

Academy of International Hospitality Research Conference , 27–28 March 2018: Slavery and Liberation

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“Slavery and liberation in hotels, restaurants and bars” was the title of the AIHR annual conference in 2018. It is the first conference on the topic of slavery and liberation in the hospitality sector, and shows the research team’s aim to be at the leading edge of research in the sector. AIHR’s declared research strategy is committed to the study *of* and study *for*, hospitality industry management. Critical study and scientific observation are implicit to this research approach. Nothing is taken at face value and all industrial practices are the subject of research and publications, without fear or favour. The study of management practices that encompass slavery and neo-slavery, as well as employee liberation through employee ownership and various forms of employee participation in decision-making, aim to inform understanding of current management practices.

The ethics of management action is an important consideration in employee engagement, particularly the extent to which employees are exploited, treated fairly, or actively involved in making decisions that affect them. Slavery and neo-slavery embrace an exploitative relationship where employers minimise labour costs in pursuit of greater profits. Worker ownership and participation in decision-making acknowledges the key role employees play in hospitality service delivery, and in wealth creation. These two topics juxtapose important approaches to hospitality employee management and will hopefully lead to further research and study. Research publications, such as that produced by AIHR, have an impact on management’s educational development, and ultimately on management practice. The study of the topics pursued at the conference will hopefully inform practical management in the sector.

The 2018 conference was unusual because it included full research papers and working paper presentations, together with a cluster of keynote speakers who contributed their expertise on the topics of slavery and neo-slavery on day one, and employee self-management and employee participation on day two. This account of the conference provides an overview of the keynote speakers’ presentations as well as an outline of the research papers and work-in-progress sessions.

Keynote presentations

The first presentation was made by Conrad Lashley and discussed slavery and neo-slavery in the context of business ethics and the hospitality sector. Conrad Lashley holds

the professorship in Hospitality Studies at the Academy of International Hospitality Research. His presentation was entitled “Slavery, neo-slavery and business ethics”. Hospitality organisations concerned with ethical business practices are taking an active stand against the use of slaves, directly or indirectly, and they are adopting human resource management practices that pay wages that allow the workforce to live at an acceptable standard. This presentation highlighted some moral and ethical positions relating to slavery and neo-slavery, and the priorities for hospitality organisation policies.

Irina Todorova serves as a senior regional specialist on counter-trafficking and assistance to vulnerable migrants for the International Organisation for Migration (IOM)’s regional office in Brussels. Her presentation was entitled “Slavery today” and explored current issues related to slavery and human trafficking. Irina is responsible for analysing regional thematic trends, supporting liaison with EU institutions and member states, and she leads human trafficking prevention and protection programmes in Europe. Irina has worked as a counter-trafficking and migrant rights practitioner for over 13 years, particularly in Europe and Central Asia. In addition to her expertise in counter-trafficking, Todorova has several years of experience working for the protection of children in a migration context.

Erwin van der Graaf is the area general manager for the Mercure Hotels network and director of franchise operations for AccorHotels. He is responsible for a portfolio of 28 hotels in the Netherlands. When he was working as a general manager in Amsterdam in 2012, he was confronted with the ugly reality of human trafficking in the hotel sector. This experience motivated him to do research on this subject and the responsibility which hotel managers and hotel companies hold to fight and avoid this organised crime. During his studies at Nyenrode Business University, he wrote a paper called “Human trafficking in the hotel industry in the Netherlands: the fine line between service, responsibility and liability”. His presentation to the AIHR conference was informed by this work.

Alexandros Paraskevas presented a paper with the title “Researching slavery in Europe’s hotels”. He is a professor of strategic risk management and chair of hospitality management at the London Geller College of Hospitality and Tourism (University of West London). His industry background includes operations management positions for over 12 years

with Marriott and Starwood. He has led numerous hotel industry projects and authored several academic articles and book chapters in the areas of risk management and business continuity. His work on human trafficking in the tourism sector includes the research leadership of the EC-funded COMBAT_THB project, which produced an anti-trafficking training toolkit and management guidance for the European hospitality industry, and was endorsed by major hotel groups and the Institute of Hospitality.

