Confronting Global Capital: Trade Union Organising for Higher Wages in Cambodia's Garment and Footwear Industry

David Cichon
Department of Sociology
Trinity College Dublin

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Declaration

I declare that this thesis has not been submitted as an exercise for a degree at any other university and is entirely my own work except where duly indicated and clearly acknowledged in the text.

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David Cichon

Summary

After almost a decade of declining wages in Cambodia's garment and footwear industry, worker incomes have steadily improved since 2013. Minimum wages increased from 80USD a month to 170USD a month in just 4 years - an average annual increase of almost 13% above inflation. This is an unusual and unexpected development for the global garment and footwear industry because power imbalances across the supply chain strongly favour capital over labour. The highly competitive environment has allowed brands and retailers to reduce the prices they pay to suppliers which in turn has led to suppressed wage growth for workers. This thesis is interested in how these structural barriers can be overcome and so the core research question addressed here is how are trade unions and their allies organising for higher wages in the Cambodian garment and footwear industry? The research is based on a global ethnographic study design, which enabled an in-depth engagement with global and national trade unions and the wider network of activists and organisations working on improving wages in Cambodia. Data was gathered through in-depth interviews, participant observation during trade union strategy workshops and protests, attendance at the International Labour Conference and engagement with the new ACT initiative on living wages, as well as garment and footwear factory visits.

The thesis shows how the Cambodian wage campaign in 2013/2014 was successful because the national trade unions and NGOs together with a network of global activists demanded a supply chain solution. The unions and their allies engaged in a well-coordinated, confrontational, global campaign demanding that brands and retailers, as the most powerful actors in the supply chain, deliver higher wages. In the aftermath of the campaign, however, the Cambodian state, while continuing to increase wages and benefits, systematically restricted trade union rights. The research presented here argues that this strategy of providing benefits at the expense of rights is aimed at developing a hegemonic labour control regime in Cambodia. Under this regime trade unions are asked to partake and consent to the state controlled minimum wage setting process, but restricted in their abilities to strike, demonstrate and organise workers. Trade unions are coerced into more 'appropriate' behaviours and wages are no longer a contentious political issue.

The thesis goes on to show the pathways through which global unions, NGOs and Trade Union Solidarity Support Organisations support the wage campaigning and industrial relations work in Cambodia. In 2014 Global Unions and NGOs successfully organised a transnational activist campaign pressuring brands and retailers to speak out in support of the wage demands by Cambodian unions. Since the end of the campaign, international unions and TUSSOs in particular, have also been important in supporting trade unions during the minimum wage negotiations. Decades of global campaigning have also forced brands and retailers to re-examine their responsibility in global supply chains and, in particular, asses how their purchasing practices relate to working conditions and poverty wages. This prompted the attempt by IndustriALL and a group of brands and retailers to develop a supply chain industrial relations

framework on wages – the Action, Collaboration and Transformation (ACT) process. The thesis shows how the ACT process is developing in Cambodia, examines the political and conceptual challenges it is facing, and argues that it has the potential to deliver substantial improvements in the Cambodian and global garment industry.

Finally, the research shows how activist coalitions transformed as the focus shifted from a confrontational campaign in 2013/2014 to engagement in industrial relations institutions. The 'campaign coalitions' which were the basis for the transnational activist campaign in 2014 transformed into 'industrial relations coalitions' when trade unions in Cambodia began to focus on the minimum wage process and IndustriALL on the ACT process. These coalitions are characterised by conflict and miscommunication – disconnected solidarities – between NGOs and trade unions. The thesis concludes by arguing that a return to the effective solidarity displayed by the campaign coalitions in 2014, will be crucial if supply chain industrial relations institutions, like ACT, are to deliver sustainable and substantial benefits for workers. Coordination between national and global trade unions and national and global labour NGOs are important in building leverage across the entire global supply chain and pressuring brands and retailers, factory owners and states into a position where the structural barriers to higher wages in global garment and footwear manufacturing can be overcome.

សេចក្តីសង្ខេប

ក្រោយពីមានការថយចុះប្រាក់ឈ្នួលស្ទើរតែមួយទសវត្សរ៍ក្នុងឧស្សាហកម្មសម្លៀក បំពាក់ និងស្បែកជើងនៅកម្ពុជាមក ប្រាក់ចំណូលរបស់កម្មករនិយោជិតបានកើនឡើង បន្តិចម្តងៗតាំងពីឆ្នាំ ២០១៣ មក។ ប្រាក់ឈ្នួលអប្បបរមាបានកើនឡើងពី ៨០ ដុល្លារ/ខែ រហូតដល់ ១៧០ ដុល្លា/ខែ ក្នុងរយៈពេលតែ ៤ ឆ្នាំ ប៉ុណ្ណោះ ដែលមានកំណើនជាមធ្យមជិត ១៣% ក្នុងមួយឆ្នាំៗ លើសពីអត្រាអតិជរណា។ នេះជាការវិវត្តមិនធម្មតា និងខុសពីការរំពឹង ទុកសម្រាប់ឧស្សាហកម្មសម្លៀកបំពាក់ និងស្បែកជើងក្នុងពិភពលោក អតុល្យភាពអំណាចក្នុងខ្សែសង្វាក់ផ្គត់ផ្គង់បានគាំទ្រយ៉ាងខ្លាំងដល់និយោជក កម្មករនិយោជិត។ ភាពប្រកួតប្រជែងយ៉ាងខ្លាំងបានធ្វើឲ្យក្រុមហ៊ុនម្ចាស់ម៉ាក និងក្រុមហ៊ុន លក់រាយ អាចកាត់បន្ថយថ្លៃដែលត្រូវបង់ទៅអ្នកផ្គត់ផ្គង់ ដែលធ្វើឲ្យរាំងស្ទះដល់កំណើន ប្រាក់ឈ្នូលសម្រាប់កម្មករនិយោជិត។ និក្ខេបបទនេះផ្ដោតសំខាន់ទៅលើរបៀបនៃការ ជម្នះឧបសគ្គផ្នែករចនាសម្ព័ន្ធទាំងនេះ ដូច្នេះសំណូរស្រាវជ្រាវសំខាន់នោះគឺថា សហជីព និងអង្គការជាសម្ព័ន្ធមិត្តរបស់សហជីពចាត់ចែងយ៉ាងដូចម្ដេចដើម្បីធ្វើឲ្យមានការ *បង្កើនប្រាក់ឈ្នូលក្នុងឧស្សាហកម្មសម្លៀកបំពាក់ និងស្បែកជើងរបស់កម្ពុជា ?* ការស្រាវ ជ្រាវនេះផ្អែកលើរបៀបសិក្សាជាតិពន្ធុពិភពលោក ដែលធ្វើឲ្យមានការចូលរួមខ្លាំងរបស់ សហជីពពិភពលោក និងសហជីពជាតិ និងបណ្ដាញសកម្មជន និងអង្គការជាច្រើន ដែលធ្វើការបង្កើនប្រាក់ឈ្នួលនៅកម្ពុជា។ ទិន្នន័យត្រូវបានប្រមូលពីបទសម្ភាសន៍ ស៊ីជម្រៅ ការសង្កេតលើអ្នកចូលរួមនៅក្នុងសិក្ខាសាលាស្តីពីយុទ្ធសាស្ត្រសហជីព និងការ តវ៉ានានា ការចូលរួមក្នុងសន្និសីទការងារអន្តរជាតិ និងការចូលរួមជាមួយកម្មវិធី ACT ថ្មី មួយស្ដីពីប្រាក់ឈ្នូលសមរម្យ និងការចុះតាមរោងចក្រសម្លៀកបំពាក់ និងស្បែកជើង។

និក្ខេបបទនេះបង្ហាញពីរបៀបដែលយុទ្ធនាការបង្កើនប្រាក់ឈ្នូលនៅកម្ពុជាកាលពីឆ្នាំ ២០១៣/២០១៤ ទទូលបានជោគជ័យ ដោយសារសហជីពអន្តរជាតិ និងអង្គការមិនមែន រដ្ឋាភិបាល និងបណ្តាញសកម្មជនពិភពលោក ទាមទារឲ្យមានដំណោះស្រាយក្នុងសង្វាក់ ផ្គត់ផ្គង់។ សហជីព និងអង្គការសម្ព័ន្ធមិត្ររបស់ខ្លួន បានចូលរួមនៅក្នុងយុទ្ធនាការមួយ កម្រិតពិភពលោក ប្រឈមមុខដាក់គ្នា និងមានការសម្របសម្រួលបានល្អ ដែលមាន គោលបំណងទាមទារឲ្យក្រុមហ៊ុនម្ចាស់ម៉ាក និងក្រុមហ៊ុនលក់រាយ ដែលជាតូអង្គដ៍មាន ឥទ្ធិពលបំផុតក្នុងសង្វាក់ផ្គត់ផ្គង់ ផ្តល់ប្រាក់ឈ្នូលកាន់តែច្រើន។ យ៉ាងណាក់ដោយ

ក្រោយពីយុទ្ធនាការនេះ រដ្ឋាភិបាលកម្ពុជាបានវិតត្បិតជាប្រព័ន្ធទៅលើសិទ្ធិរបស់សហជីព នៅខណៈពេលដែលបង្កើនប្រាក់ឈ្នួល និងអត្ថប្រយោជន៍ជាបន្តបន្ទាប់ក្ដី។ ការស្រាវជ្រាវ នេះបង្ហាញថា យុទ្ធសាស្ត្រដែលផ្តល់អត្ថប្រយោជន៍ដោយវិតត្បិតលើសិទ្ធិ មានគោលដៅ បង្កើតរបបគ្រប់គ្រងកម្លាំងពលកម្មបែបអនុត្តរភាពមួយនៅកម្ពុជា។ នៅក្នុងរបបនេះ សហ ជីពត្រូវបានស្នើឲ្យចូលរួម និងយល់ព្រមតាមដំណើរការកំណត់ប្រាក់ឈ្នួលដែលគ្រប់គ្រង ដោយរដ្ឋ ប៉ុន្តែ សហជីពត្រូវវិតត្បិតចំពោះការធ្វើកូដកម្ម បាតុកម្ម និងចងក្រងកម្មករ និយោជិត។ សហជីពត្រូវបានបង្ខំឲ្យរក្សាឥរិយាបថ "សមរម្យជាងមុន" ហើយប្រាក់ឈ្នូល លែងជាបញ្ហានយោបាយដ៏ចម្រូងចម្រាស់តទៅទៀតហើយ។

និក្ខេបបទបន្តទៅបង្ហាញពីវិធីដែលសហជីពពិភពលោក អង្គការមិនមែនរដ្ឋាភិបាល និងអង្គការជួយគាំទ្រដែលមានសាមគ្គីភាពជាមួយសហជីព ជួយដល់យុទ្ធនាការបង្កើន ប្រាក់ឈ្នួល និងការងារទំនាក់ទំនងវិជ្ជាជីវ:នៅកម្ពុជា។ នៅឆ្នាំ ២០១៤ សហជីពពិភព និងអង្គការមិនមែនរដ្ឋាភិបាល ទទួលបានជោគជ័យក្នុងការរៀបចំយុទ្ធនាការ សកម្មជនឆ្លងដែន ដែលដាក់សម្ពាធឲ្យក្រុមហ៊ុនម្ចាស់ម៉ាក និងក្រុមហ៊ុនលក់រាយ គាំទ្រ ការទាមទារប្រាក់ឈ្នួលដោយសហជីពកម្ពុជា។ ចាប់តាំងពីយុទ្ធនាការនេះបានបញ្ចប់ទៅ សហជីពអន្តរជាតិ និងអង្គការជួយគាំទ្រដែលមានសាមគ្គីភាពជាមួយសហជីព បានក្លាយ ជាតូអង្គដ៏សំខាន់ក្នុងការជួយគាំទ្រសហជីពក្នុងអំឡុងពេលចរចាប្រាក់ឈ្នួល។ យុទ្ធនាការ ជាសកលអស់រយៈពេលជាច្រើនទសវត្សរ៍កន្លងមក ក៏បានបង្ខំឲ្យក្រុមហ៊ុនម្ចាស់ម៉ាក និង ពិនិត្យឡើងវិញលើការទទូលខុសត្រូវរបស់ខ្លួនក្នុងសង្វាក់ផ្គត់ផ្គង់ ក្រមហ៊ុនលក់រាយ ជាពិសេសបានវាយតម្លៃលើរបៀបដែលការបញ្ហាទិញរបស់ខ្លួនមានទំនាក់ទំនង នឹងលក្ខខណ្ឌការងារ និងប្រាក់ឈ្នួលដែលធ្វើឲ្យមានភាពក្រីក្រ។ ស្ថានភាពនេះបានជំរុញ ឲ្យសហជីព IndustriALL និងក្រុមហ៊ុនម្ចាស់ម៉ាក និងក្រុមហ៊ុនលក់រាយមួយក្រុម ព្យាយាម បង្កើតក្របខណ្ឌទំនាក់ទំនងវិជ្ជាជីវៈក្នុងសង្វាក់ផ្គត់ផ្គង់ស្តីពីប្រាក់ឈ្នួល ដែលមានឈ្មោះ ថាជា ដំណើរការសកម្មភាព កិច្ចសហការ និងការផ្លាស់ប្តូរ ឬជាភាសាអង់គ្លេសថា ACT។ និក្ខេបបទនេះបង្ហាញពីរបៀបរៀបចំដំណើរការ ACT នៅកម្ពុជា ពិនិត្យទៅលើបញ្ហាលំបាក ផ្នែកនយោបាយ និងទស្សនាទាន ក៏ទាញអំណះអំណាងថា ដំណើរការនេះមានសក្ដានុ ពលក្នុងការធ្វើឲ្យមានការកែលម្អយ៉ាងច្រើនក្នុងឧស្សាហកម្មសម្លៀកបំពាក់នៅកម្ពុជា និង ក្នុងពិភពលោក។

ការស្រាវជ្រាវនេះបង្ហាញពីរបៀបដែលសម្ព័ន្ធភាពសកម្មជនផ្លាស់ប្តូរ ចុងបញ្ចប់ នៅពេលដែលចំណុចផ្ដោតសំខាន់បានងាកចេញពីយុទ្ធនាការបែបប្រឈមមុខដាក់គ្នានៅ ឆ្នាំ ២០១៣/២០១៤ ទៅជាការចូលរួមក្នុងស្ថាប័នទំនាក់ទំនងវិជ្ជាជីវ:។ "សម្ព័ន្ធភាពធ្វើ យុទ្ធនាការ" នេះ ដែលជាមូលដ្ឋាននៃយុទ្ធនាការសកម្មជនឆ្លងដែននៅឆ្នាំ ២០១៤ បាន ផ្លាស់ប្តូរទៅជា "សម្ព័ន្ធភាពទំនាក់ទំនងវិជ្ជាជីវៈ" នៅពេលដែលសហជីពនៅកម្ពុជាចាប់ ផ្តើមផ្តោតលើដំណើរការបង្កើនប្រាក់ឈ្នួលអប្បបរមា ហើយសហជីព IndustriALL ផ្តោត ទៅលើពីដំណើរការ ACT។ សម្ព័ន្ធភាពទាំងនេះមានលក្ខណ:ជាទំនាស់ និងការមិនយល់ ពីគ្នា ដែលជាសាមគ្គីភាពបែកខ្ញែករវាងអង្គការមិនមែនដ្ឋោភិបាល និងសហជីព។ សេចក្ដី សន្និដ្ឋានរបស់និក្ខេបបទនេះលើកឡើងថា ការត្រឡប់ទៅរកសាមគ្គីភាពដ៏មានប្រសិទ្ធភាព ក្នុងការធ្វើយុទ្ធនាការរួមគ្នាកាលពីឆ្នាំ ២០១៤ គឺជាកត្តាសំខាន់បំផុត ប្រសិនបើស្ថាប័ន ទំនាក់ទំនងវិជ្ជាជីវៈក្នុងសង្វាក់ផ្គត់ផ្គង់ ដូចជា ACT អាចផ្តល់អត្ថប្រយោជន៍យ៉ាងច្រើន និង ប្រកបដោយនិរន្តរភាពដល់កម្មករនិយោជិត។ ការសម្របសម្រួលរវាងសហជីពជាតិ និង សហជីពពិភពលោក និងអង្គការការងារមិនមែនរដ្ឋាភិបាលថ្នាក់ជាតិ និងថ្នាក់ពិភពលោក គឺជាចលករដ៍សំខាន់ក្នុងការធ្វើឲ្យមានឥទ្ធពលលើសង្វាក់ផ្គត់ផ្គង់សកលទាំងមូល ក្នុងការដាក់សម្ពាធលើក្រុមហ៊ុនម្ចាស់ម៉ាក និងក្រុមហ៊ុនលក់រាយ ម្ចាស់ពាងចក្រ និងរដ្ឋ ឲ្យប្រកាន់គោលជំហរមួយដែលអាចជម្នះឧបសគ្គផ្សេងៗផ្នែករចនាសម្ព័ន្ធលើការបង្កើន ប្រាក់ឈ្នួលក្នុងវិស័យកម្មន្តសាលសម្លៀកបំពាក់ និងស្បែកជើងសកលបាន។

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Acronyms and Abbreviations

AC Arbitration Council

ACILS/Solidarity Centre American Centre for International Labour Solidarity

ACT Action Collaboration Transformation (ACT on Living

Wages)

AFL-CIO American Federation of Labour and Congress of Industrial

Organizations

AFWA Asia Floor Wage Alliance
AFWC Asia Floor Wage Campaign
BFC Better Factories Cambodia

BMZ Bundesministerium fuer Technische Zusammenarbeit ILO Committee on the Application of Standards

CATU Cambodian Alliance of Trade Unions

C.CAWDU Coalition of Cambodian Apparel Workers Democratic Union

CBA Collective Bargaining Agreement

CCC Clean Clothes Campaign

CCHR Cambodian Centre for Human Rights
CCU Cambodian Confederations of Unions

CCW Confederation of Cambodian Workers Movement
CENTRAL Centre for the Alliance of Human and Labor Rights
CFSWF Cambodian Food and Service Worker Federation

CLC Cambodian Labor Confederation
CNRP Cambodian National Rescue Party

CNV Christelijk Nationaal Vakverbond; National Federation of

Christian Trade Unions In the Netherlands

CPP Cambodian People's Party
CSR Corporate Social Responsibility

CUMW Cambodian Union of Movement of Workers

DCM ILO Direct Contact Mission
EBA Everything But Arms
ETI Ethical Trading Initiative
EU European Union

FDC Fixed-Duration Contract
FDI Foreign Direct Investment
FES Friedrich Ebert Stiftung

FOB Free-On-Board

FLA Fair Labour Association

FTUWKC Free Trade Union of Workers of the Kingdom of Cambodia

GCC Global Commodity Chain
GDP Gross Domestic Product
GFA Global Framework Agreement

GFA NMC Global Framework Agreement National Monitoring

Committee

GIZ Gemeinschaft fuer Internationale Zussamemarbeit
GMAC Garment Manufacturers Association Cambodia

GPN Global Production Network
GSC Global Supply Chain

GSP General System of Preferences

GUF Global Union Federation GVC Global Value Chain

ICTU Irish Congress of Trade Unions

ILC International Labour Conference

ILGWU International Ladies Garment Worker Union

ILO International Labour Organization ILS International Labour Standards

ITGLWF International Textile Garment Leather Workers Federation

ITUC International Trade Union Confederation

IUF International Union of Food, Agricultural, Hotel, Restaurant,

Catering, Tobacco and Allied Workers' Association

LAC Labour Advisory Committee
MFA Multi-Fibre Agreement
MNC Multi-National Corporation

MoLVT Ministry of Labour and Vocational Training

MoU Memorandum of Understanding
NDI National Democracy Institute
NGO Non-Governmental Organisation

NIFTUC National Independent Federation Textile Union of

Cambodia

NSSF National Social Security Fund

OECD Organisation of Economic Cooperation and Development

RGC Royal Government of Cambodia TAC Transnational Activist Campaign

TATA Trade Agreement on Textiles and Apparel
TUAC Trade Union Advisory Committee (to the OECD)
TUSSO Trade Union Solidarity Support Organisations

UN United Nations

UNTAC United Nations Transitional Authority for Cambodia

USA/US United States of America
USD United States Dollar

WIC Workers Information Centre WRC Workers' Rights Consortium WTO World Trade Organization

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"what the woman who labours wants is the right to live, not simply exist—the right to life as the rich woman has the right to life, and the sun and music and art. You have nothing that the humblest worker has not a right to have also. The worker must have bread, but she must have roses, too".

Rose Schneiderman, New York 1911

Chapter 1: Introduction

On the 24th of December 2013 over 100'000 garment and footwear workers walked out of their factories and joined spontaneous protests all over Phnom Penh and surrounding provinces. Workers walked out of their factories in response to the announcement by the Ministry of Labour that the minimum wage in 2014 would be 95USD/month; an increase from the existing 80USD/month minimum wage but way below the 160USD/month the unions had been asking for. Taken aback by the radicalism of the workers, a group of independent trade unions quickly scrambled to call a national strike. On the morning of January 3rd, 2014, the labour unrests ended in a violent state crackdown in Phnom Penh. Five workers were shot dead on Veng Sreng Boulevard, many more injured, and 23 protesting workers were arrested.

Nevertheless, just four years later, the minimum wage for Cambodian garment workers stands at 170USD. While still below what independent unions in Cambodia deem to be a decent, liveable wage, a hike from 80USD/month to 170USD/month in less than five years is significant. It represents an average rate of increase of 16.2% and hence about 13% points higher than the average inflation rate of 3.2% (since 2010). The thesis aims to show how this success came about, at what cost to the labour movement and how wages in the industry can be improved going forwards.

I could not have known in September 2014, when I started the PhD and chose to write about the Cambodian wage campaign, that it would turn into this kind of wage rise. I also could not have anticipated that it would become the first country to engage in sectoral collective bargaining with the support of a consortium of brands and retailers, potentially changing the fabric of the global garment industry. I started the PhD to evaluate the nature of the national and international campaign because it seemed to me at the time that it was a great example of effective global solidarity. The fact that the Cambodian case became, more broadly, a successful campaign became evident only much later. That Cambodia would undergo some of the most turbulent political developments since the late 1990s, with a sharp descent into authoritarianism, was also unforeseeable. As the research progressed, it increasingly became about how the unions and international allies managed to push for wage increases in a rapidly deteriorating political environment.

The research, therefore, developed in ways I could not have predicted when I started. I almost serendipitously chose the most suitable methodology for this developing situation. Using the framework of a global ethnography, I was able to follow and analyse 'live' how social change was happening in Cambodia and in a global industry notoriously adverse to improvements in wages and working conditions.

In fact, working conditions in the global garment industry are almost unchanged since the Shirtwaist strikes led by the International Ladies Garment Worker Union (ILGWU) in New York in 1909, or the 'bread and roses' strikes led by the women of the Industrial Workers of the World in Lawrence, Massachusetts in 1912. The garment industry in the US in the early 20th century was dominated, similarly to today, by young migrant women who worked long hours in unsafe conditions. The Triangle Shirtwaist Factory fire in New York in 1911, which killed over 100 workers can easily be seen in the same vein as the Ali Enterprise Garment factory fire which killed 239 workers in Pakistan in 2012, or the Rana Plaza building collapse in the Bangladeshi capital Dhaka, which killed more than 1100 workers in 2013.

The strikes by young migrant women in the early 20th century, are also not so dissimilar to those by workers in Phnom Penh in December 2013 and January 2014. The global call and campaign for 'living wages' are not so dissimilar to the call by Rose Schneiderman in 1911 that:

"what the woman who labours wants is the right to live, not simply exist—the right to life as the rich woman has the right to life, and the sun and music and art. You have nothing that the humblest worker has not a right to have also. The worker must have bread, but she must have roses, too". 1

_

¹ Rose Schneiderman was a trade union activist who through this speech, which she gave in 1911 in response to the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory fire, popularised the phrase 'bread and roses'. The sentiment originally came from a poem published by James Oppenheim.

What is different is that the garment industry today is truly global. Garment production is based on a global supply chain made up of a complex web of transborder contracts and subcontracts. The speed and scale of production has dwarfed previous centuries and the speed and scale of profit accumulation is something that the factory owners in New York in the early 20th century could only have dreamed of. The global apparel market (excluding footwear sales) in 2017 was valued at 1.39 trillion USD alone, with an estimated 60 million workers employed, over 80% of whom are women.

The contemporary global garment industry has developed as part of capitalist globalisation which has further disempowered workers at the expense of capital, by removing the workplace from the place of accumulation and the worker from the lead-firms. The hard-fought labour-capital compromise that was developed in most of the Global North after the great depression and second world war is broken.

Labour studies and social movement scholars have examined trade union and global activist campaigns across global supply chains and under constraints and opportunities afforded by capitalist globalisation for decades. Amongst these studies are Mark Anner's book Solidarity Transformed (2011) where he examines the strategic global alliances and tactics of workers in the apparel sector in El Salvador and the automotive industry in Brazil. Gay Seidman's work Beyond the Boycott (2007) focuses on specific consumer campaigns resulting in corporate codes of conduct relating to working conditions in Apartheid South Africa, India and Guatemala. Researchers have evaluated the role of private and public monitoring systems (Locke, 2013) and consumer and student campaigns in the textile, apparel, garment and footwear industries (Featherstone, 2002). Sociologists have more broadly elaborated on the role and transformation of labour and work under globalisation - whether from a labour process perspective (Burawoy, 1982; Newsome et al., 2015), global development (Gray, 2014; Selwyn, 2016b), trade union transformation (Munck, 2002; Silver, 2003) or its effect on workers' rights (Mosley, 2010).

With this study I tried to simultaneously provide a more focused and broader examination than the existing studies on global labour organising and trade union strategies under global capitalism. By focusing on one topic in one national context

– wages in the Cambodian garment industry – I narrow the research focus. But by aiming to examine the totality of actors and their networks working across the supply chain, I broaden the study beyond what previous researchers have done. My key research question is therefore:

How are trade unions and their allies organising for higher wages in the Cambodian garment and footwear industry?

There has been little research specifically on wage strategies in global supply chains. Although the debate around living wages in the global economy has become prominent and NGOs as well as academics have developed a series of methodologies of how to calculate a living wage, very little research has addressed the efforts of social movements, activists, unions and international organisations in improving wages. This thesis therefore tries to address this gap in the literature by assessing the relationships between campaigning and organising efforts on higher wages by global and national trade unions and activists in the garment industry.

By referring to 'trade unions and allies' the research question allowed room to evaluate both global and national trade unions as well as global and national NGOs and other solidarity support organisations. It provided freedom for the research to focus on the actors which were taking the most prominent role as the campaigning and organising efforts developed. The question allowed for an examination into all possible pathways through which wages may be increased and therefore did not limit the investigation to the 'wage campaign' or the 'minimum wage negotiations'. It thus also provided the potential of examining activists' efforts in international organisations or sectoral and global collective bargaining attempts. The question enabled a unique investigation into the relationships between the different approaches by national and global trade unions and their allies, their coalitions and strategic priorities as well as the political economic structures relevant to wages and wage improvements in the Cambodian garment and footwear industry.

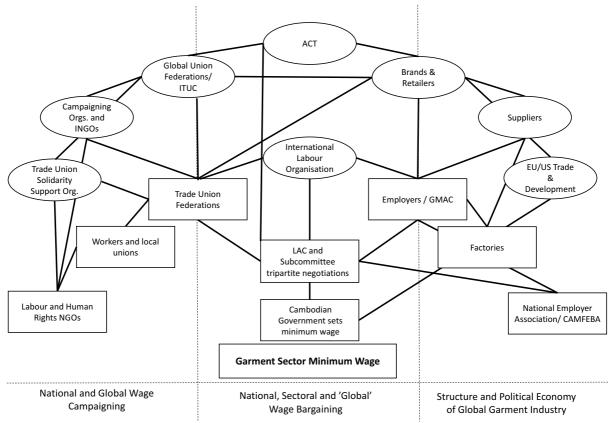
Wages have been a particularly difficult topic for unions and activists to address in the global garment industry. Wage levels had declined in Cambodia in real terms for almost a decade leading up to 2013, as the competitive global industry was pushing prices down and siphoning of productivity increases for profits or consumer surplus

in Europe and the US. The political economy of global supply chains and the global garment industry in particular has erected barriers to wage reform and makes effective trade union organising very difficult. There has been a 'wage crisis' in the global garment and footwear sector for decades based on the overwhelming power of buyers as well as the chronic undervaluing of largely women's work in the Global South, systemic intensification of work, wage theft, failure to pay minimum wages and minimum wages set at the level of poverty wages (ITGLWF and Miller, 2012). Wages have declined in part due to continued gender discrimination in a sector where over 80% of the workforce worldwide are women and because it is a sector where unions and core labour rights of freedom of association and collective bargaining remain weak.

Methodology

The research question is addressed through a global ethnography of the loosely knitted network of activists and organisations working on wages in Cambodia's garment and footwear sector. The data presented here was collected in a series of in-depth interviews with key actors, participation in national, regional and global trade union strategy workshops, an internship with a new initiative on living wages in the global garment industry, eight garment and footwear factory visits and observations of protests in Phnom Penh as part of almost a year of living in Cambodia. The research took place in Dublin, Geneva, Brussels, Berlin, Yangon and Phnom Penh and engaged with all main actors involved in the network presented in Figure 1.1 below.

Figure 1. 2 The network of players and relationships in the wage formations process in Cambodia



Source: Author

Key Actors and Organisations

Figure 1.1 above shows the key actors as well as their relationships to each other.

This figure shows also the two different – though not mutually exclusive – approaches to higher wages in the Cambodian garment industry. On the left hand are those organisations involved primarily in popular campaigning, usually addressed at brands retailers or the government and in the middle column are those working through their roles as industrial relations actors. The relationship between these two approaches will be a key part of the thesis. The final column the right shows the global political economic context in which these organising and campaigning activities take place. The circles show international actors while the boxes indicated largely nationally based actors. Table 1.1 below provides the abbreviations used throughout the thesis when quoting directly from interviews.

Table 1. 2: Key Organisations and Interview Abbreviations

Organisation/Union	Interview
	Abbreviations
IndustriALL	GUF

ITUC	ITUC
Cambodian Independent Trade Union	IU
Cambodian Pro-Government Trade Union	GU
International NGOs	INGO
Cambodian NGOs	NGO
Trade Union Solidarity Support Organisation	TUSSO
Foreign Government Representatives and Development	GO
Agencies	
Employers and Employer Representatives	Е
International Labour Organization	ILO
Brand and Retailer Staff	В

Key Themes and Thesis Structure

The thesis develops a number of key themes throughout the remaining chapters, which also represent the main contributions this research makes to the field of study. In Chapter 2 I outline the thesis methodology, exploring the ideas and mechanics of a global ethnography. I show both the theoretical considerations behind conducting an ethnography beyond strict spatial borders and of such a broad network of actors and engage in a discussion around the 'epistemological encounter' of this research. The chapter provides an innovative contribution to methodological discussions in sociology and labour studies. I then explore, in Chapter 3, the political economy of wage setting in the global and Cambodian garment industry, arguing that under neoliberal globalisation labour has been systematically disempowered making trade union organising on wages very difficult. The chapter provides a review of the literature on labour in globalisation with specific focus on labour power and agency. Chapter 4 explores the Cambodian minimum wage campaign and specifically the labour unrests in 2013 and 2014. This chapter is an investigation of the campaigning on wages in Cambodia and shows how, through a combination of grassroots worker organising and trade union actions, wages increased in the garment sector. The chapter also provides an analysis of the Cambodian trade union movement and its key challenges. Chapter 5 argues that in the aftermath of the labour unrests the Cambodian state embarked on strategic industrial relations reforms aimed at developing a hegemonic labour control regime. The chapter thus contributes to the literature on labour control regimes and the relationship between global supply chains and national politics in Cambodia.

The chapters that follow make the jump from the national context to global campaigning and organising efforts, exploring the key international actors, their relationships and living wage strategies. In Chapter 6 I evaluate the different pathways of international activism and organising by examining the work of global labour NGOs, Global Unions, Trade Union Solidarity Support Organisations and other northern trade unions who engage in international solidarity work in Cambodia. The chapter also evaluates some of the changes in the understanding of corporate responsibility that the global campaigns have been able to elicit in recent years. Chapter 7 engages more with this idea of changed responsibility by examining the importance and significance of the ACT initiative and attempts by IndustriALL to build a supply chain industrial relations mechanism. This chapter significantly contributes to a very new and developing body of literature on supply chain collective bargaining and a new generation of supply chain regulatory frameworks which move away from traditional voluntary CSR mechanisms. Chapter 8 provides an analysis of the overall efforts on wages for Cambodian garment workers by synthesising the national and international efforts which have contributed to successful wage increases. The chapter argues, that although some of the conditions were very specific to Cambodia and may not be able to be replicated in the same way, we can still learn lessons for the wider labour movement by examining the ways in which the coalitions between actors developed and deteriorated. Chapter 9 concludes this thesis by summarising key findings, discussing limitations within this research, and presenting potential areas of further research.

Overall the thesis and the research that it is based on contributes to the global labour studies literature by evaluating trade union strategies on wages across a globalised supply chain. By focusing on wages in Cambodia from a global perspective the research provides a unique insight into the interplay between local trade unions and labour control regimes and global solidarity campaigning, and its political economic constraints. It further provides a unique perspective on Cambodia and the ongoing and rapid social change taking place in the Kingdom.

Chapter 2: Methodology: A Global Ethnography of Trade Union Organising and Wage Campaigning in the Cambodian Garment Sector

"What good is your knowledge to us? Do you in your analyses of our social realities tell us what we can do to transform them? Does your apprehension of our reality speak to our experience? Do you convey it in a language that we can understand? If you do none of these things, should we not only reject your "knowledge" but, in the interest of our own liberation, consider you a friend to our enemies and a danger to our people?" (Sivanandan, 1974, p.400)

2.1 - Introduction

The restructuring of global production into global supply chains since the 1970s has created vastly complex networks of contracts and subcontracts through which clothes and shoes are manufactured. These networks are key to an ever expanding and hugely profitable global garment and footwear industry. They are also key to the chronically low wages and exploitative working conditions of the women that sew, glue, cut and trim the products. Studying the networks of individuals and organisations that campaign and organise for higher wages across these chains, while being faced with the complex realities of the social relations of productions, requires a broad, complex and flexible methodological approach.

In order to answer the question of how trade unions and their allies are organising for higher wages in the Cambodian garment industry, I therefore chose to develop a global ethnographic study of a loosely knitted network of activists and organisations. Sociologists have engaged in ethnographies not tied to restrictive spatial parameters for decades although not many have necessarily called themselves global ethnographers. Ethnographies like Seth Holmes' (2013) 'Fresh Fruit and Broken Bodies' have not simply addressed multiple sites in a 'multi-sited ethnography' but have illuminated how the social structures of global capitalism influence the physical health of migrant workers as they travel across time and

space, experiencing different aspects of the same globalised social structures in different local sub-spaces.

A global ethnography allows me to evaluate the activists, their networks and strategies, as well as their opportunities and constraints of working in a global supply chain and the possible consequences of a successful campaign for higher wages in the global garment industry. Conducting a global ethnography requires a discussion on the 'social' – object of study – the 'spatial' – the parameters of the study, as well as the relationship between the 'national' and 'global' processes. This chapter will evaluate those, provide an overview of the methods used to collect and analyse data as well as describe the epistemological perspectives underlying the project.

Overall this research is based on a series of in-depths interviews with Cambodian and global trade unionists, Cambodian and global labour and NGO activists and research trips to Phnom Penh, Berlin, Geneva, Brussels and Yangon. Over the course of these research trips, I had the chance to work with Cambodian unions preparing for annual wage negotiations and completed an internship with a new global initiative on living wages, Action Collaboration Transformation (ACT), in the Cambodian garment industry based in Berlin. I participated in the International Labour Conference General Discussion on Decent Work in Global Supply Chains in Geneva in 2016 as a member of the Irish Congress of Trade Union (ICTU) delegation and attended a number of regional and global IndustriALL and FES trade union strategy workshops on 'Living Wages' and 'Organising in Global Supply Chains'. I also collected data during 8 factory visits in 4 Cambodian provinces and the Phnom Penh Special Economic Zone.

2.2 – Introducing 'Global Ethnography' in the Context of Global Supply Chain Worker Organising

Global ethnography as a methodology was developed largely by Michael Burawoy and other sociologists at the University of California Berkley in an attempt to adapt ethnographic research and in-depth qualitative research methods to increasingly globalising social relations (Burawoy *et al.*, 2000). Traditionally, ethnography would have been more at home in anthropology departments and focused on the thick description of social processes in defined communities set in specific geographical

locations. Ethnographers would situate themselves within a community and spend extended periods of time in the 'field site'. These 'sites' or geographical 'localities' (the village, the organisation, the island) become a key feature of the analysis and research design. Some classical ethnographies had always challenged these constraints (Burawoy, 2001) and investigated social realities across space and time (Thomas and Znaniecki, 1918; Scheper-Hughes, 2004) but did not see themselves as 'global' ethnographers as such.

With the rise of 'globalisation theory' and the further globalisation of capitalism, however, a more systematic rethinking of ethnography as methodology was necessary. Gille and O'Riain (2002) write that the delinking of the 'social' and its 'spatiality' "upsets ethnography's claim to understand social relations by being there and thus demands that we rethink the character of global ethnography" (Gille and Riain, 2002, p. 271). They go on to argue that globalisation poses challenges "to existing social scientific methods of inquiry and units of analysis by destabilising the embeddedness of social relations in particular communities and places" (Gille & Riain 2002, p. 271). The break between the 'social' and its 'spatiality' is therefore core to global ethnography, as the ethnographer has to move "out from the single sites and local situations of conventional ethnographic research designs to examine the circulation of cultural meanings, objects, and identities in diffuse time-space" (Marcus 1995, p. 96).

Global ethnography allows researchers to not simply consider multiple sites or communities and networks that cut across one particularly spatial form, but also to examine closely the "consumption" ("experience") and/or "production" of globalisation (Burawoy, 2001). Allowing the researcher to not simply see 'globalisation' as a cause for social transformations, but also to examine its production - the underlying dynamics of global capitalism. This, in turn, avoids the pitfalls of reifying globalisation into cause and simultaneously consequence of social transformations, removing it from its material base (Rosenberg, 2005). In the case of this research, the issue of campaigns over wage setting is at once experience and production. The dynamics of global supply chains are influencing wage setting, while local workers experience the exploitation at the hands of these global forces. In response they organise locally and through global networks – in turn reproducing globalisation through the experience of global campaigning and resistance.

2.3 – A critical Global Ethnography

Zygmunt Bauman writes that a key objective of sociology and the sociologist is to 'defamiliarising the familiar', to make us acutely aware of the things and social processes we have previously intuitively understood as 'common sense' or established truths. I would argue that critical sociological research goes further in that it should not only 'de-familiarise' the 'familiar' but also, as Seth Holmes (2013) argues, a responsibility to 'de-naturalise naturalised suffering'. Though it is usually the agency of the workers and trade unions which makes the suffering visible, the research should try to see and understand this suffering and provide insight into the processes that create and perpetuate it. Ultimately the researcher is 'bearing witness', and according to Scheper-Hughes (1995), this requires not the removed, objective observer, but a researcher who places themselves at the heart of human events as a "responsible, reflexive and morally committed human being, one who will 'take sides' and make judgements" (Scheper-Hughes 1995, p. 419).

A good ethnography requires the researcher to be physically present and personally involved (Bourgois, 2003). In section 2.6 of this Chapter I described to what extend I was 'physically present'. Here I will elaborate the extent to which I was personally involved, because ethnography, possibly more so than most methodologies, require the researcher to engage with their own positionality, their ethics and representational conundrums (Juris and Khasnabish, 2013). The methods and strategies of data collection explored further down are crucial but cannot, and do not, exist in a vacuum. Knowledge is never produced in an ideological vacuum. Juris and Khasnabish (2013) argue that especially regarding critical ethnography:

"Participant observation, open ended interviews and related qualitative techniques are necessary, but not sufficient, *sine-qua-nons* of ethnographic praxis. We also conceive of ethnography as an attitude, a perspective, and, above all, a specific mode of "epistemological encounters" involving an ethic of openness and flexibility and willingness to allow

oneself to become personally transformed through the research process" (p. 9).

In order to describe my mode of 'epistemological encounter' I decided to describe my epistemological basis, considerations of how my research was influenced by my own positionality, ethics and discussion of the representational 'conundrum'.

The Epistemological Encounter: Critical Social Sciences and Standpoint Theory

This section explores the research paradigm and epistemological concerns of this research and how these influenced the methodological design and research process. The research is embedded in a critical social science research paradigm whose ontology rests on the understanding that realities that we attempt to study are socially constructed and heavily influence by societal power structures. These structures, on the other hand, are largely determined by global capitalist developments and developing knowledge in this context requires an understanding of these dynamics – a critical epistemological lens.

Epistemological concerns are often overlooked in social scientific studies, which means that researchers too often either infer or ignore their implicit assumption on knowledge and knowledge creation. This 'epistemological unconsciousness' (Steinmetz, 2005) is particularly apparent in sociology, where often only explicitly non-positivist studies engage with discussion around epistemology, and often do this in a way to justify their approach in opposition to the positive orthodoxy in many sociology departments. Positivism has become, at once, science and ideology (Burawoy, 1998). Without wanting to do the same here, engaging with ontological and epistemological concerns to define my own "epistemological encounter" is crucial for solid ethnographic work and robust, transparent research.

Critical social scientific research does not just aim to lay bare structures of oppression and their underlying systematic causes, it also aims to find ways to address these. In order to do so, one needs to first understand that knowledge produced is based on the position one holds in society. Feyerabend (1993) argues that "science knows no bare fact at all but that facts that enter our knowledge are already viewed in a certain way and are, therefore, essentially ideational"

(Feyerabend 1993, p. 3). He goes on to say that methodological orthodoxy sanitises the observed and reality of human interactions, by removing history and the complex interactions between ideas and interpretation, between theory and lived experiences and between those realities that hurt, harm and the structures that give rise to them. This does not lead to better or more accurate knowledge, but rather to an ever smaller, more removed, academy unable to address the realities faced by individual constraint and enabled by the structured they find themselves in.

Standpoint theory, advocated for and popularised largely by feminist researchers, has long argued that the standpoint one observes the social reality from affects the knowledge we can create. In fact, starting from a standpoint of those that are less privileged leads to a better objectivity, or "stronger objectivity" (Harding 2016 cf. Rolin 2009, p 219), because it allows us to reveal "hidden aspects of social relations between genders and the institutions that support these relations" (Harding 2016 cf. Rolin 2009, p 219). Critical epistemologies, and standpoint theory in particular, allows for a thorough analysis of power relations both in societies and between the researcher and their research participants. Or as Rolin (2009) argues:

"In my view, feminist standpoint theory is a resource for feminist epistemology and philosophy of science for two reasons. One reason is that it urges feminists to reflect on relations of power as a distinctive kind of obstacle to the production of scientific knowledge. The obstacle is not adequately conceptualized as a cognitive bias that a social scientist may be vulnerable to; it is more adequately conceptualized as a social phenomenon that is endemic in the world of power relations" (Rolin 2009, p. 219)

Standpoint theory is therefore especially fitting for research on social movements and activism, as it "accepts the normative reality of the researcher but does not see the normative and explanatory facets as mutually exclusive" (Kumar & Mahoney 2014, p. 194), and yet taking such a position "does not undermine supposed objective criterion, beginning with the assumption that when writing within and about a social movement, conducting detached "objective" research is impossible" (Kumar & Mahoney 2014, p. 194).

For me this meant not accepting the false understanding of capital and labour as equal parts in a conflict and to refuse to try and show a 'non-biased perspective' by giving equal time and attention to the perspective of 'both sides'. Rather, I take a clear labour stance and assess the dynamic of wages in the garment industry from the perspective – or standpoint – of the activists trying to improve the situation. Only this way can I attempt to adequately address the power dynamics of global supply chains. But of course, the different actors involved in the campaign occupy different and differently privileged positions within the organising efforts and within the dynamics of global supply chain generally. Evaluating these differences and understanding that different sub-spaces of the overall structure of campaigning efforts allows for different perspectives and different access to power structures, is crucial in understanding the activist relationships and ultimately the success of their attempts to increase wages.

This is crucial also in linking the "process of generating evidence with a process of empowerment" (Rolin 2009, p. 219). Because one's position in society affects the standpoint one has on creating knowledge, one's position can also affect the weight and influence that knowledge has. Marx and Engels argued that:

"The ideas of the ruling class are in every epoch the ruling ideas [...] The class which has the means of material production at its disposal, has control at the same time over the means of mental production, so that the ideas of those who lack the means of mental production are subject to it" (Marx and Engels, 1968).

This meant in particular questioning the perceived academic and popular wisdom on the nature of global production and the effects it has on the workers and communities in which manufacturing takes place. Activists, and especially labour activists in manufacturing hubs, are constantly faced with the logic of capitalism, which maintains that competition based on low-wages and capital flight are a law of nature which is here to stay. Much of the sociology of development has focused on the benefits that the development of capitalism brings to societies as they are endowed with the opportunity to 'catch-up' to the Global North (Burkett and Hart-

Landsberg, 2003). Nevertheless, trade unions critically engage with this logic, criticise it, purposefully ignore or actively refute its implications. For me, this also meant acknowledging alliances or relationships between trade unions in Cambodia and global brands, for example, which had previously not fit into my understanding of the conflicts in global production. For unions in Cambodia, for example, brands who are the focus of global campaigning efforts may in fact turn into allies in a conflict with local management or national employer organisations.

Understanding how trade unions in Cambodia, global activists and union federations understand the reality of global supply chain capitalism and allowing for those perspectives to inform the knowledge I was creating, as well as challenging my own perspectives of these dynamics, was therefore always a conscious process during data collection and analysis. Although one 'trade union perspective' does not exist of course. The ideological and strategic differences between the global unions and national unions and the NGOs and worker representatives at the ILO for example are staggering. Nevertheless, I made it clear in my interactions with unions and throughout my research that I believe that the structures of the global garment industry are exploitative and that union rights are suppressed in order to extract maximum profits for brands and consumers in the Global North. This perspective was core to my research, data collection and analyses, and I believe allowed me to more accurately understand the exploitation by global capitalism which I personally do not experience in this way.

