

Institution: Newcastle University		
Unit of Assessment: 17 Business and Management Studies		
Title of case study: Influencing the mainstreaming of the International Labour Organisation's 'Decent Work' principles into the strategic planning and operations of United Nations organisations		
Period when the underpinning research was undertaken: 2000–2011		
Details of staff conducting the underpinning research from the submitting unit:		
Name(s):	Role(s) (e.g. job title):	Period(s) employed by submitting HEI:
Professor Stephen Hughes	Professor of International Organisations	January 2000 to date
Period when the claimed impact occurred: 2014–2020		
Is this case study continued from a case study submitted in 2014? N		
<p>1. Summary of the impact</p> <p>This case documents direct researcher involvement in high-level international advisory roles mobilising policy change. Hughes's global expertise in researching labour standard regimes and multilateral organisations, especially the International Labour Organisation (ILO), has led to direct collaboration with the ILO and United Nations (UN) organisations around the 'Decent Work' agenda for employment creation, social protection, rights at work, social dialogue and gender equality. Sustained contributions (academic outputs, evaluation reports, rapporteur/advisor roles) have led to the following impacts on policy formation, implementation and upskilling of policymakers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shaped the UN strategy for mainstreaming 'Decent Work' through the first-ever evaluation of a system-wide UN policy initiative; • Influenced the ILO's strategic approach to its 'Decent Work' Agenda; • Impacted ILO and UN policy development and implementation through partnership building. 		
<p>2. Underpinning research</p> <p>Professor Hughes is an internationally recognised expert on the International Labour Organisation (PUB1). Research conducted by Professor Hughes and colleagues was pioneering in situating international relations and international political economy within the industrial relations discourse (PUB2,3). By establishing a linkage between industrial relations theory and international relations theory, PUB2 develops the concept of international industrial relations regimes, encompassing three processes – spatial, institutional and substantive. Using regime theory to analyse the global-level example of the International Labour Organisation (ILO) – formed in 1919, and the only tripartite United Nations agency – this publication throws new light on how the ILO influences national policy choices by harnessing the values, beliefs and ideologies of domestic actors.</p> <p>PUB4 argues that institutional activity constitutes an under-researched but vital aspect of understanding the political economy of international standards and codes. It demonstrates that institutional activity is an outcome of executive leadership and the research communities within these international organisations. This institutional activity of regime maintenance is costly in terms of political capital and in terms of human and financial investment (PUB2). PUB 3 and 5 argue that that the ILO has created and sustained its International Labour Standards Regime (ILSR), frequently against great odds. PUB5 notes that whilst in the latter part of the twentieth century the ILO struggled to steer a course through the debate around international trade and labour standards, collaboration with other multilateral organisations, such as the World Trade Organisation (WTO), would offer a practical demonstration that dialogue between the institutions of global economic governance can produce a social dimension to the multilateral system. PUB3 demonstrates that since the turn of the century, the ILO has become a leading player in</p>		

contemporary global governance, with its ILSR, underpinned by tripartism (government, employers and trade unions), substantially mediating the impacts of internationalisation on national industrial relations systems, but also with a broad agenda for social protection, social justice and civil society participation.

In terms of the institutional activity of executive leadership, PUB4 shows that the emergence of the ILO as the principal forum for multilateralist engagement on social issues was due to the executive leadership of sequential ILO Director Generals (Hansenne and Somavia) and the positioning of the 'Decent Work' agenda as the focal point for the ILO's strategic objectives: rights at work, employment, social protection and social dialogue. This agenda was influenced by a desire to shift the trade and labour standards debate away from the WTO and into the ILO, and it placed a conscious emphasis on engagement with other global governance institutions to ensure the ILO could play a greater role in global governance.

PUB4 notes that successive ILO Director Generals have placed great emphasis on the ILO's research activities, which have led to the creation of a unique body of knowledge regarding the economic and social importance of international labour legislation. These epistemic activities have been an important factor in the forging of links between domestic and international interests and in the development of an organisation that has sought more inclusive and socially active global governance.

More recently, PUB6 demonstrates that the ILO has continued to reposition itself in changing global circumstances by seeking to position the 'Decent Work' agenda as part of poverty reduction agendas, recognising that paid work and employment is the main route to escaping from poverty. However, access to a living wage, a safe working environment and protection from exploitation are beyond the reach of many of the poor, whose vulnerability is often exacerbated by underfunded and dysfunctional national policy frameworks.

3. References to the research

The body of work underpinning the case includes an authoritative monograph on the ILO and a variety of peer-reviewed articles in international journals.

