

### General Information

#### Research Questions

1. How do institutional and individual actors negotiate, translate, adapt, and strategically use concepts of labor exploitation?
2. How do the concepts under study circulate and relate to one another? How do they conceal and stabilize forms of social inequality?

#### Methodology

Qualitative research: historical discourse analysis and ethnography

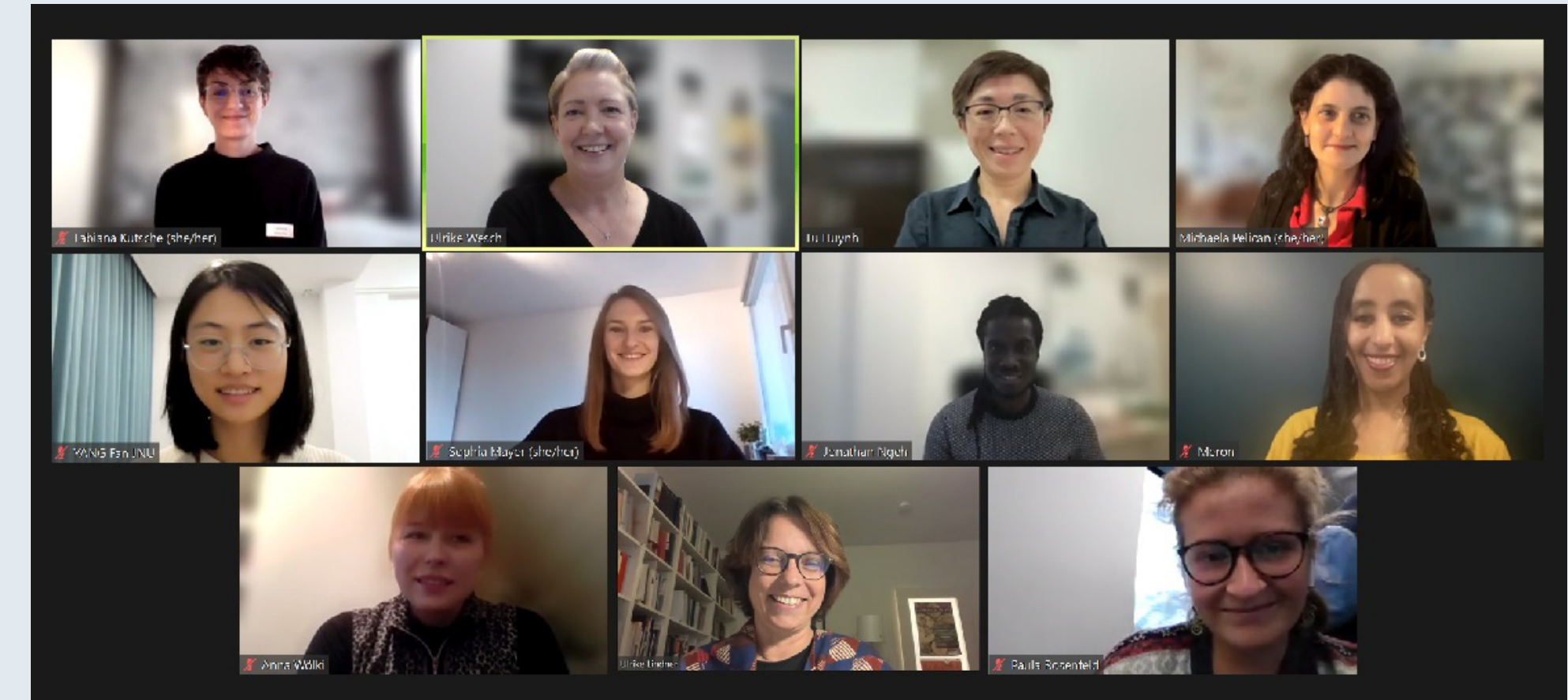
#### Theoretical Framework

Theories of inequality and labor, critical perspectives

#### Research Aim

- Focus on
- social inequalities in the context of (post)colonial labor systems and regimes of mobility in the Global South.
  - concepts of 'new slavery', 'native labor', 'human trafficking', and 'development via cheap/abundant labor'. We investigate how these concepts circulate on a global scale and how they are negotiated, translated, and adapted by various actors.
  - We intend to reconcile debates on conceptual history, labor history, and inequality. Ultimately, we aim to combine perspectives from both the Global South and North to better understand global labor regimes and draw lessons that will benefit both regions.