I therefore, to the best of my ability, take a labour perspective in my research, assuming to the best of my ability a standpoint of trade unions and labour activists. This means questioning the way I represent their campaigns, decisions and tactics as well as their lived experiences and questioning my own ideological and socially privileged position during the research, writing and dissemination of the research. This is not a process that occurs at any particular phase of the PhD but rather a continuous and ongoing engagement. The next sections on representation and positionality will explore this further. But it is crucial to start from the perspective that workers in global production are exploited through the structures of global capitalism and that the unsustainable global garment industry has expanded only through a growing hyper-exploitation – meaning that it even limited the ability of labour to reproduce itself. The women working in Cambodia's garment industry have over the

past decades sold their labour power for a wage that did not allow them to feed themselves or their families adequately, leading to exhaustion, malnutrition and the inability to work into older age. The wages have been determined by poverty and what Marx called the reserve-army of labour and not the collective strength of workers. Although, the day to day workings of the industry are more nuanced, and I will expose these nuances throughout the thesis, the standpoint I am adopting – to the best of my ability – is that of labour activists globally and in particular Cambodia. This, of course, is simply a starting point and does in no way result in theory or knowledge, it also does in not mean that I presume to understand the perspectives of all my participants equally or fully. It is simply a theoretical tool to show my understanding of how I aim to create knowledge and in what way I think this knowledge should be deployed.

In terms of data collection this meant that I started with interviews from the labour movement and allowed their perspectives to sharpen my focus and develop further questions. It meant that I formed a thorough understanding of the garment sector in Cambodia before talking to factory management and brands. It also meant that the political standing of individual activists influenced the weight that I attributed to their responses. Unions close to the government, for example, would usually not hide their political affiliations and beliefs and I would treat their statements accordingly. It also meant that, particularly in the writing phases, I would be sensitive to what is relevant information and what is simply gossip, being careful to represent unions in the way that I could discern they wanted to be represented. I almost automatically would question any statements by government aligned unions or employers which reiterated the common misconception of independent unions as thugs and corrupt criminals. Though I could of course not ignore claims of corruption within the unions movement and other possible uncomfortable revelations, and did not, I had to differentiate between allegations which were part of a long running anti-union campaign and those that were genuine. The perspective and standpoint that I chose therefore allowed me to more accurately examine my data - looking beyond the misinformation, ideological and personal attacks - and the role of the actors involved; it provided a 'crutch to walk on continuously moving ground' (Burawoy, 1998) and ultimately allowed for 'stronger objectivity' (Harding 1991).

2.4 – Representations, Positionality and Ethics in research, writing, theory and practice

"Not to own the means of production can lead to premature death, but not to own the means of representation is also a kind of death" (Nguyen, 2015)

Representation

It was also important not fall into the traps of lazy representational categories during the research and writing. Representing my participants in existing categories can strip them of the locality and situation they find themselves in and undermine the strength of ethnographic research. Existing research can reduce social movements to existing epistemological frames and social categories which reflects an "underlying acceptance of capitalist modernity, liberal democracy, and individualism, values challenged by more radical movements, including many of those addressed in this volume" (Juris & Khasnabish 2013, p.6).

Ethnography allows the researcher to challenge existing frames, develop new ones and contextualise them in more complex structural dynamics. It allowed me to both recognise the categories useful for interpretation and analysis as well as examine their limitations. We cannot fall into the trap, for example, of analysing civil society unions and activists - within global production without understanding their relationship to the state and processes of capitalist reproduction. Gramsci (1971) showed the danger of these limited perspectives when examining the role of the sociologist in studying civil society. Studying civil society structures and organisations without linking it to the state enables views that disregard their role in creating consent and fostering hegemony (Burawoy, 2001). Chapter 7 and chapter 8 will engage more with this double or 'janus-faced' (Burawoy, 2001) nature of unions and civil society when examining the dynamics of collaborating with elements of global capitalism to protect workers from other, harsher, elements of globalised hyper-competitive industries whose structural forces keep wages low and respect for workers' rights theoretical.

In writing and dissemination of the research in particular I need to avoid categories that spring out of my perspective and find ways to represent my participants and the challenges they face in their terms. Workers in the global garment industry in

particular have been and are often represented in particular frames, even by social movement actors. Workers in factories and their unions are often represented using a "victimisation frame" (Kumar and Mahoney, 2014), photos of young women sitting behind sewing machines in cramped factories and accompanied by sad stories of individuals who seem powerless in the face of exploitative bosses. Not just are these frames playing on gender stereotypes of 'weak women', they also conjure up images of poor people who need saving, rather than workers who need solidarity (Anner, 2013; Kumar and Mahoney, 2014). These frames, employed by social movement actors and academics alike, do not just harm the effectiveness of movements but also reproduce power dynamics within a network of actors that justifies ignoring (mostly women) workers in factories. They find solutions based on northern 'charity', an idea perfectly compatible with neoliberal globalisation, rather than global 'solidarity', attempting to address and overcome the underlying structures of global inequality and exploitation. Therefore, throughout the thesis I avoid conjuring up the emotionally charged images of the "poor" women "slaving" behind sewing machines who are in need of support. I also purposefully avoid descriptive terminology which makes unionists and activists seem like martyrs who have heroically dedicated their lives to the cause. The personal histories involved are always much more complicated and conflicting. Instead I attempt to interpret the broader exploitative context and, although this is sometimes difficult, treat my participants as the owners of their stories and experts in their experiences. I see my role as simply analysing the information they provide and to make sense of these varying perspectives in the broader context, not to stage their experiences using my own motives.

Faced with the complex realities and often all-encompassing and perceived lack of an alternative to the logic of capitalism, representation of the 'oppressed' can therefore itself become a form of exploitation. Paulo Freire writes that "any attempt to 'soften' the power of the oppressor in deference to the 'weakness' of the oppressed almost always manifests itself in the form of false generosity" (Freire 1996, p.26).

Examining and challenging the representational frames used by social movements and the ones I use in my writing and research was important also because traditional fault lines became blurry early on. Who was doing the organising and who were their enemies? What were they trying to change and how? The International Labour

Organisation, for example, became simultaneously an actor within the campaign in Cambodia, and the host of the International Labour Conference (ILC), i.e. a supposedly neutral platform for contestation in Geneva. Organisations and individuals can at the same time be advocating on behalf of the workers and find themselves the focus of criticism by grassroots campaigns. Researchers and academics can drift in and out of relevance and in some instances go from being a nuisance and interfering with the campaign to being the centre of a national trade union strategy day. The European Commission may negotiate and facilitate exploitative international trade agreements undermining Cambodian workers' attempts to unionise, while simultaneously funding some of the most progressive and radical worker organisations in the country. While some of these contradictions can be explained through fundamental neoliberal predispositions others are more complex. Categories of those participating in the social movements, organisation involved or opposition morph and evolve rapidly. All of these ever-evolving roles and responsibilities, however, contribute to a 'campaign' (in the widest possible sense of the word) for Cambodian garment workers' wages and are crucial in order to understand the way workers organise across the global economy today.

More often than I would like to admit, I inadvertently became the representative of the unions in Cambodia; whether in Berlin or at conferences in New Delhi and Washington. The perspective of other academics and activists in the union movement would be significantly coloured through my representation of the situation faced by Cambodian workers and trade unions. This meant that sometimes I had to tread very carefully, but also appreciate my position and at times argue for their inclusion in various processes. A job that no one gave me and that no one, least of all workers in Cambodia, elected me to do. This also occurred with engagement with the public, whether through blog posts, social media or in fact day to day conversations about my research and about the garment industry more specifically. Understanding that I was in a position to influence the way that many consumers thought about the situation in Cambodia, more so than most Cambodian garment workers and unionist would ever be able to do, means I have to be very careful in the categories I choose to represent and the arguments I choose to reinforce. This also means understanding the positionality I have compared to my participants in the research but also in the dissemination - whether through formal or informal channels.

Positionality

The postmodern turn in Anthropology increased the attention on the researcher. Especially in ethnography, the move away from the silent, impartial observer, meant the importance of how the researchers' "identity has shaped the process of knowledge construction" (Kempny 2012 cf. Jahan 2015, p. 86). Ethnography "demands an explicit awareness of our being situated in a place and in relation to other acting subjects" (Juris and Khasnabish, 2013, p. 5), which helps "fundamentally challenge, even if it does not entirely overcome the (researching) subject - (researched) object binary" (Juris & Khasnabish 2013, p.5; see also Juris 2007). Of course, the researchers' identity will "shift according to the situation in which the researcher finds themselves (Kuwayama 2003 cf. Jahan 2015, p.86).

Although it is also important to understand that assessing the positionality of oneself and the influences that this has on knowledge creations can degenerate into simple "narcissistic celebration of privilege" (Bourgois 2003, p.14). Or in fact simply recounting ones privilege in order to be absolved of it without engaging with the dynamics of positionality in the research.

I was perceived in different ways by different participants as the research went on and I could also tell that perceptions of me changed, the more unionists and activists saw me and spoke to me. Although the unions never seemed suspicious of me, the level of engagement and trust evolved over the course of the research. Prior to starting the work in Cambodia, I was also very aware of my how my gender, class, nationality and broader background, would influence my ability to conduct research and if, especially, working with factory workers I needed to find ways to address the power dynamics between researcher and participants. During my factory visits I asked a friend of mine, a young Cambodian woman, to act as interpreter to provide a way for me to engage with the workers where my background may provide challenges. What I noticed is that in many instances workers were a lot more interested to communicate with me directly than through my interpreter. They were keen to speak to an 'outsider' and 'researcher'. In Cambodia researchers are often activists and unions were therefore often more open that I had anticipated. Despite the heightening political tension and crackdown on unions, most activists openly spoke to me and seemed to trust that I would protect them and their interest. In many cases the interviews ended with a plea by the unionist to represent their concerns on whatever platform I had access too. It was understood that I was part of the international network of allies. It is clear, therefore, that their answer to me were also angled towards this. They would represent their issues and concerns to me in a way they would have done to international allies who they engage with on global campaigning. This can at times be rather simplistic and aimed at their immediate strategic need. I had to make sure to, in my interviews and discussions with activists, to go beyond what — as a European researcher with a labour standpoint and campaigning background — I wanted or expected to hear.

Nevertheless, many brands and employers spoke to me as if they did not see me as a threat. My 'gatekeeper' helped through introductions and I also noticed that some were eager to talk to 'get across their side of the story', and since I was genuinely trying to understand their positions within the industry and the way that they respond to campaigns and union organising, I was accepted. Although it was also clear throughout the interviews that I approached my research from a union perspective. My positionality here clearly also affected the information that I received. At times it seemed almost like employers wanted to 'set the record straight' to overcome and defend themselves against the images that were being conjured up through the campaigns and international media. I was therefore exposed to highly politically and sometimes emotionally charged responses, though not at all the corporate polished answers I had expected. My engagement with brand and employers was of course more limited than that with the activists and so this data does not play a large role throughout the thesis. It was nevertheless very interesting to recognise and interrogate how my positionality as a researcher with a clear labour perspective produced these responses.

Early on during my first visit to Cambodia, I had the opportunity to take part in a garment sector minimum wage bargaining strategy session. Organised by IndustriALL, FES and Solidarity Centre, the aim of the workshop was to present the preliminary findings of a garment worker income and expenditure survey and thus find a common basis for all unions on which to negotiate during the upcoming minimum wage negotiations. Towards the end of the workshop all participants were asked to summarise what they think they would take away from today, and what the next steps could be. I had no intention of including myself in the discussion or in fact

express any kind of opinion until the workshop facilitator – a member of staff at IndustriALL – passed me the microphone and said: "and what does our "professor" think?". The quotation marks were clearly implied, although the impulse to include me in the discussion was genuine. The 'professor' remark was rather a sign of acceptance and inclusion. A year later, during the global meeting on wage strategies and organising in global supply chains in Myanmar, I was asked to present my research findings on wage negotiations in Cambodia and how it could be applied in other contexts. The global unions therefore also seemed to accept me without questioning my motives.

This may have been because they saw me at the ILO as part of the ICTU delegation and because I began my research with preliminary interviews with the Global Union movement. I also believe that, both at the ILO and with the GUFs/ITUC, we shared a common language. Growing up in Geneva, with a father that worked at the ILO for 25 years, made me familiar with the jargon and internal politics of the institution. Which meant that when I attended the conference, I understood the employer/worker relationship and knew what role the ILO staff play in that. In informal conversations within the worker group in the committees a lot goes unsaid and understanding what level and type of humour is appropriate to make fun of employer representatives, becomes crucial currency.

I therefore think that my own positionality was crucial to the research in that it had bearing on the kind of information I was able to access and the knowledge I produced from this. I think being able to develop trust with the global and national trade unions in a political very tense environment allowed my participants to speak to me in ways they would not have otherwise done. It allowed me to interpret situations that I was privy to, humour and hints much better. My education, class and gender also influenced the way I was spoken to and the knowledge I created. I cannot claim to be able to interpret the information provided to me by a young Cambodia woman working in a garment factory in the provinces or a trade union leader who has spent decades suffering under an authoritarian regime exactly in the way that they had intended. I will never be able to fully understand and emphasise how their positionality influenced the way they interacted with me — or how my positionality influenced the way they reacted to and interacted with me.

I was able to use my upbringing and positionality in a way to quickly and comfortably make connection at a global level however. It facilitated access in a way that I did not expect, but also allowed me to understand dynamics at the international level very quickly. I managed to become part of the wider network of actors involved in wages setting in Cambodia much quicker than I had anticipated and so, I was in a unique position to undertake this kind of research project using this particular methodology - by simple coincidence. Although, of course it would also influence my understanding and analysis and possibly made me more inclined to become absorbed in the attempts at organising for institutional reform and possibly less at home in the more radical edges of the campaign for wages run by Cambodian NGOs. So, in the emerging conflicts between NGOs (global and national) and trade unions (global and national), I became more involved in the trade union organising attempts. Which was something that I had not at all anticipated and which I was very aware of throughout the research. The more I was accepted by the broad network of actors and the more I became involved in the global and national organising for higher wages, the more of course my perspectives began to shift. I would not have done the research justice if I had refused to acknowledge that the research process and the relationships I developed did not change me and my understanding of the issues. To assume that once I began my research in Cambodia I would not have to question my own ideology, misconceptions and intellectual preconception of what garment worker resistance and organising looks like, would have been especially naïve.

Writing & Dissemination

During the writing I needed to continue to ensure the protection of my participants. I therefore, do not just keep their anonymity throughout the thesis, but construct other strategies to ensure their confidentiality. For instance, sometimes, I make two participants into one or one person into two, in a way that would not affect the substance of the data. The field of individuals actively involved in Cambodia and internationally is not very large and it can therefore become easy to identify participants even without stating their names if I did not engage in these additional measures to protect their identities.

I was also very aware throughout the writing process of reifying categories of power, privilege and exploitation through overly complex writing and dissemination. To avoid

this, I believe it is my responsibility to defamiliarise the familiar in a way that is accessible. The writing style through the thesis may therefore at times seem almost informal or straight forward - an intentional action that took heed of such categories and aimed to dismantle them as best as possible, especially my own.

Part of the critical perspective and ethics is to make the result of the research accessible and tangible to the people we write about. I attempted to do this in a number of ways. I tried, to the best of my ability, to meet the research participants more than once. This allowed me to inform them of the progress and discuss my preliminary findings as I have already outlined in the section in revisits. I also wrote an executive summary of the research which was translated into Khmer and is to be shared with my research participants, to the best of my ability in an increasingly deteriorating domestic political situation. Some of the details outlined in this thesis. and especially the critiques of the Cambodian state, will be put on a hold for a number of years, while I continue working in Cambodia. This does not mean that we write exclusively for the people who have taken part in the research, or in fact, that we write what they expect. This would be impossible above everything else. But rather that we consider them in the research, writing and dissemination and that we understand that if the knowledge created is of no use to anyone and not-accessible to the people and persons whose lived experience we appropriate for our own ends, it will be rejected and as the Sivanandan quote at the beginning of the chapter describes, we will be considered in the interest of their own liberation a friend to their enemies and a danger to them.

Ethics

Prior to conducting the research, I sought and obtained ethical approval from Trinity College Dublin, Faculty of Arts Humanities and Social Sciences. I discussed and obtained informed consent from all research participants which included a discussion on anonymity and confidentiality as well as an overview of how the research will be used (PhD thesis and possible publication in a variety of format). All research data, including interview data and transcripts (and back-up) is kept on encrypted and password protected hard-drives and all research notes were anonymised from the start. Even my research notebooks and other handwritten observations were immediately anonymised.

2.5 – Situating Actors within a Global Ethnography

A global ethnographic approach to the research allowed me to interrogate the relationship between the social and the spatial. It also, crucially, allowed me to interrogate the relationships between the different international and national actors involved in the organising and campaigning for higher wages in the Cambodian garment industry. This involved observing the relationship between IndustriALL Global Union and their national affiliates, the relationship between the Global Unions and international NGOs and generally the alliances and basis for cooperation between international and local actors. The international activists and unions agitate in Cambodia as well as internationally and the local unions organising in Cambodia as well as systematically and strategically engaging different actors at international level. Evaluating these relationships and the different meanings they attribute to key strategies and concepts is important in assessing the effectiveness of the campaign.

The complex parameters of this study therefore benefit from the application of a global ethnography approach. The 'social' parameters within this research describe the social relations of production under global capitalism. As such, I focus on the tactics and strategies to improve wages in the Cambodian garment industry deployed by actors across a loosely knitted network. Each organisation and individual activist may take part for a number of different reasons and hold very different roles, responsibilities and ideologies. The spatial parameters of my research are set by the Global Garment and Footwear Supply Chain. The concept of Global Supply Chains (GSCs) is just one way in which the transformation of social relations of production under contemporary capitalism can be portrayed. It is, however, a particularly beneficial concept for the purposes of this global ethnography, as it allows me to conceptually set parameters, which align with the broad consensus and understanding by the network of actors that I study. Having said that, in the next Chapter I critically engage with this concept to explore if it adequately addresses the power relations of global capitalism and provide labour with a useful tool to understand the systematic barriers to improving wages and working conditions in global production.

By using the global supply chain as my spatial parameters, I do not mean to imply, however, that this 'space' is shared equally by all the participants. Or that their

understanding of this space is shared. Each of the organisations, institutions and activists I spoke with occupies a different sub-space. These sub-spaces are shaped by their position, experience and role within the supply chain, and how power relations within the activist network shape their sphere of influence and responsibility.

The global garment supply chain for workers in Cambodia is primarily represented by the factory. This workplace does not however represent the entirety of their lives. The aim here is also not to write an ethnography of the lives of Cambodian garment workers. The unionists understand and perceive the globality of the chain while often being drawn into addressing national issues, focusing on domestic politics and their conflict with an authoritarian regime. For them the 'space' is represented through their organising and campaigning in Cambodia, although they tend to understand the constraints on wages imposed by supply chain dynamics - and buyer purchasing practices.

While many of the global union activists see simply the supply chain - crucial to understanding exploitation across the industry and the root causes of poverty wages – this is a very different space to the one occupied by the national unionists or workers. The global supply chain is at once 'space' and strategy. Conceptualising, in its complex totality, the actors, power relations and social relations across global production, is crucial for labour's strategies of resistance as will be explored throughout the thesis. This is, of course, because different unions, organisations and activists occupy different sub-spaces inside the overall envelop of the global supply chain and the network of activists campaigning to improve wages. Especially between international NGOs and Global Unions, and national NGOs and local unions, conflict can occur over responsibilities. These differences also occur due to different understandings of the totality of the supply chain and its underlying dynamics as well as disagreement over tactics to overcome these.

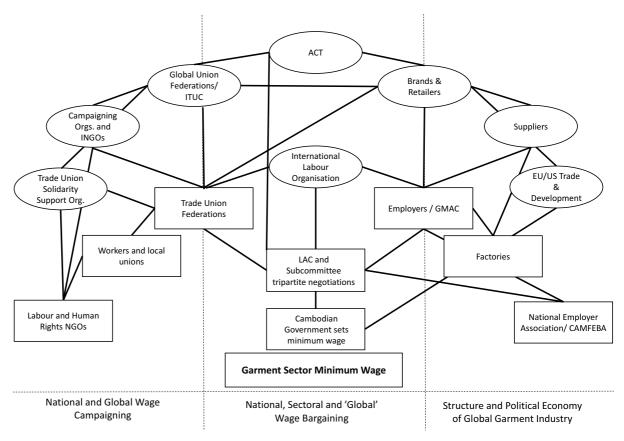
It was therefore important when setting the spatial parameters and theoretical framing of my study, that I do not simply focus on the 'local'. Giddens (1990) argues that social relations are no longer simply tied to the local. Under globalisation they can operate without being tied to a specific 'space'. As such, space, according to Giddens (1990), seizes to matter as meanings and symbols can freely travel the

world. I however disagree that space no longer matters. In fact, space matters very much, though it may no longer be confined to one particular geographical location. The way in which we set the spatial parameters, and within that use the different localities of the actors across the network, is crucial to the research design, data collection and the analysis.

And still globalisation evolves from the 'local' (Burawoy, 2001). In this case, where I have a series of different, overlapping and complex localities connected through social relations of global production, I divide them into 'national' and 'global' in order to facilitate understanding of the shape of the supply chain in which the Cambodian garment industry is embedded. **Figure 2.1** below shows the actors and networks in the global and the national and their relationship. The circles show the international actors and squares the primarily national actors.

Different actors of the network that organise across the global supply chain, therefore occupy different localities which in turn are either predominantly national or predominantly global. Wages are paid nationally and negotiated nationally. They are the return for mostly Cambodian women selling their labour power through an exploitative labour process in factories in Cambodia. The social structures of a) production and b) strategies of resistance and of improving wages, however, are no longer solely tied to Cambodia. The factory owner is in all likelihood either Chinese, Malaysian or South Korean. The owner of the factory may in fact not be based in Cambodia at all, but rather be a large manufacturing or investment firm with factories all over South and South East Asia. These firms will have contracts with European and US brands and retailers who sell the product produced in Cambodia, extracting additional surplus value. They sell it to consumers who have seen a steady decline in prices in their shops for garments from the region because global competition forces workers to give up all productivity gains and improvements in their own skill to us. In a context where wages continue to be determined as one of my respondents said "by the poverty of the country and not by the productivity of the worker". consumers and retailers stand to be able to extract massive surpluses year on year.

Figure 2. 3: Diagram of the network of players and relationships in the wage formation process in Cambodia



Source: Author

The political economy of wages in the garment sector in Cambodia and global supply chains will be explored further in the next chapter, here it was simply important to point out how the 'national' and 'global' aspect of the supply chain interact. This means that in order to examine wage bargaining and wage campaigning strategies in the industry it was imperative to use a research methodology and develop a strategy that would allow me to a) understand the spatial parameters throughout which the network of actors trying to improve wages in Cambodia acts, b) facilitate an element of cohesion between 'national' and 'global' processes without c) losing the ability to use actors' sub-space – their position within the supply chain and network - as a basis for analysis.

This meant that I had to find ways to collect data across the network of actors involved in the campaigning and organising for higher wages in Cambodia. The network above shows who these actors are and how there are related to one another. The next section show in detail how and what kind of data was collected throughout the research and how it was analysed.

2.6 - Data Collection & Analysis

As with all ethnographic research, it is next to impossible to isolate the 'data collection' phase from the 'data analysis' phase, or in fact to distil out, in its entirety, theory from methodology. Ethnographies develop in a spiral fashion, with data collection and analysis and writing taking place iteratively and simultaneously. In fact, throughout my research data collection and analysis occurred simultaneously, influenced each other and helped to transform my theoretical framing and development of new theories. Global ethnographic studies are therefore constantly evolving and developing.

It was therefore crucial that my 'data collection' strategy was flexible and adaptable. Although I would always return to the key objective of the research - to examine strategies in relation to wages in the garment industry - my methods and strategies for data collection had to adapt frequently. Many of the interactions which have influenced my research the most were not part of the initial strategy of data collection when I set out. In other words, the methodological design of this study followed the challenges to wider ethnographic work as outlined by Marcus who says ethnographic research in and of the world system have little choice but to "pursue the more open-ended and speculative course of constructing subjects by simultaneously constructing the discontinuous contexts in which they act and are acted upon" (1998, p.82). Nash (2004) argues that globalisation meant that global production and distribution sites require "maximum flexibility in their organisation charts" (p.3) and so "social movements that respond to them require flexibility in their strategies and agendas" (p.3) also. If we attempt to study flexible production and the social movements that respond to its challenges, we need to be flexible in our methods and strategies to research them.

Paul Feyerabend quoting Battlefield and Hegel writes that:

"History is full of accidents and conjunctures and curious juxtapositions of events' (Butterfield) and it demonstrates to us the 'complexity of human change and the unpredictable character of the ultimate consequences of any given act or decision of men'

(Butterfield). Are we really to believe that the naive and simple-minded rules which methodologists take as their guide are capable of accounting for such a 'maze of interactions' (Hegel)" (Feyerabend, 1993, p. 1).

He goes on to argue that participation and research of these social processes is therefore only possible for ruthless opportunists, and that those scientists and intellectuals who have contributed to knowledge creation and created new knowledge themselves, all had to break out of their epistemological and methodological orthodoxy.

While I would not argue for Feyerabend's call for methodological anarchism in order to eradicate in its entirety the sanitising orthodoxy of scientific methods, the focus on flexibility and openness was crucial to my own research. Not just in the sense that the strategies I developed prior to travelling to Cambodia became obsolete, but also because the domestic political situation in Cambodia and of course consequently the nature of the wage campaign, changed radically throughout the PhD research.

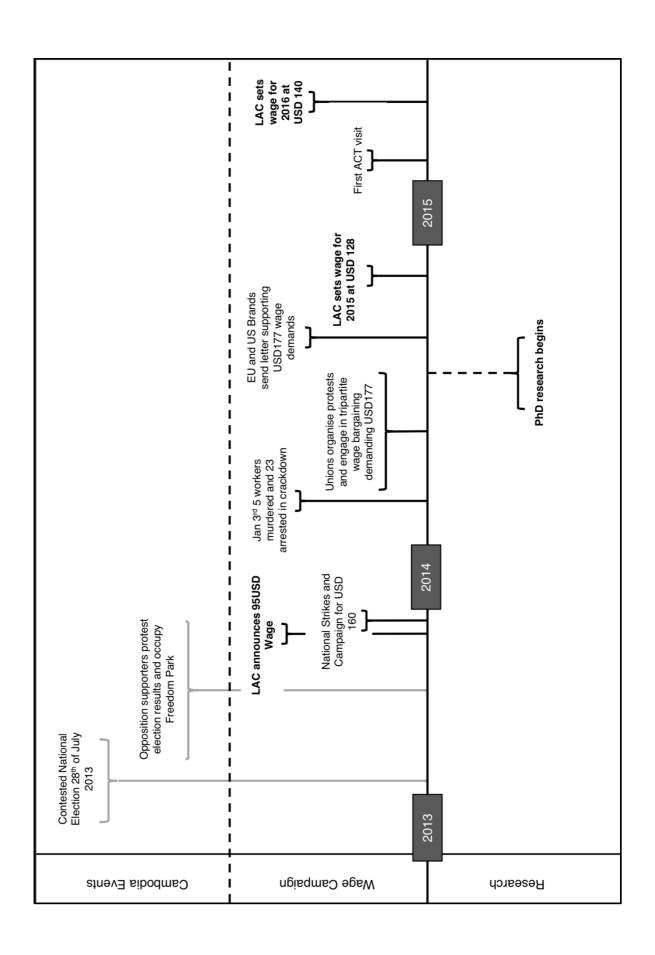
I learned early on that I needed to be flexible in my data collection during fieldwork and the research process more generally. A global ethnographic methodology allowed me to be flexible and adapt a range of different methods. It also allowed for disciplinary freedom. I had to engage with the macro-economics of wages and wage settings and of financialisation to a much larger extent than I had expected of a sociology PhD student. Social processes don't occur in disciplinary or methodological distinct categories. Participating, learning and analysing them therefore also has to be treated with some flexibility. Aiming for maximum flexible in his study of the global LGBTQ campaign, Thoreson (2011) relies on Hugh Gusterson's concept of 'polymorphous engagement'. Gusterson (1997) argues that the researcher needs to interact with "informants across a number of dispersed sites, not just in local communities, and sometimes in virtual form; and it means collecting data eclectically from a disparate array of sources in many different ways" (Gusterson 1997 cf. Thoreson 2011, p.20). I attempted to do so over the course of the PhD research.

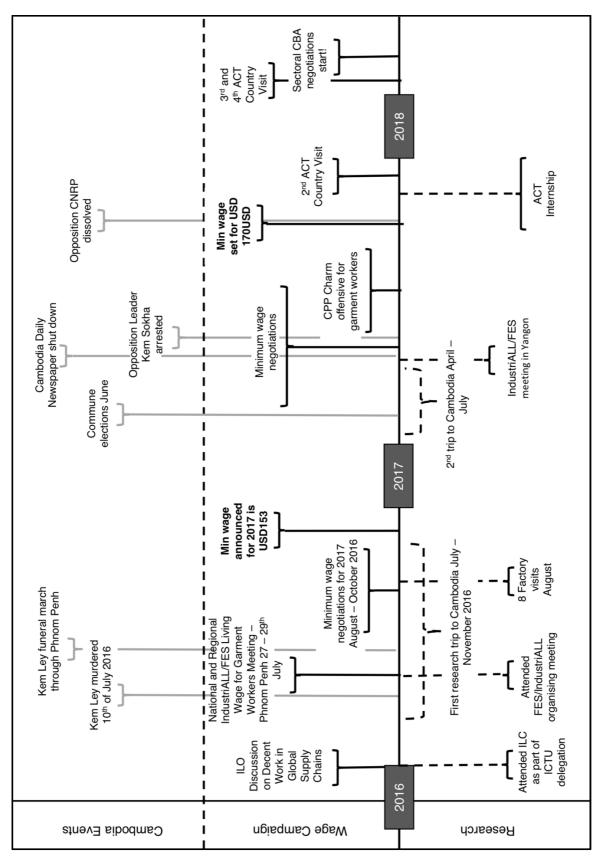
The chronology of data and data collection

Generally speaking I conducted my Global Ethnography through trying to get involved into the different facets of the campaign and attempts to organise for higher wages as much as I could. I conducted interviews, became involved in research projects, attended workshops, completed an internship with ACT, attended a MayDay march in Phnom Penh and developed relationships, even friendships, with many of the actors in the campaign and also other researchers in the field. This section shows what I did during the PhD research and how I collected data. I also describe how this data changed or altered the direction of the research as I progressed.

Figure 2.2 below shows a timeline of developments in Cambodia, the wage campaign as well as this research project. Table 2.1 which follows the timeline is an overview of the in-depth interviews conducted over the last few years. It is important to note that these do not represent the totality of the discussions and interactions I had with the different actors but are simply a list of all pre-arranged in-depths interviews which are cited throughout the thesis. The nature of a global ethnography meant that I had endless other conversations and follow-up discussions over coffees, lunches and at conference tables with many of the actors mentioned here.

Figure 2. 4: Timeline of Research and Key Events in Cambodia





Source: Author

Table 2.1: Dates of in-depth interviews with Organisations

Participant's Organisation	Date of Interview	Location
GUF	06/11/14 & 04/03/2016	Skype & Geneva
GUF	07/03/2016	Brussels
ITUC	09/03/2016	Skype
ITUC	05/04/2016	Skype
ITUC	29/06/2016	Skype
ILO	03/03/2016	Geneva
ILO	17/03/2016	Skype
ILO	18/07/2016 & 17/05/2017	Phnom Penh
ILO	18/07/2016 & 17/05/2017	Phnom Penh
ILO	09/06/2016	Geneva
Better Factories Cambodia	12/07/2017	Phnom Penh
INGO	08/11/14	Skype
INGO	26/07/2016 & 12/06/2017	Phnom Penh
INGO	25/07/2016	Phnom Penh
INGO	04/08/2016	Phnom Penh
TUSSO	14/09/2016 & 05/05/2017	Phnom Penh
Independent Journalist	18/07/2016	Phnom Penh
NGO	15/09/2016 & 12/07/2017	Phnom Penh
NGO	05/08/2016	Phnom Penh
Independent Union	12/08/2016 & 23/06/2017	Phnom Penh
Independent Union	22/08/2016	Phnom Penh
Independent Union	24/05/2017	Phnom Penh
Independent Union	10/07/2017	Phnom Penh
Independent Union	11/07/2017	Phnom Penh
Pro-Government Union	12/07/2017	Phnom Penh
Pro-Government Union	03/07/2017	Phnom Penh
European Brand	26/05/2017	Phnom Penh
Factory Manager	03/07/2017	Phnom Penh
Factory Manager	11/07/2017	Phnom Penh
Embassy Staff	05/07/2017	Phnom Penh
Embassy Staff	13/07/2017	Phnom Penh

2014 - 2016

During the first two years of my PhD research I focused on reviewing the literature and conducted preliminary key informant interviews with international trade union and NGO activists. This provided an opportunity to understand, at least from an outsider perspective, the Cambodian case and develop contacts with Cambodian participants prior to travelling to Phnom Penh. I began my research with a number of in-depth interviews with the Global Union Federation IndustriALL (IndustriALL), members of the Clean Clothes Campaign (CCC) and Workers' Rights Consortium (WRC), as well as members of staff at the International Labour Organization (ILO) and International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC). This provided me with an opportunity to map the international campaign as well as get a first perspective on the Cambodian labour movement from an international perspective. I also began online Khmer language courses and read Cambodian News - the Cambodia Daily and Phnom Penh Post - daily. This provided an important platform to keep up to date with events in the garment industry and familiarise myself with the political situation in Cambodia. Although I was in no position, yet, to appropriately interpret the events covered in the English-speaking news or discern and interpret the biases of different news sources, it helped to provide me with a timeline of key events in Cambodia. Later on, during my research in Cambodia, activist would often refer back to specific days - the violence in Bavet Special Economic Zone, the meeting of the Labour Advisory Committee for example - which I could place due to my general understanding of the Cambodian garment and footwear industry as it was covered by the daily English speaking news. The round of wage negotiations in October 2015, I almost exclusively followed through news coverage and online social media reactions by unionists and activists. The Phnom Penh Post, Cambodia Daily and later on also the government-friendly Khmer Times became important resources for my research.

This first stage of the research helped me define the key participants, clarified a list of contacts in Cambodia and organisations I needed to reach out to and most importantly made me focus increasingly on the institutional reforms of the minimum wage setting mechanisms. When I began the PhD, I was unaware of how important the minimum wage mechanism and its reforms would become. The process and its significance are discussed in detail in **Chapter 5**.

In October 2015 I also attended the Global Labour University Annual Conference in Washington DC where I met many of the academic and global activists working on labour organising and global supply chain. It further refined my research focus, making me move away from a strict focus on financial capitalism and increased by awareness of the importance of brand sourcing.

2016

Prior to my first research trip to Cambodia, I attended the International Labour Conference in Geneva in 2016 as part of the Irish Congress of Trade Union (ICTU) delegation. The conference held a general discussion on 'Decent Work in Global Supply Chains', a key pillar of the International Trade Union Confederation's strategy to address labour violations and wage concerns across global supply chains. The conference was an opportunity to meet many members of the Global Unions and NGO community working on the global garment industry. It also provided some important opportunities to observe the relationship between national union representatives, Global Union representatives and NGOs as well as an insight into the role and functioning of the ILO. As a consequence of the ILC, I began to focus more on the relationships between Global Union Federations, the ITUC and NGOs. It also began to crystallise the important differences and relationships between the campaigning and institutional reform pathways. It also made me aware of the important differences in the structures of global capitalism, showing me how the interests of national employers and multi-national corporations are not the same and are often conflicting.

My first trip to Cambodia took place from August 2016 - November 2016. While in Cambodia I spoke to the Trade Union Solidarity Support Organisations (TUSSOs), a number of Cambodian Trade Unionists, staff at a number of embassies and the International Labour Organisation project office in Cambodia. I also met labour NGO activists and spoke repeatedly to local labour researchers. I attended the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung (FES) and IndustriALL regional living wage and organising in the supply chain workshops, as well as a National Minimum Wage Trade Union strategy day and a preparation meeting for the upcoming garment sector wage negotiations. This gave me a thorough overview of labour issues in the garment sector and a good understanding of the minimum wage setting process. The interviews with the trade unions and NGO activists also, for the first time, showed me the issues with the

reformed minimum wage setting process. This shaped the overall research going forward and meant I began to focus more on the political context in Cambodia and how the state may be using the wage setting process as a political tool in a tense domestic environment.

Also, during the first trip I visited 8 garment and footwear sector factories and spoke to 40 workers about their impressions of the wage setting process and relationships to their unions. This informed the overall trajectory of my research into the Cambodian trade union movement. On the 10th of July 2016, two days after we had arrived in Phnom Penh, the outspoken political analyst and friend of women's organisations and worker groups in Cambodia, Kem Ley, was murdered. A Sunday morning, only a few blocks from our new flat, influenced my research and the political situation in Cambodia immeasurably. I will explore this further throughout the thesis. however, it was a key event in recent Cambodian history, whose significance I did not understand at the time. Much of what occurred during that first trip to Cambodia, was coincidence, accidental and not at all part of the research strategy. I was lucky that one of the first people I met when I arrived, was INGO_06 who became an important gatekeeper for me. They did not only take the time to explain the intricacies of inter-union politics in Cambodia to me, but also invited me to the strategy days and incorporated me in ongoing research projects, introduced me to all their union, ILO, NGO and government contacts.

I was also lucky that Aupuk was living in Phnom Penh and working with a small social enterprise focusing their work on the garment and footwear sector. Not having seen each other in 9 years, they, without missing a beat invited me to come visit some factories with them, opened doors and made contacts that I would not have been able to have access to any other way. This allowed me to have impressions and conversations that many other researchers have not had. I also had chance interactions with a local journalist while trying to buy a guitar in a small music shop in Phnom Penh. They ended up taking me on a tour of the city, explaining to me where most of the factories are located, and how the local communities form around them. Therefore, I almost immediately abandoned any research strategy I had devised prior to leaving Dublin and decided that I would simply follow the recommendations of the contacts I made in the first few weeks.

I also had to adjust my interview guides significantly. I started out with a perfectly naive set of questions. I had wondered about the feasibility and ethics of speaking to workers in their factories about wages and union activity, when unionisation and activism often leads to job loss, but was unaware of this would play out in reality. My interview guides became much less structured, much more free flowing, and much more forgiving towards anecdotes and accidental or purposeful redirections towards more safe waters. In fact, it was often these diversions that revealed the most and made me understand what I had forgotten to ask about. More than anything else, the reiterative research process helped me refine my research focus by developing a more thorough understanding of the differences between the campaigning and institutional pathways as well as the importance of Cambodian politics and domestic labour control regimes in determining the outcomes of wage setting in the garment industry.

2017

Before returning to Cambodia in 2017, I conducted a thorough round of analysis on the data I had collected thus far. My fieldnotes, interview transcripts and interview notes were all analysed using NVivo (12 for Mac) qualitative data analysis software. Initially, I conducted a round of open coding. This identified key issue areas in broad strokes. Codes during this first round included 'multi-unionism', 'inter-union conflicts', 'pro-government unions', 'independent unions', 'activist unions' which in a later round of coding where summarised under the category of 'Trade Unionism in Cambodia'. Similarly, key themes that emergence in the first round where 'government crackdown', 'wage law', 'bargaining rights', 'workers rights' and though these were summarised in a number of categories one of them was 'Intimidation and Violence towards Trade Unions'. This particular category ultimately became part of 'wage hegemony in Cambodia' together with codes on the reformed wage process. This became a key theme explored here in Chapter 5. This way my analysis developed form a round of open coding and a second round of axial coding in combination with more research and a return to the data later on into key themes. The final round of data analysis was performed after my second research trip in Cambodia, during which I return to some of my participants.

During the second trip to Cambodia from April - July 2017, I revisited many of the people I spoke to during my first visit. Throughout the analysis I had developed a

number of observations of what I believe was happening in Cambodia in terms of wages and how the campaign had operated. During the re-visits I asked participants to give me their perspectives on my observations and preliminary conclusions, helping me to further refine my understanding. I also spoke to trade unionists I had not spoken to during the first visit, participated in a two-day industrial relations workshop organised by a major European brand for all its suppliers and trade unions in the factories. In particular, I spoke to the participants about my impressions of the wage campaign in 2014 and received their feedback on why I thought the campaign further explored here in **Chapter 4**. I also outlined my impressions of the minimum wage setting mechanisms and its role in domestic political developments to assess whether my understanding reflected that of the actors in Cambodia.

In August 2017 I was invited to attend the global organising meeting on the IndustriALL/FES project on Living Wages and Organising in Global Supply Chains in Yangon, Myanmar. I participated in the week-long workshop with trade unionists from across the world. I also attended the Global Labour University Conference in New Delhi in October and joined the Action Collaboration Transformation (ACT) initiative for an internship for several weeks in Berlin and Phnom Penh. My time at ACT was particularly interesting as this initiative between global buyers and IndustriALL is beginning to play a crucial role in wage setting in Cambodia and the global garment industry more widely. Through my time in Berlin I gained a thorough understanding of the intricacies and work required to make the concept of brand commitments tied to in-country industry-wide collective bargaining a success. This forms **Chapter 7** of this thesis.

2018

The final half year of the PhD research was largely dedicated to a final round of data analysis and writing the thesis. Much of the writing was completed in Phnom Penh, although no additional interviews were conducted during that time. I was simply there to write and follow the developments in the ACT process as much as I can. It ultimately became an important part of the thesis as the political situation in Cambodia, especially the authoritarian control of unions, activists, the opposition parties and the independent media, intensified in the lead up to the July 2018 national elections.

Overall my data consisted largely of research notes taken during the multiple workshops, factory visits, work with unions and other key events during the research trips in Phnom Penh, Berlin, Brussels, Geneva and Yangon as well as interview transcripts from interviews with research participants. I also learned a lot during Global Labour University conferences in Washington in 2015 and New Delhi in 2017. Furthermore, I collected and analysed relevant newspaper articles and NGO reports. The data was predominantly analysed using NVIVO qualitative data analyses software in multiple reiterative waves. I analysed parts of the data in blocks and with each research trip re-examined the data with the newly acquired focus. I therefore analysed all data in an inductive manner, using a) open-coding to identify patterns arising b) axial coding to form categories and c) ultimately a round of coding to reexamine the data using key themes and theories I had developed throughout the research. Interviews and research notes were transcribed and uploaded into NVIVO as separate documents. I differentiated between interviews in Cambodia and interviews with international actors and also uploaded the research notes separately.

2.7 - Conclusion

This chapter outlines how a global ethnography was designed and deployed to answer the research question put forward in **Chapter 1**. I argue that in order to fully understand the nature of national and global trade union organising and NGO campaigning for higher wages in Cambodia, it was necessary to speak to and get involved in the processes taking place in Cambodia and globally. A global ethnography was argued for as it allowed me to take sides and critically assess my own positionality, as well as use that positionality to develop a strong network which would allow me to develop a thorough understanding of the challenges for effective labour organising and appreciate the nuances of the relationship between different actors.

The methodology chosen allowed me the flexibility to adjust my research approach to the changing realities in Cambodia and worldwide. The heightening political tensions and civil society crackdown in Cambodia, and the developments in global supply chain collective bargaining being two key developments I could not have foreseen when I began to design this research project in 2014. Overall, the methodology allowed for a thorough investigation of the organising efforts by

national and international unions as well as national and international NGOs. It also allowed me to assess both the campaigning and institutional pathway that unions and activists were exploring in attempts to increase the wages in Cambodia. A global ethnography encouraged the inclusion of a wide range of participants across the wage campaigning system and values a variety of sources (whether intentionally included or not), to inform my understanding of the research topic.

The next chapter will provide an overview of the literature on workers and wages in global supply chains while showing the real political economic barriers that activists face when trying to increase wages under neoliberal global capitalism and globalises industries.

Chapter 3: Political Economy of Wages in Global Garment Production

3.1 - Introduction

This chapter will outline the key literature and theoretical perspectives needed to understand the position of labour and labour activists in global supply chains. The aim of the chapter is to outline the existing research on the structural barriers that workers and trade unionist trying to improve conditions in the global garment industry face.

The political economy of wages in supply chains is dictated by the structure of global capital, the relationships between buyers, suppliers and factory owners and their cooperation with states, the relationship between capital and labour, the power that the different actors have and the ideological framework that bestows that power. So, as well as understanding how value is created and profit extracted along chains and networks and how these dynamics limit trade union and workers manoeuvrable strategic and action space, understanding how the spread of neoliberal orthodoxy and neo-classical economics has influenced these power structures is crucial.

Conceptualising the totality of the structural power dynamics that prevent improvements in working conditions and keep wages low is key to understanding how to organise against them. Understanding how the global labour movement and national trade unions understand the structures and challenges posed by global capitalism is important and will be explored throughout the thesis. Of course, not all activists and trade unions share the understanding of global patterns of production and neither do they share an ideological lens; the activists and unionists I spoke to did however share the understanding that structural, systematic, dynamics within global supply chains lead to low wages and bad working conditions.

This chapter will outline the political economy of wages and wage setting by investigating how capitalist globalisation has transformed the position and power of workers and organised labour, and how the organisational and ideological structure of global capital provides challenges for workers to organise in the context of global

supply chains. In order to do so, this chapter is structured as follows. First, an overview of the globalisation and labour literature shows how capitalist developments have changed labour power in the global economy and how this has led to the expansion of global supply chains. The next section will focus specifically on the development and conceptualisation of global supply chains and the role of labour within them. The later parts of the chapter will show how evaluating global and national relations within GSCs and their interaction allows us to understand the pressures of the political economy of wages in GSCs better. This section is followed by an investigation of wages in GSCs generally and in the Cambodian garment sector specifically. The relationship of global and national dynamics and how they interact is crucial to the whole chapter.

