

Fair Purchasing Practices in Garment Supply Chains

Connecting Theory and Practice

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Introduction

This chapter builds on the findings of a recently completed study commissioned by *Transform Trade* and the *Fair Trade Advocacy Office* to review supply chain responses to unfair trading practices (UTPs) in textile value chains.¹ Our chapter presents a comparative case study analysis of emerging best practices across a range of areas including: lead times, payment details, prices, discounts, technical specifications, volumes and stock management. Our study investigated the supply chains of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and their role in creating an enabling environment for fair purchasing practices in the garment and textiles sector. In this chapter, we investigate the experience of Fair Trade organisations and how they have translated Fair Trade principles into practice in their value chains. In particular, we focus on the implementation of responsible purchasing practices related to: Equal Partnership, Collaborative Production Planning and Fair Payment Terms. We argue that, if supported, Fair Trade organisations have the potential to be industry front-runners and demonstrate fair purchasing practices that can be replicated and scaled across the garment sector.

Lead firms are under increasing pressure to ensure products made through global production networks are produced sustainably (Alexander 2020). However, from the perspective of workers and suppliers in the Global South, corporate social responsibility (CSR) may appear increasingly 'transitory', or in transition, as multinational corporations (MNCs) sign up to new and evolving multi-stakeholder initiatives (Alamgir/Banerjee 2019; de Bakker et al. 2019), engage with a multitude of certification schemes (Bennett 2018; Dahlin et al. 2020) and align with the latest international agreements (Banerjee 2018). This approach towards 'transitory CSR' not only reflects the changing context of post-pandemic global value chains, but

1 Anderson M., Bradley T., Sahariah S. (2023). Fair Purchasing Practices and Barriers in EU SME Garment Supply Chains, University of Portsmouth, Portsmouth. <https://fairtrade-advocacy.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/FINAL-FTAO-good-practices.pdf>

is also a choice, and may be implemented as a defensive strategy (Stevenson/Cole 2018; Janssen et al. 2015) that obscures partial commitments and limits progress on social responsibility.

Industry approaches to responsible business practices have often focused on the wider business benefits of improving labour conditions such as a boost to productivity, stabilising suppliers' workforce and building resilience in supply chains. However, this win-win approach can overlook fundamental areas of conflict and tension between social and economic goals (Crane et al. 2014). In response to the prevalence of labour exploitation across supply chains, van Burren et al. (2021: 364) call for holistic approaches that build on a "social connection and political responsibility model". They identify Worker-Driven Social Responsibility as a promising approach to promote employee voice and support the decommodification of labour. The dynamic and contested nature of CSR was also highlighted in Matten & Moon's (2020) recent reflections on CSR 'hybridization'. Looking beyond Western institutions, they suggest that there are particular opportunities for exploring the process of 'explicitization' (policies, practices, and strategies of corporations) and 'implicitization' (norms and rules of business responsibility) in shaping CSR in emerging business systems.

In terms of business practice, the Common Framework for Responsible Purchasing Practices (CFRPP 2022) has been developed as an industry-recognised reference point for what good purchasing practices look like in the garment sector.² Based on benchmarking existing standards and policy initiatives the framework aims to support companies working to improve their purchasing practices and multi-stakeholder initiatives working with member companies to implement practical improvements to working conditions in textile supply chains (CFRPP 2022). While the CFRPP specifically focuses on purchasing practices, it also acknowledges the importance of freedom of association and collective bargaining, human rights due diligence, effective grievance mechanisms and remediation, as paramount in improving supply chain conditions (CFRPP 2022). The CFRPP recognises that the journey towards implementation will look different for each brand and retailer depending on their starting point, their business model, size, sector, operational context, ownership, structure and supply chain composition (CFRPP 2022). However, the ambitions and new business norms presented in the CFRPP are arguably

2 The CFRPP is supported as the central reference point on purchasing practices in the garment industry by ETI, ET Norway, Fair Wear, PST, Solidaridad, Ethical Trade Denmark and the Fair Labor Association. The framework identifies five core principles: 1. Integration and Reporting, 2. Equal Partnership, 3. Collaborative Production Planning, 4. Fair Payment Terms, 5. Sustainable Costing.

more limited than the transformation and system change envisioned by Fair Trade Principles.³