Sian Lea, a senior programme manager for Shiva Foundation, gave a presentation entitled, "Opposing slavery: a practitioners response". Shiva Foundation is a corporate foundation funded by the Shiva Hotels Group. The foundation specialises in tackling modern slavery and human trafficking in the UK by working closely with business, civil society and government. Sian works with the hotel and hospitality sector, in particular, to support businesses in addressing the risks of modern slavery, including sexual and labour exploitation. She contributed to the creation of and implemented the Stop Slavery Blueprint for the Shiva Hotels Group and coordinates the Stop Slavery Hotel Industry Network. Prior to joining Shiva Foundation, Sian managed humanitarian education projects with the British Red Cross and worked on capacity building and access-to-justice projects with Legal Support for Children and Women, an anti-trafficking NGO in Cambodia.

Eline Willemsen and Brian Varma presented "Work with the victims of human trafficking". Eline Willemsen has a Master's in international relations, and political science. For the past the fourteen years, Eline has been working at FairWork. FairWork is a Dutch-based NGO that fights modern slavery in the Netherlands. This is done through direct victim assistance, advocacy and lobbying, and the training of professionals in recognising trafficking for labour exploitation. In the past she has worked as a project officer on different projects that involved client contact, and for the last few years she has been working as a project manager on different projects focusing on the prevention, identification and assistance of trafficking victims. Brian Varma studied administrative and public administration law at the University of Groningen. In 2005, he started to work as a policy adviser at the City Of Amsterdam. He advised the mayor and the college of alderpersons on issues concerning the multidisciplinary approach to take against organised crime (for example, human trafficking in prostitution, labour exploitation and application of the "Bibob Act"). In 2011, he was one of the coordinators in the drafting of a new prostitution policy. In 2013, he represented the Netherlands as a national coordinator in a European project to develop common guidelines on first-level identification of victims of human trafficking. In 2017, he became manager at CoMensha, the coordination centre against human trafficking. CoMensha is commissioned by the Dutch government to register facts and figures about victims, and coordinates the initial search for shelter and care. CoMensha is proactive in influencing national and international policies regarding the combating of human trafficking.

The second half of the first day of the conference programme dealt with the theme of neo-slavery, that is the impacts of low pay on employees that disempowers and enslaves them. This has particular relevance for the hospitality sector, which has

a well-deserved record for paying low wages. In the UK, for example, one in four employees receive the legal minimum wage, and the majority is paid just a few pennies over the minimum, and few are paid at "living wage" level. Conrad Lashley again made the first presentation, setting poverty pay within the economic framework that became dominant in the 1980s and that has subsequently increased levels of inequality. While the impact of neo-liberalism can be seen across the globe, the anglophone countries, particularly the UK and USA, have followed economic and political policies informed by the neo-liberal mind-set. Lashley's paper, "Neo-liberalism and neo-slavery", argues that increased inequality and the impoverishment of many low-paid employees is not accidental. It is a direct consequence of neo-liberalism.

Steve French was the second keynote speaker of the afternoon, sharing his research on low pay in his presentation entitled, "Low pay research". He is a senior lecturer in industrial relations and human resource management at Keele University in the UK. After graduating from university, he worked for Inland Revenue, where he was a lay activist in the IRSF union (now the Public and Commercial Services Union, PCS). He then moved to Birmingham University where he completed his PhD (examining German collective bargaining after unification) in 1999. Prior to joining the staff at Keele in September 2000, he worked both as a research assistant at the London School of Economics and as a lecturer in industrial relations at the University of Warwick. His main research interests relate to the employment of migrant workers (broadly defined) in the UK labour market since 2000, where he has explored issues of wage levels, union organising, and skill utilisation mismatch. Research has been conducted for, among other bodies, the Low Pay Commission, UNITY trade union (now part of the GMB union), the West Midlands Strategic Migration Partnership and a regional lifelong learning network. This research has been supported by research grants from the Nuffield Foundation and Sir Halley Stewart Trust.

