸ This was the 20th anniversary conference of Business for Social Responsibility, held in New York 23-26 October 2012, with registration costs up to \$3,100, not including pre-conference training.

¹⁶⁹ Indeed, Merk (CCC) claimed the Indonesian Protocol model has not been seen before, in terms of going beyond IFAs, the role non-union actors played, and the resulting disclosure and access to factories.

Interestingly, becoming an accredited employer means paying a living wage not just to direct employees, but also to anyone contracted to work on-site for at least two hours a week, for eight consecutive weeks a year (Living Wage Foundation, 2012: 6). However, the living wage concept was also seen as central for many labour rights groups working to define what is responsible employment in transnational contexts of production. Many have long called for payment of living wages to be ensured by corporations outsourcing to poor countries, where a minimum wage might not be established by law, or is unenforced or is set at a poverty-rate (see the Let's Clean Up Fashion initiative for example, McMullen & Maher, 2011; Doug Miller, 2009). In the Burberry case, concerns for poverty wages in the regions work was to be outsourced to were raised in terms of corporate greed, and the lack of clarity in CSR policies about outsourced workers. For cut flowers, War on Want efforts to bring campaigners together to apply lessons from other industries particularly focused on living wages, and Gema (React Africa, interview) complained that even when improvements were agreed on some standards:

...the living wage is still the big elephant in the room.

PlayFair 2012 activists were particularly concerned to ensure living wages were part of CSR mobilisations. This was reported to be one of the most difficult areas to get commitment to in practice. Merk (CCC, interview) told me how in early negotiations on the Indonesian Protocol, it was tabled as an issue 'but put in the refrigerator very quickly'. Securing a living wage was even problematic when achieved on paper for London 2012:

All manufacturers supplying 2012 are now required to comply with the ETI Base Code which provides for a living wage for workers, which is interesting, cause say Adidas are a main sponsor of the Olympics and they don't have a living wage provision in their code of conduct, but in their Olympic suppliers – they have to ensure a living wage. (interview: Seely, ITGLWF)¹⁷⁰

¹⁷⁰ It was later reported that Adidas refused even to acknowledge it was signed up to pay a living wage (PlayFair 2012, 2011).

The research suggests that although supply chain management is increasingly seen as a CSR issue in terms of the workers involved in these, for some corporations this is seen firstly in term of sustainability – necessitating enough CSR investment in worker relations to ensure there is a viable workforce for future needs. As Evers (WWW) explained in interview, if the workers do not stay at work, the farms and factories will stop.

Secondly it is seen in terms of an opportunity to ensure increased production – necessitating the development of more longer term relationships and ‘capacity building’, but with the motive of promoting intensive working (working smarter, but can also mean harder/longer). Indeed, the way Buttle (MADE-BY, interview) described supply chain managers’ approach to investment in these relationships can be likened to the work intensification principles of scientific management (Taylor, 1911). This supply chain management discourse can include Tayloristic terminology, such as time and motion studies and increased output efficiency, and although workers are factored in as an issue, again in a similar way to Taylorism this is largely framed in terms of increased wages:

There is almost a consensus that the way to do this capacity building is first to do productivity improvement projects and on the back of that you tie in HR improvements... but my feeling having being involved in some of these projects, is that these projects are intensely resource intensive and I don't think they are necessarily sustainable... (interview: Buttle, MADE-BY)¹⁷¹

Miller (Northumbria University, interview) explained the aim is to improve productivity and with the efficiencies made, to pay workers more. As expressed in the ‘Getting Smarter’ report of consultancy Impactt (Hurst, et al., 2008: 6):

The challenge for everyone working in ethical trade is to develop ingenious and cost effective solutions which achieve the win-win of better business and better jobs all along the supply chain.

It cannot be assumed that savings made by work intensification and economic upgrading will necessarily result in improved wages and social upgrading (Barrientos, Gereffi, et al., 2011). For example, Miller (Northumbria University, interview) explained that Marks and Spencer plan to cost a living wage into its Plan A

¹⁷¹ He made reference in the longer discussion to Stephanie Barrientos and (interviewee) Doug Miller working on the Capturing the Gains project, as important for understanding if workers do gain from this.

commitments for 2010-2015. However, costing it is not the same as paying more to workers. He did see ways for this to happen, but the often conflicting roles of the factory owners, the buyers and the workers need to be made clear. As with the consequences of Taylorism in the early 20th century, the non-financial consequences of work intensification need to be considered, especially in industries already criticised for pressurised conditions of work.

Therefore, although activist campaigns make some limited progress towards slow erosion of the distinction between direct and indirect relationships of employment, the areas in which corporations are most amenable to recognising some responsibility for workers, are also those likely to improve or protect profit margins. This relates directly to the second theme of geographies of responsibility, as corporate commitment to place in terms of worker and community CSR was seen to be largely determined by profit motives.

This was most starkly seen in the case of cut flowers, and is played out in the botanical rootedness of the product, facilitating more socially rooted relationships and investment. For products that require particular soil, other geographic considerations such as mines, or other connections to specific spaces, there is more interest in recognising responsibilities. Rajak (2011a: 8) points out that the extractive industries, once seen as 'the very epitome of irresponsible capitalism', are now 'the vanguard of this [CSR] movement' or at least try to position themselves as such. Even if still promoted in global terms, local expression of CSR for these companies is a more valuable investment. A move in the opposite direction is more commonly seen as industrial economies become de-industrialised ones, for certain areas of the economy at least. As in the case of Burberry, place was always important for understanding the industrial relations context, but the factory closure as part of global restructuring and outsourcing plans, meant a change to a less static context and a less direct employment relationship. However place was also important for understanding the context within which the Keep Burberry British campaign was mounted, given the long relationship of the factory to the community, as well as the traditions of local industrial histories.

In contrast, PlayFair 2012 drew more on transnational solidarity networks to promote its cause and to make connections between workers, such as by distributing leaflets of the Olympics logo via networks worldwide to help identify supplier factories. Keep Burberry British did use transnational networks too, but in a limited way for general support and to assert likely future supply chain routes. In the case of cut flowers, transnational connections (mainly in Europe and Africa) were important for relations between those researching and campaigning for workers, and those in growing countries liaising with workers and farms. Promotion of certification aimed to ensure international standards and input from locals in the process and corporate commitment to the locale were prized as part of this.

Geographies of responsibility then can be seen as reflected in geographies of resistance. As corporations move from commitment to a local place through direct employment, to multiple and sometimes changing places through indirect employment, CSR can facilitate a negotiation of relationships of responsibility at a global level, with a vision that can glance the world, without looking directly into the eyes of each worker.

Points of responsibility and activism along supply chains

I was interested in the fact that corporations were not the only targets of the activism. CSR campaigning as a concept is often used interchangeably with anti-corporate campaigning (Soule, 2009), but this is not necessarily so. The research highlighted two points in relation to this: responsibility for the conditions of workers is seen to be held collectively by multiple parties; and campaigns mobilising CSR in pursuit of better conditions for workers can be targeted at different points in supply chains.

To promote consistency in the methodological approach, as explained in Chapter 2, several standard questions were asked of all interviewees. One of these related to where the participant believed responsibility for workers lies. I was often surprised by the complexity of the answers respondents gave ‘off the top of their heads’, as well as by the diverse parties seen to hold some responsibility for workers. The aggregate results are presented in Table 4.

Table 4: Summary of where respondents believe responsibility lies

Who is responsible for the conditions and rights of workers in supply chains? ¹⁷²
The worker
Local, national and transnational trade unions and labour rights groups
The direct employer
The government in the country where the worker is located
Agents responsible for the supply of labour
CSR, standards, assurance and certification bodies
Wholesalers and other intermediaries, including auction houses
Trade bodies
CSR membership groups and ethical investment indices
Brands marketing the end product
Retailers selling the end product
Shareholders of the companies involved
The government where the end product is marketed and sold
International organisations, including governmental, ILO, LOCOG, IOC
Consumers

Whilst the variety is interesting, perhaps reflecting the complex nature of transnational production, the weight given to each party differed considerably. Although some collective responsibility for workers might be seen as held by different points along supply chains, some parties were seen as more capable than others of satisfying these.

Ultimately it should be the government in that country, but when you look at the capacity of developing country governments it's just not there. So someone else has to be responsible and we would say that there is a responsibility on the companies who are working with these suppliers, to ensure that certain things don't happen. (interview: Crosser, CORE)

Furthermore, some parties were seen as gaining most benefit from the efforts of workers, particularly the brands and retailers due to the profits made, and so were apportioned a stronger, heavier line of responsibility:

¹⁷² To this question no interviewee included all these answers, rather the table presents every group mentioned by the respondents as a whole.

Parent companies are responsible, as they are the ones benefiting from the operation... It's like the Don of the Mafia, who is more responsible – the Don or some kid selling drugs on the street corner? (interview: Cranshaw, People and Planet)

Those seen to hold responsibility were also partially determined by the type of campaign work respondents were involved in, and this brings me to the second point of interest. Labour rights campaigns in mobilising CSR were seen to target different points along supply chains. For Burberry the major focus was on targeting the company's CSR profile. Points targeted here were mainly the corporation itself, but also shareholders, CSR associations, consumers and different levels of government. This was a less complex chain than the others. For PlayFair 2012 the CSR claims were important, but as part of strategies to leverage for robust ethical procurement practices. A key feature of the campaign was the multiple points targeted and parallel public-private approach used, reflecting the complexity of the transnational chains involved. Targets included brands, retailers, direct employers, the international and local institutions of the Olympics, and consumers. Finally, for cut flower workers, campaigns focused on promoting and influencing the development of certification schemes. Here the points targeted were mainly at the source of production, with farms as direct employers pressured to become certified, and corporate buyers, trade bodies, trade unions and assurance organisations targeted to encourage rigorous and locally involved processes. As discussed in Chapter 6, it was interesting to find very little activism targeted at consumers in comparison to the certification efforts, with some flower labels not even communicated to the end buyer.