3.2 – Labour under Capitalist Globalisation

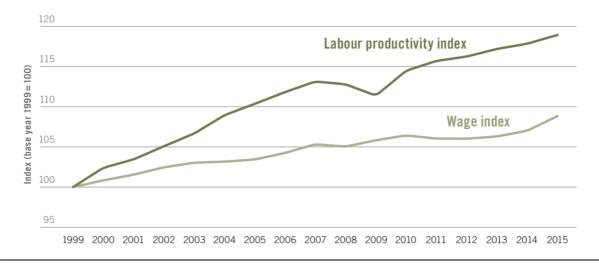
Declining profitability in the Global North in the 1970s led to the emergence of new avenues for profit maximisation by northern Multi-National Corporations (MNCs) at home and abroad. The emergence of a neoliberal political paradigm, trade policies, financialisation and privatisation as well as advocacy of export-oriented industrialisation in the Global South shaped a new wave of capitalist globalisation. These developments were driven by "dynamics of surplus accumulation" (Scholte, 1997, p. 428), the most striking consequences of which can be seen as a "rise of massive globalizing corporations, the rapid spread of so-called free trade [...] and the denationalization and privatization of former state monopolies" (Sklair, 2002, p. 4). And despite the neoliberal mantra of 'deregulation' and 'less state interventions', it was precisely state interventions – new regulations aimed at the privatisation of public services, free trade and flexible labour markets – that facilitated these new avenues to maintain profitability of northern companies (Bhattacharjee and Roy, 2016).

These developments did not come without consequences for workers worldwide. Labour markets across the world transformed significantly. Unemployment, having already risen sharply after the crash in 2008, is predicted to reach unprecedented levels over the coming years (Koehler, 2015). At a time when the labouring class – those that depend on the "sale of their labour power for their own daily reproduction" (Selwyn, 2014, p. 15) – grew from 1.1bn to over 3bn between 1980 to 2005 (Selwyn,

2014). A growing proportion of which, especially in the low-value added export-oriented production sectors, are women and the majority of which are working for less than five USD a day. In 2010 approximately 942 million workers were earning less than two USD a day (Selwyn 2014) and the number of people on low-pay (defined as earning less than two-thirds median income) has increased in almost two-thirds of countries (Bhattacharjee and Roy, 2016).

And although many countries in the Global South experienced rapid economic growth over the last three decades, this growth was built on rising volatility leading to multiple economic crises – most notable the global financial crisis of 2007/2008. Prior to the global financial crisis the world had experienced an economic boom fuelled by finance-led globalisation predicated on rising inequalities within and amongst countries and a "net transfer of financial resources from the South to the North" (Ghosh, 2015, p. 322). Overall, the last decade was marked by "debt-driven global growth [which] has trended downward and been punctuated by severe and destabilising crises; capital formation has been sluggish, and livelihoods have become more fragile and vulnerable, even as those at the very top enjoyed soaring incomes" (Ghosh, 2015, p. 321). Returns on shares and financial assets have continued to rise while the labour share of national income declined globally (Stockhammer, 2013; Picketty, 2014), even before the global economic crisis. These muted returns to labour also occurred in the context of rising labour productivity, which means productivity increases - the additional value produced by workers in the same time - were almost entirely siphoned off by capital leading to increased profits rather than higher wages. Graph 3.1 below shows the growth in labour productivity (measured as GDP per worker) and weighted average real wages for 36 developed economies (ILO, 2016a).

Graph 3. 6: Labour Productivity and Average Wage Trends in Developed Economies



Source: ILO 2016a

To maintain the labour wage share of GDP constant, would necessitate keeping the distribution of income between capital and labour at least constant. This would require annual real wage increases in line with labour productivity increases. The above graph indicates that, for developed economies at least, the wage share of GDP has decreased. The declining labour share of GDP is not just a phenomenon of more developed economies however. Although the data on labour productivity and real wages is more easily accessible, some studies have shown a decline in labour share across the world (ILO, 2016a).

These growth dynamics and the inequality they are fuelling are facilitating increasing disequilibria in economic bargaining power, i.e. by the rising power of capital over labour and accelerated rates of exploitation of workers in the Global South and North. These global shifts in power from labour towards capital have been exacerbated by a financialisation, which has empowered financial capital over physical capital and labour (Frieden, 1991; Baud and Durand, 2012). It has also altered the relationship of labour with the state and hence the structural and associational power of labour, which I would argue has contributed to the rise in incidents of severe workers' rights abuses over the last 10 years (ITUC, 2016a).

Key to the ability of workers to shape their future and protect themselves are rights to Freedom of Association and Collective Bargaining. These are internationally recognised through the core ILO Convention 98 and 87, and yet have been under pressure. The UN special rapporteur on Freedom of Assembly in 2016 published a special report on the importance of association rights at work emphasising how

globalisation of capital into GSCs, in particular, has made it increasingly harder for workers to enjoy these rights (Maina Kiai, 2016). The ITUC Global Workers' Rights Index found that collective bargaining was one of the most violated rights in 2016 with employers completely refusing to bargain or delaying negotiations until they become meaningless in 89 out of 141 countries involved in the survey (ITUC, 2016a). Freedom of Association and Collective Bargaining rights are rarely the focus of development interventions and are still sometimes seen as barriers to development by international financial institutions. In fact, a working draft of the World Banks World Development Report 2019 calls on governments to loosen workers protections and abandon minimum wages (Elliot 2018; see also Bakvis 2018). In many respects, therefore, contemporary development theory and practice have attempted to limit the ability and delegitimise attempts by workers to ameliorate their own conditions (Selwyn, 2015). Labour in this context is seen simply as an input to facilitate capital accumulation (Selwyn, 2016b) and workers in their attempts to organise for fairer wages and better conditions are faced with power relations systematically skewed towards capital.

We therefore continue to experience patterns of growth based on "maintaining gender and class inequalities as the means to keep labour costs low" (Esquivel, 2016, p. 1) leading to ever newer forms of exploitation because "the policy context in most of the world is still very much one that privileges capital and emphasizes market power over human rights" (Ghosh, 2015, p. 325).

Silver (2003) and Harvey (1998) have provided a conceptual relationship between workplace dynamics, globalised patterns of production and the wider global political environment. They have developed the relationship through discussions on 'capital fixes', where capital finds new ways and avenues of profit in times where profitability is shrinking, or where capitalism comes up against its own internal contradictions (Harvey, 1998), as it did for example in the crisis of profitability in the 1970s or the global economic crisis in 2007. These 'fixes' can take the form of spatial fixes (Harvey, 1998; Silver, 2003) where capital seeks new spheres of production where costs are lower and hence returns increase. This 'spatial fix' is particularly obvious in global restructured production.

Silver also speaks of product fixes where capital changes or invests in new products to overcome profitability concerns, or financial fixes where new forms of financial instruments are used (Silver, 2003). All of these 'capital fixes' neatly explain the dynamics between capital and labour in continuously restructuring networks of production. They also provide analytical room for labour as agency, where labour can create the conditions in which profitability is under threat or where capital changes in order to 'fix' the conflict between capital and labour (Harvey, 1998).

The agency of capital and the agency of labour then are in a constant flux over 'capital fixes'. Labour re-orientates its strategies to resist its own exploitation and commodification while capital introduced spatial, product or financial fixes to commodify and exploit labour further. Mayer and Pickles (2010) argue that the ability of labour to shape its own future, the positional power of labour, depends largely on the "specific form of political-economic regime, the industrial sector, the structure of the value chain, and the ways in which a particular industry and regional economy are inserted into global production networks" (p.7). The structure of global production, the basis for competitive advantages of production hubs and more broadly the changes in the nature of the global economy then impact on the relationship between capital and labour (and the role that the state plays) and geographical fragmentation of production changes the positional or structural power of labour (Mayer and Pickles, 2010).

3.3 – Labour in Global Supply Chains

Neoliberal orthodoxy spread rapidly over the past decades and by focusing on privatisation and financialisation in the Global North and export-oriented industrialisation in the Global South, we saw a rapid expansion of Global Supply Chains. Today, "60 percent of global trade in the real economy is dependent on the supply chains" (ITUC, 2016b, p. 4) of just the top 50 multinational companies using their complex networks of subcontracts and business relationships spanning the entire globe. These transformations have also significantly affected employment relationships. The top 50 multinational corporations directly employ a mere 6% of workers employed in the design, manufacturing and sale of their products (ITUC, 2016b). GSCs are therefore key to understanding the position of workers under

contemporary capitalist globalisation. These chains of production, circulation and consumption are characterised by large networks of subcontractors controlled by lead firms in the Global North. As a consequence, many workers, especially those in labour intensive manufacturing industries like apparel and garment, have found themselves in a workplace where the traditional labour – capital compromise of the early 20th century is broken (Huws, 2008).

The geographical and functional dispersion of production and services (Coe and Hess, 2013) has not just created 'new working classes' in the new industrial hubs (Silver, 2003) but caused new challenges for formal and informal workers at places where GSCs connect (Mosley 2010 cf. Coe & Hess 2013). The creation of GSCs – partly through the neoliberal prescription of export-oriented industrialisation policies in the Global South by International Institutions – have become "nothing more than a mechanism to capture low labour cost" (Bhattacharjee and Roy, 2016, p. 336).

These transformations have been conceptualised in a number of different ways. The term 'commodity chains' first appeared across the world systems tradition (Hopkins and Wallerstein, 1986; Bair, 2005) and was developed into the Global Commodity Chain (GCC) approach by economic sociologist Garry Gereffi and colleagues (Korzeniewicz and Gereffi, 1994) and later the Global Value Chain framework (Gereffi, Humphrey and Sturgeon, 2005). Criticism emerged that the GCC's, and in particular the GVC's, overly linear conceptualisations and emphasis on dyadic interfirm relationships neglected labour (Rainnie, Herod and McGrath-Champ, 2011; Selwyn, 2011). In response researchers, particularly labour geographers (Dicken *et al.*, 2001; Henderson *et al.*, 2002) developed the Global Production Network (GPN) approach which explicitly aimed to focus not just on linear relationships between lead firms and their governance structures, but to evaluate power relations of all social actors involved in networks of production.

Whereas GVC/GCC had largely 'written labour out of the script', the GPN framework provided an analytical approach with room for labour (Cumbers, 2015). Still, labour remained a passive actor, a victim of global production dynamics continuously searching for new, cheaper and less regulated sites of production (Cumbers, Nativel and Routledge, 2008). The role of labour as an active agent, the role of the labour

process and the role of the state too often remain in the background of analysis of global production (Smith *et al.*, 2002).

Bair and Werner (2015) contend that the arguments over the differences between GCC/GVC and GPN analysis often lead to an abstraction of the broader context and hence fail to incorporate labour fully. They opt to use the term GPN as an overarching conceptual term that incorporates GCC and GVC analysis. For the sake of simplicity, and to follow the terminology used by Global Unions and the ILO I will use the term Global Supply Chains as an overarching term. This is not to take away from some of the extraordinary analysis that GPN scholars have provided, but rather to build a broader foundation for the theoretical analysis that follows in the next section. Important here is that patterns of global production are seen as 'networks of embodied labour' (Cumbers, Nativel and Routledge, 2008), where all value added is based on labour and the labour process which converts labour power into profits (Taylor *et al.*, 2015).

In GSCs the production is internationalised through complex networks of suppliers and subcontractors, while the intellectual property, technical know-how, and largest share of the profits continue to be based in northern economies. Countries integrate their economies to a large extent into Global Supply Chains, usually at the low value-added end, which relies on large amounts of low paid workers. Growth in formal employment follows foreign direct investment (FDI) in export-oriented industries, often skewing capital ownership towards international investors. Countries can become 'specialised' in certain production processes and not be able to escape their position within the chains (Miller and Hohenegger, 2016).

3.4 – Global and National Structures in Global Garment Production

The political economic structures across supply chains constrain labour movements and in particular labour wage demands in a number of ways. Nathan et al. (2016) describe the interaction between profits, rents and conditions of value capture along supply chains and how the relationship between buyer and suppliers and ultimately defines labour relations in GSCs. They argue that the distribution of the surplus along the chain and the business practices of lead firms define 'vertical relations'

and national outcomes, such as wages and working condition, can be seen as 'horizontal relationships' (Nathan, Tewari and Sarkar, 2016). Horizontal relationships embody the "capital-labour relationship at each node" (Nathan, Tewari and Sarkar, 2016, p. 10) of the supply chain. I expand their understanding of these relationships slightly and conceptualise them as 'global' and 'national' relations, each of which are determined by the ideological and structural developments of contemporary capitalism I have already laid out above.

And although these different types of relationship can exist quite separate from each other it is their interaction that determines labour's position and strategic space including the constraints on wages. The global dynamics directly impact the national labour control regime and the 'manoeuvrable space' for labour nationally (Pattenden, 2016). This of course does not mean that unions and activists cannot manipulate the space through global and national campaigns. In fact, while this section outlines the structures and pressures that limit labour's space to improve conditions and wages, the rest of the thesis describes how the Cambodian wage campaign tried, and in some way succeeded, to overcome and transform these barriers.

Global Supply Chain Relations: Profits, Responsibility and Purchasing **Practices of Buyers**

The global garment industry can be characterised as a buyer-driven supply chain (Korzeniewicz and Gereffi, 1994); a global chain that is led by MNCs (buyers) largely based in the US and EU. These are usually brands or large-scale retailers. The European market is dominated by H&M and Inditex (ZARA) and the US market largely by retailers such as Walmart. These global buyers are the most powerful actors in the chain and their operations are based on a large number of suppliers, who are usually based in the region where they produce the garments or footwear. Many suppliers are MNCs or at least large companies themselves who operate or own factories in multiple production countries. The large number of factories and suppliers creates an imbalance in the chain forcing suppliers to compete for contracts of few buyers. This oligopsony² leads to intense competition between

of supplier must compete for.

² A oligopsony occurs in a market where only few large buyers exist which a large number

suppliers which is driving down prices paid by buyers for garments produced by their subcontractors, ultimately shrinking the financial space for wage increases. Some retailers and buyers work through agents across the region who facilitate contracts with factories or suppliers further removing the buyer geographically and contractually from the workplace. Though many of the larger brands have had ongoing contracts with the same suppliers for years, each individual contract may only last 3 - 6 months. Many of these contracts are small leading to many suppliers and factories negotiating contracts with more than one brand simultaneously. This, of course, diversifies their income and allows them to reduce their reliance on one particular buyer to some extent, but it does not change the oligopsony of the market and the power structures this brings.

Complex subcontracting networks make ethical relationships murky and legal responsibility unclear. Though the multi-national brands at the top of their supply chains are undoubtedly the most powerful actors, and the ones profiting the most, their influence with each individual factory are disputed. Disputed largely by the brands themselves, who repeatedly argue that they are doing all that they can to improve conditions across their chains and deploy monitoring and social compliance teams to ensure that the dignity at work and safety of garment workers in guaranteed. These voluntary compliance mechanisms or private governance instruments of supply chains, however, usually fall short. Workers' rights violations and low wages continue to characterise the industry, not just in Cambodia, but across the globe.

The structure of the global garment industry defines the relationship of lead firms to its suppliers. Some research has shown that the nature of these relationships contributes to the level of respect for rights and wages. The more direct the investment is, or the more long-term the relationship of lead firm to manufacturing unit, the higher are the probability that wages and working conditions improve (Mosley, 2010). Some research has therefore argued that FDI rather than stimulating a 'race to the bottom' can force manufacturing units to 'climb to the top'. The argument goes that wages are significantly higher in export-oriented firms and that the relationship to northern MNCs can also lead to better respect for worker's rights (Mosley and Uno, 2007).

The garment industry, however, as described above is characterised by a large number of short term contracts with very little sunk costs³ by lead firms. The industry is therefore more known for its hyper-exploitative wages and unsafe working conditions, with systematically eroded respect for fundamental rights at work.

As a response to these dynamics and the increased civil society pressure on lead firms, Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiatives and private monitoring mechanisms were established in the 1990s. These initiatives began to argue that some level of responsibility still rest with the MNCs for improving the conditions within the countries and workplaces they source from. It was understood however that these conditions were not of their making. CSR initiatives and private monitoring are largely understood to have failed to improve conditions in the global garment industry because they did not attempt to address or even understand the root causes of workers' rights abuses and low wages in global supply chains (Anner, Bair and Blasi, 2013).

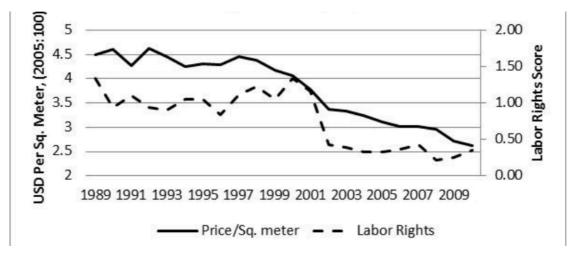
To try and formalise and clarify the relationships of responsibility in global production and consumption, trade unions have long worked on the basis of global supply chains trying to negotiate Global (International) Framework Agreements starting in the early 1990s. With many union and NGO campaigns arguing that lead firm purchasing practices are the source of labour violations across global supply chains (ITGLWF and Miller, 2012). Research has since caught up and shown that supply chain dynamics are the source of wide spread shortcomings in labour conditions (Berliner *et al.*, 2015; Lee, 2016). Increased competition within global supply chains and the global garment industry in particular, coupled with an asymmetric power relation skewed in favour of lead firms eventually forces wages and employment conditions down. Anner et al (2013) argue that the structure of the global garment industry means that labour violations are "not simply a factory-level problem [...] but a pervasive and predictable outcome" (p.3). Graph 3.2 below shows the relationship

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³ Sunk costs are those investments that can no longer be recovered by the brand or buyer. This is usually in the way of capital investments into factories. Because most buyers do not have their own factories anywhere they have very little costs associated with moving their production somewhere else. They simply have to find and negotiate with suppliers somewhere else.

between the decline in prices paid for garments imported into the US in USD/square metre and the respect for labour rights in the top 20 garment producing countries. The graph is taken from Anner et al (2013) and based on their own calculations from the US Office of Textile and Apparel, part of the International Trade Administration under the US Department of Commerce (OTEXA) data and the CIRI Human Rights database.

Graph 3. 7: Price per square metre of garment imported into the US and respect for labour rights in top 20 producing countries.



Source: Anner et al 2013

Furthermore, they show how purchasing practices of lead firms specifically are causing downward pressures on prices paid per square meter of garments imported into the US and how this is leading to declining workers' rights. This is echoed by Selwyn (2016a) who argues that in fact root causes of poverty wages and exploitative conditions can be found in the lead firms "monopolistic, value-capturing and profit-maximising strategies combined with exploitative supplier-firm strategies of capital accumulation" (Selwyn, 2016a, p. 5). Purchasing prices also lead to worsening of wages and limit the share of productivity gains that remains in the country or goes towards wages. These dynamics are in contradiction to what neoclassical economics would tell us. Based on the Heckscher-Ohlin model, the argument is that in sectors of the economy where labour is an abundant input, wages and conditions will benefit from open trade and international investment. The way in which global supply chains therefore interfere with assumed patterns of global

capitalism is fundamental to the ideological disagreement between labour and capital.

Real wages declined in many garment-exporting countries, particularly since the end of Multi-Fibre-Agreement in 2004 (Pickles, 2012; WRC, 2013). Garment worker wages in countries studied by the Worker's Rights Consortium (WRC) in 2013 on average represented only 36.8% of what was needed to provide a living wage (WRC 2013). Holdcroft (2015) argues that "continual downward price pressure by companies keeps workers' wages low while their purchasing power declines against inflationary increases on basic necessities such as food and energy" (Holdcroft, 2015, p. 96). It is the structure of the chain and in particular the outsourced production management that meant "brands and retailers have struggled to exercise due diligence in the area of wages" (Miller and Hohenegger, 2016, p. 5) and leads to firm purchasing practices to often be in direct conflict with their own codes of conducts and expectations for suppliers (Barrientos, 2013).

Though prices in the garment and footwear industry are reliant on a number of other economic parameters, such as price of raw material, productivity and currency fluctuations, there is no doubt that the structure of the supply chain and the declining prices paid for every square meter of garment has an effect on domestic wage negotiations and bargaining. Industrial restructuring has changed the cost structures of the overall production cycles. For individual factories wages have become a much larger proportion of the overall cost. As prices and materials are set (and often provided) by suppliers or multinational brands further up the pecking order, workers' wages and working hours (and daily quotas) become the last remaining variables that factory owners control (Anner, 2011).

Understanding and conceptualising the responsibility of lead firms and buyers in global supply chains has been at the core of workers' rights campaigns for decades. Campaigning by NGOs and Trade Unions has already had an effect. Initially, garment and footwear brands engaged in voluntary CSR projects and developed private supply chains governance mechanisms to show they are taking an interest in the working conditions in their supplier factories. Though they never accepted that they were directly responsible for the conditions in the factories, but rather that they had a duty to monitor and check in on the manufacturing hubs occasionally. Most

CSR programmes began particularly around the issue of child and forced labour in the 1990s and as a way to shield themselves from the damage that comes from large scale boycott campaigns and to prevent mechanisms based on regulation rather than voluntary CSR.

In 2016 and 2017 the NGO and Global Trade Union community focused on a transparency campaign. Many retailers and brands have since published list and locations of factories and suppliers. This, in and if itself, shows a shift in the understanding of responsibility across the chain. What is particularly important is that, at least with European retailers and buyers, and as a consequence of Trade Union and NGO campaigns, the ideological consensus on the responsibility of lead firms has begun to shift. The UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights and particularly the OECD Guidelines on Multinational Enterprise have over the last few years even created globally recognised documents that show the responsibility of business all the way along its supply chains. The new due diligence law in France as well as the Modern Slavery Act in the UK go in a similar direction. Though none of these instruments go as far as to challenge the legitimacy of contemporary capitalism all together, the OECD Guidance on the Footwear and Apparel sector, specifically says that buyers need to in their purchasing practices guarantee adequate wages.

Latest since the Rana Plaza building collapse in Dhaka in 2013 a growing number of brands and retailers have also accepted that they have a direct responsibility for the conditions in the factories, whether they own them or not. This came as the response of years of campaigning on the direct consequences of brand purchasing practices and working conditions outlined above. Accepting that purchasing practices are a contributing factor to unsafe working conditions was an important step and the effective collaboration beween unions, NGOs and brands developed a somewhat structural approach to solving this issue with the Bangladesh Accord on Fire and Building Saftey. The Accord created legally binding relationship between MNCs and the Occupational Safety and Health inside factories that they do not own, but source from. Nevertheless, even if brands and retailers accepted a level of responsibility over safety in Bangladesh, on other issues the complex nature of supply chains allows northern multinational to say that are doing everything they can

without actually engaging with the process in a meaningful way. This continues to be the case on wages for example.

A consensus on the responsibility of retailers and brands with regards to wages does not yet exist, in the same way the Accord has developed in health and safety. The ideology of wages and wage setting continues to be more complex and globally no consensus exist on appropriate level or even mechanisms of wage setting. The campaigning and organising efforts on changing this at a global level are explored further in **Chapter 6** and **Chapter 7**.

After more than a decade of effort at the ILO, the worker's group with the support of the International Trade Union Confederation managed to put 'Global Supply Chains' on the Agenda of the International Labour Conference (ILC) in 2016⁴. Unions and worker representatives at the ILO had long tried to argue Global Supply Chains pose a systematic challenge to workers' rights and that supply chain dynamics are responsible for chronically low wages in manufacturing hubs around the world.

I arrived in Geneva for the International Labour Conference at the end of May 2016 as part of the Irish Congress of Trade Unions (ICTU) delegation. For nearly 3 weeks, followed and contributed to the discussion on "Decent Work in Global Supply Chains" as a member of the workers group. The discussion between the employer group and the workers, and ultimately the fight over the conclusions by the committee, focused on the question of structural 'decent work deficits' in global supply chains and the use of the concept of global supply chains in the first place. The workers group, as ITUC, IndustriALL Global Union and campaigning organisations had done for decades, argued that the structural dynamics in GSCs

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⁴ The International Labour Conference (ILC) is the highest decision making body of the International Labour Organization and meets once a year in Geneva. Only the ILC can set new international labour standards and agree priorities for the organisation. The ILC is a tripartite body and as such each country delegation includes representatives of the state, employers and workers. The Governing Body of the ILO meets three times a year and is a smaller tripartite committee with rotating membership. It sets the conference Agenda and any follow-up or implementation steps that came out of discussions at the ILC. The conference actually predates the ILO which was initially only set up as a permanent secretariat for the conference.

cause 'decent work deficits'. The employer representatives on the other hand kept emphasising that 'cross-border trade' led to rights and wage benefits, arguing that industries and workplaces engaged in 'cross-border' trade enjoy higher returns supposedly leading to 'wage premiums' and better workplace protections than those that are not.

While refusing to even use the word 'Global Supply Chains', referring instead to cross-border trade, they cited a number of academic research papers to support their argument that wage benefits exist in sectors embedded in 'cross' border trade. The employers repeatedly said that "ample academic evidence" exists to support their claim of "wage premiums". The evidence they cited, however, could not substantiate this claim. In fact, one of the paper they cited to show the benefits of 'cross-border trade' did not mention wages or labour rights and simply examined the increase in profits of the firm (Atkin, Khandelwal and Osman, 2014). Another paper, that actually examined wages in industries embedded in GSC directly contradicted their argument. The paper by Were and Kayizzi-Mugerwa (2009) showed how a temporary wage premium developed in export-oriented industries in Kenya, however, after 2003 the need for competitiveness had eradicated that premium and firms were increasingly reliant on casual and precarious workers. So, the research if anything, substantiated the claim by the workers group that the dynamics of global supply chains lead to lower wages and higher instances of labour rights abuses. Because in reality global supply chains have pitted workers in different countries against each other in globalised wage hierarchies (Selwyn, 2013) where lead firms can demand lower prices (or refuse to increase nominal prices hence leading to a decline in real prices) forcing workers and factories to absorb rising costs of production inputs.

The employers' group attempts to wish away global supply chains, was not simply a disagreement over semantics, but an attempt to prevent the logic of supply chains from entering the ILO. GSCs are characterised by large, often powerful, Multi-National Corporations (MNCs) or 'lead firms'. They are, however, not represented by national employer organisations and hence have no say at the ILO. The garment industry, for example, is led by large multinational retailers and brands who often have competing interest with employer associations in home and production countries. Not all elements of 'capital' therefore necessarily share an ideological

lens. The interest of factory owners and buyers are often not at all aligned. Often, the complex structures of global garment production allow brands to be more of a 'friend' to unions, at no significant cost, than national employer representatives or factory management. Although, any conflict within the structures of global capital are usually resolved at the expense of labour.

Negating the existence of Global Supply Chains also provides the employers with the opportunity to negate the exploitative nature of contemporary patterns of global production. Decent work deficits, according to them, are then simply the result of weak governance by nation states and not because a 'governance gap' exists in globalised capitalism. Negating the global and transnational structure of capital shifts the responsibility for improvements of workers' rights firmly back onto individual nation states – who should ratify ILO conventions and pass laws that protect workers' rights – rather than question the legitimacy of the structures of global capitalism more broadly. This shows a deliberate refusal to understand how state level protection can be weakened in supply chains where the root causes of violations and low wages do not originate within a state, but with the broader structures and behaviour of lead firms.

The attention of consumers to conditions of garment workers has grown exponentially over the last few decades, largely due to effective NGO and trade union campaigning. Almost everyone I have spoken to over the last four years whether trade union activists, friend and family or acquaintances at parties and on long flights, understand that conditions in the garment industry are exploitative. When the discussion turns to wages and the right to unions, however, opinions diverge. The neoliberal mantra of 'bad job is better than no job', publicly advocated even by relatively progressive economist Paul Krugman (1997) in the now infamous essay from 1997, continues to hold. The inalienability of the autonomy of capital is a crucial strand to the political economy of wages in global production pattern. If wages increase too much, or too fast, capital flight ensues and jobs, so desperately needed in 'developing economies' will be lost. One of the key barriers that NGOs and trade unions campaigning for higher wages in low-wage sectors face are therefore the economic laws of neoliberal capitalism – and the extent to which they have become accepted. The national outcomes of global capitalist processes are removed entirely from the basis of which they emanate. Refusing to acknowledge

that global supply chains exists, and by extension that they can be regulated, is much easier than to say 'let's develop regulation which goes against the accepted 'laws' of neoliberal globalisation and hyper mobile capital'.

Jeffrey Sachs (2005) further illustrates this by arguing that the Bangladeshi garment industry represents the empowering process of economic development. Providing jobs and incomes for young women is not just important for them but is also the first rung on the 'ladder of development', that all industrialised countries have gone through. He entirely misses the structure of the supply chains, which leads to almost all value-added produced in the sector flowing out of the country. The development ladder based on a garment sector, if it exists at all, is exceptionally flat, and does not lead to developmental outcomes without strong worker protection and rising wages. This ideological construct then has led to a general understanding that rising wages are more of a threat to workers than a benefit - a believe that in fact, low waged, hyper-exploitative conditions are good, and that any criticism simply represents 'aesthetic concerns' by western consumers (Krugman, 1997).

The general discussion at the ILC in 2016 on 'Decent Work in Global Supply Chains' was valuable insight into the structure and conflicts within 'global capital' and an interesting microcosm of the ideological divide between global workers and employer representatives. The ideological disagreements at the ILC over the root causes of workers' rights abuses and low wages, the benefits of global trades and the responsibilities of the actors involved reflected the ongoing ideological confrontations outside of the ILO as well. The global dynamics described in this chapter, especially the purchasing practices of brands and retailers in the Global North, do not just limit the financial space in the industry by appropriating productivity increases and narrowing supplier margins through intense competition, but also translate this into political space for unions and NGOs. The global campaign dynamics and attempts by workers to overcome these restrictions are the subjects of Chapters 6 & 7.

National: Labour Control Regimes, National Trade Union Mobilisation and Domestic Politics

Though capital has gone global, and the patterns of value extraction and exploitation follow more complicated pathways than they did in the 18th and 19th century Europe,

the labour process remains local. Global relations, as outlined above, may affect the labour control regime, the intensification of work and the financial and political space in which unions and activists can operate, but these dynamics still manifest themselves nationally, because local and national circumstances are crucial in determining the associational power of labour (Riisgaard and Hammer, 2011). These 'national' circumstances – or what Nathan et al (2016) refer to the horizontal capital-labour relationships – are constituted by, and constitutive of, worker's ability to shape their own futures, their structural and associational power (Wright, 2000). But it is not simply the inter-firm relationships and new trade models that have transformed labour power but labour's position within the chain (Pattenden, 2016), the way the chain and domestic economy are embedded in global production (Mayer and Pickles, 2010) as well as local labour control regimes (Riisgaard and Hammer, 2011; Pattenden, 2016). These local labour control regimes are of course embedded in the global garment supply chain and affect workers strategies of resistance (Anner, 2015a). Though the literature on the relationship between global supply chains, trade union strategies (especially in reference to wages) and labour control regimes is still in its early stages.

The literature on the labour process and hegemonic control at workplace and within the state is much more developed. Burawoy (1982) in Manufacturing Consent shows the way in which hegemonic production regimes were affected by state intervention and state development more generally. He also shows how international competition and global trade reversed some of the protection labour gained through the process of building these hegemonic systems. The Cambodian case is slightly different as capital is largely foreign capital and labour never enjoyed the benefits of a social wage and a wage bargaining system that came with the early hegemonic production regimes in the US and western Europe. Anner (2015a) argues that state control regimes are one way in which labour-capital relations are controlled in the global garment supply chain. His work shows that these usually result in certain types of trade union activism. In Vietnam and China strict state labour control regimes leads to few international campaigns but high numbers of wildcat strikes at factory level.

Not just does the capitalist labour process determine labour conditions (Selwyn, 2015), it also allows analysis to focus on "control, consent and resistance at the point of production" (Taylor *et al.*, 2015, p. 4). The state as the enforcer of labour control

regimes is very important. Exploring the state's role in enforcing extra-state interest through authoritarian labour relationships and hence facilitate hyper-exploitation of labour by foreign capital is in important gap in the existing literature. **Chapter 5** will explore the transformation of the labour control regime in Cambodia and domestic wage setting mechanisms further.

The ideological basis for national wage setting is important too. As well as assuming that industries in need of large numbers of low skilled workers benefit from open markets, neo-classical economist assume that real wages rise with labour productivity. This only holds, however, under the assumption of full employment and symmetric power relations between capital and labour. It also needs to assume domestic ownership and consumption of what is produced in order to wish away the supply chain dynamics described above. Assuming that wages rise with productivity increases, and that this rise is fair or enough, is also deeply ideological. It assumes that at an initial point in time t=0 (whenever or wherever this may have been) labour was paid what it was contributing to the production process and that both capital and labour received the return on their work or investment proportional to their respective inputs.

The model fails to account adequately for the fact that the return to workers for their labour is in no way representative of their work or in fact that often the return is so low it did not even allow for the social reproduction of labour (hyper-exploitation). The model also needs to account for inflation and general diversion in social circumstances of workers. If then, the wage is growing at a rate that is lower than inflation, it is in fact declining and not rising at all. Wages, in fact, do not automatically rise with productivity but rather depend on the relative bargaining strength of labour vs. capital. Dean (2015) further illustrate this, showing that only where workers' rights are protected, and workers have the ability to collectively bargain for wage increases and improved conditions do wages rise with productivity and inflation.

Any wage growth, year on year, that does not represent at least a rise in inflation + productivity should not be considered a wage growth at all, but rather wage suppression in order to increase returns on capital. The structure of the returns on capital in global supply chains, as we have already explored in the section above, is more complicated that simply the price that factor owners set for the products that

they produce. The national dimensions of workers organising in global supply chains is discussed in **Chapter 4** on the Cambodian Minimum Wage Campaign and in **Chapter 5** on the hegemonic labour control regime.

3.5 – Political Economy of Wages in the Cambodian Garment Industry

The Cambodian garment industry is a good example of global garment production. The roughly 700 officially registered garment and footwear factories are almost exclusively foreign-owned (93%). The owners are represented by the Garment Manufacturing Association of Cambodia (GMAC). Garment and footwear make up over 80% of Cambodian exports and contribute 10% of GDP. The Industry today employs around 700'000 workers directly and an estimated 700'000 indirectly through local markets, transport and other infrastructure support services. The vast majority of workers (85%) are young women workers, many of whom migrated from the provinces to Phnom Penh. The garment and footwear industry has been a solid pillar of the Cambodian economy since the mid-1990s and has grown exponentially since then.

The industry enjoyed a reputation as an 'ethical' production hub for most of the 2000s as the industry grew under the umbrella of the US Cambodia Trade Agreement on Textile and Apparel, which linked increased US import quota to improvements in labour rights from 1999 - 2004. Since the end of the Multi-Fibre Agreement and Cambodia's entry into the WTO, however, rights and conditions have declined steadily (Arnold and Toh, 2010).

Wages in particular had been extremely low and real wages declined from 2001 until 2013, when a large wage campaign and minimum wage reforms began. Wages in the garment industry in Cambodia, for decades, were determined based on large numbers of unemployed young migrant workers (in-country rural urban migration), searching for employment in a context where decades of civil war and liberalised agriculture had effectively eliminated other options.

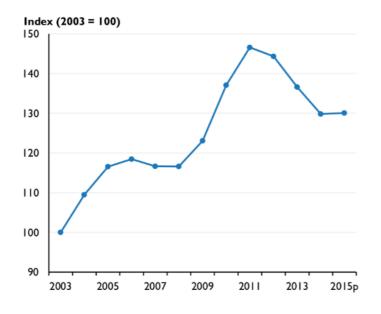
A high reserve army of labour is one way in which wages are kept low. The other mechanism was the one outlined in the general section on buyer purchasing

practices. Prices paid for garments manufactured in Cambodia have declined in the last decades as Graph 3.5 below shows. This meant Cambodian manufacturers have increasingly accepted less and less money for the products they manufactured for brands and retailers. Suppliers could afford to do this because they did not increase wages while labour productivity did increase as Graph 3.4 shows.

Minimum wage (US\$ per month) \$140 \$120 \$100 \$80 \$60 \$40 \$20 Real (Jan 2000 prices) Jan 00 Jan 02 Jan 04 Jan 06 Jan 08 Jan 10 Jan 12 Jan 14 Jan 16

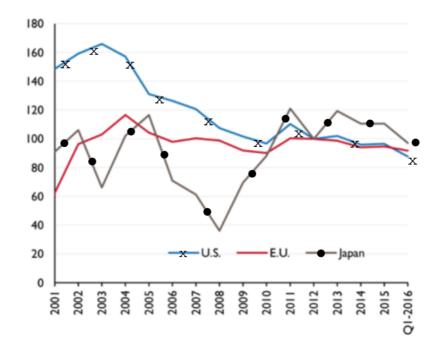
Graph 3. 8: Nominal and Real Minimum Wage Cambodian Garment and Footwear Sector





Source Graph 3.3 & 3.4: (ILO, 2016c)

This way any labour productivity improvements in Cambodia led to increased returns to suppliers, brands and consumers (through cheaper high-street prices). The decrease in high-street prices is the direct consequence of suppressed wages in Cambodia, who despite increased productivity had for years experienced real wage decline. Price reductions have also been a sign of increased competition at the top of the global garment industry, with brands reducing prices in an attempt to gain higher market share. In order to understand wage developments in the Cambodian garment industry we therefore need to explore the 'global' dynamics in Cambodia and the 'national' power relations.



Graph 3. 10: Cambodia's garment export price index to major markets

Source: (ILO, 2016c)

The wage setting process will be further explored in **Chapter 5**, but it is important to outline the embeddedness and structure of garment sector capital in Cambodia. How wages are determined, what they should be, and who should decide what they should be is crucial to understanding the political economy of wages. Almost all major EU and US brands and retailers are sourcing from Cambodia, the largest share of exports goes to the EU due to its 'Everything But Arms' scheme, allowing products from low-income countries to be imported duty and quota free. This also provides a clear incentive to EU buyers to source from Cambodia. Working

conditions and wages have been under pressure, not just because domestic cap ital siphoned off productivity increases, but also because international competition, after 2004 and the end of the Multi-Fibre Agreement and Cambodia's entry into the WTO in particular, lead to decreases in prices paid for Cambodian garments. In the Cambodian context, where a de-facto dollarised economy and no domestically owned textile production, one of the only variables to facilitate the decline in prices paid by EU and US buyers (apart from factory profit margins obviously) was a downward pressure on wages. The purchasing practices and in particular the purchasing prices by EU and US buyer therefore directly contributed to the lack of wage growth for over a decade.

Discussion around wages, and discussion around wages in the global garment industry in particular, are always framed within ideological preconceptions on the value of work, and the value of work of specific sub-groups of people. The neoliberal thinking in global development institutions is further enhanced through misconceived and often racist ideas by factory managers and suppliers. In a conversation with factory owners and managers in Phnom Penh the comment that came repeatedly was that Cambodian workers are simply lazy and that they cannot and should not be paid more, as they are slow and demand breaks. Most factory managers are not Khmer. In fact, 93% of Cambodian garment factories are owned by foreign investors who usually staff the management-level. Mostly Chinese, Singaporean and Malaysian owners who hire managers from their own countries. This leads not just to communication issues but also cultural tensions, as management stereotype Khmer workers as simply lazy. One owner told me that it is unreasonable for workers not to work 20% harder after they received a 20% wage increase. He demanded that his workers began to work on a higher quota limit and made their bonuses conditional on those increased quota limits.

Furthermore, an authoritarian government developing a hegemonic labour control regime weakened the domestic labour movement through violence and intimidation, not allowing labour the political space to ask for a higher share of rising productivity. In Cambodia, therefore, the political economy of wages was controlled through a competitive global market eradicating the financial space to share domestic capital accumulation and a lack of political for labour to organise and demand a higher share of the increased accumulation by domestic and global capital.

The next chapters will in more detail examine how the domestic labour control regime and its transformation allowed for wages to increase since 2013 and how trade unions organised through global alliances to overcome the constraints deployed by the political economy of wages in the Cambodian garment industry.

3.6 - Conclusion

This chapter has provided an overview of the research on the political economy of wages and wage setting in the global garment industry. By examining the position of labour under capitalist globalisation and more specifically the position of labour in global supply chains, I have outlined the constraints and barriers that labour activists face when trying to improve wages for garment workers. The structural dynamics of global supply chains, and the global garment industry more specifically, are crucial to understanding trade union strategies for higher wages and their effectiveness. It is clear that the restructuring of global production has had both global and national effects on workers and that the resulting global supply chains have national and global dynamics. While the global or 'vertical' dynamics of global supply chains are characterised by the asymmetric power relations between suppliers and buyers, these have 'horizontal' or national outcomes in that they lead to higher levels of workers' rights abuses and low wages. The national level is furthermore characterised by the labour control regime and a limited fiscal space available to activists trying to increase the labour share of value that is created within the geographical limits of the state. While the research outlined here has largely focused on the ways in which the development of global supply chains has disempowered workers, the rest of the thesis will show how trade unions and activist in the Cambodian context have managed to overcome some of these dynamics and, through that, provoked a redevelopment of the industry and national labour control regimes.

Chapter 4: The Cambodian Minimum Wage Campaign 2013 & 2014

4.1 – Introduction

Under the conditions of globalisation and the neoliberal restructuring of global garment production, how are workers organising and how effective is their organising? Trade Union strategies of resistance under neoliberalism have been studied extensively, with scholars examining the waves and characteristics of 'Marxian' working class movements in the Global South and 'Polanyian' movements against the further commodification of labour in the north, the new alliances between social movement unionism and NGOs, or more social democracy focused Global Labour Networks and radical south-north working class formations. In the globalised garment and footwear sector in particular, research has analysed the strategies of national unions (Anner 2011), and the work of anti-sweatshop groups in the North (Kumar and Mahoney, 2014) and their various campaigns of boycotts and international solidarity (Bair and Palpacuer, 2012). This chapter will outline the strategies of workers and unions in Cambodia during the most recent wave of labour unrest in the garment sector. These unrest from December 2013 - January 2014 were core to the wider wage campaign, and in many ways has been a catalyst for the organising in the years that followed. The international dimensions of the Cambodian wage campaign will be explored further in **Chapter 6**.

Anner (2011) argues that labour strategies are based on "collective identities, political threats and opportunities and economic structures" (Anner 2011, p.2; see also Anner & Liu 2016). This chapter looks in detail at the Cambodian labour movement during the wage strikes and campaigning that followed. In doing so it attempts to address the economic structures, collective identities and political opportunities as they played out from December 2013 - December 2014. The chapter will describe the strategies and alliances of workers and unions and show how they grew out of the collective identities of workers, economic structures and political opportunities in Cambodia at the time.

I argue that the labour unrest and wage campaign in 2014 were started by spontaneous worker and rank-and-file unrest which later on was supported by an ad-hoc coalition of independent trade unions and eventually through the involvement of international allies turned into a transnational activist campaign (TAC). The campaign was successful because workers and their allies were able to turn wages into a contentious political issue, and by working through transnational activists provoke a "boomerang effect" (Keck and Sikkink, 1998). Instead of letting the power relations of global production push them into the margins of global supply chains, trade unions in Cambodia campaigned purposefully along the GSC lines to reassert themselves within the logic of global production. This occurred at a time when domestic political relations were fragile. Making wages a contentious issue between the ruling CPP and the opposition CNRP, who were still disputing the national election from summer 2013, increased the leverage of workers significantly.

The chapter is structured as follows: first, a more detailed overview of the Cambodian garment sector provides insight into the economic structures in which workers were organising. Following this, a discussion on the Cambodian trade union and labour movement shows the nature of collective identities and internal challenges. This chapter then provides an outline of the strikes, protests and their immediate aftermath to illustrate the strategies of the campaign and its political content, before arguing why and how these strategies were successful.

4.2 - Garment and Footwear Manufacturing in Cambodia

Driving around Phnom Penh, or out of the city on any of the National Roads towards the provinces, it is almost impossible not to notice the rows of large blue corrugated iron roofs that characteristically show a garment factory. Or to ignore the row of flatbed trucks transporting garment workers to and from factories. Reading the national English-speaking newspaper further iterates the importance of the industry in Cambodia. Industry developments, export figures and wage developments are usually headline news. When in 2017/2018 the Prime Minister met with groups of garment workers weekly, each meeting was reported and his comments dissected by unions, NGOs and employer organisations across almost all news outlets. Garment and footwear manufacturing make up over 80% of all exports by the Kingdom and have contributed an average of 10% of GDP a year over the last

decade. With a workforce of approximately 700'000 formal workers as well as a shadow economy of market vendors, transport and security workers, and unfortunately a rising informal fringe of garment production, the overall employment figures attached to the industry are likely double the official figures (World Bank, 2016). This would bring the number of jobs directly and indirectly associated to the garment and footwear industry in Cambodia to nearly 14% of the working age population.

The sector has been growing steadily since the mid-1990s when the first factories opened in Phnom Penh. It grew largely under the protection of the Trade Agreement on Apparel and Textiles (TATA), a US-Cambodia bilateral trade agreement signed in 1999 and in force until 2004. The agreement was significant for two reasons. First, it allowed Cambodian garment export to rise at a time when competing export countries were already operating at their quota limits imposed through the Multi-Fibre Agreement (MFA). This sheltered Cambodian exports somewhat from global competition and hence the industry was able to grow without having to undercut its key competitors. Secondly, TATA also linked the duty free quota limits to improvements in labour rights as measured in respect for International Labour Standards. This meant that the industry had a common interest to improve standards in an attempt to gain higher and higher access quotas to the US market. All of this changed after 2004 when the MFA was phased out and Cambodia's entry into the WTO meant it was now competing on the open market. The monitoring of conditions under TATA was conducted by an ILO project in Cambodia, which developed into the Better Factories Cambodia Programme (BFC). Exporting factories are required to be a member of BFC and prior to 2005 it was the BFC reports which would decide whether guota into the US market will rise. BFC has continued to operate in Cambodia and inspect garment and footwear factories on a regular basis, although its recommendations to factories have essentially become voluntary. Although the results will be distributed to brands and retailer who can use the inspection reports for their own sourcing decisions, the programme has become one that "offers carrots without wielding a stick" (Arnold, 2013, p. 2).