Martha Crawford is a senior project manager for the Living Wage Foundation and she shared insights on the impacts of paying the living wage via the presentation on that subject. Martha Crawford joined the Living Wage Foundation in September 2017. Her role is to lead a new project that will develop and drive new benchmarks to tackle in-work poverty. Alongside this role at the foundation, she leads the Good Jobs Campaign at Citizens UK. This work aims to tackle social mobility and the growing skills gap through unique partnerships between businesses, schools, colleges and young people.

The second day of the conference included a keynote speaker contributing to the theme of "liberation". This included a number of insights into alternative employee empowerment schemes. These ranged from systems of employee ownership through to more participative and democratic management styles that enabled employees to have more say in the decisions and policies of the organisation.

Elisabet Abrahamsson made a presentation called "Workers' co-operatives". Abrahamsson has been involved in cooperative development in Sweden since early 1980, and in Europe since 1995. She founded and was the first chair of the Swedish CDA Association, Coompanion Sweden. She also held other posts at Swedish and European level, for instance vice-chair

of the Cecop (European Association of Workers' and Social Cooperatives) and of REVES (a European network of regional and local authorities working with the social economy). Between 2000 and 2004, she lived and worked in the USA, mainly as an ISO coordinator and European marketing assistant to the president of QMC Quality Management System in Auburn Hills and Detroit. Since returning to Sweden, Elisabet has been working in the development of cooperative business models for work-integrated social enterprises, WISEs. Elisabet is currently on the board of directors in Le Mat Sweden and Le Mat Europe, working in the start-ups of new Le Mat establishments.

Dave Turnbull is a regional official for Unite the Union, covering the hospitality sector in London. His presentation shared his experiences of organising London hotel workers and was called, "Hotel workers' trade union". He has been organising since 1988, starting with Unite's predecessor union, the Transport and General Workers' Union (TGWU). Prior to taking up full-time employment with the union, Dave worked as a chef in hotels, restaurants and casinos, and was the elected secretary of the TGWU Catering Workers' Branch. He holds one of the trade union seats on the UK Hospitality Sector Forum established by the Health and Safety Commission, and is the UK and Ireland representative on the joint trade union and employer social dialogue forum for the hotel sector. He is the coordinating officer for the European Works Council of a major transnational contract catering company. Since 2009, he has led Unite's high profile Fair Tips Campaign and, in conjunction with Unite's Hotel Workers' Branch, launched the Unethical London Report on Global Hotel chains for which the union received a human rights award in 2017.

Research papers

In line with the conference's mission to provide a platform to share research on the study of hospitality and hospitality management, the papers presented reflected a range of themes, not always directly related to the "slavery and liberation" topic.

Marco Bevolo, a lecturer at NHTV Breda University of Applied Sciences, presented research into the treatment of Eritrean refugees in Nijmegen North. The research sought to explore the acceptance of these refugees by the local community using hospitality concepts. The paper was entitled, "Together we are stronger". While the local community were generally accepting of their guests, particular individuals closed some leisure venues to them.

Peter Lugosi of Oxford Brookes University in the UK presented a paper entitled "Deviance and hospitality management". This presentation provided an overview of the concept of deviance, and discussed its relationship with hospitality management. It began with a review of definitions of deviance in the social sciences and the applications of the concept in organisational and consumer behaviour research, before briefly considering the notion of the deviant organisation. The paper distinguishes between four sources of deviance in hospitality management: staff; suppliers; customers; and other external agents, and explores the different forms that deviance may take from each source. In the final part, the discussion considers antecedents and drivers of deviance, exploring how these have been conceptualised in various disciplines at different scales of

analysis: organisational; interpersonal; social and cultural; and personal and individual levels. The review and discussion identifies multiple themes in the connections between deviance and hospitality management, and their implications for policy, practice and research.