In discussing the role of civil society in the development of private social standards in the garment industry, Fransen (2012: 171) suggests that the more activist and business groups focus on the point of production, the more demand there is for higher stringency in standards. Conversely, the more groups engage with the point of consumption, the less stringent resulting standards are. This is consistent with my finding that activists in cut flower campaigns saw most value in focusing on the point of production. The points in supply chains that are targeted in mobilisations of CSR are therefore important both for understanding where responsibility is seen to lie, and for where the power to improve conditions is seen to reside.

7.3 Potential implications from CSR framing of employment relations

My research shows that in the ways CSR is mobilised in labour campaigns, employment relationships are being framed in terms of the social responsibilities corporations have to the workers who contribute to their business. The transnational nature of the CSR frame is significant. In this section, I consider the processes and consequences of this framing in more theoretical depth, reflecting on my third and final research question, *how may CSR be used to frame employment relations in a transnational context and what are the potential implications for (a) employment regulation, (b) the relationship of states to corporations, and (c) the response of labour movements?*

The concept of ‘framing’ is most closely associated with social movements literature, used to understand how social groups come to have a shared perception of an issue, which mobilises them to take action collectively (Benford & Snow, 2000; Johnston & Noakes, 2005). My study has not employed the prescriptions of frame analysis method, as mobilisations of CSR were largely used within wider activist strategies rather than being the central focus addressed by campaigns. In addition, it was not only activists that framed the employment relationship in terms of CSR. However some elements of framing theory are useful here, with Goffman (1975) showing it to provide a way of understanding how interactions, events and experiences are made meaningful. Use of a frame can present a situation in a certain way, providing interpretation that can both ‘organise experience and guide action’ (Benford & Snow, 2000: 614). Relatedly, elements of mobilisation theory (Tilly, 1978) are also useful for understanding the dynamics by which CSR has become a topic of action. As this is usually applied to action arising from a sense of injustice, it relates most directly to understanding activist mobilisations of CSR, as these aimed to protect and promote the interests of workers by resisting irresponsible corporate behaviour.

Expanding both mobilisation and framing theory in a different direction, it is argued that other groups have their own shared perspectives which mobilise particular framings of employment relations in terms of CSR. Framing can, then, be seen also to be a response to activist critique, a way of resisting the resistance which can serve to protect and promote the interests of these other collectives of actors that share a position. The groups involved relate directly to the categories of CSR agendas identified, so constitute

corporations, CSR professionals and CSR promoting politicians. The consequences of the different angles of CSR framing are considered by taking each element of the research question in turn.

Employment regulation

The potential implications of framing of employment relations in terms of CSR are first considered for employment regulation. These were found to be practical, as they relate to worker experiences and redress structures, and ideological, as they relate to competing understandings of responsibility in the global economy. The transnational nature of this CSR framing was important for understanding how responsibilities to workers are being defined and how it is proposed those responsible should be held to account. As a globalising practice, Sklair (2010: 33) describes CSR in terms of Orientalism as it 'reproduces for the whole world standards and values that emanate from the heartlands of capitalist globalisation'. The values and standards promoted are those that benefit the transnational capitalist class and their supporters the most. It could, though, be thought that the globalising discourse of CSR is merely a consequence of supply chains happening to increasingly involve connections that span more than one country. Opportunities to obscure lines of responsibility and to distance a corporation from indirect workers, could also be achieved within a national context. However, the globality of CSR is a significant element of its makeup and interests are invested in this being so. Not only does the transnational context of production and exchange of globalising capitalism present innumerable possibilities for supply chain routes, it allows corporations to select the most profitable sources of labour from a world market. Therefore transnational supply chains involve multiple regulatory regimes, in terms not only of the legal rights of workers, but also of the ability and commitment of governments to enforce them. CSR provides an opportunity to present moral discourses about responsibility to a global workforce.

Framing employment relations, including those organised transnationally, in terms of CSR, establishes work conditions as part of the agenda for debates about governance, regulation and responsibility in a global economy. What is of interest, is the different consequences this framing can have, dependent on how it is done and by whom. The four categories developed in Chapter 3 are useful here. Firstly, for corporations,

presenting their responsibilities to workers in terms of CSR can serve to promote their own role in regulating the employment relationships, whilst resisting attempts to increase current legislation or to develop transnational efforts. The enthusiasm with which corporations themselves have become 'ethical standard-bearers' (Rajak, 2011a: 8) and the way they are extending the tentacles of CSR into ever more spheres of activity, including development and policy arenas (Blowfield, 2005; Sklair & Miller, 2010), suggest the value CSR has for them. Corporate agendas promote a version of CSR which is self-regulatory and generous, which can be seen in terms of a gift-relationship of benevolence (Rajak, 2011a: 177-178). Supported by discourses of CSR professionals and political adherents, this is currently the dominant understanding of CSR. However the implications of this generosity and reciprocity need to be questioned:

I would definitely see CSR as that traditional sort of philanthropic, giving back, which implies that the rest of the time businesses are taking. (interview: Haigh, APPGICR)

Within this, responsibility for employees, especially indirectly employed ones, are mainly defined in terms set by corporations through voluntary CSR codes and the developing market of private social standards. Corporate involvement in certification schemes also ensures influence over how corporations are held to account, so becoming leaders in CSR can be a valuable prospect.¹⁷³ Corporations then, have an interest in becoming expert at the managerial practices of CSR, but not necessarily in addressing the most fundamental issues of responsibility:

My worry is that because we see this professionalisation of CSR, we have a lot of companies that have learnt what is expected of them and have got very good at doing it, especially the multinationals. So they know they need to sign up to a couple of codes and they know that they need to do a sustainability report and maybe even have a sustainability manager, and they kind of tick all the boxes and everyone pats them on the back and says you're responsible, you're sustainable. Whereas if you stand back and say yes, but what is the net impact of our economic activity? If you just abstract it from the company, it is disastrous and we know that and so CSR isn't tackling the root of the problem. (interview: Visser, CSR International)

Secondly, for CSR professionals, framing employment relations in terms of CSR facilitates development of a specialist area within a growing industry. The implications

¹⁷³ This is in addition to the benefits discussed in Chapter 3, such as competitive advantage, market share, and attracting employees.

for regulation are that the establishing professional territory of CSR is supported most by a self-regulatory model. This provides opportunities in the market for standards development, implementation, assurance and communication. A role is being established whereby CSR professionals can act as agents between the interests of corporations and societal expectations. In addition, the more internally focused elements of CSR, such as employee engagement and wellbeing, are developing as expert fields for HRM. Value therefore exists in supporting the corporate version of CSR, and establishing this as essential to business survival.

Thirdly, for politicians promoting CSR, using it to frame relations of employment can facilitate advantageous relations with business and promote best practice in working conditions. This can involve encouraging CSR activity that promotes social policy and adheres to existing laws, especially when governments have weak ability to implement these, whether due to their stage of development, experiences of austerity, or neo-liberal approach. Again then, implications for regulation are that political agendas of CSR mostly benefit from support of the corporate version of self-regulating CSR. Any efforts to encourage more stringent labour laws or transnational regulation serve to strengthen the position of governments in using CSR as a negotiating tool. Investment in lobbying also reflects the expanding potential of self-regulatory CSR as a tool through which corporations can bridge different expectations of how their responsibilities, including those to workers, are understood.

Finally, activist framings of employment relations in terms of CSR were seen to have two types of implications for regulation. As with all the agenda categories discussed, activists are not a homogenous body who define responsibilities to workers in one voice. The most significant consequence involves a desired shift from corporate responsibility to corporate accountability, reflecting the ideological position that corporations should be *required* to act responsibly rather than only *expected* to do so voluntarily. The implication is that more stringent regulation is necessary, organised on a transnational basis. Standards of employment should be guaranteed in law wherever work is done, and violations punishable in a meaningful way. This aim was aligned by some to political CSR agendas of competitiveness, reputation and growth:

[The Government] have a responsibility to protect our financial markets and our businesses and to uphold the highest ethical standards. And our

markets are not being protected when blaggard companies are being listed here....that is not upholding the UK as a decent financial centre... (interview: Haigh, APPGICR)

Activists were seen to acknowledge the challenge involved in developing alternative structures of global governance, and so an important distinction was made between this long-term objective and the short-term need for self-regulatory regimes to be expected, respected and robust. As has been shown, many variations exist in how it is perceived these regimes work best, but a common theme is that the less they involve corporations and the more they involve workers, the more likely they are to plug the regulatory deficit in the short term. Indeed, an interesting finding was the notion of CSR as forerunner of legislation:

So the role of CSR may be to, it is almost an experimental, piloting form of business practice. (interview: Visser, CSR International)

For example, predicting and preparing for the future legislation was one explanation put forward in Chapter 6 to account for investment in flower certification despite the lack of consumer knowledge or demand. The attitude change brought by acceptance of standards could be a step along the way to acknowledging a need for legislation, again rendering CSR useful to labour movement aims.

In sum then, framing employment relations in terms of CSR has implications for how it is perceived conditions of work should be regulated. Corporate and other interests are invested in the promotion of CSR as self-regulatory and generous. However as this will always be determined by the underlying profit motivation of capitalism, whether and how responsibilities to workers are acknowledged will depend on a cost-benefit analysis. Ultimately if not required by law, CSR activities will retain the status of a gift, which might be expected and welcomed, but which can also be withdrawn if the reciprocal relationship is no longer beneficial to the giver. Lipschutz (2010: 260) asks how corporations might respond if their own intellectual property rights were only guaranteed by codes of conduct rather than in law, stating that ‘what is sauce for the gander, therefore must be sauce for the goose’. This equity of interests does not yet exist, and in fact the research has shown the disparity to be great, with consequences lived out by workers in exploitative, unsafe and insecure work. It seems that without robust transnational legal frameworks and systems of redress, corporate interests are

prioritised above all others, including those of workers, and CSR can be a tool through which this can be compensated or disguised.

