

Seminar: Conversations on Social Reproduction

TITLE: Freedom or Paternalism: How Rescue Makes Modern Slavery Worse

SPEAKER: Dr Pankhuri Agarwal, University of Bath

WHEN: Friday, January 6th, 12 - 1.00pm GMT/5.30-6.30pm IST

WHERE: Teams; [Follow the link to join](#)



Pankhuri Agarwal a Research Associate in the School of Management at the University of Bath working on a 4-year UKRI project to interrogate the meaning of dignity in supply chains in India and the UK's garment and IT industries. She completed her PhD in Sociology from the University of Bristol and an MSc in Development Studies from the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London. With over a decade of field and research experience working with marginalised workers, unions, government ministries, international and domestic humanitarian agencies, her research focuses on the harms of the global modern slavery discourse and dignity at work.

Abstract: It is purported that human trafficking is the third largest organised crime in the world and that people can be rescued and set free from this crime. The sensationalism and heroism of a rescue operation are prevalent in popular media, books, movies, and even online games. However, what remains less known is the semantics of a rescue operation – the semantics of rescue operations – What are the epistemic roots of their promise of freedom upon rescue? Furthermore, how do workers feel about such operations, and how do they survive the process? This talk shows that rescue replaces existing relations of patronage (between worker and employer) with relations of paternalism (between NGO and workers). As a result, workers' lives continue to be dominated by confinement, forced (im)mobility, societal oppression and stigma, economic dependency, and bureaucratic denial of their existence. Based on a multi-sited ethnography of 30 state and civil society officials as well as 30 rescued workers (sex workers and other informal workers), the article builds on Michael Barnett's definition of paternalism to provide a detailed study of the politics of rescue operations and the resulting asymmetric relation between NGO and the workers, as it lies within the international humanitarian governance order.

The Laws of Social Reproduction project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme (under grant agreement No. 772946).. For more information about the project, please email Prabha.kotiswaran@kcl.ac.uk.



@Lawsofsocrep



@Lawsofsocialreproduction



lawsofsocialreproduction.net