Research on Fair Trade fashion has primarily focused on issues of ethical consumption and consumer behaviour (Dabas/Whang 2022). Recent studies have provided new perspectives on consumers' perceived trustworthiness of Fair Trade (Eberhardt et al. 2021), consumer awareness of sustainable fashion (Shen 2024) and the role of personality traits in supporting ethically-minded behaviour (Kutaula et al. 2022). Beyond consumer studies, business model innovation (Todeschini et al. 2017) and developments in global trade policy (Athreya 2022) have also revealed important new directions for Fair Trade fashion research. In common with the wider sustainable fashion literature, research on Fair Trade fashion remains fragmented across disciplines and there is still considerable work required to bring the field together to identify opportunities for societal impact and further research (Mukendi 2020) [see McRobbie's chapter in this volume]. We argue that an explicit focus on power is often missing and provides a vital connection between theory and practice. While Fair Trade organisations are not unique in supporting fair purchasing practices, the Fair Trade Principles provide an important tool to embed social and economic empowerment in responsible business theory and supply chain practices [see Hock and Kenel's as well as Ladiges's chapters in this volume].

Power and Empowerment in Garment Supply Chains

The garment sector is characterised by extreme levels of power asymmetry that informs business practices and can restrict options open to SMEs (Islam et al. 2023). As shown by John Gaventa's work on the 'powercube' model (2019; 2021), power has multiple dimensions (levels, spaces and forms). 'Levels of power' recognises that in a globalised world, power is multi-layered and involves interrelated locations of local, national and global levels. 'Spaces of power' refers to the opportunities and barriers for stakeholder participation and action in arenas that may be considered closed, invited or claimed spaces. 'Forms of power' take into account the visible, hidden, and invisible forms of power. We use this dimension to analyse norms and beliefs that shape fair purchasing practices and may also present social and cultural barriers. Gaventa (2021) argues that it is through the interaction of these multiple dimensions that possibilities for real transformative change occur.

The 'powercube' was originally designed to investigate actions taken by institutions or organisations to address power imbalances in international development

3 The 10 Principles of Fair Trade specify the ways that Fair Trade Enterprises are set up and behave to ensure they put people and the planet first. <https://wfto.com/our-fair-trade-system/our-10-principles-of-fair-trade/>

contexts and its application outside this scope is still limited (Pantazidou 2012; Gaventa 2019). Within Fair Trade scholarship, power analysis has been applied to *Fairtrade* flower value chains (Nelson et al. 2014), tea production (Brugger 2017) and Fair Trade Towns (Discetti et al. 2020) but the application to Fair Trade garment value chains represents a novel approach and a contribution of this study. Drawing on Gaventa's (2021) powercube analysis, we show how Fair Trade organisations work to identify 'cracks in the system' that can be used to reverse the accumulative effects of power over, and to strengthen the possibilities of power to.

In this chapter, we adopt a comparative case study approach to capture a diversity of business activity and investigate how institutional and market factors influence the framing of fair and ethical purchasing practices. Cases were selected based on theoretical rather than random sampling (Eisenhardt/Graebner 2007). We selected five brands and four suppliers that self-identified as sustainable businesses and/or Fair Trade organisations (see Table 1). We are interested in the practices and business norms within Fair Trade supply chains, but also how concepts of fairness and Fair Trade principles are translated into mainstream supply chains. Beyond their own purchasing practices, these organisations also recognised their role in setting a good example for other companies. In order to enhance the transferability of key findings, cases were selected based on a range of criteria including: affiliations and certifications, e.g., *World Fair Trade Organization* (WFTO)⁴ membership, brands recognised as leaders by the *Fair Wear Foundation*⁵, members of the *Common Objective*⁶ network; size of company; business models and geographic location.

This study builds on previous work that explored the garment supply chains of SMEs (Anderson et al. 2023). We use the Common Framework for Responsible Purchasing Practices (CFRPP 2022) as a reference point to understand emerging industry norms and best practice. However, we note that the framework does not currently address issues of power in supply chains or the social and economic empowerment of garment workers. In response, we draw on Gaventa's (2019) 'powercube' model to explore challenges and opportunities for change and 'empowerment' within settings of high power asymmetries.