The relationship of states to corporations

The potential implications for the relationship of states to corporations from framing employment relations in terms of CSR, directly connect to the above considerations of regulation. Investment in CSR is a way that corporations can seek to define and remake the business-society relationship. Within this, it has been seen that the promotion of the corporate version of CSR involves transnational practices facilitated by a range of actors operating beyond state boundaries. These fit the description of the transnational capitalist class offered by Sklair (2001), and include corporate executives (particularly global CSR, HR and communication teams), globalising professionals (experts from academia, assurance bodies, and the wider CSR industry), and globalising bureaucrats (from international institutions, such as the IOC and within governments). The role these transnational actors play depend on the specifics of each case, but contribute to the overall dominance of a globally-orientated, corporate-led model of CSR which most facilitates globalising capitalism.

Three major issues arise. The first concerns the dominance of self-regulatory CSR, as within this corporations rather than governments determine what is socially responsible employment practice and how it should be ensured. Governments can use CSR as a tool of negotiation to improve their influence on corporate activity, but corporate gains from such relationships tend to be more valuable than those of governments. For workers, this might mean their rights being negated as part of trade agreements, such as in export processing zones, and it is yet unclear what status corporations will gain over workers and communities in vast areas through the developing trend of land grabbing (Pearce, 2012), as highlighted in the flower case.

Relatedly, the second issue is the encroachment of corporations into development arenas through their agendas of CSR. Promoting a positive social role for business in development policy can serve to secure the new consumer markets that globalising capitalism is ever hungry for, as well as new labour markets. The areas of the world where CSR presents the most potential are those that have the weakest states and offer

the best opportunities for ensuring that the globalised commitments of CSR codes are the most relied on form of regulation. Governance deficits of this kind can lead to 'decent work deficits' (Barrientos, Mayer, Pickles, & Posthuma, 2011: 306-307), with concessions to workers seen in terms of generosity rather than rights. For example, the role of large scale flower farms in offering social programmes, health and educational facilities in rural African communities was likened to the paternalism of Victorian philanthropists.

These businesses are playing a role in development agendas through their CSR in geographical landscapes they need to commit to for growing conditions, with workforces they rely on for future sustainability. The consequences of CSR engagement in development issues in the long term are yet to be experienced (Blowfield & Frynas, 2005), and become more pressing as neo-liberal policies are encouraged by and encourage corporate involvement. Whether corporate commitment to communities will continue, on what conditions, and whether the very poorest and least stable countries that have less to offer will be included, are critical issues for understanding potential relations of power between involved governments and 'benevolent' corporations, and their respective abilities to protect and define the rights of workers.

Legacies of corporate colonialism and industrial philanthropy can both be seen to provide the context within which CSR, in an era of responsible capitalism, needs to be understood (Rajak, 2011a: 9). It is proposed that useful theoretical comparisons can be made between changes in the business-society relationship brought by rapid industrialisation in the West in the 19th century and the rise of CSR in contemporary processes of capitalist globalisation. This was neatly highlighted by a War on Want event organised to support the PlayFair 2012 campaign. Talks by organisers and representatives of workers in factories making merchandise were followed by a walking tour of a 'sweated labour' district in London, where the conditions for the Olympics workers just described, had been experienced in the surrounding buildings during the 19th and 20th centuries. Just as the first waves of industrialisation in the West brought mass urbanisation, a decline in craft industries, poor working and living conditions, and class polarisation, so does capitalist globalisation now in developing and newly industrialising countries. Just as industrialisation in the nineteenth century brought demands for social reform and improved labour conditions, so globalisation facilitates

awareness of the conditions of workers in different parts of the world and demands for socially responsible employment. As Rajak (2011a: 10) puts it, 'old regimes of corporate paternalism are reinvented within a modern morality of social responsibility'.

As discussed in Chapter 6, a danger of the current dominant form of CSR is that what is defined as responsible in the treatment of workers and communities, is determined by the prescriptions of the CSR teams and experts who engage with responsible business events and the like, predominately organised in centres of financial capital. The ethnocentric nature of CSR as it is currently practiced is seen as problematic by Banerjee (2010) if the global vision promised can never be delivered. Furthermore, Khan and Lund-Thomsen (2011) conceive of CSR as a postcolonial project. This again suggests the importance of geographies and histories, including those of labour, but also means that entrenched relations of power limit the potential of CSR as a liberating force for development. If, through CSR framing, workers were to have internationally agreed labour rights protected, then labels such as 'ethnocentric' and 'postcolonial' in relation to CSR in developing countries would be less important. Whilst agendas are mainly dictated by business, their relationship to respective governments must be questioned.

The final issue here relates to the importance of international institutions and civil society organisations. The research question specifically asked about potential implications of framing employment relations in terms of CSR for the relationship of states to corporations. However, the scope of this was found to be too limiting. CSR framing of labour rights has implications not only for the relations between states and corporations, but also for relations with international institutions (such as the UN, ILO, IOC), and civil society organisations (including trade unions, labour, development and social justice groups). For labour movements as part of these, mobilising a CSR frame can help to question not just the power of corporations but the ways they do business (Hawthorne, 2012; Simms, Boyle, & Robins, 2010). A quotation used to begin the thesis, advertising the Responsible Business Show, described how CSR leaders are challenging the established boundaries 'between business, charity and state' (see page 14). Indeed, the dominance of self-regulatory CSR, related to the failure of some governments to develop and enforce regulation, means that international institutions and civil society groups are playing key roles. This can involve consulting on and delivering CSR initiatives and assurance, as well as pressuring corporations and governments to

improve standards. NGO funding and involvement in the APPGICR is evidence of this civil society lobbying work, and the potential power of NGO influence on corporations was expressed well by Buttle (MADE-BY, interview) in his description of some corporations being ‘petrified’ of Labour Behind the Label and its fashion campaigns.

Also:

The fact that government is so important if we are going to get the transformative change, makes the role of civil society, the activists, even more important, because what we know is that government and business are often in bed together. The lobby power of the big corporate now is so huge that it really slows things down... so the role of NGOs and civil society is absolutely crucial to pressure both the government and the companies to keep moving forward. (interview: Visser, CSR International)

As a transnational practice within globalising capitalism, CSR is therefore contributing to changing balances of power between not only corporation and states, but all those forces that either serve or question corporate interests being put above all others. This relates to the final type of potential implications, those for labour movements, as an important source of this critique.

The response of labour movements

My original starting point for this thesis centred on whether and how employment issues were included in CSR agendas. As the aims of the research were adapted and refocused, what has emerged as most interesting is the role of labour movements in mobilising CSR. This is both an under-researched and under-estimated area of CSR critique. In this final section I consider the potential implications of CSR framing for the response of labour movements. As has been shown, currently this framing mainly benefits corporations as it promotes themselves as their own regulators and helps to tilt balances of power relations in favour of corporate interests. How labour movements respond to this has significant implications for their own power to influence how responsibility is defined. This needs to be considered at both an ideological and at a strategic level.

Firstly, framing the employment relationship in terms of the current dominant, self-regulatory model of CSR, needs to be transformed or rejected if internationally agreed and enforceable labour standards are the aim. At the ideological level, some activists dismissed even the possibility that corporations could ever work to anything other than

a profit-led logic unless forced into action by the rule of law, which would again render responsible behaviour the most profitable option. Legal and democratic structures of governance are seen as necessary to ensure the interests of workers, community and environment. This was often expressed in quite radical terms:

There is a fundamental ideological debate as to whether the state can effectively intervene at all and whether it should... It almost sounds quite Marxist, I'm not a Marxist and I don't particularly use a Marxist framework but there is a mismatch between what is good for society as a whole and what is good for each individual business, and there is a tension... (interview: Greenham, nef)

...so Marx was right that the capitalist model does concentrate wealth and power and we haven't figured out how to change that. We figured out that communism and socialism didn't have a solution for it, but so far capitalism doesn't either. The concern is that a lot of companies that by every other standard can tick the boxes on CSR and sustainability, yet still they have this culture of widening gaps and massive pay packages in the bonus culture. (interview: Visser, CSR International)

Indeed, in discussing Marxist analysis of CSR, Shaw (2008: 565) identifies two main objections. The first claims ethical business is impossible, due to the nature of capitalism and its profit motive. The second claims CSR is irrelevant, as focusing on the responsibility or irresponsibility of particular businesses distracts from the 'systematic vices of capitalism'. Both these arguments have resonance in the CSR scepticism and activist approaches I encountered, with some totally rejecting the merit of engaging in CSR debates at all as the focus should be on changing the law and balance of power. However Shaw (2008: 271-274) goes on to argue that Marxian desire for a better society makes engagement in CSR relevant, and suggests benefit from corporations adopting social and moral responsibilities beyond that of profit-making. Whilst this may be optimistic, it does acknowledge the value of analysing CSR, as argued in this thesis, rather than its dismissal.