Bill Rowson is part of the AIHR research team in the hospitality studies group. His paper explored some of the new working arrangements being applied in the hospitality sector. It was called, "The changing role of work: outsourcing in the gig economy". The world of work is changing dramatically and, in our increasingly flexible labour market, the notion of a "job for life" and the concept of a "9-to-5" workday is diminishing fast. In its place, the idea of "gig working" is rapidly gaining ground. To briefly define this, gig working is when people take temporary, often ad hoc, work contracts (or "gigs") sourced online through digital, cloud-based marketplaces.

Michael Chibli, Conrad Lashley and Victoria Ruitter presented findings from research using the hospitality attitude survey developed by Blain and Lashley. The paper presented to the conference was entitled "Students attitudes to hospitableness". The survey instrument was distributed to students in three departments in Stenden and NH universities: the Hotel School; the School of Tourism and Leisure; and the Business School. The proportion of students registering positive responses to the suite of hospitableness statements was greatest among undergraduates studying on the hotel management programme.

Work in progress sessions

Three master's students made "working paper" presentations, reporting on the early stage of their research dissertations. In each case, students had identified a research topic and completed a preliminary literature review.

Verena Hopf's work-in-progress piece, "Body modification in the hospitality industry", explores how the service interaction between front-line staff and guests is crucial for the hospitality industry. These employees are important for the relation between guest and hotel – they present the image of the company. Therefore, appearance is one of the judgement factors for guests to evaluate service quality. Consequently, hotels operate with dress codes and grooming standards to create the appropriate employee appearance. The concept of forming employees' appearance is also known as aesthetic labour, developed by the researchers Warhurst, Nickson and Witz, and is linked to the concept of emotional labour. It is seen as a way of companies to "develop", "mobilise" and "commodify" their employees to improve the company brand image. Therefore, the hotels use dress codes, provide training to improve the body language and to strengthen the aesthetic skills of the employees.

"Understanding how millennial hospitality employees deal with emotional labour" is the title of Hester Visser's work in progress. In recent years, an increasing number of researchers have focused on the millennial generation (born 1980–1999) who are known for their special traits, work-values and their likelihood of burning out. The millennials want to have a good work-life balance, a meaningful job and want to feel happy at work, otherwise they quickly switch to another employer. This master's dissertation's exploratory study aims at understanding how the millennials deal with emotional

labour by focusing on their perception of the job. Data will be collected via semi-structured interviews with 12 front-line employees working in a four-star hotel in the Netherlands. This study wants to contribute to the literature by combining both in the context of the hospitality industry. Moreover, it wants to contribute to practice by providing practical applications for hospitality practitioners.

The third work in progress by master's student Thea Noordeloos is entitled "Sustainable tourism development in Amsterdam's Oud-West". This study explores the concept of sustainable tourism development as it applies in the rural area of Amsterdam Oud-West. Data will be collected by 11 semi-structured interviews with key stakeholders such as the municipality, residents and the tourism industry. The main contribution of this study will be in terms of context, since no research on sustainable tourism development has been done in this particular area. Besides, it will provide insights into the practical application of sustainable tourism development, which might be helpful for all areas in Amsterdam.

Reflections

The 2018 AHIR conference continued the practice first developed in 2014 where each year the conference is organised by one of the three professors in the Academy of International Hospitality Research. This year it was my turn, and I chose to give the conference the *slavery and liberation* theme, because I feel that slavery and neo-slavery need more exposure as issues that have a bearing on the contemporary commercial sector. Apart from the outrage at the existence of contemporary slavery, I was also keen to explore some of the alternative ways of managing a hospitality enterprise that break with the traditional, top-down, command and control model that is so widespread in the hospitality sector. From being a new manager myself, I have always thought that the workplace works best when there is recognition of an array of stakeholder interests that should be recognised when making decisions that effect everyone, or when identifying and remedying operational faults. The collective wisdom of those closest to the operational context is usually more insightful than the commanding instructions emanating from on high.