Better Factories nevertheless was used as a way to promote Cambodia as an 'ethical producer' (Arnold and Toh, 2010) and an example for an effective monitoring programme which ended up being replicated through the ILO's Better Work

Programme in a number of other garment and footwear producing countries (Arnold, 2013). The programme, however, did not deliver sustainable to substantial improvements in working conditions across the board. Apart from chronically low wages, the sector has been plagued by short term contracts, union discrimination and intimidation, gender discrimination and a lack of protection for pregnant workers and mothers (Serrano and Nuon, 2017), as well as transport safety concerns (Powis and Sovanratnak, 2016) and waves of worker mass-faintings (Arnold, 2017). Violence and intimidation of striking workers remains common and persecution of union leaders systemic (ITUC, 2016a).

Today one of its key competitive advantages is the EU's Everything But Arms scheme⁵, which allows Cambodian export duty and quota free access to the EU market – and of course allows European brands to import clothes and shoes from Cambodian at no cost. Though the EBA does not have an enforcement and monitoring aspect in the same way that TATA had, the EU does require countries who benefit from the EBA to respect core labour and human rights standards. Though no formal mechanism to monitor these standards exists, the EU has, in July 2018, launched an investigation into Cambodia's EBA status. Political developments in 2017 and 2018, including the arrest of the opposition leader and disbanding of the opposition prior to a national elections triggered the investigation⁶. If the EU were to suspend or revoke the trade preferences, the garment and footwear industry in Cambodia would face serious challenges.

Workers in Cambodia are manufacturing items for most European, US, Canadian and Australian high street brands and retailers including: H&M, Primark, Debenhams, Nike, PUMA, Lululemon, Decathlon, Carrefour, Marks and Spencers,

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⁵ The Everything But Arms (EBA) scheme is part of the EU's General Scheme of Preferences. It is the programme for least developed economies and allows them duty and quota free access to the EU market. Cambodia is therefore not the only garment producing country with EBA status, but the export figures show that EU imports from Cambodia have been growing continuously. This was particularly important to the industry after the duty free access to the US market was ended in 2004.

⁶ A country visit of an EU delegation was underway as this thesis was finalised and so the final outcome of the investigation will not be known prior to submission.

Walmart, Joe Fresh/Loblaws, C&A, Tchibo, Levi, Adidas, Target, JCPenny, and The North Face. While I won't identify individual brands throughout the thesis, I will distinguish between EU and US brands. This is largely because there is broadly speaking a noticeable difference in their engagement with unions and concerns over production conditions. US brands and retailers continue to show less willingness to engage with unions in particular and have repeatedly avoided commitments under international initiatives that their EU counterparts have signed. When many EU brands, for example, collaborated with IndustriALL and a number of NGOs to develop the Bangladesh Accord on Fire and Building Saftey after the collapse of Rana Plaza building in Dhaka in 2013, many US brands and retailers developed their own 'Alliance' with no trade union involvement.

The global garment and footwear industry is a buyer-driven chain (Korzeniewicz and Gereffi, 1994) which in Cambodia is characterised by large amounts of foreign direct investment with little sunk cost and so capital in the industry is highly mobile. The industry supplies EU and US markets primarily and so no formal relationships exists between workers at the bottom of the chain in Cambodia and the lead firms. This will be important in sections 4.4 and 4.5 when discussing the strategies of Cambodian trade union movement in increasing wages during the 2013 and 2014 wage campaign.

4.3 – Trade Unionism in the Cambodian Garment and Footwear Sector

This section will describe the Cambodian trade union movement before the next section engages in the specifics of the wage campaign in 2013 and 2014. The trade union movement in Cambodia is characterised by divisions, employer and state control, and internal conflict. It also, however, exhibits a dynamic and constantly changing independent union movement with strong international ties.

In August 2016, I had the chance to visit a number of garment and footwear factories in Phnom Penh and surrounding provinces. As the political situation in the summer of 2016 was already tightening up, I needed to be careful in the way that conversations with workers approached the topics of unions and wages. I was also asked by my contact who facilitated the visits to be subtle in my questioning,

especially regarding Trade Unions. They did not want to antagonise the factory management and I did not want to ruin their relationship with the factories. I was only accompanying their staff on their regular factory visits, and was there simply to observe. On the morning of the 23rd of August, however, as we were heading out towards Takeo Province, I was told that their contact in this factory was a local union leader and that he would be happy to speak to me. After driving out of Phnom Penh and along red dusty roads for a few hours we arrived at the characteristic white walls and large front gates of a factory. From the outside most garment factories look almost identical. Blue corrugated iron roofs peak just above white walls, stretching back as far as one can see from the road. The roofs close off large halls where the manufacturing takes place. Usually, immediately adjacent to those is another identical blue roof sitting on top of steel poles and beams, looking like a permanent giant gazebo, this is where the workers gather for their 11 o'clock lunch break and 4pm dinner if they work overtime.

During most of my visits, this is where we would be. Joining the workers on their lunch break catching conversations wherever we could and carefully asking about wages, working conditions and unions. We arrived at a large footwear factory in Takeo a little before 11 am. The almost 4200 workers were still in the main hall. They were in the midst of a large shipment for a major German footwear brand. This allowed me the chance to sit down for a few minutes with the local union leader Vu Tha⁷. He was a supervisor or team leader and no longer working on the line. In fact, as he said himself, his job now was primarily to keep workers peaceful and maintain discipline. He explained to me that he was part of a very effective and well organised union, as his boss in Phnom Penh had a position in the government. He said that the government decided the wage and his job was to make sure the workers would be happy with it and that he would "keep the peace" after whatever decision was made in Phnom Penh. Though the sentiment was not surprising, and in reality trade

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⁷ I have tried throughout the thesis to use gender-neutral names and terms for most of my participants. If I were to do that in this situation, however, it would distort the reality of workplace unionism and factory hierarchies in the Cambodian garment industry. The vast majority of union representatives continue to be men and although the vast majority of workers are women, supervisor position and management position are often also occupied by men.

unions across the world have repeatedly been accused of stifling dissent and facilitating a false capital-labour compromise, the candour and pride with which he spoke about his role and responsibilities struck me.

During my time at the factory in Takeo, I also had the chance to speak to some factory workers. After having heard from Vu Tha, I was keen to hear how the workers saw the union and its work in the factory. Without wanting to ask directly about the union, I ask a group of workers seated at one of the long lunch tables under the gazebo if they knew where to go and who to speak to if they had any issues in the factory. The first group of workers said that they had heard there was a union that would hear their concerns, but seemed reluctant to elaborate. So Socheta⁸ and I sat down on the curb next to a group of workers who appeared a little older. Sure enough, they had all been at the factory for a least three years, which in an industry notorious for short term contracts and high turnover, is rare. They were more open to talking to us. The union was useless according to them. They referred to Vu Tha and his colleagues as staff for the "Chinese Union", hired by and responsible to the factory management⁹. The said that the union sometimes even participates in the verbal abuse on the factory floor in an attempt to drive up worker productivity.

The ideologies of trade unions and in particular the role they play in the economy, the society and national or international politics are always at the core of their activism. Their identities – ideologies and societal function – ultimately decide a unions strategies and alliances. Labour studies scholars have, depending on the political and cultural context of the unions and movements they studied, divided these identities in a number of different categories. Discussions centre around the difference between or development from 'business unionisms' to 'social movement unionism' (Eimer, 1999; Fairbrother, 2008), 'moderate' vs. 'leftist' unions (Anner 2011), or ideologically rooted in either class, market or society relations (Hyman, 2001). Unions, in their primary role as representatives of collective worker interests to those of capital and the state can take the role as a force for order and peaceful

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⁸ Socheta is a friend of mine who I enlisted as a translator for all the factory visits.

⁹ Vu Tha was Cambodian, the factory management however Taiwanese. 'Chinese Union' was therefore not a description of the shop stewards like Vu Tha but a political description of the lack of independence by the union.

industrial relations – the *Ordnungsmacht* – and simultaneously play a counter force in the workplace or society – the *Gegenmacht*. They are at once a collaborative and confrontational social actor. Which side wins out in any particular situation and what form the confrontational organising takes – a firm opposition to state and collective employer interests or that of a class-based anti-capitalist organisation of resistance (Grebing, 1973) – is determined by their identities and strategic priorities at any given point. In reality most trade unions occupy both functions while operate somewhere along the 'market – state – society' continuum (Munck, 2010).

I would argue that broadly speaking the divisions can be generalised into what Munck (2004; 2010) calls 'market-oriented' and 'society-oriented' unionism working more or less with the state which sits in the middle between these two. Society-oriented (social-movement/leftists) unionism would be more characterised by a movement continuously trying to broaden the membership and reaching out to the unorganised and informal sectors (Moody, 1997) while trying to overcome the traditional division of the labour movement such as class and race (Munck 2004). Their policies would most likely reach beyond working conditions and pay and foster relationships to the rank-and-file (Turner, 2003) and understandings of 'class' as a basis for transformative union identity (Fairbrother, 2008). These types of unions are more likely to form alliances with other campaign groups (Bezuidenhout, 2000), including NGOs, student groups, women's organisations or human rights organisations (Anner 2011) and refer to non-institutional tactics (Johnston and Almeida, 2006). These kinds of unions are also, most importantly for this study, more likely to engage in and seek out cross border alliances, internationalism and global solidarity (Lambert and Webster, 2001; Anner, 2011).

Market-oriented trade unions on the other hand are more likely to strike deals with employers which may not represent the best interest of the wider 'working classes' but rather pursuit strategies which favour trade union members and leadership (Anner 2011). They would have a more hierarchical, internal structure and favour economic instrumentalism with "limited views on emancipatory politics" (Fairbrother, 2008, p. 213). They are less likely to engage in strike action or enter alliances with international allies, especially non-trade union campaigning organisations (Anner 2011). Often, these unions are heavily bureaucratic (Munck, 2004) and their leadership primarily concerned with institutional survival (Voss and Sherman, 2000).

The Cambodian trade union movement is heavily fragmented. When I started the research everyone spoke of Independent Unions, Opposition-aligned Unions and Pro-Government Unions. Though I did not manage to find out which national centre Vu Tha belonged too, he was clearly representing a government aligned union. A couple of weeks prior to my arrival in Cambodia, the Minister of Labour Ith Sam Heng had appointed a number of union leaders as 'special advisors' bestowing upon them the title of 'excellency'. This is what Vu Tha meant when he spoke of his boss' government position. This division within the union movement goes back almost to the beginning of the trade union movement in Cambodia, but has grown exponentially since the expansion of the garment sector (Nuon and Serrano, 2010).

The sector enjoys a unionisation rate of over 60% (Serrano and Nuon, 2017) but also an exceptional high level of multi-unionism. With thousands of individual unions and about 70 federations in the garment sector alone. Many of these unions erupted in the late 1990s and early 2000s due to TATA and the push for factory level unions to take part in monitoring processes (Arnold 2013). The ILO in setting up its monitoring project and ultimately BFC pushed for the need for factory level unions or worker committees to be included, which likely led to a large number of management controlled unions being founded in factories by management to comply with the monitoring requirements.

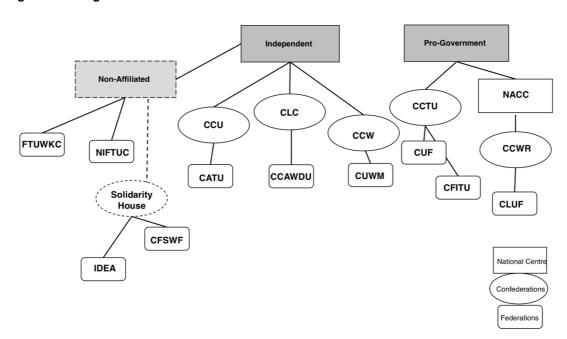


Figure 4. 2: Diagram of Trade Unions Structure in Cambodia

Source: Author

The majority of the trade union federations today belong to the one pro-government national centre (NACC) or the large pro-government confederation (CCTU) and the rest to one of three independent confederations or broadly non-aligned federations. During the annual Labour Advisory Committee (LAC), seven trade unions are represented. None of the unions which are deemed to be close to the opposition are represented and only two places are reserved for independent unions. The majority of worker representatives in these state structures would therefore be broadly regarded as pro-government.

Throughout my research I have managed to speak to and meet unionists from all fractions and although the differences at national level are usually quite clear, many labour institutions and NGOs have said that often the differences at factory level are not so stark (GUF_01). Not all factory unions affiliated to a pro-government federation are necessarily as strong a shade of 'yellow'¹⁰ as in this particular Takeo factory. Some may well be organising workers, are present on the factory floor and represent workers in collective bargaining at factory level as well as in dispute resolution procedures.

Ideological and identity divisions within the Cambodian trade union movement are not along classical political lines at times difficult to assess where on the 'market' to 'society' unionisms continuum the individual unions sit. In no interaction did left or right wing political views ever come up. The engagement and differentiations are much more procedural and along domestic political lines. The question of what a 'real union' is and does repeatedly comes to the fore, with independent unions arguing that they represent their members' interests by engaging with workers in the factory directly, and by working from the bottom up rather than imposing centralised policy. Independent unions are frequently accused by the government and progovernment unions to be simply trouble makers, however, who are hurting their members and putting them in danger by organising protests and strikes. Progovernment unions argue that they are 'real' unions as they are engaging with the government, and that therefore they are able to represent their members' position to the government and employer associations in a productive manner. They can

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¹⁰ 'Yellow Union' is a common term for management controlled trade unions.

keep the peace and therefore strengthen the industry and country ultimately benefiting workers.

Independent unions and those politically closer to the opposition party argue, however, that pro-government unions are simply politicians and in no way represent workers or work to improve workers lives. They say that a position close to the government often comes at the expense of leverage over the government. The independent unions argue that their relationship to workers and distance from the government increases their leverage. During a workshop in Phnom Penh on the strategies and possibilities of a national minimum wage (as opposed to the current wage which is the legal minimum only in the garment and footwear industries), a senior official in an independent union spoke to the group of unions on the importance of leverage and how the upcoming elections may well provide an opportunity for unions to increase their leverage. While addressing one of his fellow unionists from a pro-government union added "that this is something even 'his excellency' should understand". Accusing them of being in the pocket of the government and insinuating that as a special advisor to the Minister of Labour, they had lost all leverage. He reiterated this point when I spoke to him a year later, saying that how can he fulfil his duties as a union leader if he only sits at the negotiating table and has no rights or space to organise workers in the factory. The dynamic of leverage and power through worker organising or power through government controlled institutions will be explored in **Chapter 5** in more detail. What is important here, however, is that only the independent and opposition aligned unions engaged in genuine campaigning and organising tactics. The pro-government unions could clearly be classified as 'market-oriented' unions. Any benefits attained by the progovernment unions – at least at national level – came as a response of the populist charm offensive by the ruling CPP.

Chapter 5 will also show how as the domestic political situation developed, and Cambodian state attempts to implement a hegemonic labour control regimes, the independent unions were increasingly pushed towards a more limited institutional role.

The clear divisions and conflicts within the trade union movement are also not always as strict as the above description may suggest. Unions are not simply split

between these strict categories of 'independent', 'pro-government' and 'proopposition'. Even within the block of independent unions and sometimes within single independent confederations conflict exists. The block of independent and pro-government unions show signs to society-oriented unionism to different degrees which, together with interpersonal conflicts, can lead to a breakdown of alliances and factionalism even amongst the independent unions. Most recently the Cambodian Food and Service Worker Federation (CFSWF) left the largest independent confederation, the Cambodian Labour Confederation, to created 'Solidarity House'. They brought one garment federation with them when they left CLC. Solidarity House, although not a national union centre and more of a collection of unions and NGOs in one physical building, has been at the forefront of pushing for what it sees as a 'social movement' unionisms. Collaborating closely with the labour NGO CENTRAL, the aim is to establish a more activist, transparent and member-led union movement (IU_03). Another independent union federation, NIFTUC, who is one of the oldest federations in the garment sector, distinguishes themselves in different ways. Reiterating that independence also means independence from international donors, they attempt to survive solely on membership fees (IU_04). A task that is nearly impossible in Cambodia it remains unclear to what extent they achieve this. Independent federations and confederations are also at times moving closer to the government and even cooperating closely with them on some issues. They may remain broadly known as 'independent' – in that they do not actively take part in election campaigns or operate as special advisors to the government – but also do not engage with the rest of the independent unions who increasingly refer to them as 'government controlled'. Union presidents and key senior figures frequently spoke of the pressure to accept government funding (IU 05).

The group of unions generally seen as pro-opposition, is also constantly in flux and, as is the case with CCU (CATU) increasingly trying to shed that label. They see themselves as the only truly independent union in the country today. Though the pro-opposition unions also do no longer have an opposition to support – since the CNRP was dissolved in 2017. They also generally were less supported by the international community, which in combination with intense state pressure, has led to some formerly active and influential union confederations, like the FTUWKC, to become increasingly marginalised. FTUWKC were one of the first independent

union confederation in Cambodia with the famous union leader Chea Vichea, who was murdered in 2004, and their development closely followed that of the political opposition, especially the Sam Rainsy Party, throughout the 1990s. With FTUWKC increasingly marginalised and CCU becoming more active and influential and distancing themselves from a now defunct political opposition, the traditional fractions of 'independent', 'pro-government' and 'pro-opposition', which were still very strong when I started the research have become much more blurred. Although the pro-government unions remain firm in their stance the development of identities and alliances in the 'independent and opposition' unions is more fluid and also more interesting as these are the active unions. When I speak of independent unions I therefore generally refer to the overall block of non-state or employer controlled unions.

The central role for labour NGOs during the wage campaign and subsequent split by the CLC have created more of a fragmented 'independent' union movement with some unions more inclined to take part in national and even party politics as part of their overall 'social movement unionism' aim. The campaign and violent crackdown in 2013 and 2014, described in detail in the next section, have contributed to a reorientation of the union movement in some way. In terms of wage developments, and particularly institutional and industrial relations developments after the immediate campaign, these new divisions have been solidified.

Although multi-unionisms in itself is not necessarily an issues (GUF_01), the political fault lines in the union movement and the often competing interests within them are a strong barriers to effective worker organising (ILO_02; ITUC_01). Another barrier are the strong gender dynamics within the representation structure of almost all union federations. Although the garment and footwear sector workforce in Cambodia is over 90% women, only two federations out of approximately 70 were led by women in 2018. Though women are sometimes in senior positions within unions, the top jobs are usually reserved for men - often men that have been in those position for a very long time. While clearly an indication of patriarchal structures in Cambodia more widely, it is also an indication of lack of training and development within the union movement. Particularly within the independent unions, English language skills and a strong network of European and US allies is important within leadership positions to guarantee funding and political survival. These skills have

been forged only really by a handful of people who end up controlling much on the international work and hence much of the financial power (GO_01).

Some unions are also more likely to cooperate with NGOs - whether labour NGOs or Human Rights NGOs - and international Trade Union Solidarity Support Organisations (TUSSOs). Although these relationships are also constantly in flux and depend on the issues that are trying to be addressed. The TUSSOs actively involved in labour relations in Cambodia include the Friedrich Ebert Foundation (FES), the American Centre for International Labour Solidarity (Solidarity Centre) and in some ways APHEDA (Australian Union Aid Abroad). These organisations tend to avoid overtly political engagement and facilitate technical and advocacy support to the broader union movement. Pressure on international NGOs has increased dramatically in the last few years and organisations are increasingly aware of their precarious position (INGO_01). In 2015 the government passed a new Law on NGOs (LANGO) which restricts their activities and increases their vulnerability to government discretion. Particularly US funded and overtly political NGOs have been under pressure, being accused of facilitating the interest of foreign governments and trying to spark a 'colour revolution' and an overthrow of the government (Turton, 2017). In 2017, for example, the National Democracy Institute (NDI), an NGO funded by the US Congress through the National Endowment for Democracy was closed down and any foreign staff removed from the country. The work of TUSSOs and international NGOs is further elaborated in **Chapter 6**.

Some Cambodian NGOs have been more explicitly political and also more explicitly on the side of a specific group of unions. The labour rights NGO CENTRAL, who played a crucial role in the campaign in 2014, explicitly calls for social movement unionisms in the country and has close relationships with Solidarity House group of Unions. The Worker's Information Centre (WIC) is another very active labour NGO focusing particularly on women garment and sex workers and working closely with them to find solutions to health and general wellbeing concerns. Though not very involved in the wage campaign and mechanisms of wage bargaining, they have a close relationship to workers in the factories and facilitate support and engagement of workers on issues of their choosing.

In August 2016, during my first research trip to Phnom Penh, my partner and I were invited to attend the WIC public engagement evening. We arrived at their Tuol Kork offices late, after having completely underestimated the distance and traffic on a Friday evening, but were greeted and seated next to a WIC staffer who had agreed to translate for us. The evening consisted of a short film on garment and sex workers' lives in Phnom Penh and the concerns they shared. Issues around health care provision or the need for better protection via street lighting in areas where workers live to improve their safety were highlighted. A woman who had worked as a sex worker for a number of years described how the WIC has helped them organise drop-in centres where they have managed to meet other sex workers to discuss and organise around specific concerns that they share. These drop in centres are also core to the garment worker campaigns the WIC was running. The evening concluded with music from a group signing about and acting out the dangers of a neoliberal health system. The WIC provides some of the most in-depth and grassroots participatory information on the lived experiences of women in the garment industry. Their work has also been crucial in getting the government, and arguably the unions, to think more holistically about wages and wage setting. Their 2017 report on living conditions of garment workers showed how despite wage rises, living conditions improved only little. The continuous rise in rent, electricity and market prices above the rate of inflation, have eroded many of the benefits of wage increases.

The Cambodian union movement, therefore has a set of specific collective identities. Although the traditional divisions of 'left' vs. 'right', or 'socialist' and 'Christian', or 'social democratic' vs. 'revolutionary' labels common in the European movement do not fit, the movement shows elements of 'society-oriented' and 'market-oriented' – even 'clientelist' – union identities. Core to the divisions are the relationship to the state and disagreements over its influence on the work of unions, and issues of 'independence' and what that means, also in terms of the relationship with workers, donors and internal bureaucracy and its transparency. These divisions are also exacerbated by complicated personal relationships, many of which go back decades. Though it is important not to regard these fragments of collective identities and categories as set in stone. Much strategy and coordination occurs in the nuances where interest or ideology overlap, even momentarily, and where unions split into new dynamic groups or create alliances previously not thought possible. The next section will show that in times of crisis and immediate confrontational

campaigning the 'society-oriented' identities win out and foster effective coalitions with other unions and NGOs in Cambodia and internationally. The thesis will also show however, that as the political situation changes, strategies change and unions previously more inclined to organise protests and demonstrations seize to do so and those that continue to become less instrumental in improving wages in Cambodia.

4.4 – Wage Campaigning in Cambodian Garment Sector

This sections outlines the key campaign events and developments in Cambodia in 2013 and 2014. It shows how the labour unrests and national strike in 2013 and 2014 unfolded and how unions and NGOs responded to the crackdown and increasingly oppressive environment throughout 2014.

December 2013 and January 2014 Unrest

On the 24th of December 2013 thousands of garment workers in Phnom Penh, Cambodia, walked out of their factories. What started as largely uncoordinated wildcat actions quickly turned into a national strike that would last for over a week. Workers came out in response to an announcement by the Labour Advisory Committee (LAC) that the minimum wage in the industry would be raised from 80USD to 95USD – a full 65USD below what an independent wage commission had decided the wage needed to be¹¹. Protests and strikes largely revolved around Veng Sreng Boulevard in the west of Phnom Penh, where many factories and blocks of worker housing are located. The strikes and protests were some of the largest labour unrests in Cambodian history, and the first coordinated strike action since CCAWDU and NIFTUC organised a smaller general strike for wages in 2010.

Many workers left their factories to join spontaneous protests in the streets and outside the Ministry of Labour almost immediately after the LAC announced the new wage on December 24th. Exact numbers of workers that participated are hard to estimate, but different union estimates hover around the 100'000 mark. A consensus existed amongst a broad range of workers and their unions that 95USD is simply not

¹¹ The wage commission was set up by the government to assess what the minimum wage should be to sustain a decent living for workers and their families. Which is how an appropriate minimum wage level is defined in the 1997 labour law.

enough. Most of the initial protests, and many of the ones that followed during the week, were spontaneous rank-and-file actions or in fact simply actions by workers with no union involvement at all. One independent union activist said that "the workers went beyond the unions. They stood up or they came out to defend their interests - and wage is one of them. That built the motivation and desire of the workers. That was supported by the unions. Sometimes not even lead by the union but led by the workers".

The following day a group of independent unions came together and officially declared a general strike. Although, in many ways this came as an afterthought. The strike was already going on, workers were protesting outside their factories, blocking roads in and out of industrial zones and demanding a new minimum wage of 160USD (AMRC, 2014). Although none of the pro-government unions had declared a general strike or supported the actions by workers, many of their members and even affiliated factory unions were involved in the protests and strikes (AMRC, 2014). After the first days of disruptions in the sector, the Garment Manufacturers Association of Cambodia (GMAC) recommended a lock-out to its members. Almost 80% of all garment factories in the country shut down as a response, in some cases not locking workers out but into the factories, in attempts to keep striking workers and protester out but the work going (AMRC, 2014).

The 160USD figure was taken from a study conducted by the LAC wage survey group, which had concluded and made the recommendations to the LAC that the minimum expenditure of workers on basic necessities is 157USD (Worker Rights Consortium, 2014). The LAC agreed that 160USD was therefore an acceptable minimum wage but that this wage would be phased in slowly over the next 5 years. After the announcement of the general strike and ongoing protests, the Ministry of Labour announced on December 31st that it would increase the wage to 100USD. Unions still demanded new negotiations and said the strike would continue while no solution is found (Worker Rights Consortium, 2014).

The work of the LAC, and pressure by unions to begin renegotiating the wage again was crucial to the campaign. But so were the national elections in 2013. One senior staff at a local NGO said that "the pressure started in 2010, though what was crucial for the wage campaign more broadly was the inclusion of a 150USD wage for

garment workers into the opposition party program in 2013" (NGO_01). The opposition, Cambodian National Rescue Party (CNRP), had been formed through the merger of the Sam Rainsy Party led by Sam Rainsy, and the Human Rights Party led by Kem Sokha. The CNRP became very popular and would ultimately be in a position to threaten the CPPs hold on power in the Kingdom. The CNRP included garment worker wages in its election programme long before the negotiations started again in December 2013. The opposition had been calling for a 150USD minimum wage since before the July 2013 national elections.

A prominent NGO activist (NGO_01) said that workers came out by themselves and ultimately joined an ongoing campaign by the opposition CNRP. Opposition activists had occupied Freedom Park in the centre of Phnom Penh on and off for months, after refusing to recognise the CPPs win during the July 2013 elections. On January 2nd 2014 the CNRP officially called upon striking workers to join them for a national demonstration called for January 5th - appealing to them over minimum wage demands and anti-government rhetoric. This may also be the reason while some unions were initially cautious to get involved and in the aftermath attempted to distance themselves from the opposition. Because while this may have provided some additional leverage they were "scared to be seen as oppositional" (NGO_01). It is also no surprise that the state crackdown intensified on January 2nd after the opposition officially appealed to the workers to join them. The alliance of garment workers, unions and CNRP would pose a significant political threat to the CPP and the Hun Sen government.

At midday on January 2nd the first clashes occurred between workers and military units outside Yakjin Factory in Phnom Penh. The factory owner had locked the factory doors to prevent workers inside the factory joining striking workers outside (AMRC, 2014). Eventually, the protesting workers were dispersed, many beaten and 10 arrested during clashes with the Paratrooper Special Forces Brigade. The Brigade was stationed next to the factory and some news and NGO reports seem to suggest that a personal relationship between the factory management and unit commander lead to the troopers getting involved (AMRC, 2014). However, other military units began moving into Veng Sreng Boulevard almost simultaneously to prevent workers from holding a rally outside Canadia Industrial Zone, suggesting that there may have been a more centralised coordination of the crackdown. At

Yakjin factory workers were injured in clashes and rising tensions on Veng Sreng Road led to clashes between workers and security forces. Workers began building roadblocks and early on the morning of January 3rd, security forces responded with live ammunition. Five workers were killed and one remains missing to date. The murder of the five workers was the tragic end to the week of strikes and protests, and simultaneously mobilised a global solidarity campaign, bringing the attention of global media and brands to Cambodia.

The strikes and protests from the 24th of December to the 3rd of January were just the beginning of a year of campaigning on wages and trade union rights. The deaths of the workers and the violence by state forces sent shock waves through the industry and the world. At a time when the government was already under pressure by the opposition, mass unrests and an overtly violent crackdown through state security forces strengthened the resolve of independent unions and NGOs, at least temporarily. The next section will examine the immediate aftermath of the crackdown and the resulting strategies of the wider wage campaign by garment workers and their unions. The LAC announcement acted as a catalyst for a rather unorganised, grassroots reaction, which was fruitful in the context of political opportunity that was generated by the opposition party.

Noteworthy are particularly the momentary unity of the trade union movement given the conflict ridden relationships outlined in the previous section and the broad popular basis for the protests and strikes. As the movement developed into its 'post-strike' form alliances began to shift and the general mass appeal for the initial wage strikes disappeared. Although, politically speaking, the violent state crackdown remained important to the broader populous and was partially responsible for the CPPs poorer than expected performance during the 2017 commune elections. Nevertheless, the repression had the desired outcome of crushing the popular movement and turning it into a more concerted campaign by a dedicated group of unionists and NGO activists.

Campaigning in the immediate aftermath of the crackdown: organising, repression and first round of reformed wage negotiations in 2014.

Throughout 2014 the wage campaign in Cambodia continued despite the violence and repression experienced in January. Trade unions and labour NGOs focused on

minimum wage demands and managed to organise protests and smaller factory based strikes in a highly charged and repressive environment. Unions reached out to international NGOs and Global Unions who pushed buyers and suppliers sourcing from Cambodia to put pressure on the government to increase wages and release any workers and unionists arrested during and after the national strike.

Though the protests and strikes in December 2013 were initially grassroots led, independent union leaders became involved and spoke up collectively, demanding a higher wage. The ability of unions and NGOs, at least those not closely aligned to the government, to pull together was crucial to the success of the campaign (GUF_02).

In the aftermath of the unrest in Phnom Penh, five union leaders were arrested and charged with a range of public order offences. Most of these cases are still ongoing almost 5 years later, and being used as a way to harass and intimidate the leaders of active trade unions often critical of the government. Alliances of NGOs and unions began to shift in 2014 as well. Labour and Human Rights NGOs in Cambodia and globally became more important to the campaign as unions began to split on political and tactical lines. On January 16th, the group of unions warned of more strikes if wage talks did not resume; they continued to demand 160USD minimum wage as well as a stronger role for the ILO in the wage negotiation process (Peter and Pheap, 2014). By September and October that year, however, and before the new round of negotiations began, different unions within the block of independent unions were organising their own protest and rallies.

Labour NGOs, especially CENTRAL, became heavily involved in the campaign throughout 2014. Their relationship to the Clean Clothes Campaign in particular provided important international solidarity links. CENTRAL also supported unions in trying to organise an overtime boycott, which was swiftly crushed by the military, and in organising solidarity rallies in support of the imprisoned workers in defiance of the government ban on public assembly¹².

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¹² The Royal Government of Cambodia instituted a wide ranging ban on public assembly and protest in response to the labour unrests in 2014.

At the core of the campaign, which received the most international attention and solidarity support from international NGOs and Global Unions, were the independent union rallies for 177USD minimum wage. A group of unions, largely around CCAWDU/CLC decided that if in 2013 an adequate wage would have been 160USD, any wage set in 2014 for 2015 needed to be higher. They demanded a minimum wage of 177USD and began demanding this directly from the buyers. Iconic images of workers in orange T-Shirts with the slogan 'We need 177' surrounded by the name of all major European and US brands made news around the world. The rallies were focused on smaller gatherings during lunch breaks at factories and some small marches in Phnom Penh. Although workers remained fearful of the government and of large coordinated strike or protest actions (IU_03). The new strategy was therefore to try to put pressure on the government through smaller brand and media focused rallies.

The gatherings in Cambodia were supported by a global day of action by Global Union Federations and the Clean Clothes Campaign, who organised protests outside Cambodian Embassies and brand retail shops. The coordinated pressure on brands led both EU and US buyers to write an open letter to the Cambodian government promising not to leave if the wage was to increase to 177USD, and that they would absorb the increases in their purchasing prices (Brignall, 2014). The letter from EU brands arrived on 18th September 2014, the day after the global and national day of action on 177USD for Cambodian garment workers. It is no surprise that the EU brands that signed the letter are many of those who would later become involved in ACT. Discussion and negotiations between IndustriALL Global Union and the brands were already ongoing by the time the letter was written and allowed for a swift communication between brands and effective lobbying by IndustriALL. The letter from US brands came a few weeks later in early November, and was coordinated by the Fair Labour Association (FLA) (FLA, 2014). Brands and retailer had also written a letter in January focusing on the need for an enquiry into the murders of striking workers and to urge the government to respect workers' rights (Teehan, 2014), even Walmart had signed the initial letter.

More rallies and protests took place in Phnom Penh in October 2014, leading up to the LAC announcing the new minimum wage for 2015. Some unions continued to demand a new minimum wage of 160USD, and demanded that the wage would start being paid before the new year. The Ministry did agree to improve the process of how the wage is negotiated and set out a clear timeline, according to which the wage consultations, negotiations and decisions will be made in September and October of 2014. The Ministry also facilitated a tripartite consultation through the ILO to asses and improve the wage setting process. This was one of the central demands of unions early on. While the structure of the LAC remained unchanged, the committee agreed to a more 'evidence-based' negotiation process and to a yearly adjustment of the minimum wage. Ultimately the minimum wage for 2015 was set at 128USD. While still far below the 177USD the independent unions had demanded, it was an increase of 28% year on year from 2014 to 2015. A, to date, unprecedented wage increase in Cambodia. Though figures are difficult to get a hold of for a global comparison, the increases in the garment and footwear sector wages since 2013 contributed to the general wage increases, which in 2014 were the highest worldwide with 22.4 % (ILO, 2016a). The exact nature of the reformed wage setting process is discussed further in **Chapter 5**.

4.5 – Trade Union Strategies for a Successful Campaign

The campaign was largely seen as successful by trade unionists for a number of different reasons. Not just because the minimum wage increased significantly but also because the wage bargaining process improved and the government agreed to adjust the wage on a yearly basis (IU_02). One independent unionist said that what was a crucial outcome of the campaign was not just that the wage increased, but that the mentality of the government and the employers changed (IU_02), in that they accepted the regular, yearly adjustment of the wage going forward and that this adjustment shall be based on a more 'evidence-based' process. The ILO was fundamental throughout 2014 to facilitate workshops with constituents to develop a more inclusive process. While the Labour Advisory Committee, who makes the final recommendation to the Minister of labour on what the minimum wage should be, continued to be firmly controlled by the state, employers and pro-government unions, a subcommittee was created which had a much broader representative structure. This subcommittee was deemed a technical working group and as such was tasked with discussing all available wage related data and macro-economic evidence. The details of the wage bargaining process are further discussed in Chapter 5, for now it is simply important to understand that the unions had managed to provoke a reform of the process and that they broadly regarded this as an improvement (IU_01; IU_04; IU_02). Another significant improvement was to connect the brands and their purchasing practiced to wages in Cambodia. This struck at the heart of the political economy of global supply chains. The campaign itself, albeit only temporarily, also brought all national and international activists closer and facilitated effective cooperation. The activists did all note however, that it took a tragedy to finally address some of these issues – improvements should therefore be seen in the context of the loss of life and loss of freedom and intimidation of union movement.

Trade Union Strategies

Chapter 3 discussed how the nature of global supply chains means that the economic power of workers in the global garment industry is limited. The leverage over brands and retailers that workers can gain through striking in one particular geographical location is minimal. Therefore, the strategies labour movements in global supply chains can deploy must almost necessarily rely on publicity campaigns in order to put pressure on global brands and retailers. Though they can win improvements in the industry from factory management and the state, these possible increases are limited by the political and fiscal space afforded to these actors by the powerful MNCs on top of the chains. The available space for labour to manoeuvre in is therefore transformed through global supply chains (Pattenden, 2016), and its power and influence has changed as its industrial strength is vanishing.

The responses by labour movements and trade unions to these challenges depend on a number of key factors. Anner (2011) argues that collective identities, the type of supply chain and the access to state structures define in what kind of strategies trade unions engage. This chapter has shown that the campaign in 2013 and 2014 was clearly dominated by an effective coalition of unions and NGOs in which society-oriented identities won out. In a conflict based on a buyer-driven supply chain like garment it is therefore not surprising that unions engaged in a transnational activists campaigns (TAC). The TAC in this case used pre-existing coalitions between global unions and NGOs, as well as the temporary coalitions between unions and NGOs in Cambodia, to run a confrontational and effective campaign aimed largely at brands and retailers.

Furthermore, the type of labour control regime within the boundaries of the manufacturing hub significantly influence how workers' strategies of resistance develop (Anner, 2015a). It is therefore also not surprising that a labour movement in an authoritarian state labour control regime, where the state can control a significant part of the union movement, would resort to wildcat strikes in a situation where deprivation becomes untenable. It is also understandable that the political opportunity that was presented by the disputed election, and for the first time in decades the presence of a strong opposition party, meant the pressure on wages by the workers' and union movement was more fertile than in 2010. Independent unions became involved in the unrest and their progressive and critical stance towards the government and alliance with human rights NGOs supported their work with their international allies. I argue here that the campaign was successful because: a) it focused on the global supply chain dynamics and forced buyers to get involved, and b) it challenged the domestic political status quo. In doing so labour activists, unions and NGOs managed to turn wages into contentious politics and trigger a global 'boomerang effect'.

As was discussed in the previous chapter, the political economy of wages in global supply chains is fraught with asymmetric power relations. Workers have been systematically disempowered while capital - and multinational capital in particular - has become more powerful and manoeuvred itself into a position where risks associated with the hyper competitive global industry have largely been passed down to the workers. Workers in this have also been ideologically side-lined, deemed in development theory and practice under neoliberalism to be simply passive inputs into the process of accumulation, which in turn may eventually let some benefits trickle down. The Cambodian campaign in 2013 and 2014 purposefully and systematically addressed global supply chain dynamics and unions and workers embedded themselves as fundamental to the production process through global solidarity campaigns and rallies directed at brands and retailers.

Many of the activists agreed that what made the campaign successful was the pressure that was exercised directly on brands by the unions and workers. Throughout 2014 especially, workers demanding 160USD or 177USD wore T-shirts and banners directly addressing brands. 'Zara is starving its workers' and 'We need USD177' were slogans written in English and publicised in international media

outlets across the world. In 2014, the trade unions in Cambodia explicitly made it clear that the responsibility to improve wages in the sector lies not just in Phnom Penh but also in the US and EU. This was supported by international days of action and NGO and GUF campaigns which again increased the pressure on the brands. Both from a global and a local level, the supply chain logic became core to the wage campaign. Campaign materials also called for a 'living wage', and although the concept of a living wage did not have a strong resonance in Cambodia, it was crucial to capture the attention of international brands and consumers. The politics of the concept of a 'living wage' will be further addressed in **Chapter 6**.

Image 4.1: 'Brands Must Provide a Living Wage' & 'The Buyer Must Provide a Basic Wage \$177' – Union and NGO campaign materials 2014 (right) and 2015 (left)





One national trade union activist said that the campaign was successful partly because of "...international attention and solidarity. I think Cambodia is brought into very strong international attention [...] it is a bit more proactive than Bangladesh, in Bangladesh you need tragedy to bring the attention. But for us we build our own movement to push the brands". This was reiterated by an international activist who said that: "Unions began to address the brands and campaigning directly to the brands", this was an "important change" (GUF_02).

Domestic Political Situation – Wages as Contentious Politics

The campaign was also successful because unions and workers managed to leverage a vulnerable domestic political situation in their favour and therefore challenge an existing national labour control regime. The Cambodian state has a large degree of control over the union movement, with many national centres and

industry federations closely affiliated to the Ministry of Labour or Employer Associations. In this context, we would expect wildcat strikes and short term illegal industrial action taken by workers bypassing the official union structures (Anner, 2015a). The initial unrest by workers came at a time when the general level of dissatisfaction with the government was high and the July 2013 national elections still disputed by the opposition CNRP. Protests in Phnom Penh had been on and off for months. One activist said:

"You know, after the election and even before the election, especially people who in the urban area they don't like the current system. They don't like the current government. So this is one of them that they think that they have to do something. They have to go and protest with the party to demand for fair and clean elections. At the same time in year 2013 workers fight very hard for their wage. I think year 2013 is the year that had many strikes. Almost every day, today you had this factory where workers went on strike for wage and tomorrow you had another factory where workers went on strike for wage. So it means that wage was a very important topic at that time. And when on the 24th December 2013 when LAC made the decision that they are just going to increase to 90-95USD workers immediately were dissatisfied by this decision."

A local NGO activist said that "the most important part of the campaign being somewhat successful in the end was the political pressure. Coupled with a close cooperation with unions and pressure on the brands by unions and CCC. Most effective though the political pressure within Cambodia". The situation was fragile and the question of wages had been political contentious issue even during the elections. Despite at times being afraid to be identified as supporting the opposition, unions effectively managed to position themselves as a key political player. One of my respondents put it this way: "some say the opposition used the workers, really the workers successfully used and made leverage out of the political struggle. They knew they had political power by making wages a key election issue" (NGO_02).

The unions who were traditionally excluded from the state, because their progovernment counterparts would have more influence with the state, became an important political actor due to grassroots worker action at a time of political instability. Unions effectively used the opportunity to establish a broader transnational activist campaign based on effective campaign coalitions in Cambodia and internationally. The situation, at least initially, also allowed the union movement to overcome some of its internal challenges and rally behind a common demand for higher wages.

The transnational activist campaign also managed to work well together and maintain momentum for a while, because the demand of the campaign was simple, straightforward and so reasonable that even opposition to the campaign was difficult to argue. By and large workers were demanding a wage which the government's own wage commission had said was a wage level necessary to survive.

4.6 - Conclusion

It is clear from this chapter that a number of coinciding factors helped the wage campaign in 2013 and 2014 to be regarded as successful by activists involved. It was regarded as successful because it lead to long overdue and substantial increases in the minimum wage for garment and footwear workers and also because the reforms in the minimum wage setting mechanism, at least initially, suggested a change in the mentality of employer and the government. The campaign achieved these changes by: a) reasserting themselves into the logic of global supply chains by making wages in Cambodia an issue for brands and retailers, which also resulted in a global solidarity campaign lead by global union federations and the Clean Clothes Campaign, and b) making wages a contentious political issue in Cambodia at a time when the ruling CPP was vulnerable from the last national election. Though the timing of the campaign may have been serendipitous, and largely led by grassroots and spontaneous worker actions, independent trade unions in Cambodia managed to temporarily overcome their differences and make themselves into a real political threat. The unions showed that they could organise a national strike and that their pro-government counterparts were unable to counteract their organising potential.

The campaign also managed to create, again temporary, effective alliances with local NGOs, especially CENTRAL, and international allies, and to use this network to pressure brands and retailers into getting involved, and for the first time openly and publicly commit to increase their prices to cover the rise in wages. Though the Cambodian government and NGOs were understandably suspicious of the promises made by brands, the campaign led, at least in part, to their involvement in ACT, which is explored further in **Chapter 7**. It also forced brands to engage with the concept and ideas of a 'living wage' and connected therefore well into the transnational labour activist organising and campaign, further explored in **Chapter 6**.

Important, however, is also how the national industrial relations and labour control regime developed as a consequence of the labour unrests and wage campaigning in 2013 and 2014. The next Chapter will explore how, in response to the campaign, the Cambodian state embarked on a programme of industrial relations reforms based on the minimum wage setting mechanism, which led to higher wages, but also severe restrictions in trade union rights.

Chapter 5: Wage Setting, Industrial Relations and Hegemonic Labour Control in Cambodia's Garment Industry

5.1 - Introduction

This chapter outlines the development of industrial relations in Cambodia while focusing on the state response to the successful worker mobilization around minimum wages in December 2013 and 2014. I argue that the development of industrial relations since 2014 has focused on a strategy of 'benefits at the expense of rights', where increased wages and benefits to garment workers came at the expense of fundamental rights of freedom of association and collective bargaining. This strategy is centred around the reforms of the wage setting process since 2014. The reformed wage setting process has allowed workers more influence during the wage setting discussion at the Labour Advisory Committee which has led to yearly wage adjustment based on an 'evidence-base' and has ultimately increased the minimum wage in the garment sector significantly. This process was also, however, accompanied by a new trade union law and systematic and violent repression of trade union rights and workers' ability to collectively bargaining for higher wages. It is therefore a reform process based on workers' 'consent' in a space reduced through state 'coercion'. I argue that, Cambodia has therefore developed a hegemonic labour control regime, albeit one not based on the labour process itself but through the control of 'legitimate' union activity at national level.

The chapter first outlines the history of industrial relations development in Cambodia before describing how the system has evolved since 2014. It then shows the fundamental role of the reformed minimum wage setting process, before arguing that what we are seeing is the development of a hegemonic labour control regime.