In a similar way, at a strategic level, labour movement responses to CSR framing of employment relations reflect an understanding that major changes in governance structures cannot happen overnight. In the absence of this possibility, or of achieving this soon, the research showed activists are developing strategies which turn CSR framing to their own advantage. As pointed out by Wills and Hale, by encouraging CSR, campaigners 'strengthen their armoury to defend workers' rights' (2005: 13). This

has resulted in the on-going development of an activist CSR agenda as presented in Chapter 3, mobilised using different tactics in the campaigns studied. If employment relations are going to be framed in term of CSR, labour activists can resist by using their own frame to create the shared 'sense of injustice' that Benford and Snow (1988) claim is vital for social movement mobilisation. This 'injustice frame' may focus on a specific incident, such as the Burberry factory closure, or a more ideological anti-corporate-led-globalisation framing, of corporate interests being put above those of workers and all others, so using an 'orientational frame' (Gillan, 2008). Kelly (1998) specifically relates mobilisation theory to industrial relations, developing a model of the conditions necessary for generating collective action against employers. He limits this to direct workers, but it could be applied to wider labour rights campaigns involving supporters of workers. The campaigns studied adhere to many of the elements as responsibilities to workers were seen to have been disregarded or breached, creating a sense of grievance, and there was belief that collective action could change the situation. CSR provided a frame through which the breach could be seen and portrayed to pressure change.

Corporate responses to the campaigns revealed something of the power relations between corporate, civil society and state actors. In the case of Burberry, the company tried to ignore or have minimal engagement with how activists mobilised CSR, which included appeals to different levels of government. Within PlayFair 2012, Olympic officials entered into dialogue, eventually made agreements with campaigners, and attempted a corporate capture of resulting initiatives, presenting them as part of their own CSR legacy from the Games. Within the cut flower case, power struggles were on-going within which CSR framing was engaged in, as it equated to certification, to determine the relationship between civil society and corporate partners in standards design, implementation and assurance, with state actors again playing little part.

CSR policies have become a major tool through which corporations manage stakeholder relationships, influencing conceptions of their social responsibilities to avoid criticism of their power, labour policies and impact on society. The management of these relationships through CSR can involve inviting or entertaining the input of trade unions and NGOs. As shown in the campaigns, strategic engagement with CSR agendas can facilitate creation of spaces for engagement, critique, and on-going relations of influence. Indeed, Miller (Northumbria University, interview) recounted hearing

Hannah Jones, Vice President of Sustainability and Innovation at Nike, publicly thanking CCC for its work, at the 2011 Better Work Conference shortly before I interviewed him. He referred to this as evidence of corporate acknowledgement of the role NGOs now play in determining norms of business behaviour. On following up this speech, it was seen Jones framed the need to engage as being in the corporate interest: ‘without workers’ rights, profitability is at risk.’¹⁷⁴

CSR professionals are creating a role for themselves in brokering and facilitating NGO-corporate encounters. This is done at CSR industry events and through specialist services, such as the ‘Local Resources Network’ website, which interviewee Buttle (MADE-BY) was involved in developing, matching companies to ethical partners.¹⁷⁵ Some corporations and NGOs embrace such encounters, whilst others reject them. A danger was recognised in getting too close to corporations, as this can tie up NGO time and other resources, as well as help to condone or promote corporate-led CSR agendas. As Miller (Northumbria University) explained from the perspective of the corporation:

One of the best things you can do for your CSR is to offer your critics some work. For one thing they are cash strapped, and it is a great way of cooperating with them.

It was also seen in the case of PlayFair 2012 that the value of spaces of dialogue might only be maintained through the continued threat or perceived threat of public action, necessitating multiple strategies. As in the case of cut flower campaigns, imbalances of power and resources compared to corporations, mean innovation and solidarity are important in labour movement efforts at CSR mobilisation. However, it was found that it can be worth it; framing employment relations in terms of CSR can facilitate labour movement aims. Strategic use of the ‘interdependent power’ (Piven, 2008) created by transnational networks of production and supply in globalising capitalism, can strengthen the position of labour in resisting corporate irresponsibility and in defining what is responsible employment. As the categorisation of CSR agendas showed, there are different approaches to the responsibility debate. Capital attempts to dominate this through presenting its self-regulatory, generous version of CSR. As part of strategies to

¹⁷⁴ Better Work is a partnership of the ILO and International Financial Cooperation. ‘Workers, Businesses and Government: Understanding Labour Compliance in Global Supply Chains’ was held in Washington DC, 26-28 October 2011. For details and proceedings, see http://betterwork.org/global/?page_id=1255.

¹⁷⁵ See <http://www.localresourcesnetwork.net>.

resist and question this, labour can engage by mobilising the same concept of CSR, but with its own activist, radical agenda.

Whilst CSR as a field of discourse and practice continues to grow, so do opportunities for activists to use this frame and strategy, targeting existing CSR codes, language and experts, whether using these as ammunition to expose corporate social irresponsibility, or to build relationships of leverage to influence policies and monitoring. Engaging with industry structures will also be important for bringing about progress beyond individual companies (Schurman, 2004), as in PlayFair 2012 and flower campaigns. There are indications, at an international level, that direct mobilisation of CSR is starting to be adopted and developed more formally as a strategy. For example, the ILO's International Training Centre is offering a five day course for labour representatives in April 2013 on 'Promoting labour standards through corporate social responsibility', and the 2013 Asian Congress of the International Labour and Employment Relations Association (ILERA) includes a track on 'CSR and Decent Work'.¹⁷⁶

In terms of advancing strategies, the research suggests further purchase may be gained by targeting CSR intermediaries, such as assurance bodies and membership organisations, with Smith (SEDEX) expressing surprise his organisation is not approached more often. It was also noted that targeting public and other organisations linked to ethical values could be fruitful for establishing norms. Such organisations could lead by example through their own responsible employment strategies, adoption of a living wage, and ethical purchasing practices. For example, faith communities have already taken a lead in promoting fair trade goods and could be an ally for flower campaigns, given the product's association with rituals and traditions, such as church flower arranging, funerals and weddings.

It is argued that the significant role labour movements have to play in setting CSR agendas needs to be extended and rethought in the face of challenges and opportunities presented. In particular, it is necessary for trade unions and wider labour movements to continue work being done to develop new strategies and alliances with each other. Although the research identified on-going tensions from such relationships – firstly

¹⁷⁶ For details, see <http://www.itcilo.org> and <http://ilera2013.com/abstracts.php>.

between NGOs and trade unions and secondly between local and globally orientated organisations – transnational campaigns were seen to provide opportunities for developing stronger on-going relations. This process sometimes benefits from facilitating figures, such as Miller (Northumbria University) in his dual academic-union role. NGOs were also seen to take on a role of facilitating relations between global unions and local ones (interview: Merk, CCC). This is relevant as transnational activism needs to be rooted in domestic social networks as well as those that reach beyond national borders, whether in a sustained or episodic way (Tarrow, 1998: 184-186). Issues of motivation, energy and sustainability of campaigns and alliances also need to be considered, as several interviewees expressed exhaustion from their involvement and a kind of campaign fatigue. Particularly useful for promoting the benefits of CSR framing of employment, is the sharing of examples of campaign successes and more work is needed here. Importantly, the opportunities presented should not be seen as limited to the narrow, corporate agenda of CSR.

It is possible to approach CSR as radical. Having developed as a result of corporate power and irresponsibility being questioned, and hijacked by corporations for their own interests, the research has shown how campaign mobilisations can push and stretch CSR to promote activist agendas. Furthermore, although battles over CSR are played out in the detail of worker experience and campaigns to improve conditions, by entering this contested territory labour movements also contribute to deeper debates over the nature of responsibility in the global economy. In this way, practical actions also contribute to ideological positioning. In this too, labour groups need to extend and rethink their role in face of the challenges and opportunities presented. Engaging more directly with those questioning corporate capitalism will be important in this. Just as the transnational capitalist class plays a key role in promoting corporate agendas of CSR, it is possible that a transnational proletariat class can be mobilised on issues of work (Struna 2008), promoting its own agenda of CSR. Occupy's questioning of the power of the 1% over the 99% has brought global structural inequality and the question of elites into popular debate. Whilst this might be a purposefully simplistic analysis, it can help people relate to more structured conceptions such as the transnational capitalist class, and whilst the solidarity scope of a transnational proletariat class is not, as yet, a reality, moves that facilitate the questioning of capitalism and create space for working towards alternatives were discussed in Chapter 3. Slogans such as 'we are the 99%' can help to solidify the

possibility of such consciousness on a transnational basis, even if the 99% is much more fragmented than the 1%. In fact a recent speech by the Bank of England's Executive Director of Financial Stability even praised the role of the Occupy movement in pushing forward needed debate and contributing to possibilities of reform, arguing that:

Occupy's voice has been both loud and persuasive and that policy makers have listened and are acting... Occupy has been successful in its efforts to popularise the problems of the global financial system for one very simple reason: they are right. (Haldane, 2012: 2, original emphasis)

As part of wider alterglobalisation movements, then, labour has opportunities to use CSR framing to push forward its own aims for decent conditions of work, helping to shape and contest competing corporate, professional and political agendas. This again demonstrates the importance of CSR contestation as a research theme and as a vehicle for influencing relations of power and responsibility within the global economy. As was seen in the campaign case studies, for the injustice frame to be most useful, working in coalitions, connecting to wider concerns of corporate interests being put above all others, and utilising CSR strategically whilst keeping an ideological distance, will be important. In this way, framing employment relations in terms of CSR not only allows activists to question the dominant model of self-regulatory CSR, but can also create opportunities to engage with and influence what responsible employment and business practice mean in the context of transnational production and exchange.

7.4 Questioning CSR sociologically: Challenges and future considerations

Each research question has now been addressed in the sections above, so here I return to the broader thesis aim of questioning CSR from a sociological perspective. The contribution of the empirical analysis to wider conceptual sociological approaches to globalising capitalism, transnational practices, contestation and resistance, and relations between state and corporate power, has been a theme throughout the thesis and particularly this chapter. This final section provides an opportunity to draw together the theoretical implications that emerged from studying CSR sociologically. I then go on to reflect on the process of this research, considering its limitations, future possibilities, and the importance of these for sociology.