1. **Hughes, S.** and Haworth, N. (2011), *The International Labour Organisation. Coming in from the Cold*, Routledge, London. <http://doi.org/10.1068/a37195>
2. Haworth, N. and **Hughes, S.** (2000), 'Internationalisation, Industrial Relations Theory and International Relations', *Journal of Industrial Relations* (42)2, 195–213. <https://doi.org/10.1177/002218560004200203>
3. Haworth, N. and **Hughes, S.** (2003), 'International Political Economy and Industrial Relations', *British Journal of Industrial Relations*, 41(4), 665–682. <https://doi.org/10.1046/j.1467-8543.2003.00293.x>
4. Haworth, N., **Hughes, S.**, and Wilkinson, R. (2005), 'The International Labour Standards Regime. A Case Study in Global Regulation', *Environment and Planning A*, 37(11), 1939–1953. <https://doi.org/10.1068/a37195>
5. Wilkinson, R. and **Hughes, S.** (2000), 'Labour Standards and Global Governance. Examining the Dimensions of Institutional Engagement', *Global Governance*, 6(2), 259–277. <http://doi.org/10.1163/19426720-00602006>
6. **Hughes, S.** and Haworth, N. (2011), 'Decent Work and Poverty Reduction', *Industrial Relations*, 66(1), 34–53. <https://doi.org/10.7202/1005104ar>

Grant Funding

	Funder	Title of Grant	Dates	Amount (GBP)
1	UN External Collaboration Fund	Evaluation of the adoption of an integrated approach to the promotion of Decent Work	9-30 September 2015	6,102

4. Details of the impact

Research conducted by Professor Hughes over a sustained period of time led him to be appointed as an External Advisor to a significant UN body, and subsequently to be commissioned to conduct a key evaluation for the ILO of its integrated approach to the Decent Work agenda. Through these high-level policy reports and direct involvement with the ILO, Professor Hughes has reinforced UN organisations' commitment to Decent Work as a global and national priority, recognised in the UN 2030 Sustainable Development Goals, and influenced the strategic approach the ILO now takes to promoting the Decent Work agenda among UN agencies. In doing so, Professor Hughes has also significantly shaped subsequent follow-up actions by the ILO, which continue to guide its engagement with organisations across the multilateral system.

Shaping UN strategy for mainstreaming Decent Work

As a result of Hughes's extensive research on the ILO, in 2014 he was appointed as an External Advisor to the UN Joint Inspection Unit (UNJIU) on mainstreaming the Decent Work agenda in the UN system. The UNJIU is the only independent external oversight body of the United Nations system mandated to conduct evaluations, inspections and investigations system-wide, and Hughes's appointment as an External Advisor is highly noteworthy as his was the first appointment of an expert from outside the UN to the UNJIU. He was one of five members of an advisory group constituted to provide substantive and strategic advice to the UNJIU on what was the first-ever evaluation of a system-wide UN policy initiative. This required brainstorming on conceptualisation, advice and comments on the inception paper, and comments on preliminary findings and the draft report [IMP1a, p. 10]. The outcome of this process was a major report by the UNJIU, *Evaluation of Mainstreaming Decent Work by United Nations System Organizations* [IMP1a], submitted to the UN General Assembly/Economic and Social Council and the United Nations Chief Executives Board for Coordination (CEB). The report assessed how UN organisations have implemented resolutions aimed at mainstreaming the Decent Work agenda into their own strategic planning and different levels of operations, in preparation for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

In response to the JIU report, UN organisations noted that Decent Work and full employment will continue to be global and national priorities recognised in the UN 2030 Sustainable Development Goals [IMP1b]. The emphasis in the JIU report on the right to work as universal also led UN organisations to 'strongly advocate' inclusion and mainstreaming of this right to refugees, asylum seekers and irregular migrants within the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) at country level, and into Decent Work efforts across the UN system. Specific responses focused on JIU Recommendations to provide proactive activities on the Decent Work agenda for UN staff, which will enhance '*broader United Nations system knowledge and capacity*' [IMP1b, p. 4].

Influencing the ILO's strategic approach to its Decent Work Agenda

In 2008, the International Labour Organisation and the 187 ILO member states (represented through tripartite constituents representing government, workers and employers) had committed to the adoption of an integrated approach to the promotion of Decent Work. In 2014, the ILO Governing Body decided to place the evaluation of the impact of the 2008 Declaration on the agenda of the 105th Session of the International Labour Conference 2016 (ILC 2016). This was significant because the International Labour Conference (ILC), meeting once a year, sets the broad policies of the ILO. Based on Hughes's extensive research on the ILO and its Decent Work agenda (PUBS 1–6), he was commissioned (Grant 1) to conduct new primary research to support this exercise. The ILO Director of Multilateral Cooperation at the time the research was undertaken said, '*The combination of Professor Hughes's academic work and his experience through the JIU of the challenges and potential of enhanced policy integration made him a logical first choice to assist the office in its dialogue with other agencies*' [IMP2].

Findings and recommendations from the confidential report Hughes produced for the ILO were incorporated into *Advancing Social Justice: Reviewing the impact of the ILO Declaration on Social Justice for a Fair Globalisation* [IMP3], which was tabled at the ILC 2016. In a testimonial,

the ILO Deputy Director-General for Management and Reform said that Hughes's work '*provided a valuable independent assessment of the evolution and current state of the policy debate on social justice within the partner international institutions of the ILO ... It also assisted in preparing an interactive exchange on Decent Work and sustainable development with representatives of international organizations at the [2016] Conference*' [IMP4]. The ongoing significance of Hughes's research was also acknowledged in IMP4: '*Professor Hughes paper will be of continuing value as the Organization prepares for its Centennial Conference in 2019 which, amongst other things, will examine the implications for the ILO of the Future of Work*'. Key conclusions and recommendations from Hughes's report for the ILO have been incorporated into various follow-up documents from 2016 to 2019, as demonstrated in the next section.