5.2 – Origins of Cambodia's contradictory Industrial Relations: Between Authoritarian and Democratic Neoliberalism

The development of industrial relations in the Cambodian garment and footwear industry in many ways mimicked the development of the country itself. Cambodia, and the garment industry, saw rapid development since the mid-1990s under the auspices of international actors and preferential trade agreements. The challenges posed by an authoritarian government recovering from decades of civil war and externally imposed United Nations Transitional Authority (UNTAC), suddenly thrust into the midst of neoliberal globalisation were clearly visible towards the turn of the millennia. The Cambodian constitution was rewritten during the UNTAC years to reflect international human rights' standards and liberal democratic values. The UN facilitated elections in 1993, which ended in Hun Sen and his primary opponent Prince Norodom Rannariddh becoming Co-Prime Ministers. Hun Sen ultimately solidified his position through an armed coup against his co-prime minister in 1997 and has been in power since. Western donors, and especially those involved in the Paris Peace Accord, who in 1991 forged peace in the country by bringing all four fractions of the ongoing civil war together in Paris and founding UNTAC, were desperate for the experiment to work and continued to supply Hun Sen and his administration with huge sums of aid, despite the obvious decline into authoritarian rule. The Cambodian state who was, and to some extent remains, heavily reliant on international donor funding repeatedly managed to convince donors of its liberal democratic intentions (Brinkley, 2012) and developed a permanent state of contradictory governance between liberal democratic laws and constitution and de facto authoritarian rule. This is what Sebastian Strangio (2014) called the 'mirage on the Mekong'; a promise of participatory and democratic government only from a distance (Strangio, 2014). This mirage was accompanied by the rapid spread of corruption and development of a deeply entrenched patronage network controlled by the ruling Cambodian People's Party (CPP) and Hun Sen himself. Hun Sen, a former Khmer Rouge cadre who defected to the Vietnamese and with their help overthrew Pol Pot in 1979, has often used authoritarian tactics to guarantee 'stability' and 'peace'.

The need for donor funding and the influence of the UN over the peace process created a reliance by the government on foreign influence uncomfortable for the CPP. Prime Minister Hun Sen frequently criticises western donors and international financial institutions and publicly decries their influence. In part as a populist tool and also to use, in particular, US and EU actors as scapegoats for the strains of

neoliberalisation (Springer, 2011). In recent years the government has in particular used the threat of a foreign backed 'colour revolution', like seen during the Arab Spring, as an excuse to conduct a domestic crackdown on the opposition, trade unions and NGOs. The government claimed that the US was behind the alleged attempts by the opposition leader to 'overthrow the government' and so arrested the CNRP leader Kem Sokha in November 2017 on treason charges and subsequently used a new law on political parties to dismantle the opposition altogether (Sokhean, Dara and Baliga, 2017; Smith, 2018).

Anti-US, UN and EU rhetoric as a political tool has intensified in recent years. Simultaneously, the governments' relationship to China has intensified, with more and more aid funding coming from China, often with no conditionalities. The growing relationship to China is unsurprising as the Chinese version of real existing neoliberalism is much closer to the Cambodian political climate, then the democratically infused version offered by the west. Furthermore, China supports the political crackdown (Reuters, 2017) while the west continues to pressure Cambodia over its human rights record.

Cambodia's development since the end of the Khmer Rouge, and particularly since the end of the civil war and the Paris Peace agreement, has been one dominated by international influence. Western donors have a large amount of influence over policy and programmes in the Kingdom generally (Springer, 2011) and specifically in terms of industrial relations (Serrano and Nuon, 2017). The United Nations Transitional Authority from 1991 to 1993, the first time the UN took on the full governance structures of a sovereign nation and the most expensive UN programme to date (Strangio, 2014), attempted a transition from war to peace, from authoritarian Vietnamese satellite state to liberal democracy, and from centrally controlled command economy to a neoliberal free-market (Springer, 2011). This was facilitated in the years after UNTAC through donor driven policy and legislative reforms (as with the 1993 constitution and 1997 labour law), the explosion of NGOs and donor government Cambodia, agencies in and aggressive export-oriented industrialisation.

The international community, especially the US Department of Labour during the Clinton Administration, was set on making Cambodia a success case for export-

oriented industrialisation. The bilateral US-Cambodia Trade Agreement on Textiles and Apparel (TATA), which was signed in 1999, was unique in that it included a clear conditionality-based quota system. As a result of pressure from the AFL-CIO, the trade agreement based a yearly increase in duty free import quotas for Cambodian apparel on the condition of improvements in labour rights. With help of the ILO the US monitored factory conditions for improvements in International Labour Standards (ILS). As briefly discussed in the previous chapter, in 2001, the ILO project, initially set up to monitoring improvements for the US agreement, turned into Better Factories Cambodia (BFC). BFC continues to be an important industrial relations actor in Cambodia, and has, among other effects, instituted a strong role for buyers and retailers in the Cambodian garment industry (Serrano and Nuon, 2017).

Hun Sen is at the head of a Cambodian state still riddled with anxiety over the loss stability and political order (Kent, 2011) and determined to consolidate economic and political power, which stands at odds with liberal democratic values and the ideas of citizen participation which were enshrined it its new constitution (Ward and Mouyly, 2016). This contradiction is also visible in the industrial relations framework were "liberal democratic values as embedded in the industrial relations architecture sit uncomfortably with the regime ideologies and interests" (Ward and Mouyly, 2016, p. 259). The industrial relations infrastructure had to be rebuilt entirely after Cambodia's industry, labour force and governance institutions had been destroyed by the Khmer Rouge and subsequent decades of civil war (Reeve and Hwang, 2015).

The reforms of the industrial relations framework throughout the 1990s were largely based on the Cambodian Constitution and the 1997 Labour Law. The Labour Law introduced significant changes and "protections against union discrimination, obligations for employers to provide for collective worker representation at the workplace, comprehensive minimum terms and conditions of employment and an alternative dispute resolution process for labour disputes were all features of this progressive law" (Reeve and Hwang, 2015, p. 1). Furthermore, the Cambodian Constitution committed Cambodia to the principles of human rights as they are set out in international treaties, conventions and instruments (Reeve and Hwang, 2015). These substantive reforms were largely due to international pressure and the explosion of industrialisation driven by a rapidly expanding garment sector (Ward

and Mouyly, 2016). Although Cambodia's development trajectory was not just determined by external forces, but also by a centrally controlled political party developing a strong patronage system which to implement neoliberal reforms (Springer, 2011). With the outcome that:

"what constitutes `actually existing' neoliberalism in Cambodia as distinctly Cambodian are the ways in which the patronage system has allowed local elites to co-opt, transform, and (re)articulate neoliberal reforms through a framework that has `asset stripped' public resources (Springer, 2010a), thereby increasing peoples' exposure to corruption, coercion, and violence" (Springer, 2011, p. 2555).

These conditions and the contradictions within the industrial relations governance led to a largely ineffective implementation of the law and chronically low wages and frequent labour rights abuses continue throughout the garment industry. The situation of Cambodian workers improved in some areas (e.g. Child labour and forced labour) over the last decades and for a while the industrial relations framework had established norms which did facilitate worker participation (Ward and Mouyly, 2016). Most gains, however, have not been sustainable and despite BFC and TATA contributing to Cambodia's reputation as an ethical manufacturing hub, improvements were short lived (Arnold and Toh, 2010). As I will show later on, especially core rights of freedom of association and collective bargaining have been under threat. The Cambodian government and industrial relations governance specifically continue to rely on violence and authoritarianism (Ward and Mouyly, 2016), which will be further explored later on.

Cambodia therefore is not simply trying to marry the contradictions between externally imposed neoliberalism and externally imposed liberal democratic values, but also the contradictions between neoliberal reforms who aimed at opening the country up to economic elites and a firm control of politics and economic activity by a domestic elite through a wide-ranging patronage system. The international community has repeatedly and continues to repeatedly pressure Cambodia to establish a governance regime that is accountable to its citizens and promotes liberal democratic values, while focus on economic regimes which allow EU and US

brands and retailers to allow to exploit a cheap labour force. The industrial relations framework clearly shows these contradictions by being built on an infrastructure based on international standards and liberal democratic understandings of unions and employment relationships but implemented by a government with authoritarian tendencies aimed at centralising political and economic power within the CPP. These dynamics contributed to the state developing a hegemonic, rather than outright repressive labour control regime.

5.3 – Strategic Development of Industrial Relations since 2014 – state coercion and populist consent

I will argue that since 2014, the Cambodian state has attempted to create a hegemonic labour control regime based on coerced consent by the union movement. The industrial relations system has authoritarian flair but remains compatible with the BFC system of 'measurable' improvements in working conditions. Freedom of Association and Collective Bargaining rights however, those core rights that promote independent workers voices and protect their ability in shaping their own futures, are the obvious casualty of this kind of approach. The state has relied on a repressive labour governance structure reducing the power of independent trade unions and genuine worker representation, while simultaneously improving wages and offering a plethora of benefits to garment workers.

The reforms of the minimum wage setting mechanism is core to this strategy. I will show how the wage mechanism is key to the development of a 'hegemonic' labour control regime in Cambodia in the next section.

State Repression through Violence, Intimidation and Laws

'Kem Ley - Wipe your Tears Continue your Journey'13

before he was executed in Utah, said 'Don't mourn, Organize!'.

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¹³ 'Wipe your tears – continue your journey' was the slogan of Kem Ley's funeral. It reminded me of the the now famous quote from Joe Hill, who in one of his last telegram

In 2016 and 2018, the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC) classified Cambodia as one of the worlds' ten worst countries in the world to be a trade unionist, arguing that there is no guarantee of rights in the country (ITUC, 2016a, 2018). Citing numerous cases of trumped up charges, violence during strikes and protests, incidences of anti-union discrimination and the new minimum wage law as the basis for the categorisation. In fact, trade union protests against the law outside the national assembly in April 2016 turned violent when state security forces broke up the protest (ITUC, 2016a). Workers and unionists remained in fear throughout 2016 and 2017, with an independent unionist saying that: "even the local authority are also restricting and at the same time workers still in fear before of the crackdown was very bad. In terms of killing workers and arresting workers. Many workers were injured. More or less workers are afraid" (IU 02).

On the morning of the 10th of July 2016, prominent political analyst and outspoken critic of the Hun Sen government, Kem Ley was killed. Shot three times in the back of the head while drinking his morning coffee in his usual coffee shop in the petrol station corner Mao-Tse Tung and Monivong Boulevard in Phnom Penh.

We had only arrived in Phnom Penh a few days earlier. My partner and I only moved into our flat just north of Tuol Tom Puong the previous night. We were still acclimatizing to the Cambodian summer heat and slept with all available windows open, and so it was no wonder that we were woken up by sirens. The emergency services were coming down street 163 and passed our windows to get to Mao-Tse Tung. A few hours later, through the online pages of the English-speaking Phnom Penh Post, we found out that Kem Ley had been shot and killed by a single, thus far unknown, male assailant. The killer had been caught, but not yet identified. For the next few days the media would refer to him as Chuob Samlap, the name he had given the police upon his arrest. Chuob Samlap literally means 'Meet Kill'.

I didn't know who Kem Ley was that Sunday morning. The response in the media said, he was a 'political analyst' or at times 'government critic', 'outspoken critic' and, although never formally aligned with the opposition party, a 'government opponent'. The commentary in the English-speaking Cambodian news, as well as the little international coverage that the murder received was more or less clear in its implications. Although no one explicitly said so, the understanding was clearly that

it was a political motivated killing. That, once again, an outspoken critic of Hun Sen and his ruling Cambodian People's Party (CPP) was silenced under dubious circumstances.

As I started to attend meetings, interviews and became more familiar with Cambodian politics outside of just labour related news, I began to be able to place the murder of Kem Ley in a wider structure of state repression and violence. It also affected the way in which my research played out. In the weeks that followed I did not have a single meeting without Kem Ley being either explicitly mentioned or silently acknowledged. The incident made the all-encompassing state repression of dissent brutally apparent. The state has been using force to maintain and expand its power base in Cambodian politics for decades. A number of high profile activists had been killed in what is widely believed to be state sponsored assassinations. In 2012 the environmental and land rights activist Chut Wutty was killed, and in 2004 Chea Vichea was murdered as he was buying his morning newspaper. Chea Vichea, the leader of the first independent trade union the Free Trade Union of Workers of Kingdom of Cambodia (FTUWKC), was assassinated whilst in the midst of a large wage campaign.

Violence and intimidation of unionist is not simply directed at labour leaders operating on a national stage, but frequently experienced by workers in factories and trade unionists in workplaces. In 2012, a district governor shot three striking workers with impunity outside the Manhattan Special Economic Zones (Strangio, 2014), and a group of transport workers striking in Phnom Penh in 2015 were brutally attacked by a group of masked 'security'.

Kem Ley was never a unionist himself, though considered a friend by many independent unions, human and labour rights NGOs and women's organisations. When I met NGO_02 who is running a small women's and labour rights NGO in Phnom Penh, a few months later, they emphasized just how important Kem Ley had been to their organisation. Though not always at the front of the barricade, he had been an invaluable support for smaller community organisations in whatever way he could. Especially their NGO, who focus on organising garment and sex workers in Phnom Penh around health care, safety and security at the workplace and in their communities, had benefited hugely from his support. A Cambodian freelance

journalist writing on labour and human rights issues in Cambodia, had expressed very similar sentiments. We met the week after the murder and they were still visibly affected by the death of who they had considered a friend. The murder of Kem Ley was by many felt like a warning to a growing broad opposition and also an attempt to impose a level of fear of speaking out. Kem Ley was murder only days after publicly speaking to a Global Witness report about the corruption and patronage politics of Hun Sen and is family. Interestingly enough, this fear was not immediately obvious. Almost everybody I spoke to during my stay in Cambodia seemed very aware of the dangers of speaking up and out against the CPP and state, though very few said it would prevent them from doing so. NGO_02 spoke of being a nuisance without making themselves and their colleagues a target. Others seemed to have capitulated to the inevitability of getting hurt or arrested.

After speaking to IU_03 for over an hour, they walked me back down to the road. As we stepped outside we were talking about problems with the police and they pointed to the end of road to the first intersections. That's where police would regularly sit and watch their office building and very nonchalantly, added that they accept the fact their work may ultimately mean they would get hurt or at least imprisoned for a while. What was really problematic for them was that the police were pressuring the landlord, who was renting the office space the union, to revoke their lease. It was clear that he had accepted the fact that physical violence, intimidation, false imprisonment were daily risks that just came with the job.

The morning of Kem Ley's funeral I left the house and decided to go and meet the processions somewhere further down the route. Although open to the public, I felt it would have been inappropriate for me to attend the funeral mass as a mourner, and so decided I would simply observe part of the public procession. I also was unsure what it would look like and if it was safe to go. I expected it would be a protest more than a funeral. A funeral procession was to accompany Kem Ley's body from Wat Chas pagoda in the east of the city, all the way across Phnom Penh along Russian Boulevard and towards his home province of Takeo. I asked Ruol, one of the moto taxi drivers outside our front door, to drop me at the corner of Mao-Tse Tung and Russian Boulevard and although he said it's probably a bad idea for me to go, agreed to drop me there. Russian Boulevard crosses Mao-Tse Tung in an overpass.

I could watch from a distance as the procession approached, without interfering too much.

What I saw was not a funeral procession but clearly a march. A show of force of anyone opposing the CPP government. The front of the procession was made up of a group of about 40 monks, marching ahead of motorbikes and tuk tuks with flags and large cardboard signs with Kem Leys face. The marching monks were important as they openly, and at the very beginning of the processions, defied government orders against marching. The government had banned mourners from marching the previous week in an attempt to prevent the funeral from turning into outright dissent and public protest. Anyone taking part in the funeral procession was to do so only on their motorbikes or tuk tuks. All petrol stations along the route and all the way into Takeo were closed for the day. The monks defying the order at the front broke the power grip the state thought it had over the procedures. It became clear that there was nothing the state forces could do to prevent the protest march.

I stayed close to the intersection Mao-Tse Tung/Russian Boulevard for a good 15 minutes, watching a crowd slowly growing in density as it flowed past. The only thing that reminded me that this was a funeral were the large white placards with a black and white photo of Kem Ley and the slogan: "Wipe your tears; continue your journey" – both in Khmer and English. Though as the crowd was swelling to take up the entire width of Russian Boulevard, the funeral wagon approached and all that dissipated for a minute. Cars and trucks filled with people dressed all in white, the traditional colour of Cambodian funerals, went past and the body of Kem Ley went by laying on an open wooden wagon with four high pillars draped in flowers. Surrounding him were his wife and children. Though now for the first time grief was visible, anger still seemed the overwhelming sensation of the crowed. Not just from the people driving, cycling and occasionally marching along with the procession, but also the crowed standing by the side of the road.

I decided to start walking towards town along Russian Boulevard, opposing the flow of the funeral procession. I thought this would give me a better idea of the size of the protest. Walking down Russian Boulevard the intensity of the protest did not let up. I walked all the way until I reached the intersections Russian Boulevard and Monivong. Taking a right here would bring me back towards Tuol Sleng and our flat.

From the left came the procession. I had been walking for about 40 mins by this point and when I reached the intersection the procession had shown no sign of slowing down. Eventually, not long after turning left, I saw the end of the procession. It took nearly an hour walk walking against the stream to see all or most of it. My field notes from the day say I estimated at least 200'000 people. Newspaper coverage of the day said it was closer to one million. An exceptional show of support for Kem Ley and his family and an exceptional show of strength of maybe not 'the' opposition but definitely 'an' opposition to Hun Sen. This march had slowly and impressively passed the seat of the Prime Minister, the Peace Palace, along Russian Boulevard.

The funeral of Kem Ley represented the atmosphere in Cambodia in 2016 and leading up to the elections in 2017 and 2018. It illustrated the anger at the ruling party and their kleptocratic patronage system, the defiance in the face of threats but also the fatigue of activists faced with intimidation, violence and systematic aggression against any form of political opposition.

Laws and Judicial Harassment

The most striking new development in the post-2014 industrial relations environment in Cambodia was the 2016 Trade Union Law. The law was the first attempt at a legislative 'break' from the underlying liberal democratic industrial relations infrastructure. The Trade Union Law was widely criticised by trade unions in Cambodia, the International Labour Organisations, Global Unions and national NGOs. During the 105th International Labour Conference in Geneva, the Committee on the Application of Standards agreed to send a Direct Contact Mission (DCM) to Cambodia to evaluate the level of union repression in practice and the effects of the new Trade Union Law specifically. The mission took place in March 2017, and in the conclusions the group of experts flagged a number of concerns in the application of the Law. Most concerning was the interference by the Ministry of Labour over the trade union and Most Representative Status registration process, as well as judicial harassment of trade union members and the ambiguity over the right to strike (ILO, 2017a). Other stakeholders like the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC) raised concerns over the trade union registration process, the limitations on the right to strike, the ability of a court to dissolve unions in the event that they are in breach of one of the activities deemed to be inappropriate for unions as well as restrictions, and control over union finances (Serrano and Nuon, 2017).

One independent trade union leader emphasised the fear of state influence over union finances saying that:

"If [there] are no politics involved we don't mind to submit [our finances] to the government, because our report should be published and send to all our members and our activity and financial report should have a proper audit and send to all our donors. We are fine to also send it to the government but we do not know their intentions, we are scared of interference of the union movement" (IU_02)

This was emphasised by others who said that it was still very difficult for many unions to survive purely on membership fees and many independent unions, those that are not on the employer or state payroll, survive through international donors (IU_03, IU_01, IU_02). The government could well use the overseas support as a sign of foreign interference in Cambodian affairs and shut them down.

Another worrying development for many union leaders was the inclusion of Article 20, which states that any union leader, manager, and those responsible for the administration of a trade union, may not have been convicted of a crime at any time. Many independent union leaders do not trust the judicial system and feel that Article 20 could be used as a way to undermine legitimate union activities. IU_03 said that the judicial system is:

"influenced by the ruling party, the powerful. The employers can take us to the court as well. So it is easy if they do not want someone to be a union leader, for example me or any other. They just follow some incitement case and get us convicted. Even though they do not arrest me or put me in jail they can convict me and say you are convicted because you commitment the incitement for example and you are 6 months sentence but sentence is suspended.

And then on the record was convicted and then I cannot be a union leader" (IU_03).

This is especially problematic as a number of independent union leaders still have ongoing court cases from the 2013 and 2014 wage strikes in Phnom Penh. An independent unionist (IU_01) told me that he has been severely limited in his actions over the last few years because his court case continues to be undecided. This has caused him to be careful in fear that if he is to continue to speak up and organise workers, the case will be decided against him. This level of judicial harassment was repeatedly criticised by a number of brands, NGOs and Global Unions over the course of the last five years.

Another example is the draft law on the National Minimum Wage. The draft aims to extend the current minimum wage to all sectors covered by the labour law. This would significantly improve wages in the construction, tourism and food and beverages sectors.

The Law draft, however, included articles which would significantly threaten freedom of association and collective bargaining by trade unions and other industrial relations actors (ITUC, Solidarity Center and CCHR, 2017). The most worrying was Article 26 which prohibits unions involved in the wage setting process from protesting any form of 'objection' to the outcome of the process. This would essentially reduce the trade union movements role to one where they are sitting at the LAC - or its proposed successor, the National Minimum Wage Council (NMWC) (IU_01).

Activists and unionist were also harassed by the courts in other ways. In response to the Kem Ley funeral three prominent activists, including prolific and high profile labour activist Moeun Tola, were arrested for embezzlement charges. The accusation was that the three of them, in their capacity as members of the funeral committee, embezzled funds donated to the funeral fund. Kem Ley's family denied that money went missing and all three accused continue to deny the charges, still they were charged in abstentia and went to live abroad. International pressure has since brought the Minsitry of Labour to call upon the courts to drop the case against Tola, which it did in July 2018. The Kem Ley case was also the basis for a defamation suit against former CNRP leader Sam Rainsy, who accused the Hun Sen government of orchestrating the killing of Kem Ley. Rainsy lost the legal case and

as consequence stayed in exile and had to retire from the CNRP (remember the new law on political parties passed earlier in 2016 said that parties whose leaders are convicted criminals may be disbanded by the supreme court).

In January 2018, the ruling CPP adopted a new 5-year strategy to increase internal surveillance and security to monitor any 'opposition forces'. This was retrenched by Phnom Penh's municipal Police Chief, Chuon Sovann, who in March 2018 told authorities to:

"Strengthen all the expert measures in [the] management and control of the information of civil society organisations, unions and communities having opposition tendencies both inside the country and outside the country attempting to cause social instability" (Dara, 2018, p. 1).

In this vein, the Cambodian Assembly in February 2018 passed changes to the constitution and criminal court which included restrictions of the right to freedom of association and included a *lese majeste* law making it illegal to disrespect the King (Kijewski, 2018). This general fear of opposition and political crackdown could also be seen in the shutting of the government critical Cambodia Daily Newspaper in 2017, and the arrest of two Radio Free Asia journalists and one Australian freelance journalist on espionage charges the same year.

Consent through Benefits

In 2017, Prime Minister Hun Sen began a large-scale populist offensive to coincide with the lead up to the 2018 National Elections and the ongoing repression outlined above. The PM started weekly meetings with garment workers to discuss their concerns and responded with a number of new initiatives (Meta, 2017). In his first meeting in August 2017, he announced that employers will cover their workers' contribution to the National Social Security Fund (NSSF), that workers will be able to avail of public transport for free for the next two years, and that a pension plan for garment workers would start in 2019 (Sokhean and Peter, 2017). Since then, in regular intervals, the PM has announced more initiatives including lower water prices for garment workers (Sokhean, 2017a) and crucially began to address concerns over fixed-duration-contracts (FDCs) (Sineat and Handley, 2018). These short-term

contracts lasting typically 3 months, have been a key concern of the garment industry and have been the used as a tool to prevent unionisation and to let pregnant workers go without paying the required maternity benefits (HRW, 2015). Although the draft labour law amendments that have been published by the Ministry in 2018 of Labour in Response after Hun Sen's announcement, do not yet address union concerns fully (Sineat and Handley, 2018)(IU_04).

In a garment industry that continues to be overwhelmingly young women workers, a promise by the PM for increase in maternity benefits was very welcomed. Before 2018, garment workers would be eligible for 50% of their salary for 3 months. This has been increased to 120% of their salary for 3 months, with the government paying the extra 70% (Sineat, 2017). In the first three months of 2018, the state had spent 1.2 million USD in additional maternity benefits according to the NSSF (Kunthear, 2018). The PM also offered free health care to workers (Sokhean, 2017b).

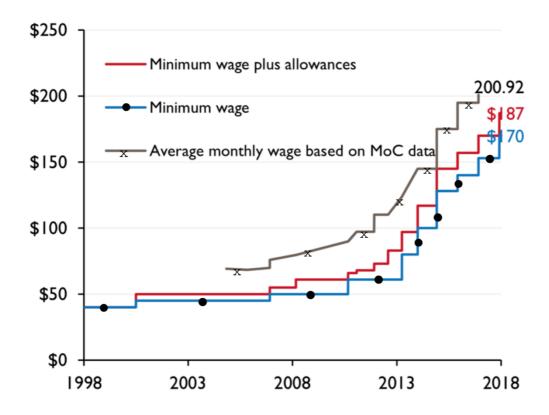
5.4 – Minimum Wage Setting in the Garment Industry

The reforms of the minimum wage setting mechanisms were core to the development of the industrial relations system based on benefits at the expense of rights, and the two-pronged coercion and consent strategy by the government.

The minimum wage setting mechanism has changed significantly since 2014. As explained in **Chapter 4**, the large minimum wage campaign in 2013 and 2014 had a number of important outcomes. First, the minimum wage setting mechanism through the Labour Advisory Committee (LAC) under the Ministry of Labour and Vocational Training (MoLVT) became more 'transparent' and 'evidence-based'. It also began to undertake a yearly adjustment process, with meetings of tripartite technical working group and the slightly smaller tripartite Labour Advisory Committee taking place in August, September and October every year. This process has led to an increase of real wages year on year since 2014, something that the industry had not seen since its beginnings in the mid 1990s. In fact, real wages declined in the industry from 2001 to 2013. Since then, the minimum wage has risen significantly, and with it the real wages of workers. The average monthly wage of a Cambodian garment worker earned during full-time standard working week, remains very close to the minimum wage (ILO, 2018). In 2017 when the minimum base wage

(without bonuses and overtime) was 153USD, the average wage for a full-month and full-time workers was 161.97USD (ILO 2018). Her average income, however, is markedly higher, as excessive overtime as well as statutory benefits, and in some cases incentive bonuses are paid on top off the minimum wage. Seniority and hierarchies within factories are usually distinguished through bonuses, rather than a higher base wage. Overtime pay, and bonuses have not increased since the yearly wage increases started in 2013, thus the average yearly increase of total incomes has therefore not been as significant as the minimum wage figures below may suggest. The ILO (2018) also suggests that as a consequence of the higher minimum wage the overall wage structure in factories was compressed. The difference between different position within the factory and seniority has reduced as the minimum increased – which has contributed to the average wage being relatively close to the minimum wage figure set by the government. Interesting is also that average overtime in 2017 increased and the percentage of the overall increase in income from overtime pay also increased. Graph 5.1 shows the growth in the minimum base wage (without statutory bonuses), the growth of the minimum wage (with statutory bonuses) and the average monthly wage not in regular working hours (so including overtime pay and additional bonuses). All figures are in nominal USD per month.

Graph 5. 2: Cambodian Garment Worker Wage Increase



Source: ILO 2018

The average income, and by extension the minimum wage, continues to be far below what a worker and their family require to afford a decent standard of living. Unions and NGOs have said that in particular the steep rise in garment worker rent for their accommodation, market prices and electricity have meant that they have not seen a significant increase in their standard of living despite the significant wage increases (NGO_03). The research conducted by the unions for the annual wage negotiations in the two previous years also shows that the necessary minimum income for a garment worker to cover her basic expenses is around 226USD, and this should be paid in regular working time. The ILO calculations suggest that in 2017 the average monthly wage was at around 200USD for factory workers, including overtime. The current wage therefore remains clearly below the standard set out in the Cambodian labour law and significantly below what is necessary for a decent standard of living. Nevertheless, the significant increases in the minimum wage since 2013 should not be underestimated.

Minimum wage setting in Cambodia is regulated under the 1997 Labour Law which stipulates that a minimum wage shall be set and adjusted at regular intervals.

Currently only the garment and footwear sector in Cambodia has a minimum wage, which was set at 40USD in 1997, and adjusted only four times between then and 2013, which saw this period having a minimum wage of 80USD. Since then, yearly adjustments have been made by the Minister of Labour. The wage is set by *Prakas* (ministerial orders) by the Minister in charge of labour who receives recommendations from the tripartite Labour Advisory Committee (LAC). The labour law, in line with ILO Convention 131 on minimum wage setting (ILO, 2016b), which Cambodia has not ratified, stipulates that when the minimum wage is adjusted the following issues should be taken into account:

- a) The needs of workers and their families in relation to the general level of salary in the country, the cost of living, social security allowances, and the comparative standard of living of other social groups;
- b) Economic factors, including the requirements of economic development, productivity, and the advantages of achieving and maintaining a high level of employment.

In response to the state violence and disruptive worker action, the International Labour Organisation (ILO) facilitated a tripartite workshop with unions, employers and the Minsitry of Labour, in April 2014, to discuss the wage negotiation process. Out of that workshop, the tripartite partners decided on the following new principles for the minimum wage setting process (ILO, 2016b):

- (i) Minimum wages should be adjusted on a regular, annual basis.
- (ii) A preferred model is gradual, steady, adjustments.
- (iii) Recommendations should be based on a process of constructive discussions in the LAC.
- (iv) Before making a recommendation on a specific minimum wage level, the committee should aim to achieve a consensus among all members, and only failing this, hold a vote, and
- (v) To achieve a balanced result, both social and economic criteria should be considered.

The workshop also agreed that a number of specific criteria should be the basis for any new minimum wage adjustments. These were:

- 1) Needs of workers and their families;
- 2) Cost of living;
- 3) Inflation;
- 4) Productivity;
- 5) Competitiveness;
- 6) Labour market/employment; and
- 7) Profitability of the sector.

The reforms of the wage negotiation process were welcomed by the unions (IU_01; IU_02) as it represented significant improvement to the ad-hoc and opaque process previously used. Not only did it lead to yearly minimum wage adjustments, it also showed a change in mentality by the employers and the government on how often and in what way the minimum wage should be negotiated (IU_02). The ILO also saw the reforms as progress, as the new criteria provided a basis for a more evidence-based approach to wage negotiations (ILO_03 & ILO_04). Trade unions also accepted that, at least in theory, the reforms are a positive development. One independent unionist said that an evidence-based process that is genuinely participatory and avoids unnecessary conflict is what they are aiming and campaigning for (IU_02).

The Labour Advisory Committee and technical working group on wages, continue to be heavily controlled by the government and employer interests. The LAC is a tripartite committee with 14 government representatives, seven employer representatives and seven trade union representatives. Of the seven union representatives, however, only two are independent from either state or employer control. During the negotiations in 2015 for example, unions, for the first time and with the help of IndustriALL, agreed on a figure of 140USD (GUF_01) as the official union figure in the negotiations. It looked as though the unions were united. Ultimately, however, pro-government unions folded at the LAC and voted with the government's figure. According to the independent unions, it is very difficult to agree on a common negotiation strategy and outcome, as highlighted when IU_02 told me:

"Even the unions that are pro-opposition party and the other union that split from us, the other people who represent the real interest of the worker we can come to a common agreement very easy. But the only thing is if you want to scope all the unions in the country and you call it like a common agreement, yes, it is a fake one. ILO usually tries to coordinate it but its always a fake one, not a real one."

The new wage setting process was designed to be more evidence-based, in an attempt to create more balanced negotiation and provide some stability in the sector and avoid the kind of violence seen in 2014. This was welcomed by employers and unions alike. The above mentioned tripartite workshop in 2014, facilitated by the ILO, agreed that the 'evidence' used throughout the discussion should be based on official government statistics (ILO_03). It is, however, very difficult to gather all the relevant and up-to-date evidence needed to inform the seven criteria outlined above. There is also significant political disagreement over how to use this data. The ILO wage project in Cambodia is heavily engaged in collecting this data every year and in facilitating training workshops for employer representatives and unionists on how to interpret and use the data. The project does not suggest a figure but rather aims to provide the tripartite partners with the tools to come together for an 'evidence-based' process. The government statistics and data used for some of these criteria, however, is often unreliable or simply unavailable.

A good example related to the above is the discussion over 'productivity' during the 2017 round of wage negotiations. The ILO calculations (based on figures from the National Institute of Statistics and Ministry of Commerce) put the productivity increase in 2016 at 9.3% (ILO, 2017b). A productivity increase of over 9% is next to impossible and likely due to measuring errors. The ILO says that part of the calculation error comes from an adjustment in the way that Ministry of Labour counted the workforce in 2016, which means productivity was probably underestimated in 2015 and overestimated in 2016. During the negotiations, the social partners ultimately agreed to use a more long-term average to measure productivity improvements. Productivity was then calculated based on the value-added in the sector divided by the number of workers. The figure for value-added in real terms was relatively uncontroversial, discrepancy exists, however, over the number of workers in the industry. In 2018, the Ministry of Labour and Ministry of Industry almost simultaneously released conflicting numbers of workers in the

garment industry (Sokhorng, 2018). This could significantly alter the productivity figures. Furthermore, there is a distinct possibility that the rise in unauthorised subcontracting has substantially inflated productivity figures, because the production taking place in these plants would not be included in the overall export figures while the workforce in any unauthorised factories would not be counted. Hence a calculation of productivity based on value-added/worker is inflated through the use of unauthorised subcontracting and through the miscounting of the overall workforce more generally.

Other contentious figures are those used to estimate the 'needs of workers and their families'. This requires both an understanding of living costs in Cambodia, as well as the size and structure of an average family. The last labour force survey conducted in Cambodia is from 2012 and gives an average household size. Workers and trade unions challenged the numbers in the survey by questioning the number of dependents for each worker. The argument is that, in reality, a weak social security coverage means that garment workers do not just support their children but are also the primary source of pensions for their parents and often support the extended family. The level of remittances to family in the provinces amongst garment workers is high, demonstrating the level of support they provide parents and extended family. The tripartite workshop on minimum wage setting reforms agreed in 2014 that the basis for 'needs of workers and their families' will be the level of the real adjusted poverty line. This will be multiplied by the average number of household members and provide a number below which the minimum wage cannot legally be set. Using the poverty line as a basis, however, remains a contentious issue for unions, and independent unions have pushed for a different base level. In 2016, the group of IndustriALL affiliated unions, which includes unions from all shades, with the support of IndustriALL, FES and the American Centre for Labour Solidarity (ACILS), conducted a survey to gather data on the living costs (expenditure) and income of garment workers. In 2017, CLC/CCAWDU by themselves re-ran a similar survey to inform the 2017 wage negotiations. However, both surveys were disregarded during the negotiations as the discrepancies between the survey methodologies made it difficult to show changes in the living standard of workers and therefore made it difficult to delineate an evidence-based argument in 2017. Nevertheless, the research showed a rise in living costs of garment workers above inflation and higher household numbers. It also showed that the real average wage is not much higher than the statutory minimum. In 2017, the government announced it would conduct its own, large scale survey of garment workers' expenses and incomes to evaluate the living and working conditions better. The survey was due to be released in time for the 2017 wage negotiations but as of July 2018 had still not been made public.

In addition, removing productivity discussions from the wider industry situation in terms of corruption, textile imports, and transportation infrastructure means it focuses almost exclusively on labour productivity, obfuscating the responsibilities of employers and the government (INGO_01). Issues around competitiveness of the industry assume that it is entirely under the control of the Cambodian government, factory owners and more important workers to determine what makes the industry competitiveness. The standard assumption is that higher wages will ultimately make the industry less competitive. This avoids wider discussions on the supply chain dynamics and forces trade union to accept a large amount of responsibility for wages as a key base for competitiveness. One activist said that the discussions on productivity and competitiveness cannot trump the survival of workers. They argued that the minimum wage should be set on workers' needs and that from that minimum baseline issues around productivity and competitiveness can be used to collectively bargain for higher wages in individual factories or the industry (INRO 01).

Furthermore, the engagement of union leaders with the data was limited. Unions pointed out that a day-long workshop from the ILO was not enough to allow the union leaders to confidently negotiate on the basis of the data: building a genuine understanding of the meaning and limitations of data, the options to obtain and collect them, the national and international sources of conducting plausibility checks and benchmarking exercises on data and survey results, and the theoretical economic relationship between different data, takes much more than one day.

Ultimately, although workers and independent unions have had more input and have managed to create significant improvements in the wage, the minimum wage setting process remains firmly in control of the state. The process cannot be removed from its political context, as the evidence-base is abandoned over power-political and party-political maneuvering by the different stakeholders. Since 2014, Prime Minister Hun Sen added an extra 5USD on top of whatever wage figure was decided at the

LAC. As well as populist posturing, it was a clear sign that the 'evidence-based' decisions reached by the LAC were irrelevant. The decision remained firmly in the hand of the government and even more so personally at the discretion of Hun Sen. This was one way to increase his appeal with garment workers, who during and after the national elections in 2013 were very close to the opposition CNRP.

In practice, therefore, the process is restrictive and limiting industrial relations and trade union activism in Cambodia. The 'evidence' and criteria used in the reformed wage negotiations is limiting the maneuverable political space for workers. The negotiations descend into purely political manipulation of data and ultimately it is the power realities outside of the negotiating room that matter. The influence of the employers over the government, pressure from brands and retailers, and most crucially the extent of the independent unions' ability to organise strikes and demonstrations (and how these can affect the outcome of elections) is what determines the outcome of wage negotiations, at least as much as evidence. Hughes (2007) argued that when it was first founded, the LAC was an attempt to separate unions and party politics by removing the negotiations from the grassroots organising. The committee has undoubtedly improved social dialogue and provided unions with a stronger voice in representing workers behind these closed doors. The whole process, however, remains firmly in state control and its reforms are a clear attempt to de-politicise wage setting by trying to isolate the process from the strengths of the workers movement. One of my respondents said that: "Wages however were set and raised only based on the strength of worker resistance. A strong and militant campaign would lead to a better wage" (INGO_01). The LAC and annual wage setting is a consultative process at best, not a negotiation, and very far from a collective bargaining approach. A national minimum wage system set up this way alone - even a participatory and 'evidence-based' one - is unlikely to lead to living wages in global supply chains in the long term.

5.5 – Minimum Wage Setting and Cambodia's Hegemonic Labour Control Regime

Gramsci (1971) writes that hegemony is a capitalist system in which the powerful can govern with the consent of the subordinate classes, and where elements of coercion are necessary only in the background to maintain the limits of the

acceptable behaviour. Though Cambodia in general represents a more authoritarian than hegemonic system, the challenges to the CPP power, especially by the labour movement, have led to industrial relations reforms based on a minimum wage setting mechanism which I argue can be characterised more as a hegemonic than authoritarian labour control regime.

As **Chapter 3** already escribed, patterns of global production, at the core, are simply 'networks of embodied labour' (Cumbers, Nativel and Routledge, 2008), where all value added is based on labour and the labour process which converts labour power into profits (Taylor *et al.*, 2015). Not only does the capitalist labour process determine labour conditions (Selwyn, 2015) it also allows analysis to focus on "control, consent and resistance at the point of production" (Taylor *et al.*, 2015, p. 4). This process is also constituted by – and constitutive of – workers' ability to shape their own futures, their structural and associational power (Wright, 2000).

The literature on the labour process and hegemonic control at the workplace and within the state is extensive and very developed. For Burawoy (1982), the development of hegemony occurs through the labour process at the workplace – through the political and ideological apparatus of production. Through managerial strategy based on a social wage and a collective bargaining system, the company relies less and less on coercion and more on consent, developing a hegemonic regime based on class compromise (Burawoy, 2013). Burawoy (1982) also shows the way in which hegemonic production regimes were affected by state intervention and state development, as well as how international competition and global trade reversed some of the protection labour gained through the process of building these hegemonic systems.

The Cambodian case, and what I call the 'hegemonic labour control regime', is different for two reasons. First, the industry is embedded in a hyper-competitive global supply chain with almost all capital foreign owned, meaning labour never enjoyed some of the protections of industrial production that the US and Europe historically had. Workers in Cambodia never had a social wage and the wage bargaining system came with the hegemonic production regimes in the US and western Europe. The idea of a class-compromise is next to impossible under the circumstances of global production. Second, industrial relations in Cambodia largely

play out at a national level, rather than a workplace level. As described above the industrial relations framework is a national political framework and so much of the mechanisms controlling labour sit at a national level. Of course, the labour process in Cambodian factories is also important and should be examined, but as its stands the framework of the labour process and labour control regime is determined through the political and ideological structures of the state, rather than the production process¹⁴. Similar state ideological coordination of industrial relations have been seen in Soviet and communist state labour control regimes, where unions where centrally controlled to play a dual-function of protecting workers and encouraging productivity (Pravda & Ruble 1986 cf. Anner 2015b).

The geographical fragmentation of production and the creation of global supply chains, has changed structural power of labour (Mayer and Pickles, 2010). Labour power is determined also by the local labour control regimes (Riisgaard and Hammer, 2011; Pattenden, 2016). According to Anner (2015a) there are three ideal types of labour control regimes in the global garment supply chain; state, market and employer control regimes. These all correspond to specific types of union strategies, as workers and trade unions try to circumvent or are constrained and compromised by the barriers imposed by these regimes.

In Viet Nam and China, for example, strict state labour control regimes with a centralised, usually pro-government, trade union leads to few international campaigns but high numbers of wildcat strikes at factory level. Alternatively, an employer control regime which exhibits high levels of violence against unionists is more likely to lead to international solidarity campaigns (Anner, 2015a). Lastly, in a market labour control regime, unions and workers are more likely to lead to international accords (Anner, 2015a).

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¹⁴ There are other ways in which this dynamic is important. Part of it is the type of industry, garment being a very low-skilled, high intensity, low waged production process, makes it more vulnerable to external pressures. The steel industry of the northern United States, where Burawoy did his research, were protected from external pressures in a very different way. It was also not the key industry providing more than 10% employment national wide.

Although Cambodian unions have experienced a high level of state repression and interference, as well as high level of violence, the union movement is not in its entirety state controlled. Independent national union federations exist and although they make up the minority of the unions in the industry, they are some of the most effective trade unions. Furthermore, a relatively fast-growing industry and a somewhat saturated labour market means that market pressures are less. Garment industries in countries with high levels of unemployment – a large reserve army of labour if you wish – like in Bangladesh for example, have a much stronger market-control mechanisms.

Anner (2015a) argues that "labor is more likely to pursue transnational solidarity when blocked from resolving its demands through domestic structures" (Anner, 2015b, p. 23) and wildcat strikes prevail when high levels of state control exist. The Cambodian garment industry was characterised by high levels of wildcat strikes in the past decade. Strike numbers were steadily rising in the industry and only very few of them ever fulfilled the steps necessary for a 'legal' strike in the labour law. Cambodia has also had a large number of international solidarity action and global attention on the garment industry. Therefore, a combination of state and employer labour control regimes were present in Cambodia prior to 2013. The development of the industrial relations framework in Cambodia since 2013 and the wage setting reforms in particular, are changing this however.

Here, I will argue that the Cambodian hegemonic system is very much a state authoritarian system and an attempt to consolidate state power, which in the context of global supply chains shows different dynamics than those that Burawoy (1982) described. The Cambodian state never lost its despotic nature and therefore needs to be incorporated into the analysis. It also shows little attempt to create consent at factory level, rather the state is creating a national wage negotiation process that it can control centrally but that at the same time, at least nominally, enjoys the consent of labour.

The reformed minimum wage setting process enjoys an element of consent. Trade unions are supportive of the more transparent and evidence-based wage setting mechanism, in theory, and saw the reforms as a win for the labour movement. In practice, however, the process has turned out to be very restrictive. The

simultaneous campaign of intimidation and process of legislative restriction are limiting 'legitimate' union work at the negotiation table, which is firmly in control by the state. Soon, coercion will only be necessary in situations where 'illegitimate' unions are breaking the law and refuse to partake in a 'transparent', 'evidence-based' and 'consultative' minimum wage setting process.

One trade union leader pointed out that in the aftermath of the national strikes it has become more difficult to mobilise workers because: "more or less workers are afraid. And at the same time worker they will get their salary improved every year and so the number of strikes is less" (IU_02).

Restricting rights and using coercion as a way to cement the clear limits of what constitutes legitimate trade union activity reduces the political space for unions by simply allowing them to consent to state-controlled processes. In this way the state has effectively outlawed all possibility of associational worker power through which they may show their strengths in the negotiations. In previous wage negotiations, grassroots organising and politicising wages provided unions with leverage to push for higher wages (INGO_01). One labour activists pointed out that: "The question of leverage is very important as workers need to reserve the right to do what their want amongst all the consensus" (INGO_01). Ultimately the aftermath of the wage campaign saw the government engage with the unions on wages "while slowly restricted all other rights. So the state is using wages almost as a way to distract from restricted all other rights through the TU law" (INGO_01).

All of this effectively disarms wages as an area of contention. The RGC has a strong interest in 'de-politicising' wages in Cambodia. As we have seen in 2013/2014, wages in particular are an area where trade unions can galvanise a large power base. The national strike and protest caused large-scale disruption of Cambodia's largest export industry, which not only slowed down the accumulation of profits during that time, but also sent a signal around the world that Cambodia has unstable and disruptive labour relations. For an industry that is 93% owned by foreign direct investors, this is a significant concern. Furthermore, the national strike escalated largely as it coincided with protest by the opposition party CNRP who refused to recognise the outcome of the 2013 national elections. The CNRP had declared wages for garment workers a corner stone of its election campaign. Garment worker

wages were therefore a key concern of the ruling CPP domestically, and due to the globalised nature of the industry and its reliance on foreign-direct investment, peaceful industrial relations were important.

Generally, the power of the independent unions in the negotiation comes through the power they have outside the negotiating table (IU_01 and INGO_01). The leverage of the independent unions in 2014 came through the mass mobilisation at Christmas 2013, and through the crackdown was significantly hampered in the following years. In 2015 and 2016, the preparedness of unions and workers to organise was almost non-existent (IU_02). The union movement found it very difficult to organise workers against the Trade Union Law. Not just did it come after a severe crackdown with five workers murdered only two years before, but it also came at a time when the wage setting reforms were taking place, making it especially difficult for workers to risk their jobs and physical wellbeing over a new law as they saw wages increase. INGO_01 told me that the state was engaging with the unions on wages and including the union in wage negotiations while restricting all other rights. This 'benefits at the expense of rights' strategy was at the core of government actions and reforms since 2013.