Sociological contributions

I began this study because of a desire to understand how relations of responsibility between business and workers are defined in transnational contexts. My previous research of the Guinness brewery in Dublin had sparked this curiosity, as I found understandings of socially responsible employment to be historically bound to place through elements of social, economic and political development. I was interested in how relations of responsibility are impacted by the complexities of transnational production and exchange in globalising capitalism, when locally rooted businesses such as Guinness become part of giant TNCs. In the subsequent research done for this thesis, it was found that the transnational vision of emerging agendas of CSR was indeed significant for all the research questions addressed. It was studying this from a sociological perspective that facilitated the possibility of stepping back from the individual and specific research findings, to consider the wider implications of changing societal expectations and power relations within a global economy. More particularly, the study demonstrates that a globally orientated sociology is demanded to analyse contestation over responsibilities, the transnational practices involved and the consequences for different social groups.

This thesis addresses the established sociological problem of the relationship of corporations to labour, but has done so within the context of the current dominant form of globalisation – capitalist globalisation – and the complex transnational systems of production and exchange that are emerging from it. The necessity and value of globally orientated sociological analysis is supported by the research findings, which consistently stress the importance of transnational practices, vision, solidarity and power relations - all operating above the constraints of national borders to some degree. A contribution of the thesis is, then, the evidence presented of the value transnationally orientated sociological analysis offers for interrogating dynamic business-society relations, with an important empirical contribution being made through the case study focus on the impacts these relationships and related transnational practices have on the lives of those involved, namely workers within global supply chains.

Of particular sociological interest is how contestation over CSR connects to important debates regarding the nature of responsibility in a global economy. In this way, the

research findings have both practical and theoretical implications for understanding shifting power relations. Each substantive case study has shown how through mobilising CSR, activists have identified complex lines of responsibility between workers and the companies that benefit from their labour, and further that they have used CSR as leverage to gain some corporate acknowledgement of these responsibilities – including for periphery workers who are indirectly employed. Framing the employment relationship in terms of CSR is an interesting move sociologically as it potentially changes the influence that different groups have on understandings of responsibility. For workers and their advocates this CSR framing potentially facilitates improved working conditions, albeit limited to those labouring for the pressured companies or industries focused on and is usually dependent on the corporation's voluntary commitment to policies that they themselves control. For corporations and their supporters this potentially facilitates the promotion of the dominant conception of CSR as self-regulating and altruistic, serving to bolster corporate control over how responsibilities are defined and implemented, and to undermine or avoid the development of further state regulation of business practices.

As suggest at different points in the analysis, processes of contestation over CSR have implications for broader theoretical understandings of social responsibility. CSR has been shown to be a key part of the terrain of on-going struggles between corporations, states and labour. The complexity is highlighted by the range of actors my interviewees saw to hold some portion of responsibility for working conditions, notably including civil society, consumers and international institutions (as discussed with Table 4). However, drawing on the conclusions made throughout this chapter, the research suggests that it is corporations that gain most from the current dominant model of CSR, and their investment in developing and protecting this is well-rewarded. Furthermore, the alternative CSR approaches of other actors can also facilitate corporate interests, with the actions of CSR professionals and lobbied politicians assisting corporations in the use of CSR to bridge differing expectations of how their responsibilities are understood. Even activist mobilisations of CSR can appeal to, and so promote, the profit-motive of corporations as a way to ensure voluntary policies and private standards benefit workers too. It has also been seen though, that worker, trade union and civil society engagement in CSR debates can be radical and so provide a significant countervailing impact on how responsibilities to workers are framed and acted upon.

The thesis contributes empirical evidence of how these processes of contestation play out when corporate responsibilities to particular workers are in dispute, and the findings from each campaign studied are indicative of substantial changes and dynamic pressures playing out in the competitive environment of the global economy. In critiquing and unpacking CSR sociologically, it can be seen as much more than a product of corporate spin and marketing, but rather is a globalising practice of transnational corporations, with corporate CSR discourse servicing the interests of capitalist globalisation.

Shifting and contentious relations of power not only between states and corporations, but also with global civil society, can clearly be seen in approaches to the regulation of global capitalism. Tensions were clearly identified between self-regulatory models of CSR and demands for robust state and transnational legislation. Although it has been acknowledged that activist mobilisations of CSR have the potential to be radical - questioning the ideological basis of CSR within the context of capitalist logic and creating space for debate of alternative models of the global system - such efforts face huge challenges and the development of a transnational proletariat class to facilitate this has a long way to go. Indeed, massive differences in corporate and activist access to resources were seen within the transnational campaigns studied, limiting activist activity and demanding innovative strategies.

The domination of self-regulatory CSR and the continued rise of private social standards are testament to the successful normalisation of corporate CSR discourse in ever more pervasive areas of social life. This includes social policy and development agendas, indicating a significant extension of corporate power transnationally. In this way, the influence of corporations is infiltrating areas previously the preserve of the state when this benefits the interests of the transnational capitalist class involved. The implications for democracy, global inequality and ecological sustainability are potentially profound, and as has been shown, contestation over CSR is playing a role in resisting this movement. Not only is activist CSR mobilisation influencing corporate policies, promises and practices at work, social movement engagement is also promoting wider public debate on global inequality, responsibility, fairness and power.

Despite this radical potential of framing employment relations in terms of CSR, the research findings suggest that in the current dominant system of capitalist globalisation it is only legally binding transnational regulation that can ensure a precise understanding of what responsibilities corporations have and that can hold them to account for these globally. The strength of corporate resistance to this is reflected in the enthusiasm shown towards the professionalisation of CSR, with CSR discourse and practice used to disguise the need for or to compensate for the lack of robust legislation. Corporate-led CSR can be employed as a way to negate the economic, moral and ecological crises linked to globalising capitalism. Corporations and their advocates are attempting to evade claims of corporate social irresponsibility by promoting their version of CSR as generous, presenting this as part of a 'new and improved' version of a responsible, socially-orientated 'caring capitalism'. CSR not only bridges the gap between behaviour expected and experienced, but can also secure the future sustainability of work forces and consumer markets, and protect corporate influence over how responsibilities in the global economy are defined, implemented and upheld.

Sociological conceptions of contestation, power relations, transnational practices and regulation within global capitalism have been key themes within this study of CSR. This has enabled a globally orientated analysis which takes into account the wider context of discourse and practice. As such CSR has usefully been shown to be a contemporary and significant development within the continually evolving business-society relationship. Four central conclusions from the thesis were introduced at the beginning of this chapter, which result from questioning CSR sociologically in this transnational context. They are returned to here to reiterate the value of the approach and to draw together the contribution of the research.

In conclusion, the pursuit of improved working conditions through CSR framing has secured employment as a key CSR issue, identifying lines of responsibility regardless of whether workers are direct or distant. The transnational context of emerging CSR agendas is significant for influencing not only relations between states and corporations, but also with civil society and international institutions. Also, rather than being a response to the criticism that corporate interests are prioritised above all others, including those of workers, the dominant self-regulatory version of CSR actually serves to promote and protect those corporate interests. Finally, it is argued that radical CSR

agendas are possible, creating space for labour rights groups and wider movements to question the limits of responsibility in global capitalism, to promote improvements and to develop alternatives.

Limitations of the study

My subject matter has been challenging, as well as fascinating, due to its emerging and dynamic nature. The field of CSR already looks very different to when I began, and it is likely that other innovations, trends and issues will have emerged by the time the study is read. The research was necessarily limited in terms of the volume of material it was possible to cover and the need to end. This is particularly true of the case studies, with two of the three not just on-going but entering formative stages – Play Fair as it widens its scope and moves to Brazil, and cut flower campaigns as certification schemes are currently being decided on. The interruption of the research for several years did present challenges, but the subsequent refocusing was beneficial, and exposure to the topic over such an extended and crucial period in CSR's development has had advantages.

The study was limited by the decision to undertake only three case studies, but the selection allowed me to conduct these in-depth whilst still enabling comparison between factory, event and product-focused campaigning. It is acknowledged that these campaigns mainly interacted with TNCs, but impacts on smaller companies were also implicated through supply chains. The research was limited by language and location, however travel and Skype helped with this, and the role of London in the development of CSR was found to be significant. Finally, it is recognised that data from corporations were mainly restricted to publicly available discourse and interviews with consultants. Although attempts were made to have more direct participation from corporate CSR teams, these either failed or were abandoned so as not to compromise on-going campaign negotiations. The focus of the research though was on CSR mobilisation in workers' rights campaigns, and for this the access gained to the campaigns and the actors involved provided the most appropriate and interesting data.

Recommendations for further research

Any fast moving topic demands on-going study to understand the processes and consequences of how it is developing, and this is particularly true of CSR, given the contestation identified. Labour movement mobilisation of CSR was identified as having radical as well as strategic potential, and further investigation of how this plays out will be important for understanding the contested nature of CSR. Its interaction with agendas of decent work, social upgrading and wider alter-globalisation questioning of the current corporate system, will be interesting. Important issues noted arising from this include how CSR framing of employment interacts with gender inequality, development policies, land grabbing trends, ILO policy and relations between different levels of trade unionism and wider global civil society. Indeed, as the globality of CSR was found to be important, it would be useful to investigate in more detail any interlocking transnational networks that connect actors engaged in CSR – including activists and NGOs on the one hand, and CSR professionals and promoters and sponsors of CSR events and opportunities (such as the Olympics), on the other, as well academics and politicians who can intersect multiple-networks.