Impacting ILO and UN policy development and implementation through partnership building

Hughes had identified a continuing challenge of translating 'high-level commitments' to the Decent Work agenda into policies and programmes at regional and country levels; he called for greater policy coherence among UN agencies in the promotion of Decent Work and the 2030 SDG Agenda. In response, the ILC 2016 Resolution [IMP5] included the need to promote Decent Work as an integrating platform for greater policy coherence among UN agencies (SII.6 and SII.11; Part B.15.6). The importance of research evidence to inform policy dialogue and as a platform for collaboration was also acknowledged (Part B.15.5), as was the need to utilise the ILO International Training Centre in Turin to promote understanding and awareness of Decent Work. The Implementation of the ILC Resolution 2016 [IMP6] called on the ILO to develop a strategy to promote partnership with other UN organisations, with a special focus on economic and financial institutions, and to foster policy coherence at country level in pursuit of the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals. The influence of Hughes's work on these outcomes was acknowledged by the ILO Director for Strategic Programming and Management: '*Your report highlighted the institutional and in-country challenges the ILO and other UN agencies face developing an integrated approach to decent work. Partnerships are central to this approach and a key part of the ILO development cooperation strategy. You helped us reflect on the importance of providing adequate capacity and enabling environment in support of the ILO decent work agenda. We are grateful for the analysis and recommendations provided in your report. It helped shape our thinking on the important roles of partnership and leadership the ILO can play in promoting decent work and their related goals of the 2030 SDG agenda*' [IMP7].

A report to the ILO Governing Body in 2017 [IMP8] drew on the 2016 Resolution – which, as noted above, had been shaped by Hughes's analysis and recommendations – to focus on promoting Decent Work and social justice through a strategy of partnerships and policy coherence with international and regional financial institutions at the country level. A subsequent paper presented to the ILO Governing Body in March 2019 [IMP9] proposed a strategy to develop ILO-wide institutional capacity to deliver the 2016 Resolution. This called for the training of ILO staff, delivered by the ILO International Training Centre (ITC) in Turin, on the common capacity development approach of the UN and its application to the ILO's own work with social partners and labour administrations in-country (Section III C.22, 26 and 27). The ILO Senior Coordinator on UN and Sustainable Development, who worked with the ITC/ILO on the development and launch of the training programmes, acknowledged the influence of Hughes's work: '*The report you wrote for the ILO team that prepared the 2016 Conference reports helped to identify the need for training and awareness raising to deepen collaboration on the implementation of the aims and principles of decent work at the institutional, as well as country level ... The ITC/ILO courses such as "Decent Work and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development: how to achieve the sustainable development goals through Decent Work", are an important means to increasing the capacity of ILO constituents, staff and other UN agencies' officials to integrate Decent Work in national programmes. Now, several years later, we can see that your report helped the ILO and its partners to move forward on an important component of the integrated approach to the promotion of decent work*' [IMP10].

5. Sources to corroborate the impact

IMP1a 'United Nations Joint Inspection Unit Full Report: Evaluation of mainstreaming of full and productive employment and decent work by the United Nations system organizations' (p. 10).

IMP1b UN Secretary General response to the United Nations Joint Inspection Unit Full Report.

IMP2 Testimonial letter dated 2 March 2020 from the Director of Multilateral Cooperation, ILO, Geneva (Retired).

IMP3 'ILO Advancing Social Justice: Reviewing the Impact of the ILO Declaration on Social Justice for a Fair Globalization'. https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_norm/---relconf/documents/meetingdocument/wcms_465464.pdf (Chapter 4 - in particular section 4.5 Observations and Challenges).

IMP4 Testimonial letter dated 18 January 2017 from Deputy Director-General for Management and Reform, ILO, Geneva.

IMP5 'ILO Resolution of the International Labour Conference 2016 on Advancing Social Justice through Decent Work. Evaluation of the impact of the ILO Declaration on Social Justice for a Fair Globalization and Conclusions for Future Action'. https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_norm/---relconf/documents/meetingdocument/wcms_497583.pdf

IMP6 'Implementation of the Resolution on Advancing Social Justice through Decent Work'. Minute Sheet to ILO Director-General, 27 June 2016.

IMP7 Testimonial letter dated 13 March 2020 from the Director for Strategic Programming and Management, ILO, Geneva.

IMP8 'Partnership and Policy Coherence Strategy'. Report to ILO Governing Body 331st Session, International Labour Office, Geneva, 26 October–9 November 2017.

IMP9 'ILO-wide Strategy for Institutional Capacity Development'. Paper to the ILO Governing Body 335th Session, International Labour Office, Geneva, 14–28 March 2019.

IMP10 Testimonial letter dated 2 March 2020 from the Senior Coordinator on UN and Sustainable Development, ILO, Geneva.