The reformed minimum wage setting mechanism also limits the leverage of unions working through the global supply chain directly with global campaign organisations or buyers. It is effectively preventing unions from trying to circumvent the state and its enforcement mechanism and use the power of the lead firms. The focusing on national criteria and restrictions on union rights removes wages from the logic of the global supply chain. It even attempts to remove it from the logic of employer and worker bargaining. The reformed minimum wage setting system makes collective bargaining at factory and sectoral level difficult as it is not predicated on strengthen representative worker organisations but to undermine independent trade unions and worker organising. It is also not based on collective bargaining but specifically on state control and coerced union consent. This is particularly problematic in the context of global supply chains. One of the most important mechanisms to improve wages and working conditions in global supply chains is through strong unions who enjoy rights of freedom of association and collective – with the possibility of creating leverage through strikes and work stoppages. Removing this will create further

barriers to find systematic solutions to decent work deficits in the global garment industry.

Chapter 4 has shown how in 2013 and 2014 the 'society-oriented' elements of the labor movement became the driving force behind a large-scale global campaign. Although the independent trade unions do not have nearly as many members as the pro-government unions, they were able to and strategically did mobilise large parts of the garment and footwear workforce. They were, partly due to their internal structures and believes, able to create effective coalitions with NGOs and international allies and mobilise a much broader base then simply their membership. This was crucial to the campaign and also to the threat to CPP control in 2014. In the aftermath of the campaign, however, the union alliances and coalitions began to break down. Different factions within the independent/opposition union movement began to split and new rivalries were created. In some cases, over the need to become an even more 'society-oriented' trade union movement, which is near to its membership and engages in broad reaching social campaigns – not only based around workers concerns (IU_03; NGO_01).

The trade unions and labour NGOs did attempt to regroup and jointly organised an International Workers' Day march in 2017. The key unions and NGOs – CLC, CCU, Solidarity House and CENTRAL – were involved and came together, while other independent unions organised their own events. I was invited to attend the march and showed up on time at the agreed place at Wat Phnom. Though large banners had been put up around Wat Phnom, I could not see any unions or workers. No flags or groups of people waiting around. I texted a contact of mine, who forwarded me a mobile number of one of the TUSSOs staff to call. I called and found out that Wat Phnom was the decoy location, and that after city hall had banned the protest march, they had simply moved the starting point. The new assembly point was much closer to the national assembly increasing the chance the march would actually make it to there.

The aim of the demonstration was to deliver a petition to the National Assembly calling for a higher minimum wage and an end to the new Trade Union Law. About 3000 workers and trade unionist gather on Sotheros Boulevard. By the time I arrived, it was already very busy, and the atmosphere was visible tense. Workers were

wearing read headbands with white writing in Khmer which read "our rights!". The crowd was just getting organised when military police in full riot gear came by the truckload and blocked the road leading to the national assembly. It was obvious for a while that no one really knew how this would turn out. Everyone was standing around nervous while some union leaders were negotiating with the officer in charge. It was an exceptionally hot day in Phnom Penh and after a while the crowd was starting to be exhausted – my fieldnotes from the day speak of a very tense atmosphere in the sweltering heat of authoritarianism.

Eventually the march was allowed to proceed approximately 500 meters to within a few hundred metres of the National Assembly. We were stopped again outside the Australian Embassy on National Assembly Boulevard, and this time luckily in the shade of a the construction site of a large skyscraper. After a series of speeches from trade unionist and NGO activists one of the CPP parliamentarians did actually come out to greet the workers and receive the petition. Against all expectations she arrived, relaxed and without any security. She greeted the workers, thanked them for coming, gladly accepted the petition and gave a short speech about how well the CPP had taken care of them. She successfully turned the protest, which began very tense and in a confrontation with police into a CPP election rally. This reflects well the way the ruling party has forced trade unions and workers into a difficult position where they fear to speak up and when they carefully do speak up, their ideas are co-opted by the ruling party into a populist tool.

The attempt to reignite a strong worker campaign for higher wages, more rights and against the CPP who was already campaign for the commune elections later in the summer, failed. The relationship between the actors involved in the event also did not improve significantly. The minimum wage figure, of 208USD, which the petition demanded was included by the CLC without any real consultation of other unions and declared here prior to any union strategy sessions on the 2017 wage process had started.

The Mayday event and the broader development of trade unionism in Cambodia also came as a response to the development of the new labour control regime. The regime clearly put trade unions under pressure to change, adapt or at least engage with the new realities. While some decided to engage more in the social movement

activism and join forces with NGOs to build a broad society-oriented labour movement which engages with the informal sector and those less well organised than the garment industry, those independent unions in the garment sector who wanted to continue to organise around wages had to comply with the new rules. The elements of the trade union movement which went the social movement route, no longer play a role in the minimum wage campaign and have in some way been marginalised. Their NGO allies have also been under intense government scrutiny and have almost been stifled. This does not mean that they are not still supporting workers in workplaces in effective ways, but rather that the ability to mobilise at a national level has reduced significantly.

The largest independent union federations, which continue to engage in the wage process are struggling with the need to comply to the new laws and regulations. After decades of trying to buy off the independent unions the state changed tactics and simply set the rules for acceptable behavior so narrow that trade unions almost had to engage in a very limited 'market-oriented' form of trade union organising. The minimum wage process sets strict rules and in combination with the new trade union law – and its registration and reporting requirements – the outcome can only really be that trade unions consent to an outcome predetermined by the state. Forcing unions into a situation where their legitimate activity is restricted to consenting to a process that is controlled by the government, particularly damages the independent union movement. They increasingly struggle to differentiate themselves from the pro-government or employer-controlled unions, as they can no longer confront them and are reduced to being legal advocates in individual labour disputes or representatives in a closed-door negotiation where they are no longer allowed to publicly oppose the outcome. The reforms of the industrial relations framework and the minimum wage setting mechanisms in particular have effectively undermined the independent union movement and likely made the conditions for what Wright (2000) calls a 'positive class compromise' impossible.

This drive by the Cambodian state to develop a more hegemonic than outright authoritarian control regime can least partially be explained by the international attention and pressure the garment industry in particular gets. The continued reliance on foreign direct investment, contracts from increasingly reputation conscious buyers and trade preferences in the EU give incentive to the state to

appear at least somewhat democratic. Although these actors are not known for their decisive actions when faced with clear workers' rights violations, in general Cambodia does continue to rely on international reputation (Ward and Mouyly, 2016).

5.6 - Conclusion

This chapter has shown how the developments since the widespread labour unrests in Cambodia have provided higher wages for workers but at the expense of rights. The Cambodian government embarked on a series of industrial relations reforms and policy initiatives aimed at establishing a hegemonic labour control regime. In this context, the rights of trade unions are restricted while wages were increased through a state-controlled minimum wage process. This process effectively depoliticised wages while coercing unions, especially independent trade unions, to consent to the wage setting process.

The process has ostensibly become more 'evidence-based' and unions given a seat at the table. Though the evidence is shaky at best and ultimately any 'evidence base' presented by the independent unions ignored. The state and Prime Minister Hun Sen himself exert a level of control that contradicts any assertion of such a process. Unions do not have any more influence over the wage setting process now that they did before the reforms, but their abilities to organise workers and develop grassroot campaigns for wages has been systematically disbanded. At the same time any effective political opposition has also been restricted, diminishing a key strategy of unions.

And still wages in the sector kept rising and the populist charm offensive by the ruling CPP has delivered a surprising list and level of benefits to workers. With the threat of political opposition during the commune elections in 2017, and with a view on the national elections in 2018, the state has engaged in a programme of benefits with the aim of guaranteeing political support by the nearly 800'000 strong garment and footwear sector workforce. This again, though, came as the consequence of the hegemonic labour control regime where the state has used the combination of

benefits and restriction of rights in an attempt to create a politically pliable trade union movement.

Chapter 6: Transnational Labour Organising and Campaigning on Living Wages for Cambodian Garment Workers

6.1 - Introduction

One of the most vivid memories from my first research trip to Phnom Penh is struggling to focus on the welcome speech given by the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung (FES) Resident Representative during the regional workshop on 'Living Wages in the Garment Industry'. I could barely hear their 'dear sisters and brothers' greeting in proud social democratic German tradition, over the constant interruptions. We were seated at round tables in a windowless function room, brimming yellow from the reflections of white lights against the golden seat covers and table clothes. Each table had a different trade union delegation with the TUSSO, European Trade Union representatives and myself, seated at the last table in the very back. It took me a while to realise that what I was listening to were not other conversations but the persistent hum of at least 5 simultaneous translations. Almost every trade union delegation had their own translator and behind us at a small table in the corner of the room was the simultaneous Khmer translation. The Cambodian delegation being the biggest and the workshop taking place in Phnom Penh, their translator could use the hotels translations equipment and headphones. Delegations from the Vietnam, Thailand, Myanmar, Bangladesh and Indonesia had their own translators at their tables. Although at times difficult to translate from Khmer into English and back into Vietnamese or Thai, the discussions in general were surprisingly smooth. In the end it only took a few minutes until the constant stream of different languages blurred into background noise.

During the workshop we discussed the different approaches to 'living wage' strategies, from 'collective bargaining' in Vietnam to minimum wage setting in Cambodia. The concerns of how to organise unions in a repressive environment like Bangladesh or how easy it was for the Vietnamese unions to organise in an even more repressive environment. When unions are controlled by the party in a one-party state, there seems to be very little internal strife. But the workshop was

primarily a way for IndustriALL to lead a discussion on industry-wide collective bargaining on wages. To explore the differences between minimum wages and living wages and show why bargaining for wages will deliver better results than state controlled minimum wage setting mechanisms. Observing the workshop allowed me to be more familiar with the union to union support in the region and most importantly IndustriALL's approach to higher wages for garment workers. It also showed me the difficulties of genuine transnational organising based on coordinated national trade union campaigns.

Not just were there severe political and ideological variation amongst the unions, but also uncertainty over what a 'living wage' is how it would influence the unions work. There were a number of different expectations of what IndustriALL can do for its affiliates and why industry bargaining is important. All of these are discussions that are echoed across the multiple layers of transnational labour organsing as well.

The field of transantional labour activism is of course much broader than simply the work of IndustriALL. The international response during the 2014 unrests and the global NGO campaign for living wages for garment workers also play an important part in shaping the development of Cambodian garment worker wages. The network of transnational activism, however, is complex and their different political and strategic perspectives do not always align.

I learned in that workshop and in the Global Workshop I observed the following year in Yangon, and in the discussions at the ILO on decent work in global supply chains, that there is no consensus among activists and unions what a 'living wage' should be and even less consensus on how to get there. I learned that coordination between international actors is effective when they respond to emergencies through short-term transnational activist campaigns, but that their relationships and different perspectives on organising in the industry become more complicated in the long-term organising for higher wages — when efforts by activists turn from campaigning to industrial relations. I learned that regardless of whether in national minimum wage workshops in Cambodia, regional or global trade union workshops on living wages or during discussion at the ILO, good translators are simply key.

This Chapter will outline the structure, actors and key relationships across the transnational sphere of wage campaigning in the Cambodian garment sector and show how the different projects and political perspectives work together. First, I will use Zajak's (2017) concept of transnational activist pathways to show the different actors, their approaches and targets in increasing wages and I will then outline the themes which, in my opinion, decide the effectiveness of the campaigns. I argue that there is a difference between the effective transnational activist campaign which responded to the 2014 national strike and created a 'boomerang effect' through their pressure on global brands and the longer term industrial relations support by unions and TUSSOs in particular. Nevertheless, some of the long-term NGO campaigns on 'living wages' were crucial in informing the overall willingness of actors – especially brands and retailers - to even acknowledge wages and an issue in global supply chains. I will then discuss the importance of transnational coordination and the relationships between the actors before analysing their different understandings of 'living wages' for garment workers. The chapter argues that no common understanding of a 'living wage' exists and that the way it is interpreted by many global activists is not shared by Cambodian trade unions, and that therefore it is not an important strategic element to trade union work on wages in Cambodia.

6.2 - Transnational and Global Labour Activism

Workers and trade unions have found a myriad of ways to agitate in the era of globalisation. As described in **Chapter 3**, the material and political base for labour resistance has transformed as neoliberal globalisation has eroded the nationally based industrial structures of employment. The emergence of global supply chains in manufacturing and service provision and the outsourcing of manufacturing to the Global South with a high level of informal employment and unemployment forced trade unions to change their organising strategy significantly. Though despite difficulties of organising across different countries which exhibit severe wage disparities and were pitted against each other by lead firms in global manufacturing and despite the increasing nationalism brought about in part through a rising precarity of workers in many parts of the world, unions and workers and their allies have managed to develop coalitions and global networks of unions and activists who are battling power asymmetries of global supply chains.

These global patterns of labour resistance and worker strategies of transnational organising have been researched extensively over the past decade. Beverley Silver (Silver, 2003) evaluates how the expansion of capital has led to the commodification of labour and the creation of new working classes in areas of the world previously untouched by industrialisation and modernisation. She argues that globalisation led to Polanyi-type and Marx-type labour responses. Polanyi-type movements were defensive movements that tried to protect existing ways of life from the increasing commodification of labour, land and money; Marx-type movements where the new working classes in the Global South that centre more around wider class-based alliance organising against new industrialisation and modernisation (Silver, 2003). The international strategies and responses to globalization can be understood in similar terms to the national labour movement developments described in Chapter 4. In fact, Munck's (2010) categorisation along the 'market-state-society' continuum used in Chapter 4 to describe trade unions identities and functions has a 'localnational-regional-global' vertical dimension too. He describes the responses of union movements in this geographic as well as identity basis.

Important is that these characterizations are 'ideal' types. I already showed how they are not necessarily apt in describing the Cambodian labour movement, especially as trade unions change and swap in and out of these ideal types as the campaign and their relationships to each other, to the employers and the state evolve. In **Chapter 4** and **Chapter 5** I have argued that during the wage campaign the more 'society-focused' union identities dominated the coalitions of independent unions who were active and how in the aftermath of the campaign and throughout the development of a new labour control regime, unions were forced to develop towards a more 'market-focused' approach.

Mayer and Pickles (2010) provide a more apt, contextual approach to transnational labour organising and argue that:

"Workers, of course, have always responded in one way or another to the circumstances in which they find themselves. How we understand the positional power of labour to shape its own conditions of work and contribute to the creation of decent work depends in large part on the specific form of political-

economic regime, the industrial sector, the structure of the value chain, and the ways in which a particular industry and regional economy are inserted into global production networks" p.8).

Similarly, Anner (2011) goes beyond the Marx-Polanyi divide and focuses more on forms of transnational and local activist strategies. He argues that labour responses to globalisation are based on a number of different determinants including collective identities, state structures and industry restructuring. Anner's research in Latin America shows how these determinants have led to four distinct responses to globalisation: Transnational Activist Campaigns (as described by Seidman and others), clientelist national labour relations in the garment industry (a highly globalised buyer driven commodity chain), and either transnational labour networks or micro-corporatist labour regimes in the auto industry (a supplier driven commodity chain). In Cambodia the 'society-oriented' unions operating in a buyer-driven supply chain engaged in a transnational activist campaign throughout 2014.

Another subset of the literature examines transnational labour activists more from a social movement and human rights perspective. Gay Seidman (2007) describes how many of the global campaigns for improved labour conditions, particularly in the context of global garment production, have tried to utilise transnational activist networks with a focus on human rights – rather than explicitly labour rights. The social movement literature, and in particular research on transnational activist networks by Keck and Sikkink (1998) has been widely influential in this area. They have influenced research on anti-sweatshop (Armbruster-Sandoval, 2005) and trade union and NGO solidarity campaigns (Anner and Evans, 2004). These campaigns often appealed to northern consumers in an attempt organise boycotts and foster local change through what Keck and Sikkink (1998) called the boomerang effect (Seidman 2007). These movements often advocate for an improvement in working conditions through better and increased state regulation and state protection of its citizens (global and state-focused labour response).

The research generally focuses on the forms labour resistance takes and their ideological (Hyman, 2001; Silver, 2003; Fairbrother, 2008; Munck, 2010) and strategic visions as well as the alliances they form under the new realities of

globalised production (Keck and Sikkink, 1998; Seidman, 2007; Anner, 2011; Fairbrother, Lévesque and Hennebert, 2013). Some of these will be addressed in describing the actors involved in wage campaigning in the Cambodian garment industry. This chapter focusing on the global or transnational aspect of the organising and campaigning on wages in Cambodia and the overall structure of wage strategies employed by transnational labour activists.

In order to understand how change on wage occurs in the Cambodian context I need to, of course, understand to some extend the political orientation, internal structures and strategic priorities of the key actors. These, however, are not just the national and globa unions, but also the NGOs and TUSSOs. The descriptions of strategies and ideologies outlined up to here focuses on trade union identities and not on all actors.

The political ideologies or orientations of the global actors are the most difficult to determine or characterise. In the same way that the political orientation and union identities of national trade unions developed as the situation changed, so do those of the global actors. They are also large heterogenous organisations or networks of organisations which may not share a neat 'market-oriented' or 'society-oriented' perspectives on unionism or in the case of the labour NGOs and campaigning organisations may not have a view of 'unionism' at all. I therefore describe rather if they have a 'confrontational' or 'collaborative' approach to capital (or both) as well as their internal structures. This is summaries under the term organizational nature. Trade unions, almost by definition have both a confrontational as well as at time collaborative relationship to capital — at least those than engage in collective bargaining processes. I also show the strategic priorities and functional modalities in Cambodia to show how and why the key actors engage in the strategies and pathways they do.

Overall, I will focus on the pathways of transnational activism as outlined by Zajak (2017). Situating her research in the intersection between social movements research and literature on institutions and global governance, Zajak shows how transnational activism can perpetuate better working conditions or protections for workers through distinct pathways.

6.3 - Pathways of Transnational Activism on Wages in Cambodia

Zajak (2017) describes four pathways of transnational activism, in that

"activists can try to mobilise from within or target international organisations (the international-organisational pathway), other states or regions (the bilateral pathway), transnational companies and private regulatory arrangements (the market pathway) or can support domestic civil society (civil society pathway)" (Zajak, 2017, p. 132)

These pathways are not distinct and disjunct from each other, they can overlap and activists can utilise multiple different pathways at the same time or move from one to another if opposition or barriers to change become too strong.

The different transnational actors involved in wage activism tend to focus on one pathway or another. Table 6.1 is an overview of the most important transnational actors involved in Cambodia, their organisational nature, strategic priorities as well as functional modalities in Cambodia.

Table 6. 3: Transnational Activists on Wages in Cambodia

	Organisational Nature	Strategic Priorities on Wages	Functional modalities
	Global Union Federation for	Two-pronged strategy: trade	One administrative
	manufacturing, metal and	unions support for national	staff in Cambodia and
	chemical. 10 affiliated union	minimum wage negotiation	a regional office in
	federations in Cambodia	but priority on industry-wide	Kuala Lumpur, though
IndustriALL	from all trade union factions.	bargaining and development	most work on wages
	Shows both a confrontational	of ACT.	in the garment sector
	and collaborative relationship		coordinated through
	with capital.		head office in
			Geneva.
	International Trade Union	Overall a living wage strategy	Regional Desk Officer
ITUC	Confederation. Cambodian	through support for national	responsible for
1100	national trade union centres	minimum wage mechanisms.	Cambodia.
	from all factions are affiliated.		

	CNV (Netherlands) through	Trade union capacity	Neither has a
	the 'strategic partnership'	development for minimum	permanent presence
	with FairWear and Dutch	wage negotiations and	in Cambodia. Ad-hoc
Other	government; IFMetall	sectoral bargaining through	and project-based
Unions	(Sweden) through the GFA	training and research.	support.
Ginons	with H&M and other bilateral	training and recodion.	опрроти.
	union support to all		
	IndustriALL affiliates;		
	TUSSO, German social	Trade union capacity	Office in Bangkok
	democratic foundation	development for minimum	responsible for
	(publicly funded) focusing on	wage negotiations and	Cambodia and
	union support and research	sectoral bargaining through	Thailand. Part-time
Friedrich	• •		
	on working conditions in	training and research.	project staff in Cambodia.
Ebert	Cambodia. Collaborates with		Cambodia.
Stiftung	IndustriALL, ITUC and other		
	TUSSOs. Open to working		
	with all factions of the trade		
	union movement in		
	Cambodia.	Tuede vuien een eikv	Office in Dharens
	TUSSO; American Centre for	Trade union capacity	Office in Phnom
	International Labour	development for minimum	Penh. By far the
	Solidarity. AFL-CIO	wage negotiations and	largest presence in
	international solidarity	sectoral bargaining through	Cambodia of all the
Solidarity	organisation (publicly	training and research.	international actors;
Centre	funded). Collaborates with		They are therefore
	IndustriALL, FES and other		often the go to for
	TUSSOs. Open to working		IndustriALL and other
	with all factions of the		international actors as
	Cambodian trade union		well.
	movement.		O(" : DI
Apheda –	TUSSO; Australian Trade	No real engagement on	Office in Phnom
Union Aid	Union Development and	wages.	Penh.
Abroad	Solidarity Organisation	Lindra Marca	No nome and
Class	Coalition of NGOs across	Living Wage campaign,	No permanent
Clean	Europe and the US. Most	largely through pressure on	presence in
Clothes	Prominent are the Belgian,	brands and promotion of	Cambodia – work
Campaign	Norwegian and some	Asian Floor Wage Alliance.	closely with
	German groups as well as	Support for national NGOs.	CENTRAL and CLC.

	Labour Behind the Label		Now also work in
	(UK) and International		somewhat
	Labour Rights Forum (US).		collaboration with
	Almost exclusively		capital through the
	confrontational relationship to		German Textile
	capital.		Partnership.
	US based workers' rights	Campaigning on living wages	One part-time
Workers'	monitoring (of university	and support for national	permanent staff in
Rights Consortium	apparel) and campaigning organisation. Almost exclusively confrontational	NGOs.	Phnom Penh.
	relationship with capital.		

Source: Author

I have managed to observe a number of these pathways over the course of my research. The market-pathway is characterized by NGO-led global living wage campaigns and ad-hoc NGO and Union solidarity campaigns, like the international reactions that followed the labour unrests and state crackdown in January 2014. The Civil-Society pathway is the ongoing long-term union building and solidarity work that IndustriALL and local Trade Union Solidarity Support Organisations (TUSSOs) do, the international organisations pathway is the activism that the ITUC and others are doing at the International Labour Organisation in trying to develop new international standards on Global Supply Chains and are using the supervisor mechanisms of the ILO to pressure the Cambodian state and the bilateral pathway concerns largely the work of unions and NGOs in pressuring the US and EU to use their trade preferences to influence labour conditions in Cambodia.

The next sections show how the different actors engaged in the different pathways and how they supported the national actors in their wage campaigning and industrial relations organising on wages. Table 6.1 summarises the different pathways and work of the actors.

My research has focused on wages but not all of the transnational activism is directly aimed at wages. It is not always easy to differentiate between general union building support and specific support on wages either. While I focus on wages and wage related work by the international activists, I believe it would be inappropriate not at least to acknowledge non-wage specific transnational activism as well. This is also

important because the non-wage activism in many cases influences the relationships between the activists.

The market pathway: Global Wage Campaigning

According to Zajak (2017) "in the market pathway, the case universe is defined by all private entities engaged in market-based regulation that could potentially become the target of labour rights activism" (p. 133). Living Wage campaigns by NGOs and trade unions almost exclusively focus their activities on the lead-firms in the garment and footwear industries. Activists target brands and retailers directly because they are seen as the most powerful actors in the chain and those that benefit the most. Pushing these MNCs to ensure that a living wage is paid to the workers producing their clothes is an attempt to overcome the opaque structures of responsibility along global supply chains.

And this is exactly what happened during the short-term transnational activist campaign on wages in Cambodia after the labour unrests and national strike in December 2013 and January 2014. A global campaign was clearly focused on pushing brands to become actively involved in Cambodia by supporting the unions in public statements and use their weight in the chain to pressure the Cambodian state to free imprisoned workers and raise the wage.

Much of the long-term living wage work by NGOs, and the CCC in particular, also broadly fits into this category. The Clean Clothes Campaign's living wage campaigning, for example, focuses on the commitments of individual brands and through publicity and social media campaigns attempts to hold them to account. In Cambodia as elsewhere in the world, their focus on H&Ms living wage strategy has been key throughout 2018. H&M in 2013 published a five year 'living wage strategy', which initially promised to ensure the payment of a living wage to all workers in its strategic supplier factories. The CCC in 2017 and 2018 published letters and began a campaign around forcing H&M to show, in more detail, their progress towards this goal and challenging their change in rhetoric (CCC, 2018).

Part of the CCC and other NGO campaigning has been the Asia Floor Wage Alliance, an alliance of unions and NGOs working on an Asia wide floor wage. The Asia Floor Wage Campaign is trying to address concerns over regional competition

and poverty wages by developing an approach to calculating living wages in each national context. Throughout my research however, the Asia Floor Wage Campaign was not prominent in Cambodia. It was not a key part of local union organising on wages.

Table 6. 4: The use of alternative transnational pathways to influence wages and labour conditions by the main international actors

	IndustriALL	TUSSOS	NGOs	ITUC	Bilateral Union Support
Market Pathway	Development of supply chain industrial relations framework through ACT process; also key member of the transnational activist campaign in 2014.		Global Living Wage Campaign focuses on lead- firm responsibility; largely through the Asia Floor Wage Alliance. Support for unions and NGOs during the 2014 Wage campaign.	End Corporate Greed Campaign with living wage focus in Global Supply Chains. Stronger focus on Electronics industry.	Work through Multi- Stakeholder initiative like Eaitweat and ETI. Eaitweat in particular has engaged its members on fair labour costing in purchasing practices.
Civil Society Pathway	Union support for minimum wage setting mechanism and push for collective bargaining on living wages. Strategic priority is the ACT approach.	FES: Supported national, regional and global 'living wage' in garment sector workshop; research in preparation for minimum wage discussions; Capacity building. SC: research and trade union coordination on minimum wage negotiation strategies; capacity building.	Support for labour NGOs in Cambodia. Non-wage related work with independent unions.	General regional support for national minimum wage setting mechanisms. Not very active in Cambodia.	CNV: Trade union capacity building support for minimum wage negotiations through research and funding. EMETAL: Trade Union capacity building through training and development (not necessarily wage setting).
Institutional Pathway			NGOs have lobbied and provided input into the discussion at the ILC on Decent Work in Global Supply Chains (and other relevant discussions).	Decent Work in Global Supply Chain push. Committee on Application of Standards TUAC and UN lobbying	Delegations at the ILO were involved in Global Supply Chain discussion and supported Cambodian unions in the committee on the application of standards.
Bilateral Pathway		FES research on trade agreements and core labour standards used to lobby EU.	CCC have pushed EU to use EBA as a lever to push for better conditions.		AFL-CIO instrumental in TATA and monitoring of industry in early 2000s.

Source: Author

The Asia Floor Wage Campaign, nevertheless, has established itself as an important international benchmark, with many researchers, NGOs, unions and journalists referring back to their Living Wage figures in order to assess the issue of wages in Cambodia. Interestingly though, the Cambodian trade union movement does not use the Asia Floor Wage figures as a basis for their wage demands.

Interesting is how the campaigning focused on brands has resulted in clear reactions. Brands have and continue to react almost immediately to publicity campaigns on workers' rights and have in many cases re-designed their marketing strategies to counter the narrative that fast fashion means deadly factories and poverty wages. If you walk into any H&M or Primark store you will undoubtedly find signs up their sustainability and social responsibility programmes. Their websites have clearly marked pages on their relationships to suppliers and supply chain policies as well as links to their annual CSR reports. This is way more apparent than it is in Apple or Samsung stores. The wave of corporate social responsibility projects and the concept of CSR in the first place came as a result of the labour rights campaigning against Nike and others in the early 1990s.

In fact, brands and retailers in the garment and footwear industry have in some cases become 'activists' themselves. NGOs and labour organisations lean on them to push governments for stricter regulations and better labour protections. Through Multi-Stakeholder Initiatives such as the Ethical Trading Initiative (ETI) in the UK, a number of brands have collectively lobbied the Cambodian government to improve conditions. They pressured the state to drop some of the most punitive articles in the new National Minimum Wage Law and rectify some of the restrictions on Freedom of Association that the 2016 Trade Union Law introduced. MSI and the ETI 'activism' or advocacy in Cambodia is interesting because, other than the NGO campaigns which almost exclusively focus their activism on buyers and brands, the ETI focused on the Cambodia state. Though MSI do not engage in active solidarity campaigns in the same way the CCC would for example, they do engage their industry members on discussion on a living wage. Many CCC affiliates are also members of these MSIs and so they are one pathway for NGOs to influence the behavior of brands and the standards in the global industry. The ETI has a clear living wage policy and in 2015 published guidlines on living wages in the garment industry for its members (ETI, 2015).

In many ways in terms of Cambodia, the ETI played the role of a brand association pressuring the government. They almost became a professional association representing the opinions and interest of the brands, in the same way that the American Apparel and Footwear Association has done on multiple occasions. Although these dynamics also need to be evaluated carefully, as in some cases they are simply diverting the pressure from brands to governments. By becoming an advocate for better conditions in Cambodia, they do not need to seriously evaluate their own role and responsibilities in creating these conditions. As we will see in the next chapter, however, the new supply chain industrial relations initiatives like ACT purposefully go beyond this and are brand and union collaboration examining brand purchasing practices.

The ACT approach forms the key strategic focus for IndustriALL and in many ways sits in both the market and civil society pathway as it attempts to combine brand commitments on purchasing practices with industry-wide sectoral bargaining.

Over the last few years the industry has also seen a large scale 'transparency' campaign, where the Clean Clothes Campaign and its affiliates as well as Global Union Federations and the ITUC have pressured brands and retailers to publish a list of suppliers and factories they produce in. This has been an attempt to increase transparency in an otherwise opaque network of subcontracts. In response to the campaign many of the major European brands have already published a full list of production sites on their websites and some other have pledged that they will do the same. Publishing supply sites potentially enhances or is at least the prerequisite for brand accountability for working conditions in their supply chains.

The civil society pathway: IndustriALL and TUSSO Union Building Projects and Minimum Wage Setting Support

The civil society pathway suggests support for local trade unions and civil society organisations by international activists. All of the main international actors engage in some form of support for local labour NGOs and trade unions. The most prominent though, in terms of wages are IndustriALL, Solidarity Centre and FES. The IndustriALL and FES projects on 'Living Wages' and 'Organising Across Supply Chains' which ran a series of global, regional and national workshops have been

particularly important. These workshops were geared towards national trade unions sharing their strategies on wages with each other, and IndustriALL both supporting that work and beginning conversations on 'Living Wages' negotiated on the basis of collective bargaining agreements. These workshops were not just international support for national unions, but international union to union strengthening activities.

The global workshop in Yangon in 2017 was the follow-up event of a series of regional workshops that had taken place over the course of the previous years, including the Phnom Penh workshop I attended in July 2016 described in the introduction. The global workshop was a full five-day event at a Yangon Hotel and included trade union delegations from Pakistan, Bangladesh, Ethiopia, Myanmar, Mauritius, Indonesia, Philippines, Egypt, South Africa, Vietnam and of course Cambodia. The discussions that took place in Yangon had evolved significantly compared to the regional workshop the previous year. The discussion on living wages vs. minimum wages and more importantly the discussion on the capacity for collective bargaining had become much clearer and more defined. The ambiguities that I felt in the Phnom Penh workshop were almost entirely gone. IndustriALL and its affiliates had clearly come to a consensus to work on industry-wide collective bargaining as key to higher wage strategies in the sector. Important was also the technical support through presentations on collective bargaining by ILO experts and the South-South experience sharing from South Africa, one of the very few developing countries to have sectoral collective bargaining on wages.

As well as these broader union support projects, IndustriALL, FES and Solidarity Centre have supported Cambodian unions in the minimum wage setting mechanism. They facilitated research and collaboration among union on preparations for the annual minimum wage negotiations on multiple occasions. In 2016 they organised and paid for a survey of garment workers' expenses and incomes and facilitating meetings for unions to come together and agree how to use the survey data during the negotiations – always cautious to play a facilitator role and not impose wage figures or strategies. Support of the minimum wage setting process and trade union capacity building on the process also came directly from other unions in Europe. Though this would traditionally be more focused at specific collaboration rather than support for all unions. The Dutch trade union federation CNV for example has a long-standing relationship with C.CAWDU/CLC and supported them in the preparation

for minimum wage negotiations in 2017. This support also comes through research projects and capacity building on non-wage related issues through the 'Strategic Partnership'. The Strategic Partnership is collaborative project between Fair Wage foundation, CNV and the Dutch government.

In terms of general transnational activism, which does not specifically address wages, it is also worth mentioning that IndustriALL signed a Global Framework Agreement (GFA) with H&M. In Cambodia the GFA since 2017 has a National Monitoring Committee (NMC) which includes representatives of H&M and local IndustriALL affiliated unions. The Committee facilitates social dialogue and dispute settlements and has contributed to a better and more direct relationships between trade unions in Cambodia and H&M. H&M has also developed a relationship with IFMetall, the largest Swedish manufacturing union and IndustriALL affiliate, who have provided training for unions in Cambodia on the GFA and industrial relations.

The institutional pathway: ILO CAS and Decent Work in Global Supply Chains

The institutional pathway is primarily through the International Labour Organisation (Zajak 2017). The ILO is the sole international organisation that has a tripartite governance structure. In its structure the International Trade Union Confederation provides most of the support to the representatives in the workers' group. The ITUC therefore channels much of the activism that occurs through the ILO. The ILO has, over the course of the last century, developed a series of international standards on wages and wage setting.

The most significant move by the workers' group in recent years in relation to wages in global supply chains has been the *General Discussion on Decent Work in Global Supply Chains* at the 105th International Labour Conference in 2016. Although the ILC discussion did not focus specifically on wages in global supply chains, wages became a key issue after the employer group in their opening statement suggested that, while Global Supply Chains supposedly did not exist, cross-border trade lead to wage benefits for workers. The employer group cited supposedly academic evidence to show that wages were higher in exporting industries and therefore poverty wages in supply chains were not an issue. This was clearly an attempt to – early on during the negotiations – refuse to accept any of the workers' groups

assumptions. **Chapter 3** shows in more detailer how the evidence, it turned out, did not support the employer groups claims. The worker representatives, in turn, countered by asking for the inclusion of 'living wages' into the language of the conclusions. The use of the phrase 'living wage' was challenged almost immediate by the employers. The language that ultimately was agreed on was 'minimum living wage', which is already agreed ILO language.

At the same conference the Committee on the Application of Standards (CAS) engaged with the Cambodian Trade Union Law after a complaint was submitted by Cambodian Trade Unions. The committee evaluated if ILO convention 87 on the Freedom of Association and the Protection of the Right to Organise is being adhered to. This included, among other issues, the new Trade Union Law - which at the time was still a draft - and the intimidation and imprisonment of union leaders in the aftermath of the 2013/2014 national strike. The committee concluded to send a Direct Contact Mission (DCM) to Cambodia to follow up on the union complaints and the mission found substantial concerns with the new Trade Union Law, forcing the government to develop a road map of how it will address the areas of noncompliance with ILO conventions. This road map has not been published yet.

Activism on wages in global supply chain, however, remains difficult within the ILO. Not just does the employer group continue to refuse to accept the existence of global supply chains, but also the classically nation centric representations structures cause problems when talking about supply chains. One union activist told me that it would be much easier to develop an international standard in negotiation with Multi-National Corporations and those lead firms sitting on top of the supply chains than through the ILO. Employers at the ILO are represented by national employer association which often do not include MNCs. Most garment and footwear brands and retailers therefore have no standing at the ILO. Workers at the ILO are represented through the worker group which is usually made up of national work representatives send by the most representative national worker organisation.

This also meant that during the discussion on supply chains, IndustriALL who represents 50 million workers in manufacturing industries and hence most supply chain workers, does not have any formal standing at the ILO. The IndustriALL Deputy Secretary General, who looks after the Asian region and the garment

Industry, was at the conference but only as an NGO observer. This means that IndustriALL enjoys the same standing at the ILO as the Clean Clothes Campaign and other NGO activists who do not formally represent any workers¹⁵.

Other important institutional pathways are the UN Human Rights Council, and more specifically the lobby work by ITUC and others during John Ruggie's tenure as Special Representative on Business and Human Rights. John Ruggie's work ultimately resulted in the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights which, albeit still voluntary guidelines are much more explicit about the responsibility of business and the state with regards to working conditions across their spheres of influence – which includes business supply chains. Possibly the most progressive and effective international institutional tool for workers in Global Supply Chains to date, are the OECD guidelines on Multinational Enterprises, and more specifically the Guidance on the Garment and Footwear Sectors agreed in 2017. Worker representation at the OECD is channeled through the Trade Union Advisor Council (TUAC) in Paris and they worked extremely hard to push the Guidance to be the most progressive document on working conditions in supply chains yet, including the responsibility of garment and footwear sector lead-firms on wages. Though they do not specifically speak of living wages, a clear and defined responsibility for wages is already a huge step forward.

The bilateral pathway: The US GSP and EU EBA Trade Preferences and Global Trade Agreements

The bilateral transnational labour activism pathway focuses on applying pressure through other countries, usually those with close trading ties, offering trade preferences or supplying large amounts of bilateral aid. Cambodia has a history of bilateral pressure on labour rights. The origins of the garment industry were accompanied by the US-Cambodia bilateral Trade Agreement on Textile and Apparel (TATA) which famously provided conditionality-based duty-free import quotas for garments manufactured in Cambodia. The conditions were the increased compliance with international labour standards as measured by an ILO technical

¹⁵ And in an absurd twist, it meant that my 'travailleur' badge which I received as part of the ICTU delegation, officially afforded me more rights than it did any IndustriALL representative.

cooperation project which turned into Better Factories Cambodia (BFC) and ultimately the ILO/IFC Better Work franchise. The labour rights conditionality came largely due to pressure by the AFL-CIO in the United States, partly out of international solidarity and partly because it effectively created a non-tariff barrier and therefore would not undercut the US industry.

TATA finished when the Multi-Fibre Agreement ended the global regulation of the garment industry and so all trade preference for Cambodian garments to the US were removed. The key trade preference today are through the EU's Everything But Arms scheme, which is the General System of Preference the EU affords to all least-developed economies. The EBA allows duty and quota free import of Cambodian garments. This has led to a sharp increase of exports to the EU and has also of course, allowed EU brands to import Cambodian made garments and footwear duty free.

Though some activists have attempted to use these mechanism as a way to apply pressure on the Cambodian state, especially in the aftermath of the arrest of opposition leader Kem Sokha and the dissolution of the main opposition party CNRP, the bilateral pathway is no longer a key to labour rights activism in Cambodia. It has especially not been of great importance to wage developments. The idea of applying GSPs and especially the EBA as a political and campaigning tool is repeatedly floated by international activists, and many called for Bangladesh to have its EBA status revoked. That is a controversial strategy that is not very popular with Cambodian unions as it could potentially have a detrimental effect on the industry and jobs. IndustriALL also, as a global union federation, is very unlikely to call for a boycott or removal of trade preferences. It is not a strategy that is frequently supported by its national affiliates (GUF_01).

The US State Department through the Embassy in Phnom Penh has continued to work on labour relations in the Kingdom after TATA expired. In many ways it seems that the US continues to feel responsible for labour relations and working conditions in the industry. This is partly because Cambodia was a major experiment on the western imposition of labour and human rights, and accepting its failure seems impossible. The current Ambassador was also involved in the TATA negotiations. I had the chance to meet a senior state department official who talked me through

their perspective in the garment sector and labour in Cambodia. Over the last year the US included travel goods in its GSP and unions have begun to pressure the US to expand the GSP to include footwear manufactured in Cambodia. There is no specific state department or US department of labour, or in fact USAID, project on union support for working conditions in the sector at the moment, a large amount of informal support comes from the US Embassy to projects on improving the working conditions in the sector.

The European Union's work in the area was largely facilitated through the German Ministry of Technical Cooperation (BMZ) and its implementation agency GIZ (Gemeinschaft fuer Internationale Zusammenarbeit). GIZ runs a large scale global garment industry project in the region and in Cambodia has focused on development on labour inspectorate and transport safety project for garment workers.

6.4 – Living Wages, Transnational Activist Campaigns and Transnational Activist Coordination

These pathways clearly show the way the different actors are organising for higher wages in Cambodia. Crucial to the effectiveness of the campaign, however, are the actors shared understanding of strategies and shared analysis of the issues. Examining the different strategies and tactics of transnational activism requires an evaluation of the coordination between the different transnational activists as well as their relationship to their Cambodian allies. In terms of wage campaigning it is particularly important to assess the concept of 'living wages' and the role it plays in transnational campaigns.

Alliances, Conflicts and Friendships - Coordinating Transnational Activist Campaigns

In the case of Cambodian wage campaigns however, it is important to differentiate between long-term industrial relations work, short-term transnational activist campaigns and long-term wage campaigns at global level. One of the key observations of my research is that the coordination of the different transnational activists and local activists worked much better during the quick emergency response after the violence in 2014. The campaign and strikes are described in detail in **Chapter 4**. Important here is how international allies reacted. GUFs, ITUC

and NGOs began almost immediately to pressure brands for public statements on wages and to support the release of arrested trade unionists. In the aftermath of the crackdown financial support also started flowing into the country for NGOs and Unions to print banners and T-Shirts. The Cambodian state was put under a lot of pressure by brands, the CEO of H&M even visited himself to ask PM Hun Sen to release the workers and trade unionists still in prison in 2014. The international allies followed the lead by independent union in the country, who themselves only reacted to a wildcat worker mobilisation. In their reactions all actors managed to converge and build effective coalitions.

In many ways, the wage campaign in 2013/2014 was a prime example of the 'boomerang effect' as described by Keck and Sikkink (1998). The local labour movement mobilised and by making wages a contentious political issue provoked a global response which pressured the government and employer organisations more than they could have done themselves. Key to this dynamic however, were the ongoing long-term activism on wages in Cambodia, which had developed a network that was easily and effectively mobilised. A Global Union activist told me that for the wage campaign in particular, all the different actors and approaches aligned perfectly. The tense situation in the aftermath of the violence in 2014 forced everyone to work together and in-step with each other. In the aftermath of the initial outpouring of solidarity and support by transnational allies, however, their strategies and collaborations began to diverge again. This happened locally as well as with the transnational actors. Especially in relation to wages the cohesion of 2014 began to fade away. A global union activist told me:

"I think in Cambodia at this given moment it aligns quite well. But if you would spread it over a timeline you would see moments of much more convergence and moments of much more contesting on what should happen. And I think now that we are going into that ACT process, that bargaining process, we will see much more divergence on what the locals want and what their allies want. And Workers United has a different view on it than IndustriALL head office and different unions have a different view that the

CCC sees as a way forward. So there is no consensus on strategy."

Interesting is what happens when the immediate urgency fades and strategies begin to diverge. Whose vision and strategic priorities will win out, how are they determined and how will the activist coalitions develop? The influences and power over the international strategies are constantly contested.

Generally speaking the transnational actors agree that the activities at international level and between the international and local actors are well coordinated and a clear division of labour exists. An ITUC staff said that the work is:

"fairly well coordinated. I mean obviously the unions are affiliated to us so we have a longstanding relationships. And also with the solidarity support organisations like the CCC and WRC, SC, we frequently are on conference calls together and are talking about these issues. And those organisation in Cambodia and elsewhere are also participating in these calls, and there is a strong effort to try and make sure these are as coordinated as possible. Again the Global Unions are going to have a more direct relationship with the brands than we usually have. So we have the GUFs and some of the NGOs approach the brands while we do more the work with the global institutions, the ILO and the UN as well as the governments or other governments. Like the governments of the US and the EU who obviously have trade programs and have leverage through their trade regimes that they can apply on Cambodia and Bangladesh or elsewhere. There is usually that division of labour" (ITUC_01).

Nevertheless, there is some competition and conflicts among the international actors. Especially the relationship between the Global Union Federations and the Clean Clothes Campaign is sometimes strained. When they have worked together, campaigns have functioned much more smoothly – like in response to Rana Plaza

collapse in Bangladesh or the violence in Cambodia in January 2014. In fact, it was the very effective collaboration between these actors that managed to bring about the Bangladesh Accord. A member of staff at a global union said:

"Yeah. Around the Accord we worked very closely with the Clean Clothes Campaign and the Workers Rights Consortium in the US. So around garment sector issues we talk to them because they have the campaigning history and the knowledge and the expertise. Around the compensations in Bangladesh they are very much involved. With Clean Clothes Campaign, we have access to their network of members and its really about who can put the pressure on the companies, cause really we are dealing with European companies and North American companies, so that's why dealing with those two organisations is very useful. But yeah its others as well that we work with on a periodic basis depending on the issue. But particularly in this sector, where the unions themselves are not that strong we really rely on the campaigning organisations who can help bring that pressure from another angle" (GUF_01).

In times of less immediate need to coordinate the relationship becomes more strained however. At times it seemed that the relationship between the brands and IndustriALL and even the brands and the CCC is better that between the CCC and IndustriALL. The relationship also seems to have become worse over the last few years. In the absence of a unifying transnational activist campaign, which is confrontational and follows a joint, often straightforward, goal the actors retreat into their long-term strategic priorities, which do not line up very well between the Unions and NGOs. Trade Unions hold industrial relations roles and usually attempt to work through these industrial relations institutions to bargaining for better conditions for workers. The NGOs do not hold these positions and their strategic priorities evolve around continuous confrontational campaigning. These are in many way

contradictory approaches. The dynamics between the industrial relations and campaigning functions of activist coalitions will be explored further in **Chapter 8**.