In this chapter, we focus on the experience and practice of Fair Trade organisations and investigate the following research questions:

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- 4 The World Fair Trade Organization (WFTO) is the global community and verifier of enterprises that fully practise Fair Trade. WFTO, formerly IFAT, was founded in 1989. <https://wfto.com/about-wfto/our-movement/>
 - 5 Fair Wear Foundation is an independent, non-profit organisation that works to improve conditions for workers in garment factories. <https://www.fairwear.org/about-us/>
 - 6 Common Objective (CO) is a business network for the fashion industry working to take sustainable fashion from niche to norm. CO builds on ten years of work by the Ethical Fashion Forum, which now reaches a global network spanning 141 countries. <https://www.commonobjective.co/co-about>

- 1. How do Fair Trade organisations practice fair purchasing in their value chains?
- 2. What are the main barriers to fair purchasing practices, and what opportunities are there to scale-up fair purchasing practices across the garment and textiles sector?

The first phase of data collection was based primarily on desk research. A review of the academic literature was supplemented with an analysis of relevant company reports, press releases and corporate social media accounts. This was combined with interviews of selected stakeholders that included representatives from case study brands and suppliers, NGOs and supply chain experts and workers from a number of India-based factories. The data was analysed using cross-case pattern search techniques with the aim of looking beyond initial impressions and seeing evidence through multiple lenses (Eisenhardt 1989). The qualitative data collected from worker interviews was coded thematically and compared against a larger database built between 2019 and 2022.

Central to our understanding of the grassroots context of work in the garment sector was documenting the experiences of a cohort of 40, mainly female workers, in Delhi and Bangalore India. Researchers maintained regular contact with this group of ‘community narrators’ from the outbreak of the Covid pandemic up to July 2022. The voices of workers were complemented by interviews with members of civil society and trade union organisations that represent workers in the garment sector. Through this approach, we were able to better understand the lived reality of work in global value chains and test claims of good practice at a community level.

Table 1: Case study interviews and focus groups

Organisa- tion	Position in Value Chain	Location	Purchasing Practices and Key Areas of Action
Sasha	Supplier	India	· Decent Working Conditions · Ethical Sourcing & Supply Chain Management · Fair Trade (WFTO member)
Creative Handicraft	Supplier	India	· Decent Working Conditions · Ethical Sourcing & Supply Chain Management · Fair Trade (WFTO member)

Organisa- tion	Position in Value Chain	Location	Purchasing Practices and Key Areas of Action
Craft Resource Center	Supplier	India	· Decent Working Conditions · Ethical Sourcing & Supply Chain Management · Fair Trade (WFTO member)
ACATEL	Supplier	Portugal	· Traceability and Impact Measurement · Ethical Sourcing & Supply Chain Management
Fair Wear India	NGO	Noida Uttar Pradesh India	· Decent Working Conditions · Ethical Sourcing & Supply Chain Management
Focus Group 1	Factory workers	Gurugram Haryana India	· Working Conditions
Focus Group 2	Factory workers	Gurugram Haryana India	· Working Conditions
Focus Group 3	Factory workers	Gurugram Haryana India	· Working Conditions
Birdsong	Brand	UK	· Decent Working Conditions · Ethical Sourcing & Supply Chain Management · Fair Trade
Schijvens	Brand Workwear	Nether- lands UAE Bangla- desh China India Morocco Pakistan Portugal Turkey	· Living Wage · Decent Working Conditions · Ethical Sourcing & Supply Chain Management · Circular Economy

Organisa- tion	Position in Value Chain	Location	Purchasing Practices and Key Areas of Action
Wayz Sneakers	Brand	Portugal	· Recycling & Waste · Local Production · Environmentally Friendly Materials · Energy Efficiency
Monkind	Brand	Germany Portugal	· Recycling & Waste · Organic Materials · Environmentally Friendly Materials · Animal Friendly · Energy Efficiency
Sica	Brand	Germany Bangla- desh	· Recycling & Waste · Fair Trade · Decent Working Conditions · Ethical Sourcing & Supply Chain Management · Supporting Traditional Skills

Reframing Responsible Purchasing Practices

Our research findings focus on three aspects of responsible purchasing: Equal Partnership, Collaborative Production Planning and Fair Payment Terms. They provide insights into the purchasing practices of Fair Trade organisations and explore areas where they meet, exceed, or challenge the Common Framework for Responsible Purchasing Practices core principles. These areas of practice also highlight the multiple dimensions of power and power asymmetry in relation to partnerships, production and payments.