Developing trends in ethical procurement, including public procurement, could be a particularly fruitful area of study for CSR, as buying practices were identified as having a significant role in setting norms of responsible employment. Related to this is a focus on living wage standards and the developing issue of work intensification in supply chain management – which link cost efficiencies to pay. Research of this has, so far, been limited mainly to buyers in Europe, but the impact of buying power from emerging economies will be important. In this regard, further research on the Play Fair campaign as it focuses on Brazil for both the 2014 World Cup and 2016 Olympics is already underway, to see how the gains made for 2012 – on ethical procurement, public awareness raising and CSR legacy – fare in a different context, but one supplied by many similar chains as London. Then for cut flowers, further work on the role of auction houses in developing CSR agendas and on the disconnect between the promotion of flower certification to corporate and end consumers would be useful, not only for interest in the particularities of the sector, but as this can help to understand relations of power in defining where responsibility for workers lies.

The importance of future struggles over where responsibility lies

It was claimed earlier that to misunderstand the significance of CSR is dangerous. How socially responsible employment is understood has important consequences for the experiences of workers. As a contemporary move within the dynamic relationship of society to business, my argument is that to problematise CSR is an important sociological project. Promotion of the dominant corporate model of self-regulation has normalised discourses of CSR in ever increasing areas of social life, from job adverts, marketing strategies, public policy programmes, to development agendas. However it is not only corporate voices that shape what CSR means. Rather than being a worthless concept, competing groups invest great efforts to imbue CSR with their own agenda and to champion their version over those of others. CSR then, can be seen as a contested territory within which daily battles are being played out over how responsibility in a global economy is understood, both ideologically and practically.

Although the dominant model of CSR is presented as a sensible response to criticism that corporate interests are being put above all others, I argue that this version of CSR actually contributes to the promotion and protection of corporate interests. The use of CSR by corporations to acknowledge that some responsibility for workers *lies* with them, is exposed by activist CSR framing of employment relations as *lies*, when only corporations are granted the privilege to regulate themselves. It is only through analysis of the discourse and practice of CSR and the processes of contestation involved, that its significant role in promoting the interests of capitalist globalisation can be exposed. This becomes more urgent as the crises of the current system in economic, social and ecological arenas build, crises which corporations often attempt to use CSR itself to negate. It is also through analysis of the discourse and practice of CSR that its radical potential can be understood. Radical mobilisation of CSR could provide opportunities for deepening debate over responsibility and its limits in global capitalism in the longer term, as well as providing opportunities to shape how socially responsible employment is understood and experienced in the short term. Both are important for questioning the changing nature of work in the global economy, and both are important for workers.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1: CSR groups and networks followed

Sample CSR professional organisations and networks:

BSR The Business for Social Responsibility network
Business in the Community (BITC)
Business Respect (claimed to be oldest CSR newsletter in the world)
Corporate Responsibility Group
CSR360 Global Partner Network
CSR Chicks
CSR Europe
CSR International
CSR News
CSR Professionals
CSR Wire
Ethical Corporation
Ethical Performance
Ethical Trading Initiative (ETI)

Sample CSR academic and research networks:

Academy of Business and Society (EABIS)
Business and Organisations for Sustainable Societies (BOSS)
Business and Society Research Group (CRASSH)
Cranfield Corporate Responsibility Network (CCRN)
Development Studies Association Business and Development (previously CSR) Study Group
Global Unions Research Network (GURN – as a founding member)
International Centre for Corporate Social Responsibility (ICCSR)

Sample CSR and labour activist organisations and networks:

Business & Human Rights Resource Centre
Clean Clothes Campaign (CCC)
Corporate Responsibility Coalition (CORE)
CorpWatch
Ecumenical Council for Corporate Responsibility (ECCR)
European Coalition for Corporate Justice (ECCJ)
Global Compact Critics
International Labor Rights Forum
Labour Start
No Sweat
OECD Watch
People and Planet
SpinWatch

Appendix 2: Interviewees from CSR engaged groups¹⁷⁷

Name and position when interviewed	Format and location
Martin Buttle: Senior Supply Chain Consultant, MADE-BY consultancy on ethical practices in fashion, and previously of Impactt, labour standards consultancy	In person, London
V Chandra: Organising Secretary, The New Trade Union Initiative	In person, World Social Forum, Mumbai
Jim Cranshaw: Corporate Campaigns and Buy-Right Project Coordinator, People and Planet	In person and by email, Oxford
Marilyn Crosser: Coordinator, Corporate Responsibility Coalition (CORE)	In person and by email, London
Baroness Sally Greengross: Chair, the Associate Parliamentary Corporate Responsibility Group (APCRG) and External Adviser, Fujitsu CSR Board	In person, House of Lords, London
Tony Greenham: Head of Business and Finance project area, New Economics Foundation (nef)	In person, London
Louise Haigh: Coordinator of the All Party Parliamentary Group on International Corporate Responsibility: Business, Human Rights and Environment (APPGICR)	In person, Houses of Parliament, London
Sharon McClenaghan: Senior Private Sector Advisor, Christian Aid	In person, World Social Forum, Porto Alegre
Beth Murray: Marketing and Research Executive, Coethica consultancy	In person, London
Jason Periera: Regional Coordinator, International Young Christian Workers	In person, World Social Forum, Mumbai
Molly Pierce: Editor of <i>Communicate</i> , industry magazine for corporate communications and stakeholder management	In person, London
Alex Steele: Director of Improvise CSR and sustainability consultancy	In person, London
Maria-Jose Subiela: International Projects Director, Business in the Community (BITC)	In person, London
Natalya Sverjensky: Senior Sustainability Strategist, Futerra communications consultancy, blogger on greenwash and co-founder of CSR armchair activist project focused on BP's CSR	In person, London

¹⁷⁷ Klier, Merk, McCarthy, Miller and Smith from Appendix 4b and Mason from Appendix 3b are also drawn on in Chapter 3.

Joanne Szymonek: International Department, National Commission, NSZZ Solidarnosc Trade Union	In person, London and by email, Poland
Stephen Timms: Labour MP and Shadow Minister for Employment, previously twice held Minister for CSR post, also a Trustee of TraidCraft	In person, Houses of Parliament, London
Wayne Visser: Founder of CSR International, Director of Kaleidoscope Futures and Sustainability Markets Ltd, Visiting Professor in Corporate Responsibility at Warwick University, Senior Associate of Cambridge University Programme for Sustainability Leadership	In person and by email, London
Murray Worth: Campaigns Officer for Economic Justice, War on Want	In person and by email, London

Appendix 3: Data sources and interviewees for Keep Burberry British

3a Keep Burberry British: Major documentary sources

Source	Types of documents
Keep Burberry British website www.keepburberrybritish.	Campaign blog,, links to news articles, photographs, film clippings
Burberry Plc website www.burberryplc.com	Company publications and reports, news and press releases, marketing materials, CSR policy and reports, CSR job adverts
GMB website www.gmb.org.uk	Union publicity, press releases, photographs, campaign materials, links to news articles
Rhondda Trust www.rhonddatrust.org.uk	Scheme explanation, application forms, selection criteria
Keep Burberry British Archive, held at Welsh Assembly, Cardiff	Letters, notes from meetings and brainstorms, newspaper and magazine articles, photographs, stickers, banners, reports, emails, petition
Personal archive of Glynis (Ex-Burberry worker and shop steward)	Newspaper articles, letters, photographs, poem
Public access parliamentary sources from the House of Commons, European Parliament, the Welsh Assembly, and politician's websites	Reports, transcripts of questions and proceedings, blogs of individual politicians
Internal Welsh Assembly documents relating to factory closure accessed through previously granted Freedom of Information (FOI) Act request	Emails, file notes, minutes of meetings with Burberry, ministerial briefings and jackets, letters between Ministers, Burberry, MEPs, AMs, workers and Prime Minister
Media, including: BBC, S4C, Guardian, Observer, Rhondda Leader, Telegraph, New York Times, Financial Times	Interviews, news reports, photographs, film clippings
Sherman Theatre Play 'Burberry: A Welsh Campaign'	Script

3b Keep Burberry British: Key interviewees¹⁷⁸

Name and position when interviewed	Format and location
Leighton Andrews: AM for Rhondda, Labour Party, campaign organiser and Trustee of Rhondda Trust	In person and email, Porth Office, Wales
Bethan: Ex-Burberry employee, machinist for 7 years then returned for 12 after having family, now working as a care assistant	In person, Public House, Treorchy
Chris Bryant: MP for Rhondda, Labour Party, Parliamentary Under-secretary of State and Minister for European Union, Campaign organiser and Trustee of Rhondda Trust	In person, Foreign Office, London
Mervyn Burnett: Senior Organiser, South Western Region, GMB (main union for Treorchy Burberry workers) campaign organiser, Trustee of Rhondda Trust	In person, GMB, Cardiff
Guy Clarke OBE: Partner, Morgan Cole Solicitors, Cardiff, Trustee of Rhondda Trust - responsible for setting up the fund and continued administration with Burberry regarding payments	In person and email, Morgen Cole offices, Cardiff
Matthew Davis: Personal recipient of Rhondda Trust funds, £4000 for a legal practice course	By email, Rhondda based
Glynis: Ex-Burberry employee, started 1966 hand sewing buttons, GMB Shop Steward, Burberry shareholder, Rhondda Trust Trustee, now in temporary retail employment	In person, Family home, Treorchy
Hywel Francis: MP for Aberavon, Labour Party, Chair of Welsh Affairs Committee, including ‘Globalisation and its impact on Wales’ investigation, which called campaigners and Burberry executives to give written and verbal evidence, historian of Welsh industrial past	In person, Parliament, London
Alan Harris: Writer of play ‘Burberry: A Welsh Campaign’, who interviewed many of the key campaigners for research	By email, Cardiff based
Jean Jenkins: Lecturer, Cardiff University	In person, London
Edward Mason: Secretary to Church of England’s Ethical Investment Advisory Group, advising on investment issues – including Burberry	In person, Church House, London
Sarah: Ex-Burberry employee, presser for 13 years, now working in the kitchen of a care home	In person, Public House, Treorchy

¹⁷⁸ As noted in Chapters 2 and 4, ex-Burberry workers have been given pseudonyms.