The conflict is also based around a number of other disagreements between IndustriALL and the campaigning NGOs. One is that IndustriALL has affiliate unions across the political divide in Cambodia and tends to work with both the progovernment as well as the independent unions. For the CCC and many other NGOs the pro-government unions are *persona non grata*. One international activist told me how they appreciate the leadership of the previous IndustriALL Secretary General because he 'understood the politics in Cambodia', which meant that he was able to subtly work more with those unions that the CCC deems to be real unions. I would argue that it is not that the rest of the staff and the current leadership do not understand the politics, in fact in my opinion they understand exactly what is going on in Cambodia, but rather that they need to be engaging will all affiliates in order to maintain their position in Cambodia as a representative worker organisation. Which is a very different organisaitonal structure to the labour campaigning NGOs like the CCC.

Independent and activist unions in Cambodia, at least those willing and capable of engaging with international allies, on the other hand have a clear understanding of when and how they use the relationships they have cultivated over the years. C.CAWDU/CLC in particular have close relationships to a number of European Unions, the Clean Clothes Campaign and IndustriALL. While many of the European Unions, as discussed above, function more like a donor supporting union capacity building, the CCC and IndustriALL are more involved in the day to day campaigning work. Independent unions essentially choose who to reach out to depending on what the issue is they want to address. These unions have their own strategies and choose their allies according to their needs.

In the eyes of the national unions the transnational actors all have different roles that they play. IndustriALL has a tendency to engage in negotiations with brands and has a more complicated relationship in Cambodia which leads to a less aggressive approach to factory disputes for example (IU_02). The Clean Clothes Campaign on the other hand may act faster and put more uncompromising pressure on brands to act and solve individual problems. These ad-hoc problem-solving campaigns by the

CCC can work well in Cambodia and the CCC has built up a reputation amongst buyers of being relentless and very effective at organising European consumer campaigns. Although generally speaking, they have not engaged much with the NGOs on wage related matters since the end of the large global wage campaign. The day-to-day industrial relations support on wages come from unions and TUSSOs.

IndustriALL, simply due to its organisational structure, has to work with all their affiliates, which may include those closer to the government and has established good relationships with European buyers in particular, which it is currently trying to capitalise on to get the ACT process going. This does not mean that they will not get involved in campaigns where buyers have clearly not lived up to their responsibilities or promises, but rather that they have a very different understanding of how especially wage demands by workers should be dealt with by the brands. They have clearly a more industrial relations and long-term perspective, which the local unions have understood and therefore they go to IndustriALL when they need support building the union movement and challenging employers in negotiations but go to CCC if what they need is a quick and large publicity campaign to convince buyers to force their suppliers to reinstate dismissed unionists or pay compensation for abruptly closed factories.

The international activists become involved at different times and sometimes those with the most connections in the country and the more complex decision-making structure could only react slower than others. This does not always play in favour of the Global Union Federations, as their institutional embeddedness in Cambodia is much stronger than those of the CCC for example. Therefore, who local activists reach out to, may also depend on the internal organisational structures of the international partners (GUF2).

There are a number of close personal relationships that have developed over the years also. IndustriALL has close connections to its affiliates, and the ACT process has further reinforced these. There is now frequently someone from IndustriALL head office visiting Cambodia so "there is some institutional linkage but also personal linkages that work very complimentary" (GUF2).

Living Wages

The concept of a 'living wage' did not play an important part early on in this research. Largely because it did not play a role during early interviews in Cambodia. During the Cambodian union campaign for wages in 2013/2014 and even throughout the years that followed the concept of a 'living wage' was not very important to Cambodian trade union organisers. A 'living wage' as such has rather been an international rallying cry. Not just in the garment industry, but labor movements all over Europe have supported the introduction of a living wage. Though the more I became familiar with the Cambodian wage campaign, the more I appreciated that the Cambodian fight for a minimum wage is for a 'minimum living wage', although the trade unions did never articulate it as such. In transnational activist campaigns across the garment industry the concept has taken a number of different meanings and in fact no shared understanding of the concept exists.

In Cambodia, itself the term is not very widely used. In fact, not one trade union leader I spoke to specifically referred to 'Living Wage'. Only when I pushed in relation to the ACT approach did K_IU_01 admit that maybe a living wage is better for workers in Cambodia. But there was no real engagement with the concept or its multiplicity of meanings and methodologies. Which, I believe has been a positive development for Cambodia. The Cambodian labour movement has always demanded a 'living minimum wage'. The Cambodian labour law specifies that a minimum wage should allow for a decent standard of living for Cambodian workers and their families. Which is why the negotiations over the minimum wage always include an element of cost of living and family size. The intricacies of the wage negotiation process were elaborated in **Chapter 5**, it is here simply important to note that a 'living wage' as such has not been of great practical importance to the Cambodian trade unions.

I believe this is a positive development because it allows the unions in Cambodia to set their own standards in the negotiations, allows them strategic flexibility and does not require them to take a side in the international discussion on living wages. Although, as the process of sectoral bargaining advances, and unions begin to make demands on wages above the legal minimum wage, the idea of a living wage may become more important.

The Clean Clothes Campaign has focused its Living Wage work through the Asian Floor Wage Alliance (AFWA). The Asia Floor Wage Alliance is an alliance of trade unions and NGOs in Asia and labour rights organisations in the Global North. They refute the allegations by brands that the concept of a 'living wage' is imposed on Southern labour organisations by Northern NGOs and have worked on organising an Asian consensus on wages since 2006 (Bhattacharjee and Roy, 2016). The AFWA has developed living wage methodology based on a calculation of costs of food and non-food items, including an overall 10% for discretionary spending. The level is therefore based on local conditions in each Asian manufacturing hub. Their primary work on 'bargaining for a living wage' (Bhattacharjee and Roy, 2016) is based on strengthening local union movements and engaging with brands as the ultimate employer responsible (Bhattacharjee and Roy, 2016). The AWFA supports union efforts for collective bargaining and minimum wage campaigns across Asia. Their figures have been frequently used by researchers, activists and unionists to show the current deficit of wages. The Asia Floor Wage figures have therefore become somewhat of benchmark on living wages in the industry. They claim that their figures are the practical quantification of the ILOs concept of a 'minimum living wage'.

NGO and AFWA campaigning work therefore continues to rest on specific figures of what a 'living wage' is. In fact, the Clean Clothes Campaigns efforts for a living wage in the global garment industry use the AFWA figures because to them an exact, quantifiable figure appears crucial. They require these figures as an accountability basis for their work with brands. As brands are the ultimate campaign targets a specific figure for each context is key to holding brands to account. A key criticism of H&Ms living wage strategy by the CCC for example was the lack of a specific figure or clear indication of what they perceive to be a living wage. The downside of having a specific number, decided centrally by the AFWA, is that this is difficult to reconcile with the emphasis on collective bargaining by unions. If only a perceived pre-decided wage figure is deemed a 'living wage', it pre-empts any collective bargaining efforts by unions.

IndustriALL's living wage approach is different and in fact, they purposefully stay away from naming specific living wage figures. Their approach to living wages is

very specifically focused on the process, rather than a particular figure or methodology for deriving a 'living wage'. Their overall wage strategy in Cambodia is a two-pronged approach. On the one hand they technically support their affiliates in the annual minimum wage setting process and on the other hand develop an industry-wide collective bargaining system linked to brands purchasing practices through the ACT process. IndustriALL have argued for years that the minimum wage process is not likely to deliver anything that would remotely represent a 'living wage'. While the Cambodian unions have focused initially on using the minimum wage mechanism to push up the wage to a 'living wage', IndustriALL have, in their work with Cambodian unions focused on the need to industry-wide bargaining. GUF 1 said that:

"for us of course this round of the minimum wage process is not the end of the story, in fact we hope to get past it so that we can start campaigning for an industry agreement on wages. That's our next goal. And then it would be a matter for the Unions to decide what figure they would take into that. At the moment we don't have a process, the only "process" that is available is this government which is not going to deliver what we need" (GUF 1).

The approach has resonated with local unions (GUF2). Although:

"there is however some degree of divergence of how to understand those two components, and especially the second one because the minimum wage discussion, mandatory minimum wage which is set through the tripartite discussion I think that's quite concrete because there is an ILO that is able to assist and impact that. And then it's much more about figures. The brand bargaining part I think that's where there is much more noise in the connection. And while both IndustriALL global and the unions local, or the dynamic unions local, might aspire to sector wide bargaining its not a give at this given moment in time that they understand the same thing

by what do you understand as sectoral bargaining. Especially what is the implications for the brands." (GUF 2)

ITUC also began focusing on wages in 2014. As they began their multi-year 'End Corporate Greed' campaign on supply chains. The campaign focuses, among other things on living wages for workers in global supply chains and came in part due to the work that was done in Cambodia in 2014 (ITUC_01). Although currently the campaign has been focusing more on the electronics industry, which a wide spread campaign against Samsung in particular.

The different strategic perspective on living wages, especially the different view between IndustiALL and CCC can lead to conflicts among the transnational activists. It does also however provide an important strategic advantage in global supply chain organising. Over the last few years a division of labour between these two has developed in a way that could be used in a more effective way, which the CCC as the campaigning organization focusing on brands making living wage promises and embarrassing them publicly when they do not live up to these and IndustriALL offering a sustainable and effective approach to paying living wages in supply chains. In many ways the CCC would provide the leverage throughout supply chains and IndustriALL would play the industrial relations role. Without IndustriALL working and developing a supply chain collective bargaining mechanism, the living wage promises would be meaningless as there is no way for brands to actually fulfill them. Brands can make large promises publicly, often pushed by effective campaigning by the CCC, as was the case in Cambodia in 2014, but there is no mechanism for follow up and especially no mechanism that would strengthen Cambodian trade unions.

Some living wage campaigning can therefore seem too top-down, directed by international NGOs or corporate strategies by buyers and therefore not in sync with the situation of the labour movement in the producing countries. Often, there is no or only a reduced role for unions and so they do not pose a systematic challenge to the industry. This runs the risk of re-trenching workers as a passive actor and labour as an input into production, who simply needs to be paid the right price. Rather than empowering and enabling worker voice. This is not to say that CCC and others do not listen to workers. In fact, in Cambodia the independent unions have strong relationships to these activists and the Asian Floor Wage Campaign does

emphasise the need for strong unions and bargaining structures. But rather that there is no approach or even conceptual framework linking the purchasing practices of brands with the power of unions in much living wage campaigns.

Ultimately, while the campaigning was important for raising public awareness, making wages an important supply chain concern and particularly for pushing brands, it ended almost in a vacuum. It was definitely needed but according to an IndustriALL staff much of the campaigning was not very productive, "in that its just been calling on the brands to pay a living wage. And they have gone well 'how do we do that?' And nobody has told them how to do it and so they haven't done it". This is where the ACT process comes in. The aim is to provide the mechanisms to brands through which they can actually pay a living wage. The next chapter will explore the ACT process in detail.

6.5 - Conclusion

This chapter has examined the pathways and key themes throughout the transnational labour activism on wages in Cambodia. The different unions and NGOs working on wages in the Cambodian garment and footwear sector engage in one or more of the transnational activist pathways outlined by Zajak (2017). Broadly speaking the efforts of all the actors involved in wages at an international level can be seen as either primarily campaigning or industrial relations activities. What we can already see from an international perspective is that in times of global campaigns in reaction to some immediate threat to workers the coalitions work well. When they return to their day-to-day the different roles begin to splinter coalitions however. Exactly how these developments affect the overall efforts for higher wages and how their coalitions develop, as well as what that means for national and international labour activists will be examined in **Chapter 8**.

What is clear is that national trade unions use their different international actors in different ways and that broadly speaking from a national perspective, these actors play different roles.

This chapter also identifies the concept of a 'living wage' as a key are of concern for the global campaign on wages. While almost all actors agree that minimum wages are not enough and that a national minimum wage process cannot deliver significant wage increases, there is no shared definition of the concept of living wages. Whereas for many of the global labour NGOs a minimum wage is a specific figure – calculated through the methodology developed by the Asia Floor Wage Alliance – IndustriALL believe that no specific figure or methodology should be set. What is important to them is the process by which wage increase are achieved. They need to be through collective bargaining because the national minimum wage process is ill equipped and will not significant increases and also because only collective bargaining process can strengthen and empower trade unions. For unions in Cambodia, the concept of a living wage is foreign. They demand a minimum wage which covers a decent standard of living for workers and their families. What this demand will be once sectoral collective bargaining agreements and they no longer debate a purely minimum wage remains to be seen.

Overall, transnational activism on wages in Cambodia is and has been multifaceted with little strategic convergence between different actors.

Chapter 7: From Confrontation to Collaboration: The ACT Process on Living Wages in the Cambodian Garment Industry

7.1 – Introduction: Overcoming the Challenges to Living Wages in the Global Garment Industry

Previous chapters have shown how the Cambodian labour activists and trade unions successfully organised for higher wages through coordinated wildcat strikes and grassroots organising as well as a collaborative campaign, with their international allies and GUFs, to show the need for supply chain solutions. The organising over the last few years, channeled much of the momentum from the 2013 and 2014 mobilisation and despite difficult political circumstances managed to continue to push for wage increases by working through the reformed minimum wage setting mechanism.

The global and Cambodian wage campaigning was aimed specifically at brands and buyers, demanding they'd take responsibility for poverty wages in their supply chain. It therefore played a very important role in challenging the unspoken economic logic of global supply chains and the domestic power relations in Cambodia. The ACT process — a collaborative project between 19 EU and Australian brands and IndustriALL Global Union on wages — in many ways, tries to start where the campaign has finished and establish a mechanism for brands and retailers to deliver on their living wage promises and find a more sustainable solution for chronically low wages in the global garment industry. This thesis has thus far described national campaigning and industrial relations developments and global campaigning and organising pathways, this chapter engages with the ACT process as a novel attempt at developing supply chain industrial relations.

The thesis has already shown the wage crisis that the garment and footwear sector has experienced for decades. As outlined in **Chapter 3** the nature of the global garment and apparel supply chain means that financial space for wages in

production hubs is systematically eroded at the expense of workers and to the benefit of western brands and consumers. Anner, Bair and Blasi (2013) write that "the growing power of buyers vis-a-vis suppliers, facilitated by trade liberalization and retailer consolidation, has enabled them to resist pressure to pay their contractors more" (p. 10). As competition between a large number of suppliers in Asia and Central America intensifies, prices are pushed downwards and as competition between lead firms intensifies these price reductions translate into retail price reductions. Until 2013 any improvement in productivity in Cambodia was, for more than a decade, absorbed by brands rather than translated into higher wages. Prices per square metre of garments imported into the US and EU markets have declined in Cambodia (ILO, 2016c) which led to nearly ten years of real wage decline. Lower prices paid by buyers have also led to decline in labour rights in the top garment exporting economies (Anner, Bair and Blasi, 2013).

The complex nature of business relationships across the chain, and complex internal structures of multinational buyers especially "the outsourcing of production management (including industrial engineering) and the general separation of the managerial functions of purchasing and code compliance has meant that brands and retailers have struggled to exercise due diligence in the area of wages" (Miller and Hohenegger, 2016, p. 5). The wage crisis has been exacerbated by the fact that over 90% of the global garment workforce do not have access to genuine and meaningful collective bargaining (Holdcroft, 2015).

Chapter 6, showed how buyers in Europe and the US are increasingly under pressure to address labour rights violations, unsafe and inhumane working conditions and poverty wages in their supply chains (Holdcroft, 2015). Global campaigning on wages in the garment industry, as well as the collapse of Rana Plaza factory in Bangladesh in 2013 and the violence in Cambodia in 2014 further embedded this pressure. In response to this, European buyers in particular, have begun to recognize that it is not just their responsibility to assess the labour violations in their supply chains and potentially provide remedy, but rather that their actions and purchasing practices are often the cause of low wages and other 'decent work deficits'.

The problem that very quickly became apparent, however, was how buyers would pay a living wage. Brands have promised in the past to pay more in order for wages to increase, and even explicitly supported the unions in Cambodia in their wage demands in 2014, through public letters to Hun Sen. Though when it came to take concrete action, the argument often was that it was too complicated to do so by themselves and that they couldn't act unless the other brands would too (NGO_01, INGO_01, IU_02). In some ways this was a quick and easy way out for buyers. But it was also not entirely untrue. Simply demanding that they should pay a living wage was not possible, nor would unilateral brand action in individual factories lead to sustainable solutions. Especially as monitoring wage levels which are different in their factories, where they may only make up 5% of overall sourcing, would be highly inefficient. Also because brands monitoring their unilateral actions, as they try to do with their Code of Conducts, is unlikely to lead to substantial improvements. So, the practicality of how the increased awareness and potentially changing sense of responsibility by buyers - elicited through decades of campaigning - will translate into higher wages, was never adequately addressed. Key questions that remain are as simple as how should brands pay a living wage? Should they actively buy factories and seize to operate through suppliers and subcontractors? Should they simply adjust their purchasing prices and pay higher FOB prices per square metre of garment produced and expect that their suppliers pass the increase onto workers?

A group of buyers¹⁶ and IndustriALL's answer to these challenges is the Action, Collaboration and Transformation (ACT) initiative. ACT aims to establish living wages through a process which would link brand purchasing practices to industry-wide collective bargaining agreements in Cambodia, Vietnam, Myanmar, Turkey and Bangladesh. Cambodia was the first country that an ACT delegation visited in 2015 and is the country where the progress has advanced the most.

This chapter will outline the ACT approach and the role that buyers take, arguing that this shows a development of the recognition of responsibility in supply chains. The chapter then takes a more policy oriented approach to examine some of the

 $^{^{\}rm 16}$ To see the most up to date list of brands and retailers involved in ACT see actonlivingwages.com

technical challenges that ACT is facing and how these can be overcome before exploring the political challenges specific to Cambodia.

I argue that ACT is based on the idea of addressing conflictual distributional issues through collaborative industrial relations. Aiming to maintain profitability for suppliers and brands, while increasing the share of value produced which goes to workers. This requires a strong and independent union movement and somewhat democratic industrial relations. This chapter therefore explores the role of national unions and their perspective on ACT before showing how the political situation in Cambodia, outlined in **Chapter 5**, provides challenges to a successful implementation of the project. With a union movement under immense political pressure, the ACT approach signifies a lifeline for independent unions. Finally, I will discuss the role of the concept of 'living wages' for ACT and discuss some possible implications of supply chain industrial relations solutions for the garment industry.

Anner et al (2013) argue that any approach in the garment industry cannot "be truly effective unless it targets the structural characteristics of the global apparel industry, with particular attention to the buying practices of the brands that coordinate overseas production" (p.7). I conclude by arguing that if implemented successfully ACT will be transformative for the industry as it combines a process which strengthens the bargaining position of unions and addresses the purchasing practices of buyers simultaneously.

7.2 – The ACT Approach: Channeling Activist Pressure into Supply Chain Collective Bargaining on Wages

This research has shown the limits of national solutions to wages in the global garment industry. The industry is based on a hyper-competition between large number of suppliers and asymmetric power relationships between workers, suppliers and the buyers that control most of the value-added processes. This has, for decades, allowed buyers to suppress prices and erode any financial and policy space in which national trade union movements can bargaining for higher wages. A sustainable solution to wage increases in Cambodia, and in the garment industry more generally, can therefore not entirely be brought about through local and national organising, but will require supply chain solutions including brands and

retailers. The Cambodian unions understood this in 2014, when they marched under banners demanding that brands pay 177USD minimum wage. The fact that, five years later brands may in fact be incorporated into some form of industrial relations infrastructure seemed highly implausible then. Although in Cambodia the wage increases originated with grassroots worker mobilisation which created leverage for a strong trade union movement, in global supply chains it is not enough to use this power to push up wages but it also needs to transform the supply chain power asymmetries through reforms of purchasing practices of buyers. In order to address this, ACT has two fundamental requirements. First, wages increases should be the outcome of industry-wide collective bargaining agreements and, second, that ACT member brands will facilitate the payment of a living wages through their purchasing practices (ACT, 2015). ACT also has prerequisites which include full respect of freedom of association and collective bargaining rights. This means that buyers need to take an active role in enabling the wage setting process in Cambodia and accept their responsibility to overcome poverty wages.

In many ways, by trying to connect collective bargaining and freedom of association to brand purchasing practices, the ACT approach is attempting to address horizontal and vertical – or national and global – political economic pressures of global supply chain simultaneously.

In order to allow for collective bargaining agreements to lead to higher wages and create the space necessary for genuine sectoral collective bargaining, ACT brands will make a number of specific commitments to Cambodia. Brands will have to continue sourcing from Cambodia for a number of years and give assurances that while wages rise, the orders will remain. ACT member brands also commit to reform their purchasing practice in order to allow for higher wages to be paid. This will inevitable include reforms of the contract negotiations process between buyers and suppliers and a guarantee that higher wages will be taken into account when negotiation over price in particular. In general brands have thus far committed to:

- Making target countries a preferred destination for sourcing and investment for a defined period of time.
- Brands will ask their suppliers to actively support the collective bargaining process. Compliance with the standards of the industry wide collective bargaining agreement will be requested from suppliers.

- Based on the purchasing practice self-assessment and the feedback from suppliers, change purchasing practices that are an obstacle for suppliers to move towards a living wage
- Brands and suppliers ensure that their purchasing practices support long term partnerships with manufacturers which enable and reward their progress to paying a living wage
- Brands agree to incorporate the higher wages as a cost item in their purchasing price calculations

The way in which these general commitments will be implemented in detail are still being developed. ACT brands do not yet make up a majority of brands sourcing from Cambodia, they are however collectively sourcing from 43% of all exporting factories. The commitments and assurances from brands therefore already provide important incentives to suppliers to engage in collective bargaining.

Lead firms in the global garment industry – brands and retailers – have been under immense pressure over the last few years. Trade unions and NGOs have effectively campaigned on workers' rights in global supply chains for decades and the resulting changes in the understanding of lead firm responsibility are starting to show. Brands and retailers, especially those in Europe, have increasingly accepted that, as the most powerful actor in the chain they have a responsibility towards the distribution of profits along the chain. Those involved in ACT are beginning to show commitment to the idea that sustainable improvements in workers' wages can only occur through a reform of their purchasing practices.

The transformation of the understanding of lead-firm responsibilities, is only in its early stages however. In 2011 the UN Guiding Principles and OECD Guidelines on Multinational Enterprises iterated that MNCs have responsibilities towards their supply chains and even a direct relationship to workers' wages in their subcontractor facilities, regardless of whether a direct formal contractual employment relationship exists between the MNC and the workers or not (OECD, 2017). The OECD reiterated this through the OECD Due Diligence Guidance for Responsible Supply Chains in the Garment and Footwear Sector in 2017. This signaled a significant departure from the unilateral largely unenforceable often Code of Conduct based CSR initiatives by individual buyers.

Of course, buyers position within ACT – and if they develop similar supply chain industrial relations initiatives elsewhere - "play a contradictory role in these relationships" (Alexander et al., 2017, p. 13). They are constantly negotiating contracts with suppliers in countries expecting competitive rates while simultaneously pushing for increased wages or sustainability requirements and compliance with labour standards leading to less profits. They are in some cases also pushing for substantial reforms by "to some extent substituting for the state in producer countries - inspecting factories, pushing suppliers to respect the law, and indeed pushing the state to enforce and in some cases improve the law" (Alexander et al., 2017, p. 13). There is therefore a definite need for the buyers to come to terms with this contradictory role. The easiest way for them is to make as many of the compliance requirements as possible into pre-competitive issues in as many sourcing countries as possible. To ensure that by investing in higher wages and safer factories, as is the case in Bangladesh, they do not incur a disadvantage over their competitors. This will allow them to benefit from a more sustainable and productive industry without losing significant market shares. ACT members will in the short term also benefit from being preferred buyers and creating a more stable industry with fewer disruptions due to strikes and labour unrests.

7.3 - ACT Technical Challenges

There are a number of conceptual and practical challenges in trying to develop supply chain wage bargaining in a meaningful way. ACT member brands and IndustriALL needed to examine how brands would, by adjusting their purchasing practices, increase the labour cost included in each item, find a way to develop relationship between their commitments to Cambodia and the domestic collective bargaining process, monitor the fulfillment of their commitments, and try to find a way to extend any agreement across the entire industry.

Linking Purchasing Practices to Collectively Bargained Wages

Incorporating higher wages in purchasing practices will require some element of increasing the labour cost component of the overall manufacturing cost in line with what collective bargaining agreements have decided the new wage will be. This will open up space to negotiate and guarantee that suppliers can afford to pay a higher collectively bargained wage, buyers need to adjust their prices.

The garment supply chain is a complex network of negotiated contracts and subcontracts and "given the complexity of the value chain and the specific ownership structures of capital in the sector it is virtually impossible to establish a macro level overview of the share of relative profit and wage in the industry both at a national as a well as international level." (Miller and Hohenegger, 2016, p. 1). Therefore, establishing negotiation guidelines and costing models that, without breaking competition law, increasing the labour share of value is complex and challenging undertaking.

In an industry where it is exceptionally difficult to figure out what prices are paid and even more difficult to assess how much of that price goes to wages, agreeing to cover a 'living wage' in the purchasing prices becomes difficult. Each piece of clothing that is produced is negotiated, prices can depend on quantity and length of the order, on the quality of the material used as well as the number of work processes needed to complete the item. The number of pockets, type of stitching and whether or not the item includes embroidery or some form of knitted fabric all affect the price of an item and the labour cost component within the price.

Theoretically, a standardised labour minute can be negotiated for each item or each process required to complete an order, but this will require exceptionally open negotiations between buyers and suppliers. Usually it will require an 'open costing' model, which allows buyers to have complete insight into each cost item of manufacturing, including the margins of the supplier. Only very few buyers have a complete open costing model established across their supply chain and so only very few can have complete knowledge over the wage component of the price of each piece produced. In addition, some buyers use Free-On-Board (FOB) prices, where it is up to the supplier to source the material and other inputs, whereas some have a Cut-Make-Trim price where all inputs are provided to the supplier by the buyer. With such different costing models and negotiation processes finding a standardised way in which a number of EU and Australian buyers would facilitate the payment of a living wages, is a key challenge for ACT. Discussions are ongoing amongst the member brands of ACT and IndustriALL on how best to develop this system. ACT is also engaging with national actors in the countries in which this may be

implemented as any approach will have to satisfy brands and suppliers in target countries.

The other key commitment by brands to facilitate the payment of a living wage is the sourcing from the country. ACT brands have committed to continue sourcing from Cambodia for a number of years and make Cambodia a 'priority sourcing destination'. What exactly this will mean in practice is still being developed, but regardless this will provide some stability for the Cambodia industry. The promise by brands to stay and make Cambodia a priority destination not despite but *because* wages and in turn labour costs are increasing is quite remarkable as it goes against the prevailing logic of the global industry. This further links the behavior of brands to collectively bargaining wages and opens up space for unions and employers to genuinely negotiate higher wages.

Another technical challenge for ACT is the relationship between the content of any collective bargaining agreement and brand commitments. Otherwise, unions and employers could either sign a collective bargaining agreement which does not address wages, or an agreement with higher wages, without brands delivering on their commitments. This will be addressed most likely though a conditionality clause which links some minimum requirements of an agreement on wages to brand commitments. Stakeholders in Cambodia must also trust that brands will stick to these commitments.

Monitoring and Enforcement of CBA and brand commitments

As the process is in its early stages, much of the national actor engagement has been very careful. Brand commitments on wages have not delivered in the past and because buyers constantly provide contradictory demands to their suppliers in terms of sustainability and competitiveness, their trust in the brands is very fragile. The successful implementation of ACT will therefore depend on the enforceability or at least the monitoring of brand commitments. Considering that contracts between buyers and suppliers will continue to be subject to confidentiality, monitoring whether buyers do in fact incorporate higher labour costs into their price negotiations will be difficult. Measuring sectoral FOB price will not provide information of individual buyers and FOB prices say little about the increase in labour costs, as material, quantity and the number of work processes differ for each item.

Monitoring commitments on labour costs will likely only be possible through some form of 'grievance mechanism' which links suppliers to their buyers and allows complaints if they do not stick to the commitments they will make in terms of purchasing practices. These are serious technical challenges that should be solved through the cooperation between ACT members and national actors in Cambodia. The local employer association GMAC and key suppliers should be able to collaborate with brands in order to develop a monitoring system which both parties are comfortable with.

The enforcement of the sectoral collective bargaining agreement also needs to be guaranteed in some way. Labour inspection in Cambodia is notoriously weak and even the BFC programme which has been in Cambodia since 2001 and has a comprehensive factory inspection system in place, struggles to measure compliance with benefits and wages. Any CBA between employers and workers will therefore most likely require a separate monitoring body which looks after the sectoral agreement – preferably one made up of representatives of workers and employers. Any potential break in obligations under the agreement would have to be handle through an agreed dispute settlement procedure, or the Arbitration Council. In addition, IndustriALL will have an enforcement role in that it will need to decide if any of the brand members are in breach of the MoU.

Other challenges for ACT in Cambodia

There are also questions of extension of the bargaining agreement. Can and will the state declare an agreement to be universally applicable across the sector, and if not, how can an effective system be developed nonetheless. Legally extending an agreement will cause challenges to the industry, but ultimately facilitate a more sustainable and efficient garment manufacturing system. There will of course be consequences for those factories in the country who are not supplying to ACT brands and therefore will be paying higher wages while producing for buyers who will not reform their purchasing prices and practices.

Overall, a sectoral agreement is likely to force the industry to become more productive, with most likely smaller, less efficient factories, giving way to larger more sophisticated production sites. Factories with low levels of efficiency will struggle to

keep producing as labour cost increase, especially if they are not producing for ACT members and the increase is not in some way absorbed through higher prices. Though the data from the Ministries on employment and factory numbers are not always reliable, it seems like the wage increases in Cambodia over the last few years have already forced this kind of development.

Furthermore, the process needs to be in step with and complementary to the already existing minimum wage setting mechanisms. In Cambodia the minimum wage setting process takes place once a year over a period of a few months leading up to October. The collective bargaining process would therefore, in theory, be taking place at the same time. The CBA will need to agree an overall level of compensation to workers, which undoubtedly will need to include the new minimum wage level. The two processes will therefore need to be linked in some way.

Some of these concerns are being addressed by an ongoing ILO project on sectoral bargaining, which has provided support to unions and GMAC in the development of a sectoral bargaining agreement. The group of unions tasked with negotiating the agreement have drafted what they think a CBA should look like as a basis for the negotiations with the help of the ILO for example. Although this draft is in the process of being revised as ACT is making progress and as GMAC and trade unions engage in negotiations.

7.4 – ACT Political Challenges

Unions in Cambodia initially perceived the ACT process as an IndustriALL and brand initiative. The unions were not involved very much at the beginning of the process and felt little ownership over the idea. Some of the union leaders I spoke to were either unaware of ACT, or unable to tell me what it is, when I spoke to them in 2016 and early 2017. Those that knew were initially skeptical but became more positive as the process went on. They were never skeptical of the idea in and of itself, but of the possibility of its success. By the time I spoke to many of them, two years had passed since the first ACT country mission and very little had happened since. A little animosity was also obvious in 2017 from some of the trade union solidarity support organisations that operated in the country on a full-time basis. One staff said that there had been exceptionally little engagement or collaboration with the

organisations in Cambodia (TUSSO_01) and that 'they' simply came in 2015 and did a 'dog and pony show' and left with no follow up. One prominent union leader said that the brands had announced ACT as a big initiative two years ago and it was now running the risk of just becoming another CSR advertising opportunity. Voicing skepticism over IndustriALL's role in facilitating what may result in nothing more than a publicity stunt for brands to show that they were taking an interest in wages in Cambodia. There was therefore, from the union perspective, a risk involved in collaborating so closely with the buyers.

By the middle of 2017, the unions and labour organisations in Cambodia had heard that a foundation had been set up but had not had any formal engagement with them yet. In late 2016 and early 2017 everyone I spoke to in Cambodia seemed exceedingly underwhelmed and not very positive about the ACT approach. My research notes from both of my research trips at that time repeatedly emphasise that ACT is risking becoming another 'top-down' approach with little buy-in or ownership by the local unions and maybe even worse to become identified as simply a buyer initiative – similar to what BFC had become. Or as one independent union leader put it, ACT needs to be aware "not to shape the air and the ground doesn't know about what you are doing" (IU_02). During our second meeting, in 2017, they went even further and said that ACT was running the risk of interfering in their work by trying to find issues that unions should focus on in their industry-bargaining agreement. They were encouraged, for example, to include concerns over fixed-duration contracts (short term contracts) in the CBA, which from their perspectives was inferring with the work they were already doing on the issue.

Union leaders in Cambodia, however, knew that their strategies needed to transform and that in the current political climate, and in such a globalised industry, returning to trying to organise strikes to strengthen the position in minimum wage negotiations would not lead to sustainable improvements (IU_02). Many independent unionists were heavily involved in the 2014 campaign which called on brands to do more. They believed that in order to find a sustainable solution to wages in the industry, brands needed to do more (IU_02).

In this vein and trying to harness the momentum from 2014, IndustriALL repeatedly emphasised the potential of ACT and how it could support the Cambodian union

movement in organising for sustainable improvement in wages. In 2017 with the appointment of an Executive Director and senior project manager for ACT, and the beginning of regular engagement with Cambodian stakeholders, many of the concerns began to dissipate. Unions became actively involved in the ACT process and the simultaneous sectoral bargaining process that the ILO office in Phnom Penh was organising starting summer 2017. The concept of industry-wide bargaining was not alien to local activists – the unions understood the importance of collective bargaining agreements – but rather did not expect this approach to be possible given the political situation in Cambodia.

The concerns over slow moving progress and lack of effectiveness of ACT came due to a distinct and purposeful lack of communication on the internal processes. ACT did communicate directly with the national actors on any progress but avoided public announcement in order not to make any public promises without having developed the groundwork. The apparent lack of engagement was also because progress on the groundwork throughout 2015 and 2016 was slow. The process began in 2015 when IndustriALL signed a memorandum of understanding with 17 buyers. The ACT process was to be developed in 5 countries, including Cambodia, and incorporate 'living wages' on the basis of industry-wide collective bargaining and facilitated through brand purchasing practices. Not just would this process require 17 competitors to agree on what they were willing to commit to Cambodia and other countries willing to participate, it would require them to agree a process of implementation and monitoring. They would also have to develop these processes in collaboration with IndustriALL and without interfering with, or undermining, domestic collective bargaining structures. The aim was to empower local actors to negotiate a living wage in a sustainable manner, not undermine the national trade union movement. The fact that worker representation at ACT is through IndustriALL and not through the local unions in Cambodia did initially cause some animosity over the process. As ACT develops however, and as national industry-wide collective agreements are negotiated, the role of IndustriALL will diminish and the national unions gain control over the process. As ultimately the negotiations over wages and conditions are the responsibility of the Cambodian unions through a sectoral bargaining process. IndustriALL will for ACT in Cambodia simply be responsible for making sure the brand commitments are adhered to and upon request form the national union movement provide support in the negotiation process.

The Cambodian Industrial Relations Environment

Considering the development of a new industrial relations strategy by the Royal Government of Cambodia (RGC) which is focused on developing a hegemonic labour control regime, the ACT process will face a number of challenges in its implementation in Cambodia. It may also, however, provide a lifeline for genuine union activity and activism.

As outlined in Chapter 5 the Cambodian government has pursued a strategy of violence, intimidation and state directed benefits to establish a hegemonic labour control regime. With this the state aimed to sideline independent union activism and genuine collective worker representation and solidified its own control over industrial relations and wage setting in the garment sector in particular. The reforms to the minimum wage setting process and the laws that accompanied them, for example, have made genuine collective bargaining at factory and sector more difficult. It was also an attempt to isolate Cambodian workers from their international allies and reduce the influence of global unions and international actors. Not just through the outright conflict with the US but also through increased control over union finances, including oversees financial support, and ramped up rhetoric of outside forces trying to provoke a 'colour revolution' in Cambodia. In an environment where this is the deliberate strategy by the government, developing a wage setting mechanism based on industry-wide collective bargaining - between employer representatives and worker representatives – and in collaboration with international buyers and a global union is potentially problematic for the Cambodian government.

The ACT approach uses the dynamics of the global supply chain to free space for national bargaining. This could provide some counterweight to the governments overall industrial relations strategy. Also, because it strengthens independent unions by giving them a central role in wage decisions and increasing the leverage they hold. The state has repeatedly said that it is willing to work with brands but that they do not believe any promises made to the Cambodian industry, especially after the promises in 2014 did not materialise.

One concern is that the process would also deliver higher wages to workers without Hun Sen personally being able to claim responsibility for the improvement, undermining one of his key populist tools. Although, this could be fulfilled by legally extending any collective bargaining agreement and the benefits that this brings. There is, however, also a possibility that this process will create tension between the Cambodian government and the many, largely Chinese, investors who own factories in the Kingdom. Over the last year, however, the responses form the Minister of Labour in relation to ACT have been very positive. It seems that the state has also seen the potential benefits which could come from the ACT process.

In many ways a wage setting through sectoral collective bargaining requires a collaborative understanding of labour relations. In Cambodia, this is systematically being eroded. Cambodian industrial relations architecture was built on established western industrial relations systems legislation but was rarely ever enacted in that spirit. The Cambodian state has always shown an authoritarian understanding of the labour and capital relationship. This has become worse in recent years and the labour movement is under extreme pressure to conform to the states understanding of 'good unions'. Sectoral agreements need to be negotiated between capital and labour at eye level with very limited state involvement. The state, traditionally, would simply set the rules and regulations necessary to legally extend the agreement to all workplaces in a particular sector. A key political challenge for ACT in Cambodia is therefore also the general lack of a collective bargaining tradition and repression of independent unions capable of meaningful engagement with such a process.

7.5 – Trade Unions and the ACT process in Cambodia

One Cambodian labour activist told me that, although there was some demand for ACT, unions still lacked the leverage for effective industry-wide bargaining. Cambodian trade unions struggle to maintain the level of power and strength required to effectively negotiate collective bargaining agreements. Not just is there a weak history of collective bargaining at factory level – and no history of collective bargaining at sectoral level – the CBAs that do exist in some instances are below the labour law (E_01) and designed to crowd out space for genuine agreements and genuine union representation in the factory (TUSSO_04). They are often a tool by factory management to please buyers and control the workforce through appointed or paid-off unions agreeing to CBAs which limit rights and benefits rather than enhance them.

The labour movement in Cambodia has been very effective in recent years in driving up wages. However, these increases were predominantly based on campaigning and utilising fragile domestic political situation effectively. Using the state controlled industrial relations institutions provided some results also, but again only due to the wider political environment. Unions gather their strength through campaigning and mobilisation, rather than associational power in negotiations. In fact, the employers frequently question the legitimacy of independent unions and their associational power. The leverage that unions can build through organising is usually deployed through industrial relations structures to change laws or negotiate collective bargaining agreements. The Cambodian state, however, after the unrest in 2014 and show of strength by the union movement made sure that the protest in the streets did not translate into institutional power or influence over the wage setting mechanism. With the campaigning capacity increasingly restricted through new laws and the institutional capacity missing, union leverage is becoming weaker.

Attempts at sectoral collective bargaining in the garment industry have failed in the past. An attempt to create something akin to a CBA for the sector in form of an MoU between GMAC and several key trade unions failed in 2014. The MoU was geared towards collective labour disputes resolution and based on unions agreeing to conduct only legal strikes if GMAC members agreed to treat Arbitration Council decisions as binding. Attempts to renew the MoU in 2014 were futile after the widespread unrest and violence in the sector earlier in the year. Ostensibly the MoU failed because employers accused unions of engaging in illegal strikes all throughout the agreement. Strikes did indeed increase over the period of the MoU. In return however, unions also complained that GMAC was not capable of getting its members to agree to binding AC decisions. The lack of trust in each other and lack of trust in the others' ability to control their members will also be a potential stumbling block in the ongoing sectoral bargaining negotiations.

Although the Cambodian unions were initially reserved about the process, the largest independent unions are now very much involved and positive about ACT. This is also because the ACT process may provide a lifeline for independent unions in Cambodia. Not just does ACT emphasise the need for full respect of freedom of association as a pre-condition for brand commitments to Cambodia, but the

conditionality of brand commitments provides genuine leverage for union representatives. The minimum wage setting mechanism is not a bargaining process because unions do not have the ability to walk away from the process and let the 'negotiations' collapse. They can simply 'abstain' or not show up. But the wage will be set regardless. With the brand commitments being conditional on wage improvements and a signed CBA, unions can walk away and risk a collapse of the sectoral CBA and hence leading to real and significant losses for factory owners. It would of course also lead to the lack of a wage increases for their members. This would allow for genuine collective bargaining, rather than simply consultations on wages where unions have little decision-making power.

Not just is this important for sustainable and peaceful industrial relations as well as continuous improvements in wages for garment workers, but it also provides an opportunity for unions to organise. Something that is increasingly being restricted by the government outside of this process. It is therefore a process based on empowering the local trade union movement rather than one aimed at circumventing it. This is a crucial difference between ACT and any other buyer living wage initiatives.

7.6 - Living Wages in Global Supply Chains

The ACT Memorandum of Understanding states that a 'brands and retailers will ensure that their purchasing practices facilitate the payment of a living wage'. A 'living wage' is defined as 'the minimum income necessary for a worker to meet the basic needs of himself/herself and his/her, family including some discretionary income. This should be earned during legal normal working hour limits' (ACT, 2015). This use and definition of 'living wage' caused some concerns in Cambodia. Not just because the Ministry of Labour in Cambodia and the employer representatives object to the use of the term, but also because the concept had little meaning to the Cambodian trade unions. Unions had always organised on the basis of a minimum wage and treated the minimum wage as a wage that would guarantee a minimum income necessary to cover the basis needs of workers and their families. The minimum wage under Cambodian labour law, actually specifies this. During the minimum wage negotiations and wage campaign in 2013/2014 unions did always asked for a wage, which for all intents and purposes was a living wage demand.

IU_01 admitted that they had always organised on minimum wages, and although 'living wages' may be beneficial to workers it was somewhat alien to the Cambodian trade union movement. Nevertheless, they were willing to engage with the concept.

The confusion is understandable considering there is no accepted definition of a living wage and no accepted mechanism for calculating it. As outlined in **Chapter 6** there are significant differences between NGOs, unions and other labour organisations over what the living wage is and how it should be calculated in different context. Many Cambodian unions frequently engage with international allies and NGOs who have different understanding of the living wage concept, when at the same time, for them the concept remains meaningless.

What came out very strongly from the workshops on 'Living Wages' that I attended was that for IndustriALL the key difference was process rather than any particular mechanism of calculating a specific figure. The importance of a living wage strategy was to have a wage that covers the costs of workers and their families and that is negotiated through industry-wide collective bargaining agreements. These agreements need to be genuine and promote workers voice as opposed to a minimum wage which is set by the government. What was important to IndustriALL was to technically and politically strengthen the national union movement and collective bargaining framework. Collective bargaining agreements were also important as a basis for a living wage initiative as they allow workers to address wage-related working conditions not traditionally addressed by minimum wage setting mechanisms. Especially overtime, skill appropriate remuneration, daily quotas and other benefits are important wage related factors that should be negotiated at sector level.

Including the concept of a 'living wage' in the ACT process was likely not only at the behest of the unions, but also because buyers were increasingly under pressure to show what they were doing to guarantee a living wage across their production sites. Some brands, like H&M for example, had also already published a living wage pledge and strategy. H&M in 2013 promised to pay all the workers in its strategic supplier factories a living wage by 2018. These aims are difficult to attain through individual efforts and without a mechanism like ACT in place.

The crucial aspect of many of these discussions was the possible transformations that collective bargaining on wages can bring to the sector and the region. As it stands there is no collective bargaining in the industry anywhere in Asia and so there is also little capacity of setting up collective bargaining institutions. This is further complicated by the authoritarian political environments that many unions in Asia are embedded in. Collective bargaining, and sectoral collective bargaining in particular, in Europe occurs in a context of more union freedom and worker power. What makes the ACT process truly different from different approaches to improving conditions in the garment industry, especially those that involve buyers, is the role of collective bargaining. ACT has said that the current wage is far below any meaningful definition of a living wage but has not named a specific figure of what a 'living wage' should be. But rather continuously emphasised that in order to reach anything resembling a living wage, incomes need to be rising above inflation and productivity and that wage improvements need to be substantial and continuos. This has been, and will continue to be, criticised by activists and NGOs, but it is crucial to developing genuine and effective collective bargaining mechanisms. Which will ultimately strengthen the union movement much more and improve wages in a much more sustainable way than naming a figure for a living wage that is inevitably based on hitherto more often than not – shaky statistics and needs to be adjusted, reviewed, and methodologically refined annually anyway.

7.5 – Supply Chain Collective Bargaining

Supply chain collective bargaining and other 'transnational collective IR arrangements' (Alexander *et al.*, 2017) are a new area in the governance of labour and employment relations. Not many attempts have been made by the global union movement to create such structures in a globalised economy. In many ways it is only the Accord on Fire and Safety from 2013 and the ACT initiatives that have thus far attempted anything that can remotely be described as supply chain or transnational industrial relations.

Traditionally industrial relations rely on the collective interest representation and formal collective bargaining structures between workers representative and employer representatives, in some way facilitated by the state. At supply chain level, these actors lack the necessary capacity for collective bargaining (Alexandre et Al

2017). Economic activity in supply chain transcends borders and no transnational state authority exists under whose jurisdiction the overall value creating activity occurs or who has authority over the different actors. Employer interest across these chains are often contradictory, as suppliers and buyers negotiate contracts under the hyper-competitive conditions of a globalised industry. Employers in Cambodia, who are often owned by overseas investors do not share interest with the European or US buyers they supply. The only group, who can in some way claim to have a representative body at transnational level are workers, who can be represented by their sectoral Global Union Federation or International Trade Union Confederation.

In negotiating national conditions and wages, however, buyers and GUFs have no legal standing. Employers in Cambodia are represented through CAMFEBA at national, or GMAC at sectoral, level. The most powerful actors in these chains and those over the largest influence over the distribution of profits do not have any formal industrial relations role in national states. Incorporating these buyers in supply chain collective bargaining structures therefore poses a number of conceptual challenges. Overcoming some of these challenges, however, would create more sustainable and effective supply chain governance structures.