1. Equal Partnership

Equal partnerships can be defined and implemented in a variety of ways. For some brands, equal partnerships may involve reshoring their supply chain and working with local suppliers to build lasting relationships. For Fair Trade organisations, purchasing relationships are based on commitment from both sides and are not solely judged on the volume of orders, as the following quote shows:

“This long-term relationship is a very important element when you get into a fair purchasing relationship or a practice. This commitment from both sides, the buyer

side, and from the producer side that we will work together. It may not be huge orders for every year, every month, and so on. But you know they won't disappear and when I say disappear, non-fair traders actually disappear – they ghost you.” (Interview with Craft Resource Centre).

Geographic proximity to suppliers is often identified as important for smaller brands. In addition, respectful sourcing dialogues are recognised as being based on good communication and frequent contact with suppliers:

“Frequent communication with our makers, and most of them are twenty minutes away on the bus, so it'll be weekly, if not nearly daily, phone calls, checking in, going to visit, sitting down, and manually going through orders if necessary. But again, that's part of our social impact.” (Interview with Birdsong).

Retail brands working with Fair Trade suppliers are increasingly open to co-branding products. This opens up new opportunities for brand recognition and value creation by Fair Trade producer organisations:

“Nearly all our products are co-branded, we have only one buyer in the United States, which is completely branded as theirs without carrying our brand (...). In the past there used to be this fear that customers, or some retailers could approach us directly if our label or brand is carried. But now most of the buyers don't have that kind of fear. You know there's no point we'd also like to have consolidated orders, rather than several retailers approaching us.” (Interview with Creative Handicrafts).

Recent debates about fashion collaborations and potential for the misappropriation of traditional crafts (The Voice of Fashion 2021) have highlighted how respectful sourcing practices also have a cultural dimension:

“We are really embracing the concept of cultural sustainability, and coming from the learning of indigenous practices, communities and craftsmanship. It's very clear to see how craftsmanship always has a connection between nature, people and practices. I think they're all very intertwined, the environment and the social are not separate.” (Interview with SICA UPCYCLING DESIGN).

In a globalising (or partially globalised) world, governance is increasingly multi-layered, incorporating subnational, national and supranational levels (Keohane 2002). A failure to work effectively across levels of power can undermine the reach and effectiveness of measures designed to strengthen workers' rights (Gaventa 2021). However, Fair Trade organisations, working with their supporting net-

works, demonstrate an approach to value chain partnerships that responds to the challenges and opportunities of 'glocalisation' (Robertson 1995).

2. Collaborative Production Planning

Buyers are not homogeneous and they will have different expectations about their level of involvement in the production processes. A practical example of collaborative production planning is Fair Trade buyers working with suppliers to agree a mutually acceptable order schedule. For instance, agreeing to stagger big orders throughout the year can help suppliers manage capacity:

"Can one big order be broken up into two or three orders, you know, because that would ease some of the other pressures. . . We have been successful in discussing with some of our buyers, and they have actually started doing that. Place a big order, but we'll take it in staggered shipments. Not all at once." (Interview with Craft Resource Centre).

Online analytics and dynamic website design can enable smaller brands to implement responsive production planning that is based on made-to-order. By tracking online sales, demand for products can be matched to current production capacity:

"We make to order, and if they are at capacity we'll just switch that item off for a little while, which enables us to be really flexible. But then sometimes it is about driving enough demand." (Interview with Birdsong).

Crowdfunding campaigns can also be a useful tool to help small brands increase forecasting accuracy. By encouraging consumers to pre-order, brands are able to reduce financial risk and minimise deadstock:

"The last production we did a crowdfunding campaign, which was very good. We could also see which products are selling better, which products people are ordering, and we can project for the future. We only put the samples on the campaign, so people received the orders after two or three months. But usually our lead times are six months from the beginning." (Interview with SICA UPCYCLING DESIGN).

There are also opportunities for collaborative product development. This might involve buyers and suppliers working together to adapt a product or the technical specifications in order to manage costs:

"So first of all, we go into the technical specification of the product, and oftentimes I will show them the breakdown. We have this complete transparency which is something missing from the non-Fair Trade sector (...). A great example recently

was El Puente, the German organisation. They loved a series of winter scarves which we had in our catalogue, but they said that it's expensive. So what we did was the length of the scarf was 100cm by 180cm, so they told us: 'look, we don't really need that big a scarf, can you make it a little shorter'. It can be done, if the design can be modified. So we made it 100cm by 140cm." (Interview with Craft Resource Centre).

Fair Trade partnerships demonstrate the potential for production planning that is both collaborative and responsive. In most garment value chains these technical production spaces are closed to voices of producers. However, Fair Trade production and planning practices provide examples of how these spaces can be reimagined and redesigned by including producers as active participants in decision-making spaces. These collaborative strategies open up closed spaces and begin to challenge established power dynamics.