Julie Spiller: Penyreglyn Project Co-ordinator for Valley Kids, charity Rhondda Trust recipient	By email, Rhondda based
David Taylor: Press Secretary to AM Leighton Andrews, campaign organiser and administrator	In person, Cardiff Welsh Assembly
Sian Weston: PhD student at Constance Howard Resource and Research Centre in Textiles, Goldsmiths University, and coordinator of the ‘Can craft make you happy?’ project for ex-Burberry employees.	In person and by email, London
Leanne Wood: AM for South Wales, Plaid Cymbu	In person, Cardiff Welsh Assembly

Appendix 4: Data sources and interviewees for PlayFair 2012

4a PlayFair 2012: Major documentary sources

Source:	Types of documents included:
Play Fair campaign websites:	
http://play-fair.org http://www.fairolympics.org http://www.playfair2008.org http://www.clearingthehurdles.org http://www.playfair2012.org http://www.labourbehindthelabel.org	Reports, educational materials, press releases, videos, blogs, galleries, campaign materials – flyers, posters, postcards etc., copies of correspondence, related email lists and Facebook/Twitter accounts.
Official Olympic websites:	
http://www.olympic.org http://www.london2012.com https://www.competefor.com/business/login.jsp http://www.olympics.org.uk	Reports, press releases, publicity, copies of correspondence, position papers, videos, blogs, related email lists and Facebook/Twitter accounts for some sites.
Selected Olympic study and watchdog websites:	
http://www.cs.london.org http://www.podium.ac.uk http://www.olympic.org/olympic-studies-centre http://www.bl.uk/sportandsociety http://www.gamesmonitor.org.uk http://www.lifeisland.org http://counterolympics.com http://uk.groups.yahoo.com/group/gamesmonitor http://www.learmarsh.com http://www.citizensuk.org/campaigns/london-2012-olympics http://www.olympicwatch.org	Reports, research articles, interviews, newsletters, galleries, videos, campaign materials, discussion boards, blogs, related email lists and various social networking sites.
Additional sources:	
Local, national and international media, mainly accessed via the web for search purposes	Articles and illustrations covering the campaign and Olympic issues
Personal archive of campaigner Doug Miller	Reports, press coverage, correspondence, fact sheets, notes and campaign updates
PlayFair 2012 and Play Fair international campaign research and hard copies of materials obtained in person at events and directly from campaign coordinators	Research reports, educational materials, campaign leaflets, stickers, posters and postcards

4b PlayFair 2012: Key interviewees

Name and position when interviewed	Format and location
Asalettin Arslanoglu: Director of Organising for the Textile, Knitting and Clothing Workers' Union of Turkey (TEKSIF) and visiting speaker PlayFair 2012	In person, by translator, TUC, London
Kristin Blom: Campaigns Officer, ITUC, Belgium – official partner of Play Fair international campaign	In person at London protest, and by Skype and email, Brussels
Samantha Dormer: Head of Product Strategy for Cocoa, The Fairtrade Foundation	In person, Fairtrade Foundation, London
Charlotte Garada - General Secretary of LSE Student Union, Committee Member of NUSSL and Buy Right	In person and email, LSE, London
Sam Guerney: International Policy Officer, TUC and involved in Play Fair international since 2004, member of ILO governing body	In person, TUC, London
Julia Hawkins: Media Relations and Communications Officer, Ethical Trading Initiative (ETI)	In person and email, ETI, London
Sebastian Klier: Campaigns Officer, War on Want – supporting organisation of PlayFair 2012	In person and email, War on Want, London
Shaun McCarthy: Chair of Commission for a Sustainable London 2012, and Director of Action Sustainability	Telephone by appointment, London
Anna McMullen: PlayFair 2012 Campaigns Coordinator, Labour Behind the Label	In person and email, Bristol and London
Jeroen Merk - Clean Clothes Campaign International Secretariat	In person and email, Amsterdam
Doug Miller - Professor in Workers' Rights in Fashion, Northumbria University and ITGLWF Project Officer, PlayFair from 2004	In person and email, Newcastle, London
Karla Mundim - Student activist, Made in 48	At workshop and email, Bristol
Amelia Parsons - Communities Officer of University of West of England Student Union, and Bristol Fairtrade Network Organiser	At workshop and email, Bristol
Ashling Seely - Coordinator of GUF's Sportswear Project and Policy Assistant to General Secretary for ITGLWF, official partner of Play Fair international	In person, TUC Women's Conference, Eastbourne and email
Tom Smith - Head of Marketing and Business Development, SEDEX, of which LOCOG is a member	In person and email, London
Sharon Sukhram - PlayFair 2012 Project Officer, TUC	In person, TUC and events, email

Appendix 5: Data sources and interviewees for cut flower campaigns

5a Cut flowers: Major documentary sources

Campaign Websites:
http://www.cactus.org.co/ingles/principal.html http://www.laborrights.org/creating-a-sweatfree-world/fairness-in-flowers http://www.hivos.nl/eng http://www.iuf.org/ http://www.laborrights.org/creating-a-sweatfree-world/fairness-in-flowers http://www.olaa.nl http://www.traidcraft.co.uk http://www.waronwant.org/campaigns http://www.women-ww.org/
Research groups and networks:
http://www.capturingthegains.org/research/themes/sectors/agrofoods/index.htm http://ftepr.org/ http://genderinvaluechains.ning.com/
Certification websites:
http://www.fairflowers.de http://www.fairflowersfairplants.com/home-en.aspx http://www.fairtrade.org.uk/producers/flowers/oserian.aspx http://www.florverde.org http://www.maxhavelaar.nl/english http://www.my-mps.com www.veriflora.com
Trade associations, cooperatives and collaborations:
http://www.asocolflores.org/ http://www.britishfloristassociation.org/ http://www.ethicaltrade.org/in-action/projects/kenya-flower-project http://www.floraholland.com/en http://www.florint.org/ http://www.kenyaflowercouncil.org/ http://www.newcoventgardenmarket.com/
Media:
Local, national and international media, mainly accessed via the web for search purposes, including articles covering the campaigns and related employment and consumer issues

5b Cut flowers: Key interviewees

Name and position when interviewed	Format and location
Hella Alikuru: Africa Region Coordinator, International Union of Food, Agricultural, Hotel, Restaurant, Catering, Tobacco and Allied Workers' Association (IUF)	Skype and email, Kampala, Uganda
Sima Arman: Coordinator for Flower Label Programme (FLP), international certification scheme	In person and email, Munich, Germany
Candida Barbato: Coordinator for Flowers and Horticultural Programmes and Supervisor Training Scheme, the Ethical Trading Initiative (ETI)	Telephone by appointment, London
Loek Barendse: Counsellor for Quality and Sustainability, FloraHolland Auction House	In person, The Netherlands
Benedicte Brahic: Researcher, Women Working Worldwide (WWW)	In person and email, Manchester
Christopher Cramer: Professor of Development Studies and Fair Trade, Employment and Poverty Reduction (FTEPR) research project, SOAS	In person, London
Barbara Evers: Research Fellow, Brooks World Poverty Institute, Manchester University, Coordinator Capturing the Gains Programme, Director of Women Working Worldwide (WWW)	In person, joint with Medusa, and email, Manchester
Joyce Gema: React Africa consultant, involved in research and campaign coordination, representative of Traidcraft	Skype and email, Kenya
Fiona Gooch: Private Sector Policy Advisor, Traidcraft and coordinator of cut flower campaign	Email, London
Jos Harmsen: Producer Relations and Development Coordinator, Max Havlaar - Fairtrade certification body	Skype, The Netherlands
Simone Heenskerk: Research and Development Officer for Social Certification Standard, Milieu Programma Sierteelt (MPS) – international certification programme	In person, The Netherlands
Kees Hoek: Flower Campaign Coordinator, Latin American Activities Association (OLAA) and contributor to the International Code of Conduct (ICC) and establishment of Fair Flowers Fair Plants (FFP) international certification scheme	In person and email, Amsterdam
Sjef Langeveld: Fair Flowers Fair Plants (FFP), previously of Both Ends and involved in development of ICC	Skype and email, The Netherlands
Sue Longley: Agricultural and Plantation Programmes Coordinator, International Union of Food, Agricultural, Hotel, Restaurant, Catering, Tobacco & Allied Workers' Association (IUF)	Telephone by appointment, Switzerland
Marta Medusa: Development Officer, Women Working Worldwide (WWW)	In person, joint with Evers, Manchester

Phillipina Mosha: Education and Gender Secretary, Tanzania Plantation and Agricultural Workers Union (TPAWU)	Skype and email, Tanzania
Lone Riisgaard: Assistant Processor, Roskilde University	Skype and email, Denmark
Anne Tallontire: Senior Lecturer, Sustainability Research Institute, University of Leeds	In person and email, Leeds
Eunice Waweru: Programme Coordinator for Workers' Rights Watch, Kenya	Email, Kenya
Caroline Wildeman: Campaign Coordinator for Women@Work, Humanist Institute for Development Cooperation (HIVOS)	In person, The Hague
Brian Wills-Pope: Vice President of British Florist Association (BFA), Member of International Florist Organisation (Florint)	Telephone by appointment, Plymouth

5c Participants from FloraHolland International Trade Fair

Name and company:	Based in:
Harold Block: Gartenbaubetrieb Block	Germany
Puk van den Bulk: PR consultant, De Singel	The Netherlands
Edwin Erwich: FloraHolland sales representative, exhibiting on behalf of distant growers	The Netherlands, Ethiopia, Kenya
Cleta van der Hulst: Van der Hulst Rozenkwekerij	The Netherlands
Olaf Janssen: Sales Manager, Clayrton's, Hello Kitty Plants	France
Pter van der Kamp: Green Chain	The Netherlands
Joyce Lansbergen: LG Flowers	The Netherlands
Michael Schnor Neilsen: Sales Manager, PKM, brand name - Fairytale Flowers	Denmark and Kenya, with partners in Poland
Cora Noordam: Sales and Marketing Manager, Plant Planet	The Netherlands
Koen Peeters: Konaplant	Belgium
Rob van der Velden: Joint owner of family business, Velden Roses	The Netherlands
Jacqueline van Wingerden-Boon: Bonito Plant	The Netherlands

5d Participants from New Covent Garden Flower Market, London

Company:

Algar Ltd
Bloomfield of London
D and G Wholesale
E-Four
J H Hart
Pratley Covent garden
S Robert Allen Ltd
Zest Flower

Appendix 6: Sample interview guide

Interview guide/prompt: Mervyn Burnett, GMB Offices, Cardiff 5 November 2009 10am

- Introductions, explanation and thanks – explain about the recorder.
- *Tape recorder on* - Verbal confirmation that agree to be interviewed for the study.