#### Researchers



Project Team Members during a Project Meeting

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### Preliminary Results



"Arribaron hoy destacados expertos de la reunión de la O.I.T.", in: Última Hora (18.01.1951), ILO Archives, CL 1001-1303



Workshop on Human Trafficking and Modern Day Slavery organized by Cameroonian Returnee Migrants from the Gulf states, Kumba, Cameroon. Source: Jonathan Ngeh, 11.09.2023

<b>Research Question 1</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Origin of all concepts outside of the region under study, mostly in the Global North</li> <li>• Concepts introduced into the local discussion and governance via a top-down approach, e.g., by the ILO in the case of 'native labor' or 'new slavery' through British actors</li> <li>• Counter-discourses, rooted in local critique and the negotiation of concepts, are exemplified by cases such as legislators in Cameroon working on a locally adapted formulation of their national Human Trafficking law or female industrial workers in Ethiopia criticizing the claim that industrial jobs contribute to their empowerment.</li> <li>• Race, class or social status, and gender are found to shape inequalities, but intersect differently, e.g., the racialization of colonized and indentured laborers and of migrants from the Global South intersects with patriarchy and classism.</li> <li>• Gender as a key factor in the two contemporary contexts of factory workers in Ethiopia and Human Trafficking in Cameroon</li> </ul>
<b>Research Question 2</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Circulation, translation, and adaptation of the concepts to local discourses based on the relation between language and European colonialism. Impact of the relation depends on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ who has the power and agency to generate a concept, interpret it, apply it to different contexts and be critical of it.</li> <li>○ whether there is a local equivalence of the concept or an entirely different concept that contends with the one introduced from elsewhere.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

### Additional Results

#### Circulation and Translation of Concepts

	New Slavery	Native Labor	Human Trafficking	Development via Cheap/Abundant Labor
	<b>Meaning and Actors</b>			
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Refers to the situation of Chinese indentured workers in South Africa between 1903-1911</li> <li>• NS used by actors in the UK (e.g., members of the British Liberal Party) and South Africa (e.g., white trade unionists)</li> <li>• 'Huagong' (= Chinese laborer) used by actors in China to refer to NS (e.g., journalists and officials).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Influenced by racialized discourses from mid-19<sup>th</sup> century. - refers to the working situation of colonized laborers.</li> <li>• Changed to 'workers in non-metropolitan territories' after 1944</li> <li>• Background of change: WW II, Cold War and growing anti-colonial sentiments</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Established as a legal concept in the U.S. Trafficking Victims Protection Act (TVPA) and the UN Palermo Protocol of 2000.</li> <li>• Refers to the movements of persons through coercion or deception into exploitative/ slave-like conditions.</li> <li>• Signed and used by over 150 countries, incl. Cameroon</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Used by the Ethiopian government to attract foreign direct investment (FDI) and female workers to factories.</li> <li>• 'Empowerment' has a different meaning from its local Ethiopian equivalence – 'mebkat'</li> <li>• 'Empowerment' entails awareness of gendered power structures and the individual choice and agency to make strategic life choices, while 'mebkat' means earning enough money to live on and the ability to resist something that affects one's own life choices.</li> </ul>
	<b>Reason for the Use of the Concept</b>			
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Motivated by political reasons in the British context and opposition to recruiting Chinese indentured laborers in the case of South Africa</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• For colonial governments, differentiation between white workers and colonial workers facilitated the exploitation of the workers in their colonies</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Two main objectives: to prosecute perpetrators of human trafficking and to protect and assist trafficked people</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The government strategically employs the concepts of 'cheap/abundant labor' to attract FDI for building factories and 'empowerment' to attract female workers.</li> </ul>
	<b>Role of Language</b>			
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Chinese journalists reporting on the situation of Chinese indentured laborers in South Africa maintained local Chinese connotation of 'huagong' → more relatable to their readers = Process of translation and transculturation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Translations play important role when negotiating for congruence in meaning of 'native labor' in English and 'travail indigène' in French</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• HT legislation exists in both English and French due to Cameroon's bilingual and bijural system.</li> <li>• Translation process led to the inclusion of 'slavery' in the English version of the law, → dual interpretations of the Palermo Protocol within the country</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Governmental actors combine meanings of 'mebkat' and 'empowerment' → shift in the meaning</li> </ul>

### Research Outputs



- Opening conference, online, November 2021
- Conference "Social Inequalities in the Gulf and Beyond", Abu Dhabi, February 2023
- Panel at ECAS 9 conference "Global-African Entanglements", Cologne, June 2023
- In preparation: Podcast Series "Alter Voices - Labor Stories",
- In preparation: Special Issue in ZANJ, Journal of Critical Global South Studies