3. Fair Payment Terms

Fair payment terms are crucial for suppliers in order to manage cash flow. Examples of best practice include medium-sized brands that have committed to make advance payments as part of supplier-buyer codes of conduct.⁷ Fair Trade principles require that an interest-free pre-payment of at least 50% is made available on request from suppliers of Fair Trade handicraft products (WFTO 2024). Recognising the financial disadvantages faced by producers and suppliers of Fair Trade products, pre-payment is a well-established practice that is accepted by most buyers:

"That's a game changer, you know some of our buyers the minute the ship has left with the products from India they send the payment across. Okay, here's the money, you know. Sometimes it happens that the product has reached Europe, and there were some product problems. Maybe ten per cent of the products were defective, so we have to give a credit note. The credit note is adjusted later against the subsequent orders, so nothing gets held up. So this is one of the biggest benefits of fair purchasing, in fact, that the money is flowing." (Interview with Craft Resource Centre).

However, Fair Trade principles are not seen as a rule book, they allow for flexibility based on an open dialogue between partners:

7 See for instance: Schijvens (2021) Supplier-Buyer Code of Conduct. https://schijvens.nl/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/code-of-conduct_website.pdf

“Most of the Fair Trade buyers continue to pay in advance, but it again depends on the liquidity of the customer side. There is cooperation from us and from the buyer.” (Interview with Creative Handicrafts).

In contrast, for smaller brands market dynamics mean that payment terms are often determined by suppliers:

“As I am the smaller one in my supply chain. I have very few benefits about payments, so I pay in advance. I pay thirty per cent in advance when I make an order. So when I get the products here, I pay the same day, so there's no cash advance or no payment period, thirty days or sixty days. No, I always pay immediately.” (Interview with Wayz).

The business practices of Fair Trade organisations demonstrate how sustainable costing procedures can empower producers. For Fair Trade partners, sustainable costing starts with the principle of fair payment (WFTO 2024). A fair payment is one that has been mutually negotiated and agreed by all through on-going dialogue and participation, which provides fair pay to the producers and can also be sustained by the market, taking into account the principle of equal pay for equal work by women and men. Transparency in payment terms is fundamental in revealing and questioning forms of power (visible, hidden, and invisible) that shape norms about purchasing practices and definitions of fairness.

Confronting Market Challenges and Limitations

It is challenging for any campaign, movement or collective action to attempt to work across multiple spaces, forms and levels of power. Gaventa (2021) argues that the process of building alliances and coalitions which work across these dimensions is crucial – while recognising that alliances are often themselves filled with power divisions and conflicts. Fair Trade networks and intermediaries can provide new opportunities for participation in arenas that may be considered closed, invited or claimed spaces (Gaventa 2021). We find examples of Fair Trade organisations working with market actors beyond the Fair Trade community and contributing to new value chains and policy dialogues that engage with the wider ethical and sustainable business sectors. Previous research on Fair Trade has shown the importance of boundaries for newly claimed or created spaces, and to examine “who is allowed to speak and participate in a determined space” (Discetti et al. 2020).

In our study, the coordination offered by the WFTO was recognised as an important focal point and voice of Fair Trade enterprises. The WFTO represents its members through multiple roles including networking, market making and advocacy.

“You know we have been doing this for 32 years now, and without WFTO it would not be possible. Having a central organisation with very clear aims and goals, with a mission and vision (...). That’s the focal point, there is no other, at least for us in the non-food sector, there is no other reference point or reference organisation.” (Interview with Craft Resource Centre).

One of the strengths of Fair Trade has been a degree of flexibility in how the Fair Trade principles are applied. This has worked well in a network that is well-established and has a common understanding among suppliers, brands and buyers. However, as Fair Trade looks to open up new mainstream markets, there may be challenges around how these supplier-buyer partnerships based on trust translate to more commercial contractual relationships. There are also questions about how Fair Trade’s model of social and economic empowerment counters what some scholars have seen as a systematic process of ‘taking the power out of empowerment’ (Batliwala 2007) or moves towards ‘empowerment lite’ (Cornwall 2018).