Background

- Could you tell me a bit about your own background and how you got involved with the campaign?
- Personal connection to the Valleys, to the company?

The factory closure

- What motivated you to take such an active part in the campaign and GMB response to the closure?
- Reasons why opposed the factory closure?

The campaign

- Can you talk me through the development of the campaign and the relationships with others?
- How was the strategy decided upon, motivation, who involved, relationship with Burberry?
- Major themes to emerge?

Outcomes

- Looking back, how would you assess the effectiveness of the campaign?
- Do you think Burberry would have made different decisions if had known such a campaign would be fought?
- In hindsight, is there anything you think the campaign could or should have done differently?
- Do you think there are any lasting impacts from the campaign?
e.g. for Burberry and CSR, the workers, the Valleys, other companies, other campaigns

CSR – let emerge but if not already covered

- For you, what does CSR mean?
- Who do you see as responsible for the conditions and rights of workers in global supply chains?
- In what ways do you think ideas about CSR played a role in the campaign or in decisions Burberry made and will in future?
e.g. Burberry's CSR and memberships, codes, communications in campaign, PR company, future employment strategies, outsourcing, supply chain management.
- Who do you think is responsible for the conditions and rights of workers in supply chains?

Anything else to add?

Who else should I talk to – contacts?

Thank and check contact details for follow up.

Appendix 7: Chronology of Burberry factory closure¹⁷⁹

1937 The factory is built during an inter-war economic development initiative, owned by Alfred Polikoff (Wales) Ltd.

1939 Manufacturing of clothing begins, with Burberry becoming a major customer over the years.

1989 Ownership of the factory is taken over by Burberry.

2004 Discussions are held about efficiency problems and an improvement strategy is devised. MP Bryant is assured no closure is planned and that he will be informed if that becomes a possibility.

2006

6 September Burberry announces that a yearlong review has concluded there is no viable alternative to closure of the Treorchy factory. Workers are told it will close after the legally required 90 day consultation period. Immediate meetings are held between the union, politicians and management.

7 September Workers decide to fight closure plans after a mass meeting.

19 September The Welsh Assembly discusses the closure and are informed that a campaign is being mounted; support is pledged to work with the campaign and management to pursue all options.

6 October The official GMB campaign to save the factory is launched. Union leaders negotiate to extend the closure date by a month.

7 October Workers travel to London to protest outside Burberry's stores.

9 October MP Bryant proposes an early day motion to support the Keep Burberry British campaign, signed by 85 MPs.

26 October Workers hold a demonstration at the Welsh Assembly in Cardiff.

7 November Welshman Glyn Wise, from the reality TV show Big Brother, pledges support.

11 November It is reported that Prince Charles has expressed concern over the closure and offered assistance to government ministers in pursuing alternative options.

18 November More than 100 workers travel to London to protest outside Burberry's stores, to raise awareness of their campaign and promote a boycott of Burberry goods.

26 November The campaign receives a boost when Welsh-born Burberry model and film star Ioan Gruffudd offers support by writing to the CEO of Burberry to urge her to reconsider.

10 December Welsh film star Rhys Ifans backs the campaign.

¹⁷⁹ This was developed from the research, see Appendix 3 for the combination of sources used.

- 14 December** Burberry executives meet Welsh Secretary Peter Hain, announcing that alternative employment will be offered at Burberry factories in Yorkshire, as well as financial support to do so. An offer no workers is able or wishes to take up.
- 17 December** Welsh opera star Bryn Terfel joins the campaign and pledges to use Burberry products in future if the closure is reversed.
- 19 December** A protest is held outside the Houses of Parliament, asking for more government support to prevent the closure.
- 24 December** Burberry's Christmas gift to staff is criticised (Burberry scarf and £30 Burberry voucher).
- 24 December** As a shareholder in Burberry, the Church of England's Ethical Investment Advisory Group writes to management over concerns about the closure.

2007

- 5 January** The official company-union consultation was due to end but negotiations, including threats of legal action, prolong the period.
- 7 January** Actress Emma Thompson joins the campaign.
- 10 January** Burberry announces the factory will now close on 30 March 2007.
- 16 January** Burberry profits increase 22% in previous 3 months i.e. since closure was announced.
- 21 January** Welsh singer Tom Jones pledges his support for the campaign.
- 22 January** Manager of Manchester United Football Club, Sir Alex Ferguson, joins the campaign, as does T4's Welsh presenter Steve Jones.
- 23 January** MP Bryant raises a debate in House of Commons to question whether Burberry's Royal Warrants can be withdrawn.
- 26 January** Burberry announces via a press conference that they will donate the Treorchy factory to the community, but this is received with suspicion and criticism as it is seen as a financial liability.
- 27 January** Workers travel to London to hold a protest outside Burberry's stores.
- 2 February** Burberry pulls out of sponsoring the BAFTA nominee's dinner after campaigners announced a plan to demonstrate at the event and celebrities threaten to boycott it if Burberry are sponsors, including Dame Judi Dench.
- 4 February** Welsh-born singer and presenter Charlotte Church joins the campaign.
- 11 February** Welsh-born actor Michael Sheen backs the campaign.
- 13 February** Author and comedian Ben Elton joins the campaign.
- 14 February** A coordinated global protest 'Stop Burberry breaking our hearts' is held on St. Valentine's Day simultaneously outside Burberry in Las Vegas, London, New York, Paris and Chicago, and outside Parliaments in Cardiff, London and Strasbourg.

27 February Burberry executives and GMB officials are called as witnesses regarding the closure, for the Welsh Select Committee's inquiry 'Globalisation and Wales'. These were: John Peace (Chair), Angela Ahrendts (CEO), Michael Mahony (Director of Corporate Affairs), and Stacey Cartwright (Chief Financial Officer), Allan Garley (GMB Regional Officer) and Mervyn Burnett (GMB Senior Officer).

2 March As a result of the campaign and on-going negotiations, Burberry managers offer workers an improved multi-million pound redundancy package, a loyalty bonus and £1.5m community fund.

5 March Burberry workers travel to protest in London and are hosted by Mohamed Al Fayed at Harrods, who offers to place orders if a workers' collective is started at the factory.

24 March A Burberry Workers' Concert is held, including performances by campaign supporters The Automatics, Gruff Rhys, Goldie Lookin Chain, and The Alarm and organised by The Pop Factory.

29 March Production ends and the factory closes. Employees and supporters march through the town, accompanied by the Treorchy Male Voice Choir, ending with a rally and party.

9 April BBC Wales air a special programme 'The Burberry Story', followed by a Burberry Workers' Concert.

18 April A Burberry financial report is released showing that the factory closure will increase profits by £1.5m per year but only after a 4 year period, due to the £4.8m redundancy paid out and £1.7m building related costs of the closure.

7 December The Rhondda Trust, set up to distribute the community fund secured from Burberry, meets for the first time.

18 December The Treorchy factory building is sold to investors, but development plans later fail.

2008

12/19 April The play 'Burberry: A Welsh Campaign' by research participant Alan Harris is performed at the Sherman Cymru Theatre, Cardiff.

22 June The first instalment of the £1.5m promised by Burberry is received by Rhondda Trust

18 December The first awards of the Rhondda Trust are announced.

2009

12 November Two private investors announce £3.6m funding secured for development of the ex-Burberry factory, partly from government sources, to create small business units for local enterprises. The site has since been through many different plans but its future remains uncertain.

Appendix 8: Invitation to CSR death and rebirth event from CSR International

INVITATION

'Gratitude is the memory of the heart.'
Jean-Baptiste Massieu

It is with deep sorrow and regret that we report the passing of a dear friend and loved one, known to many as Corporate Social Responsibility and which we affectionately called CSR 1.0.

We hope you can join us at the Remembrance ceremony in London on 4 March. There will be an opportunity to share your memories and tributes.



INVITATION

'Every child begins the world again.'
Henri David Thoreau

It is with great joy and hope that we report the birth of a healthy new baby, named Corporate Sustainability & Responsibility, who has already acquired the nickname of CSR 2.0.

We hope you can join us at the Naming and Blessing ceremony in London on 4 March. There will be an opportunity to share your good wishes and hopes.



Wednesday 4 March 2009, 6-9 pm
Hub Kings Cross, 346 York Way, London N1 9AB
RSVP: Clemence Vief, 07513103805 or
clemence@csrinternational.org