

**Dr Esther Hennchen**



***Whose responsibility is it, anyway? From organized irresponsibility to shared responsibility in global supply chains***

Whose responsibility is it, anyway? A building collapses in a developing country and thousands of workers die who are producing clothes for Western consumers under appalling conditions. Is it local factory owners breaking national laws, local governments failing to enforce these laws, multinational buyers squeezing suppliers, international organizations failing to intervene, or consumers demanding ever cheaper prices and fast fashion?

The question of responsibility attribution is particularly intriguing for complex and interrelated social challenges, such as decent working conditions, due to their systemic and interrelated nature. These 'wicked problems' are caused by a network of actors who contribute to, enforce, or mitigate harm through their actions and interactions. Consequently, identifying cause(s) and actor(s) becomes difficult due to the intractable patterns of cause-and-effect relationships. While academics and policy makers praise inclusive collaboration and shared problem-solving within multi-stakeholder initiatives (MSI) as the panacea for solving these problems, these initiatives suffer from a limited stakeholder view, and it is unclear how responsibilities can be shared and managed among MSI partners.

This research project is a collaboration between the University College Dublin, the Better Work Program of the International Labor Organization, and the International Finance Corporation. The primary goal of this research project is to provide a comprehensive conceptual framework for better understanding shared responsibilities within MSI and its implications for society at large. Notably, it takes the first empirical steps in the fields of Supply Chain Management and Corporate Social Responsibility to provide concrete recommendations and management information about innovation for multi-stakeholder partnerships in times of persistent social challenges in global supply chains. This research project is also crucial for translating the UN agenda, EU policies, and MSI efforts such as BW into meaningful action and scaling their impact in and beyond the garment sector.