In this chapter and our previous study (Anderson et al. 2023) we identified a number of common challenges facing Fair Trade organisations (both brands and suppliers), that are interwoven with the structures of fashion value chains and power in the market. These structural issues present barriers to expanding fair purchasing practices and highlight the need to address power asymmetries [see Sark and Gotthardsen’s as well as Boça-Moisin and Winkler’s chapter in this volume].

The ongoing competition from Fast Fashion brands and the wider impact on value chain practices is seen as a fundamental barrier to change. Even within Fair Trade networks, suppliers talk about the pressures around price and are not immune to the effects of a ‘hyper competitive textile and garment industry’ (STTI 2021). A representative from a Fair Trade enterprise explained:

“I think it’s always a little bit of a tightrope trying to get a price, even with very well intended buyers that totally buy into the mission.” (Interview with Sasha)

In terms of market drivers, there is a concern that the ethical consumption market has not grown sufficiently to replace mainstream consumer trends. There is also an ambition to encourage engaged ethical consumption that challenges the ‘passive consumption’ seen in many mainstream Fair Trade markets (Doherty et al. 2013). For Fair Trade producer organisations ethical consumption has multiple dimensions:

“The biggest barrier is not enough growth in ethical consumers. An ethical consumer, to me as a producer, is someone who is willing to pay the price, who recognizes the value of the product, and is also interested in the story.” (Interview with Craft Resource Centre)

The turnover of buyers and loss of institutional knowledge can destabilise the buyer-supplier dynamic and make it more difficult to achieve a healthy working environment. For instance, when buyers change roles the knowledge of suppliers and production context are often not retained. This is a challenge across the sector and is reflected in the experience of Fair Trade suppliers:

“We are seeing quite a bit of turnover in the buyer organisations, you know, people coming and going. Institutional knowledge is very important. When you are a buyer, and you’re talking to a producer from the South. You have to know a little bit more than just the product. You have to know their story, you have to know which village they’re working in. You have to know the constraints they are facing.” (Interview with Craft Resource Centre)

Despite corporate commitments to ‘stakeholder capitalism’ (Business Roundtable 2022) conventional models of business ownership continue to prioritise the short-term interests of shareholders above all others. However, Fair Trade organisations are able to operate differently because of their enterprise design and collective ownership models:

“It’s very tough to remain sustainable and continue to practise values in your entire supply chain. We are able to do that, I think, primarily because we don’t have an investor. We have collective ownership in the organisation, we do not need to service an investment or an investor, we do not need to show the bottom line to the investor that we are increasing our profit every year.” (Interview with Creative Handicrafts)

Conclusions

This chapter provides new evidence and documents case study examples of current purchasing practices in textile supply chains. By adopting cross-case pattern search techniques we are able to analyse existing barriers and explore opportunities to scale-up fair purchasing practices across the entire textile supply chain. Our data points to the need, once again, to rethink the conceptual framing but also the practical application of fair purchasing in order to move towards more sustainable and ethical garment value chains.

The experience of Fair Trade organisations in building sustainable partnerships has much to offer the rest of the sector in terms of good practice. The findings from this research point to the importance of investing in building trust and equality into supply chain relationships. Reciprocal learning in relation to what works to navigate the challenges of the marketplace also emerges as an important dimension of fair practices [see Marina et al.’s as well as Demandt and Gözet’s chapter in this volume].

Fair Trade partnerships show the potential for genuine collaborative and responsive production planning. By combining data analytics and dynamic online stores organisations can implement responsive production planning where demand for products can be matched to production capacity. Collaborative product development also shows the opportunities for buyers and suppliers to work together to adapt a product or the technical specifications in order to manage costs [see Ladiges's chapter in this volume]. Fair payment terms are a key principle that is evident in the practices of brands that endorse Fair Trade and ethical trading frameworks, but it is also reliant on the buyer's understanding of the vulnerabilities and risks suppliers are expected to shoulder. These vulnerabilities need to be made more visible. One solution is a move towards more transparent and sustainable price setting – where fair prices represent an equitable share of the final price to each player in the supply chain.

Throughout our study, we find clear parallels in the experience and challenges of SMEs from different regions operating across the value chain. Almost always, SMEs working in the garment sector find that they are price takers not price makers [see Lawson Jaramillo's chapter in this volume]. Despite the challenges detailed above, we find examples of SMEs (in particular Fair Trade organisations) innovating with purchasing practices that begin to shift power dynamics within fashion value chains. If supported, these organisations have the potential to be industry front-runners and demonstrate fair purchasing practices that can be replicated and scaled across the garment sector.

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