The new supply chain industrial relations initiatives attempt to do just that. Within ACT for example, "the traditional function of organised labour negotiating with direct employers remains. However, it is the global peak labour organization (IndustriALL) that plays the role of a facilitator, creating a conducive environment for collective bargaining at the national level" (Alexander *et al.*, 2017, p. 13). In many ways this is similar to the way that Global Framework Agreements try to operate except that these attempts of building transnational industrial relations infrastructure, like the Bangladeshi Accord and possibly ACT, attempt to do so by going beyond existing arrangements and developing these legal relationships (Anner, Bair and Blasi, 2013). These initiatives are what Anner (Anner, 2015a) calls 'transnational accords'. These accords are signed between Global Union Federations and a number of buyers and are based on the premise that lead firms are responsible for the conditions and/or wages in their supplier factories (Anner, Bair and Blasi, 2013).

The ACT process in developing in this way is an outcome of the relationships and research build around the Bangladesh Accord (Alexander *et al.*, 2017) and both

initiatives due to their "transnational, collective, and inclusive nature, extend the unilateral initiatives [...] they can rather be seen as further steps towards the implementation of transnational IR arrangements" (Alexander *et al.*, 2017, p. 14).

The crucial difference to many of the existing attempts at supply chain governance are the role of unions, both at global as well as national level. Buyers, traditionally, have not been willing to support or even work with trade unions. In fact, many attempts at supply chain governance based on unilateral voluntary approaches were designed to keep unions out of the equation, to create an alternative system of corporate social responsibility which avoids or crowds out the possibility to genuine and sustainable improvements in working conditions and wages. Buyers, traditionally, were not only interested in keeping costs low but also "to reduce the likelihood of supply chain disruptions caused by worker organisation and mobilisation" (Anner, 2015b, p. 18).

Other than unilateral approaches based on individual buyers code of conduct, Multi-Stakeholder initiatives have taken hold over the last 15 years (Holdcroft, 2015). They have grown significantly over that time and more and more companies have joined them. Although they have not shown significant improvements in rights or working conditions over that time (Holdcroft, 2015). Private regulatory mechanisms have generally not led to improvements core rights of freedom of association and collective bargaining and wages (Barrientos and Smith, 2007; Locke, 2013; Egels-Zandén and Merk, 2014). This is also because they have systematically sidelined labour and were not aimed at improving their voice in the process. Though some private initiatives by reputation conscious buyers who have worked very closely with their suppliers have had effects on safety and health (Oka, 2016). In general, therefore, worker-led initiatives or those based on worker organising and collective bargaining are much more likely to be sustainable and effective.

Even the multi-stakeholder initiatives, which union involve trade unions, do not attempt anything remotely resembling collective bargaining, nor do they attempt to empower workers to find solutions based on collective representation. Rather, they are predicated on top-down buyer driven approaches to neoliberal understandings of corporate social responsibility and can therefore not be regarded as transnational or supply chain industrial relations (Alexander *et al.*, 2017). ACT and the

Bangladeshi Accord even go beyond traditional Global Framework Agreements in that they do not simply assume lead firms have responsibility to influence their subcontractors but that they are in fact directly responsible for the conditions and wages in the factories of their subcontractors (Alexander *et al.*, 2017).

Reversely, the focus on collective bargaining in the ACT approach makes it markedly different from any previous initiatives. Furthermore by "linking national industry-level collective bargaining between unions and employers to the purchasing practices of brands, the ACT process creates a framework for genuine supply chain industrial relations" (Holdcroft, 2015, p. 102). The process continues to build unfamiliar alliances between IndustriALL and buyers and in some way even between local unions and buyers. In part this is also because buyers are beginning to recognise, after decades of unilateral CSR and monitoring initiatives, that improving the industry will only work through an effective collaboration with trade unions and a process which has workers at the centre.

The weaving of buyer responsibility across the chain in the ACT approach comes through two key buyer commitments. On the one hand, buyers will commit to a sourcing destination for a number of years, facilitating long-term relationships and more comprehensive industry development. Longer term sourcing commitments will provide suppliers in Cambodia the guarantee that, even with rising wages, orders will continue. This also provides more opportunity to collaboratively work on 'world class manufacturing' as the ACT MoU states.

On the other hand, and again this is new and embedded buyer responsibility firmly across the chain, is the promise of linking wages to purchasing practices. ACT member brands have already undergone a purchasing practices self-assessment. The results are being evaluated in detail in order to develop standardised approaches to purchasing practices. In order to close the gap between buyer and social responsibility departments and provide more coherence in the buyer and supplier relationships. Suppliers complained, throughout this research, that the disconnect between the social responsibility tasks that buyers demand on one hand and the price and time squeeze on the other are a key concern for suppliers. Having to deliver and document better wages and working conditions, as well as environmental sustainability, while also being squeezed on price and delivery times

shows the contradictory nature of most buyers stuck between profit maximisation and reputational protection (E_01).

In particular, the promise that increases in wages and developments towards living wages will be reflected in purchasing prices, is a fundamental change in the modus operandi of the global garment industry. Traditionally wages were the weakest link in the chain and the most likely to get cut when brands began to renegotiate prices down. In the situation where a minimum wage didn't allow for further wage reduction, suppliers would increase daily quotas or working time (Anner 2011; E_02). Linking purchasing prices to collectively bargained wages does not just safeguard wage levels, but for the first time provides a system through which workers can increase the labour share of the value added through effective organising.

Developing a supply chain regulatory mechanism based on collective bargaining agreements brings other benefits as well. CBAs can include agreement on other wage related factors like overtime, daily quotas and skills development. A major concern in the garment industry, in Cambodia and globally, remains work intensification. When wages go up, so do daily quotas and overtime. In Cambodia this is compounded with the pervasive use of short-term contracts, meaning workers may work excessive overtime while orders are high and lose their jobs during a lull. Short-term contracts are also used as an anti-union and maternity discrimination measure. These concerns can all be addressed in sectoral bargaining agreements, without having to change or amend the labour law.

The global garment and footwear industry continues to exhibit very low level of collective agreements and non-existent wage bargaining systems. This means that workers are reliant, as is the case in Cambodia, on ineffective and state controlled minimum wage setting mechanisms (Holdcroft, 2015). The previous chapter showed how in Cambodia the minimum wage setting mechanism is used as a political hegemonic tool to control the trade union movement, rather than provide an opportunity for social dialogue and collective decisions making.

The ACT process is attractive to buyers (and should also appeal to suppliers) because it sends wages into a pre-competitive sphere. Wages, in theory, will no longer be a basis for competition with the industry in Cambodia. In terms of

international competition wages of course continue to be a basis for comparative advantage between countries. The ACT approach will therefore only be successful in the long term if it can be successful in other countries as well. For suppliers in Cambodia, this is particularly important because the labour market conditions, as well as the political situation will likely mean that pressure on wages will continue to push them up. Finding a way to ensure Cambodia's competitive edge in the global garment industry, not despite rising wages but due to rising wages, is a welcome challenge for suppliers. This can only work if buyers will not tacitly accept – or are contractually prevented from accepting – that the overwhelmingly foreign suppliers move their production to low labour cost countries which are not (yet) covered by an ACT agreement.

7.6 – Confrontation to Collaboration

The increased collaboration between IndustriALL and brands was predominantly the outcome of the relationships that were built during the process of the Bangladesh Accord. Although this level of collaboration is a new development in the industry and clearly signals a new era for supply chain industrial relations, this level of collaboration is not a given and there is no guarantee that it will go forward unconditionally and indefinitely. In the aftermath of Rana Plaza collapse and the violence in Cambodia, many brands were under a lot of pressure to show that they were taking their responsibility seriously. This level of pressure cannot, however, be maintained for an extended period of time. The extension of the Bangladesh Accord already proved much more difficult, and outside pressure through large NGO campaign had to once again be mobilised to convince brands to take part.

In terms of ACT, the brands currently involved in the process have taken their responsibility very seriously and IndustriALL for a while stopped trying to recruit more brands, in order for the process to be firmly established first, so that brands who would not be so interested in genuinely paying living wages will not water the process down before it can even begin. In the last few months, however, two more brands have joined.

At a local level the collaboration is also not yet as smooth as it could be. The unions, employers and state do not yet trust the brands to live up to their commitments and

are vary of entering an agreement with them. This is largely because promises on increased pricing made after the 2014 labour unrests were not kept.

Crucial to the further development of ACT will be if it does indeed provide an alternative to the neoliberal orthodoxy governing global production. If it does indeed empower workers and bind multi-national enterprises into industrial relations framework, where they genuinely share the responsibility to improve conditions, it might. At least the process has already challenged the ideological cloaking of responsibility in global supply chains by making a direct link between purchasing practices and wages. This means that they are no longer the opaque and benevolent firms benefiting from a competitive global industry they have no control over, but rather relevant actors in the regulation of wages and working conditions based on antagonistic collaboration between organized capital and organized labour. Brands far too often benefit from local employers and states fighting their wars for them.

Of course, there is also a danger that the process represents just another attempt by capital to co-opt labour in order to safeguard the benefits that neoliberalism brought them in the early days where workers in the Global South were not as organised as they are now. Though this is a danger, the heterogenous nature of the wage campaign and structure and broad labour network would make this very difficult. The global NGOs continue to be very skeptical of the process. As trade unions are always and constantly engaging in negotiations and collaborations with capital, the real test will be if the ACT process provides more benefits to labour than it pacifies and immobilises the movement.

And so, as it stands, it seems that ACT may be a serious and innovative attempt to transform the industry, which might overcome the systematic power imbalances of global production, for the first time, to the benefit of workers.

7.7 – Conclusion

This chapter examined the new supply chain initiative on wages – ACT. Action Collaboration and Transformation (ACT) is a joint initiative between IndustriALL and 19 European and Australian brands and retailers with the aim to create living wages in the industry through collective bargaining agreements linked to brand purchasing

practices. The initiative is still in its early phases and in fact, no collective agreement as envisaged by ACT has yet been signed. This chapter outlined, however, the key challenges for the ACT approach, what it could potentially mean for the industry globally and in Cambodia. The ACT approach provides an opportunity for Cambodian unions to engage in genuine collective bargaining with an incentive to suppliers to also engage meaningfully in the process. In this way it breaks the political economic structures of the global garment industry which has systematically disempowered workers for decades. Compared to other initiatives in the industry, which were usually based on corporate social responsibility and side-lined unions, ACT puts trade unions and collective bargaining at the centre. It therefore combines a redeveloped global understanding of corporate responsibility brought about through decades of campaigning by unions and NGOs with the need to strengthen trade unions in producing countries.

Cambodia is the first destination attempting to link a sectoral bargaining agreement to brand purchasing practices and as such is facing a number of challenges. Many technical and conceptual challenges that come with the ACT approach have not yet been fully addressed and the difficult domestic situation for unions is making collective bargaining challenging. There is a risk that state may start interfering when it realises that this process will threaten the level of control it currently has over wage setting in the industry, although so far, the Ministry of Labours responses have been positive. If successful, the ACT process will also represent a much needed lifeline to an independent trade union movement increasingly under pressure by the government. ACT represents a serious attempt by all the key actors to develop a sustainable industry and continued substantial wage increases for Cambodian workers. It may result in a blueprint for a different, more humane, global garment industry.

Chapter 8: Disconnected Solidarities: Coalitions and Strategies on Wages in Cambodia's Garment Sector

8.1 - Introduction

This thesis has thus far examined the strategies and structures of the campaign and trade union organising efforts on wages in Cambodia. The immediate wage campaign in 2013 and 2014 and the industrial relations work that followed were based on a number of different coalitions between global and national actors. These coalitions and their strategies were different whether they were engaging in campaigning efforts on the one hand and industrial relations organising on the other – by which I mean trade union organising around formal wage negotiations and collective bargaining as well as union building efforts. Understanding the relationship between these different actors and approaches and the overlapping and sometime competing efforts on higher wages in Cambodia's garment and footwear sector is crucial in order to provide important insight into global labour campaigning for higher wages in global supply chains.

Here, I will summarise the previous chapters in explicitly outlining the different coalitions which developed and deteriorated and argue that it is precisely their deterioration - in the disconnected solidarities of these actors - that we can learn important lessons on social movement and labour organising and global campaigning. The chapter first outlines the different types of coalitions, how they can be characterised and how they fit into the wider structure of this thesis. I then show how the effective solidarity work of unions and NGOs in 2013-2014 through their 'campaign coalitions' contributed to rising wages in Cambodia before analysing how in the aftermath these coalitions deteriorated and new 'industrial relations coalitions' were formed. These coalitions can be characterised more by their disconnected solidarity between unions and NGOs, as well as between different fractions of independent unions in Cambodia and globally. The chapter concludes by arguing that effective solidarity between unions and NGOs is crucial for the leverage of the labour movement in global supply chains - even at times when unions are taking up their roles as industrial relations actors and entering compromises with capital.

8.2 – Structure of Trade Union and NGO Activism for Higher Wages in Cambodia

The key actors I have come across throughout the research and whose work I have described in this thesis were a) Global Union Federations and the International Trade Union Confederation, b) national trade union federations and confederations

(both independent and pro-government), c) international labour NGOs, d) national labour NGOs, e) Trade Union Solidarity Support Organisations and f) European trade unions organising separately from their membership in IndustriALL or ITUC. These different actors have different organisational natures and strategic priorities, which at times can lead to conflict and distrust, but can also when properly aligned lead to effective national and global campaigns. **Chapter 6** has outlined these conflicts and congruences between actors at a global level and how their different organisational forms and priorities lead to different strategies employed through different transnational pathways. **Chapter 4** evaluated the strategies of the national actors and their relationships and both chapters showed how the relationship between the national and global level were crucial.

Key to the overall structure of trade union and activists organising and campaigning for higher wages in Cambodia were the development and deterioration of different coalitions. As the work of trade unions on wages in Cambodia developed from campaigning to working more through and trying to build effective industrial relations institutions, the national and global coalitions transformed. In 2013 and 2014, during the height of the wage campaign national and international unions worked together and build up effective coalitions with NGOs in Cambodia and globally. These 'campaign coalitions' can be characterised by 'effective solidarity' – they worked closely together and, although not always on the same strategies or for the same reasons, supported each other in the objective to increase wages for garment workers. It was a joint and global confrontational campaign aimed at international brands and retailers and the Cambodian government.

In the aftermath of the immediate campaign on wages, these coalitions began to deteriorate. Unions and NGOs 'returned' to their long-term strategies for increasing wages, with trade unions in Cambodia and globally engaging more fully in their industrial relations roles and focusing on working through and improving industrial relations institutions. National and global NGOs do not have a formal role in these developments and so conflict arises within the previously quite effective coalitions. Though they still exhibit solidarity towards each other, their strategies have become less compatible. These 'industrial relations coalitions' are characterised by 'disconnected solidarities'. Table 8.1 below summarises these coalitions and how they can be characterised.

Table 8.1: Types of Activist Coalitions on Wages in Cambodia's Garment and Footwear Industry

	Who?	Work	Work on Wages	Characterised
		Nationally	Globally	by?
Campaign	Global Union Federations; ITUC; CCC; WRC; Independent unions in Cambodia; Labour and human rights NGOs;	National Wage Campaign 2013-2014 (Chapter 4): Grassroots demonstrations and national strike; Solidarity demonstrations by national NGOs throughout 2014; support by NGOs for 'USD177' wage campaign;	Market-Pathway (Chapter 6): Global day of solidarity demonstrations; coordinated pressure on brands and retailers in EU and US; Support for unions and NGOs in Cambodia; Online and Social Media campaigns; investigative reporting and fact-finding missions to Cambodia;	Effective solidarity: Through broad and shared goals and joint campaign targets; Confrontational global and national campaign; Unions and NGOs have equal standing;
Industrial Relations Coalitions	IndustriALL; ITUC; Independent and to some extend pro- government unions in Cambodia; European Trade Unions; Trade Union Solidaritty, Support Organisations;	Minimum Wage Negotiations (Chapter 5): A broader group of trade unions engaged more actively in the now annual minimum wage negotiations; though these were also a key area of a new hegemonic labour control regime ACT & Sectoral Bargaining (Chapter 7): A group of independent and progovernment unions is engaging in attempts to negotiate a collective bargaining agreement.	Civil Society Pathway (Chapter 6): Support for Cambodian unions involved in minimum wage negotiations through research funding and capacity building; Workshops on wage setting and wage strategies Institutional Pathway (Chapter 6): Discussion at the ILC on DW in Global Supply Chains, as well as the CAS case against new TUL ACT (Chapter 7): ACT approach to supply chain industrial relations mechanism on wages	Disconnected Solidarity: Focused on trade union work and their industrial relations roles; conflict between NGOs and Unions (both globally and nationally); conflict between unions (both globally and nationally); cooperation and collaboration with capital:

These two types of 'coalitions' describe how the networks of actors working on wages in Cambodia is varied and based on frequently changing alliances and relationships between the different actors.

Research on trade union and NGO coalitions, for example, has previously examined different forms and strategies that these networks can take. The research has developed ideal types of networks based on the intensity of cooperation between the actors (Kryst, 2012) and cooperation between unions and NGOs:

"can range from only non-binding declarations, joint conferences and temporary projects, to long-term campaigns, a common secretariat, joint problem definition and planning processes or even to a continuous exchange and joint proposals for the policy process" (Kryst, 2012, p. 104).

It is difficult to characterise union and NGO relationships as they work on wages in the garment sector as any particular ideal type however. I also do not go into detail in terms of the internal structures of different coalitions and alliances, but rather examine more broadly who is involved at what stage of the wage work and how they are cooperating. A more detailed description of the different relationships and internal structures of global and national union and NGOs coalitions were described in **Chapter 4** and **Chapter 6**. The 'campaign coalitions' and 'industrial relations coalitions' described here both include the cooperation or the lack of cooperation between global unions and national unions, Global Unions and NGOs, national NGOs and national trade unions, as well as between national trade unions and between Global Unions and ITUC.

The Union and NGO coalitions campaigning on wages in Cambodia are fragile – both globally and nationally – and complicated largely due to the different organisational structures involved. Unions are centralised democratic organisations that are primarily tasked with representing the interests of their members. They are active industrial relations actors and as such frequently in negotiations with employers and the state over the working conditions and wages of their members. Powerful unions in developed economies are in positions where they can effectively represent their members in meaningful collective bargaining rounds. This, however, almost inevitably requires compromise and to some extend the collaboration with employers. NGOs, and labour campaigning NGOs in particular, are set up very differently and have different priorities. They are voluntary organisation build as social movement organisations who rely on supporters (Kryst, 2012). They do not hold an industrial relations role and as such have an almost exclusively confrontational relationship with capital.

Trade unions also take on a campaigning role at times and, especially, in the global garment industry often have to resort to the campaigning strategies in order to overcome the asymmetric power relations they are confronted with. This thesis has shown how and why these campaigns can be effective. In the case of Cambodia, as I will discuss here, the coalitions between unions and NGOs began to fracture once unions attempted to move from campaigning mode into industrial relations role – from confrontation to negotiations and ultimately cooperation. Both nationally, through the admittedly flawed minimum wage process, and internationally through the still developing ACT process, NGOs became side-lined and so as trade union priorities shifted coalitions broke apart. The concern will be what happens when trade unions need to return to campaigns and need to revive the campaign. As well as how the ongoing campaigning by NGOs is interfering with attempts by unions to develop more sustainable industrial relations infrastructure.

The relationships within the group of independent unions in Cambodia also shifted significantly after the campaign and so did those between global unions. The disconnected solidarities that characterise the industrial relations coalitions are therefore also visible within the trade union movement. They are often emphasised by external attempts to support long-term strategy and institution building. These difficulties are also apparent with the TUSSOs in Cambodia and globally. They try to orientate themselves somewhat in the middle and support unions in their industrial relations tasks as well as the broader campaigning on wages and working conditions in Cambodia. They also attempt to support unions and campaigns with research and resources. This means financial support for wage strategy sessions, trainings and capacity building as well as funding research on new laws and policies which may restrict union capacities.

8.3 – Campaign Coalitions: Effective Solidarity on Wages

The wage campaign in Cambodia in 2013-2014 and subsequent union organising was seen as successful by many unions and activists because it led to a series of significant wage increases, a change in the employer and state approach to wages and provoked the beginning of a sectoral collective bargaining process.

Trade unions, activists and workers in Cambodia and globally managed to combine a number of national and international strategies on wages in an effective way. Collaborating in 'campaign coalitions' with a shared goal. The campaigning and organising efforts in Cambodia did therefore manage to bring together actors from a wide variety of backgrounds in a somewhat loosely-knitted global network of activists and managed to combine global campaigning efforts on 'living wages' and national campaigning on minimum wages very well. This effective solidarity across campaign coalitions made up of national and international trade unions and NGOs with different political and strategic considerations were crucial to the success of the campaign. This section will summarise how the key coalitions were developed and how they managed to raise wages in Cambodia.

Important in overcoming the barriers to higher wages, created by the political economic structures of global production (**Chapter 3**) and authoritarian domestic politics (**Chapter 5**), were the convergence and collaboration – even if only temporary – of all the national and international actors involved. The trade unions and NGOs involved in the campaign in Cambodia framed the issue from the very beginning as a supply chain issue rather than focusing simply on the national wage structures. This coincided with a wider and ongoing global campaign by their international allies to change the understanding of responsibility in global supply chains.

The key event in the national campaign was without a doubt the wave of labour unrests and national trade union strike in December and January 2014 and the violent state crackdown that ended the strike. The unrests were started by grassroots worker actions in the factories in response to what was deemed an insufficient wage rise for 2014. The unions and NGOs in Cambodia quickly came together and found ways to cooperate and support the workers striking and protesting in Phnom Penh. A coalition of independent trade unions declared a national strike a few days after the unrests started and a number of human rights and labour NGOs – some with links to the ongoing political turmoil – also began to support the campaign for higher wages. The key coalitions at national level, consisted of collaborations between different groups of independent unions and national labour and human rights NGOs.

Especially throughout 2014, in a tense political environment in which trade union rights and freedom of assembly and association rights were being restricted by the state, labour NGOs and trade unions worked closely together. The labour NGO CENTRAL was hugely important in 2014 in maintaining the momentum of the wage campaign while many independent union leaders were either in prison or under investigation and awaiting trial. Early 2014, for example, they coordinated a protest in support of the trade union leaders still in prison following the 2013/2014 strikes. The protest was held when a complete ban on political assembly and protest was still in place across Phnom Penh. They nevertheless managed to hold the protest by organising it under the guise of a panel discussion. Although there was no formal strategic planning between the unions and NGOs, their solidarity actions were crucial for the independent unions in Cambodia at that time. CENTRAL also attempted to organise an overtime boycott in garment factories in support of the unions. They only managed to mobilise workers in a handful of factories and still the state reacted by sending trucks of soldiers out to factories across the country (NGO_01). Effectively locking workers into their workplaces and forcing them to work overtime. CENTRAL also with support from their international allies, the Clean Clothes Campaign, supported the unions with campaign materials in the form of the iconic "We Need USD177" banners and T-Shirts, which throughout 2014 became key to the wage campaign.

The coalitions of Cambodian and global activists managed to make wages a contentious political issue through the work of all of the coalitions involved. Garment worker compensation became a key issue in the competition between the ruling CPP and opposition CNRP who, in December 2013 and January 2014, were still contesting the outcome of the last national elections held in the summer of 2013. The CNRP clearly came out in support of the workers and in January 2014 called upon striking workers to join them for a mass demonstration against the government planned for the 5th of January. The coalition between workers, unions and the opposition party was a clear threat to the CPP and it is therefore no surprise that the worker strikes were crushed violently before the demonstration on the 5th could take place. Nevertheless, the ability of unions to position themselves and the wage issue as a core domestic political concern provided leverage to them, they had not had during previous wage campaigns and strikes.

The campaign also managed to successfully build or activate global campaign coalitions through their networks of trade union and NGO allies. These coalitions supported the campaign through a global day of action across the world in 2014 and orchestrated pressure on brands and retailers from their basis in Europe and the US. This led to active brand involvement in Cambodia through an open letter from EU and US brands supporting the wage claims by workers and promising not to move their production if wages were to rise to 177USD. The pressure also facilitated the visit of H&Ms CEO to Cambodia to ask the government to release workers and union leaders imprisoned during the strike and personally reassure the Cambodian government that H&M will continue to buy from Cambodian suppliers if wages were to increase. This global solidarity campaign pressuring brands and retailers to take stand was very well coordinated with the Cambodian campaign, which was directly addressing brands and retailers in their demonstrations and lunchtime rallies throughout 2014.

The key campaigning coalitions who build up the pressure on brands and retailers internationally were those amongst the global union federations (especially IndustriALL and UNIGlobal), those between the GUFs and ITUC and those between the global unions and global NGOs, most notably the Clean Clothes Campaign. The Cambodian campaign saw an unusual level of cooperation especially between the Global NGOs and Global Union Federations. One global activist said that: "the level of alignment of a lot of actors was quite unique and quite effective. I think the Accord did help bring in a better comfort zone between CCC and IndustriALL on what is their joint action" (GUF_02).

Many of the NGOs and Unions had also been working on wages in the garment sector for years. The IndustriALL predecessor, the ITGLWU had started a campaign on 'living wages' for garment workers with a specific focus on multinational brands and buyers in 2008 and the Asia Floor Wage Alliance began to develop its approach to wages in the supply chain around the same time. They therefore had pre-existing relationships to each other as well as staff who had been engaging with the topic of wages in global supply chains previously.

They also, more broadly, managed to channel their global efforts on re-defining what corporate responsibility in the global garment industry looks like into the Cambodian

case. These efforts had started in particular in the aftermath of the Rana Plaza collapse and managed to establish the Bangladesh Accord on Fire and Building Safety. The Accord was the first instance of collaboration with brands and buyers to create a legally binding relationship between factory conditions and lead firms. Decades of campaigning by trade unions and NGOs had managed to start a conversation challenging the hegemony of capitalist globalisation and the orthodoxy that a) globalisation is good for everyone and b) nation states alone are responsible for working conditions and wages in their territory. Other, institutional initiatives, such as the OECD Guidelines for Multinational Enterprise and the development of the Guiding Principles for Business and Human Rights at the UN in 2011, and of course the discussion at the International Labour Conference in 2016 also contributed to a change in the perceptions on global supply chains. The international campaign coalitions therefore very effectively build up the pressure on brands and retailers producing in Cambodia throughout 2013-2014.

Union to union coalitions were also crucial in the Cambodian case. In a traditionally heavily fragmented union movement, even within the block of independent unions, the ability of the unions to come together was crucial. As was the coalitions of international unions with IndustriALL and UNIGlobal and the ITUC who pulled together in the immediate aftermath of the crackdown. These coalitions, however, also only came together during the immediate solidarity work necessary for the ongoing Cambodian wage campaign

Overall, the campaign managed to provoke wage increases and pushed for a reform of the wage-setting process. The momentum and pressure creating through the national and local campaign focusing on the responsibility of brands and retailers opened up space for improvements in Cambodia. Of course, it also led to the state strategically trying to close this space again through anti-union and anti-NGO legislation, which will need to be addressed by the unions and global activists. Nevertheless, the Cambodian wage campaign in 2013/2014 saw effective solidarity through global and national campaign coalitions who even in a very tense political environment managed to push for some improvements in wages.

The trade unions and trade union support solidarity organisations more focused on organising workers and pushing for institutional reforms and those activists, largely

from labour NGOs and other allies, more focused on large scale public campaigning, managed to come together effectively in 2013 and 2014. In the later years, however, these alliances began to fragment. Although some unions in Cambodia continue to work with the CCC on non-wage related issues quite effectively, unions and NGOs at an international level have split and the relationship between unions and labour NGOs in Cambodia has also become more difficult. The conditions which lead to rising wages and industrial relations reforms were quite unique to the combination of Cambodian politics and garment supply chain pressures. We can still, however, learn some broader lessons by assessing how the effective solidarities of the campaign coalitions outlined in this section deteriorated.

8.4 – Industrial Relations Coalitions: Disconnected Solidarity on Wages

This section will show how the union and NGO coalitions as well as union and union coalitions which worked well in times of immediate campaigning, begin to disintegrate when unions take up their role as industrial relations actors. In this case the campaign coalitions did not hold up after unions in Cambodia began to engage in the minimum wage process and IndustriALL began to focus its wage work on the ACT process.

Evaluating these 'disconnected solidarities' will provide a basis for more generalisable analysis on global labour and NGO campaigns. This section argues that the 'campaign coalitions' outlined above developed into 'industrial relations coalitions' as the focus of the trade union work became more and more focused on the national and global industrial relations institutions. These developments were characterised by a change from effective solidarity to disconnected solidarity.

I will here outline how these coalitions worked and by they can be characterised as 'disconnected solidarities'. First, I will examine the global to national dynamic and then the Union and NGO relationships before exploring the dynamics between unions.

Global and National Industrial Relations Coalitions

Industrial relations coalitions describe the cooperation between different trade unions, NGOs, TUSSOs and activists in or on the reforms of formal industrial relations institutions with regards to wages. In Cambodia this is in particular the minimum wage negotiations through the Labour Advisory Council (LAC) and the work on sectoral collective bargaining agreements. At an international level this speaks particularly to the work on the ACT process as well as the bilateral solidarity support work that international and global unions and TUSSOs provide to Cambodian actors engaged in wage bargaining.

These coalitions are different from the campaign coalitions in a number of ways. The industrial relations work focuses largely on the work of trade unions, as they, as workers representatives, hold formal roles in these processes. NGOs do not have any formal standing in industrial relations work and so the division of labour and influence over strategies becomes skewed towards trade unions. Consequentially, what has happened in Cambodia, is that the effective collaborations we saw between unions and NGOs on wages have become more difficult and alliances shift. While unions in Cambodia still work with global campaigning NGOs on specific issues in the factory, they do not collaborate actively during the wage setting process. The collaboration with IndustriALL, TUSSOs and other international unions intensified however.

In general, the transnational activism and support for Cambodian unions occurs through a number of pathways outlined in **Chapter 6**. As soon as immediate campaigning seized and more institutional work for unions began, the civil society pathways became more important. The civil society pathway, which focuses on the support for union building activities, is based on a number of national to international relationships. IndustriALL is, with the support of FES, involved in a number of union building support through workshops on wages in the garment industry and organising in the supply chains, attempting not just to strengthen Cambodian unions but also to bring together regional unions in the garment industry to share experiences and discuss tactics. IndustriALL together with some TUSSOs also supported unions with independent research on wage data to support them in the

LAC process. The Dutch union CNV also supported union building projects by independent unions in Cambodia through the 'Strategic Partnership', including funding research and supporting strategy development for the annual minimum wage negotiations. IFMetall, the Swedish Manufacturing Union, also supports Cambodian unions in a number of different ways. They have been involved in funding and supporting an IndustriALL union building project as well as supporting the implementation through training of the IndustriALL Global Framework Agreement with H&M.

These different support structures of international and global union to national unions are not however very transparent or coordinated. Especially some independent unions may be in contact with several international allies and trying to marry very different approaches or support structures. While there can be a range of support for unions on different issues, which require little strategic conversion, without any real conflict – APHEDAs work on HIV in the workplace, for example, or IFMetall's training with H&M on social dialogue in the workplace – competing involvement from different international actors in wage strategy and campaign objectives can be counterproductive.

There is also a significant financial component to the support from international allies. Although not from IndustriALL itself, which does not provide funding, many of the other allies and trade union support organisations do. The funding can exacerbate tensions within the trade union movement and within the block of independent unions in particular. Some of the most outspoken independent unions for example, who receive support from many international sources, are accused by other independent unions of not genuinely being independent but advocating for the strategies supplied by their international allies (IU_05 and IU_04).

And although in my experience funders and union supporters are extremely careful not to impose their perspectives it is understandable that these structures lead to conflicts between unions. The lack of transparency over support from international unions and funders can therefore lead to distrust among the union movement. It is also worth noting that most support from international donors is project based and rarely, if at all, core organisational funding (EU_01 and IU_03). This means that unions have to in some way adapt their work to the requirements the individual

projects, which usually come with extensive reporting requirements. However, it is also still very difficult for unions in Cambodia to survive on union dues alone. Unions have to reach out for financial support from other sources in order to function at least somewhat effectively. One independent union activists said that:

"We are lucky that we get support from other unions, from NGOs and from donors to do some of our activity. But we have learned that it is not really good at all to get money of donors because you have to spend a lot of time with paper work and in meetings with donors." (IU_03)

The concept of a living wage is also an area of disconnect. There is no agreed concept for a living wage in Cambodia – nor between global NGOs and unions – and in fact not even an agreed translation of 'living wage' into Khmer. The concept did not come up in conversations with Cambodian organisers. The campaign materials, developed largely by the NGOs in Cambodia with the support of the CCC use the term 'living wage' in the English translation though speak more of a 'decent wage for living' in Khmer. Without a clear definition, this is almost identical to the definition of a minimum wage in Cambodian labour law. The concerns over the concept of a 'living wage' also exist between international activists, with no clear shared definition or calculation. Although a living wage can be a useful campaigning tool at international level, it was not used as one in Cambodia. The Asia Floor Wage alliance even held a public forum in Cambodia in 2012 which in its conclusions stated that a living wage will become a key campaigning objective, and still this did not occur (Ford and Gillan, 2017).

During the regional and global workshops on wages in the global garment industry organised by IndustriALL and FES, there was confusion over what a 'living wage' is. Whereas some union representatives used the terms minimum and living wages interchangeably, others were only speaking of minimum wages. It was clear that some unions, including those in Cambodia, focused simply on improving the minimum wage. Which, they demanded, should be set at a level which provides a decent standard of living for workers and their families. So for Cambodian unions the aim was, at least initially, to have a minimum wage at a living wage level which would be nationally defined. IndustriALL agreed that the wage should be defined

nationally, but simply argued that they should be set through a collective bargaining agreement, because the "minimum wage process simply won't deliver" (GUF_01). In practice much national organising on wages comes down to a two-pronged strategy of pushing for higher minimum wages and trying to set up sectoral bargaining. None of the unions present at any of the workshops referred to a specific methodology through which a living wage should be calculated, nor did they necessarily engage in the difference between the minimum and living wage. They all agreed however, that wages should be set through collective bargaining agreements and that they needed to afford a decent living to workers and their families.

Nevertheless, the living wage concept – despite not being clearly defined – was a very effective way of uniting a large number of actors behind the shared goal of substantially higher wages in Cambodia. A straight forward and reasonable demand which was a huge asset to the campaign coalitions in 2013 and 2014. The intricacies of how this will be implemented however, and how brands in particular can pay a living wage to workers in Cambodia was not part of the large-scale campaign. These intricacies came through the work of IndustriALL and national unions in the aftermath of the campaign. The concept was therefore useful as long as it did not need to be implemented in Cambodia and translated into what it would mean in the Cambodian context.

It was crucial tool to push brands and retailers on living wages to begin to talk about their responsibility on wages because simply pushing them to make sure legally agreed minimum wages are adhered to is not enough. It was crucial, however, to then begin to define the term and how it would be applied in Cambodia. To work through the concrete steps of how a living wage would be linked to collective bargaining agreements in the Cambodian context. Otherwise it runs the risk of undermining important developments towards sectoral collective bargaining, by preempting what a wage needed to be in order to qualify as a 'living wage'. An externally determined living wage figure leaves no room for compromise in Cambodia. Collective bargaining between employers and unions, on the other hand, will inevitably require a certain level of compromise. It is the strength of the union movement and their allies which should determine how beneficial this compromise is for labour.

Disconnected Solidarities: Trade Unions & NGOs

The relationship between unions and NGOs in particular became difficult after 2014. Both at national and global level. In non-emergency situations where they need to not simply react, but strategies and build a movement, the differences in strategic priorities and orgnisational structures became apparent. The labour NGOs in Cambodia as well as the global campaigning organisations such as the Clean Clothes Campaign are set up as organisations to run effective campaigns against specific targets. Their operating strategy is to push brands and retailers, or from time to time, governments to act in specific ways. They do this through large scale social media and publicity campaigns, including demonstrations and solidarity actions. They are structured in a much less rigid, democratic representative structure than global and national trade unions. They are not set up, nor necessarily able to enter negotiations and ultimately compromises with capital – and this is by design.

Global Union Federations, on the other hand, represent a large number of workers and trade union federations across the world. By design this requires balancing different ideological and political perspectives and interest. In Cambodia alone, IndustriALL has 10 affiliated federations from all political backgrounds including progovernment and independent unions. Cambodian unions do not just have to represent workers but are also constantly trying to recruit more workers and organise in factories. As well as, at least some of them, being progressive campaigning organisations, they hold formal roles in the industrial relations institutions in Cambodia - roles that many of the independent unions had to fight for in the first place. This means representing workers in the Labour Advisory Committee during wage negotiation, at the Ministry and Arbitration Council during collective disputes and more recently in collective bargaining negotiations with employers. Unions are therefore both campaigning organisations and institutions embedded in the industrial relations framework in Cambodia and globally. This means that their strategies change from campaigning against capital to negotiating with capital, and as is the case with the ACT approach even collaborating with sections of capital.

It was in the absence of an immediate campaign, after the dust of the labour unrest had settled that and the unions began to focus more on organising new members, engaging in the minimum wage process and developing collective bargaining strategies that the coalitions began to break down in Cambodia and internationally. In many ways, this is reflected in different priorities and strategies of the organisations. They are not however the result of any insurmountable ideological divides but rather a feature of their organisational priorities and possibly communication and coordination problems.

An important challenge to the relationship between unions and NGOs will be the development of the ACT process. ACT is in and of itself the outcome of years and years of campaigning in the garment industry and the demand by unions and NGOs for brands to take responsibility for wages. NGOs however have been sceptical about ACT thus far. There are a number of reasons for this including the lack of communication between ACT and the NGOs and also their lack of involvement. The CCC representatives that I have met along the way do not trust the process yet and that is partially because they are not involved and partially due to a complicated relationship with IndustriALL.

Disconnected Solidarities: Union to Union Coalitions

The union to union coalitions so important during the 2013 and 2014 campaign also did not manage to hold after the global campaign slowed down. One of the largest independent labour confederations saw one of its federations split over internal organisational and overall strategic disagreements. The unions which left formed an umbrella organisation – Solidarity House – with a number of other civil society groups and started to very closely work with the labour NGO CENTRAL. They shared the NGOs social movement unionism ethos more and therefore decided to continue working closer with them as the other unions began to more and more engage in the institutional wage setting processes. The independent unions generally began to be split over the strategies and tactics, contradicting each other over what their wage demand should be. The FTUWKC almost entirely removed themselves from the wage negotiations after refusing to endorse the union demand in 2016 (David, 2016).

Attempts to revive some unity amongst the independent unions for an International Workers' Day demonstration in 2017 also only showed some limited success. CLC, Solidarity House and CATU came together to march for higher wages and against

the trade union law. They marched onto the national assembly and, after a tense stand-off with military police, handed a petition over to a National Assembly representative. The petition included a wage demand of 208USD, though the consensus was clearly that this was simply a CLC figure and that it was largely meaningless as the consultations between the unions on what the wage figure should be had not started yet. Some of the other independent unions refused to participate in the demonstration and opted instead to organise their own events on May 1st – none of which were protests.

The disconnected solidarities within the Cambodian union movement were described in detail in **Chapter 3.** The key barriers in the movement are the division between the pro-government and independent unions and the union internal gender dynamics. The underrepresentation of women in union leadership positions in an industry with a workforce of 85% women is a huge concern.

The political differences and personal rivalries even within the block of independent unions in Cambodia also make a long-term effective collaboration difficult. The union movement also still relies on a handful of key personalities, who are the key contacts for international support and even researchers. This overreliance on a few overworked individuals can also lead to strain on the movement, especially if the government targets them through judicial harassment.

The different unions also at times have competing interests at a global level. IndustriALL is sometimes in a difficult position as it represents – and receives affiliation fees from – pro-government and independent union federations in Cambodia. It also represents union federations across the world from chemical, metal and automotive sectors. Creating an internal dilemma over how its limited resources are deployed. Global Unions and the ITUC also overlap in their work on wages when, as in Cambodia, the minimum wage is effectively a sectoral wage.

8.5 – Confronting and Collaborating with Capital

Crucial to the Cambodian wage campaigning and trade union organising was a thorough understanding of capitalist forces and their exploitative dynamics as they manifest in global supply chains. It is important in this context to understand that the strategies and even the organisational structures of the labour NGOs and trade unions involved in the network are not mutually exclusive. In fact, they share the analysis of the power structures and political economic barriers to higher wages, and to some extend even share a vision for the way forward. I asked a member of staff at a global union about the barriers to increased wages.

DC: What do you think the biggest barrier to effective wage

organising is?

GUF_02: Besides Capitalism?

DC: Haha yeah?!

GUF_02: Capitalism still.

Unions and campaign organisations also agree that wages in the global garment industry a) need to improve substantially, b) can only improve if the most powerful actors responsible in part for the competitive dynamics driving wages down take responsibility and c) that core labour rights of freedom of association and collective bargaining need to be guaranteed.

It is also apparent that in the absence of an immediate campaign, when unions move away from campaigning strategies and towards an industrial relations focus, coalitions suffer and conflicts between unions and NGOs – and to some extend between unions and unions – begin to appear. This is unfortunate because these coalitions could be beneficial also in the day to day collective bargaining efforts of unions in the global garment sector.

The political economic pressures and reasons for low wages in the garment sector do not disappear and the strategies which made the initial campaign successful could also provide important and needed leverage to unions when they fulfil their industrial relations obligations. The campaign in Cambodia was successful because unions in Cambodia, Global Union Federations and their various NGO allies managed to assert wages as a supply chain issue. They managed to move the understanding of brands, retailers, employers and even the Cambodian state away from the old orthodoxy that wages are a purely national issue. Brands and retailers had to recognise their responsibility for wages, which has the potential to change the supply chain dynamic.

It was only this pressure which made the ACT process possible in the first place. Now that unions have begun to negotiate a mechanism in which wages become, at least in part, the responsibility of brands and retailers this pressure should not disappear. Just because the role of unions has transformed from a campaigning role to a negotiating position does not mean that the NGO role cannot still be crucial to these negotiations. If anything, effective collaboration and cooperation is more crucial now. The network of actors involved in wages in global garment industry would benefit hugely from seeing the value in the different approaches and genuine debate and exchange on the value of campaigning and institutional reforms. It is important for campaigns to create the conditions necessary for genuine transformations and then allowing these transformations to go ahead. Cambodian trade unions, and national unions representing workers in global supply chains in any context, are by themselves in no position to engage in strike action to force brands to the negotiating table, this should come to large scale campaign - or the threat of large scale campaigns. Building leverage across supply chains is therefore very important not just at times of immediate crises and global campaigning but also when unions in Cambodian are negotiating.

This includes the importance of collective bargaining as a key stepping stone. NGOs do not always see the value in this process, possibly because it takes place without them and possibly because it is presupposed on the willingness to compromise and collaborate with the powers of global capitalism, which for good reason is not in their institutional DNA. But the outcome of collective bargaining process depends heavily on the strength of the union movement and the willingness of employers to reach an agreement favourable to labour. The campaigning and the bargaining approach are therefore not mutually exclusive but necessary. In any developed economy with entrenched collective bargaining agreements, the strengths of the union movement go hand in hand with their bargaining success. This strength needs to be demonstrated every now and then when collective agreements are renegotiated, usually through strikes and campaigns at workplaces and the wider public. For trade unions in the garment industry, strikes have only limited success when the lead firms are based in Europe and the US and have large production networks. If, as is the case of Cambodia, they are furthermore imbedded in authoritarian national political

context, they have limited success in pressuring the state as well. Strength and leverage of the movement therefore needs to be built differently.

Some conflict between the Global Unions and labour NGOs is also momentarily based on communication issues around the ACT process. The NGOs want to force brands to pay for 'living wages' in their factories but have little concept of how this would work in practice. The ACT process is trying to do exactly that by establishing a mechanism which connects brand commitments on wages to sectoral collective bargaining agreements. There has been, also for good reason, limited communications about progress on this and so NGOs are understandably sceptical. On the other hand, they continue to pressure brands to pay a living wage without a concept of how this should work. Unfortunately setting up a structure for supply chain collective bargaining takes time and there is little trust between the actors involved to give each other the benefit of the doubt. Unfortunately, this had led to a lack of coordination between unions and NGOs. As discussed above, each could play a crucial role in facilitating this process and improvement in the future.

There is of course a risk of co-optation of unions by the brands in the ACT process and also a risk of co-optation by the government for unions involved in the bargaining process in Cambodia. This, however, is a risk that the unions have clearly decided they are willing to take because it has to be seen as a juxtaposition with the risk of wasted opportunities which an effective coalition of unions and NGOs fought hard for. It may be possible now to see that the state-run wage process in Cambodia is part of a process of controlling unions more than empower them, but the same cannot yet be said for the ACT process. In fact, if all goes well this will provide a lifeline for Cambodian unions.

8.6 - Conclusion

This chapter synthesised the thesis by elaborating on the types and developments of the key coalitions and their strategies. I showed how campaign coalitions at a time of immediate global campaign in response to the workers strikes in 2013/2014 managed to build effective solidarity and ultimately a successful campaign. The success of the organising efforts by unions and NGOs continued as the global campaign slowed down and the national and global union industrial relations work

intensified. The coalitions of key actors and activists changed however, as unions became more central to the work and NGOs were left with no clear or formal role.

I described how these industrial relations coalitions could be characterised by 'disconnected solidarities'. The disintegration of the campaign coalitions and development of coalitions more focused on long-term strategic wage improvements and institution building came with challenges. The need to through collective bargaining or wage negotiations enter compromises with capital and in some cases even collaborate with capital cause friction not just between NGOs and unions but also between unions. Understanding how the labour movement can maintain effective coalitions during times of negotiations and bargaining and in the absence of campaigns is crucial to developing a more sustainable and humane garment industry which respects fundamental rights at work. The example of ACT shows clearly how global campaigns can, and have, created space and appetite for improvements in the industry. Making sure that collective bargaining processes – as oppose to corporate social responsibility approaches - are at the centre of these improvements would be a huge step forwards for wages and workers' rights in the global garment industry. Having trade union centred approaches in not just important for industry improvements but may in fact strengthen national trade unions in ways that can help improve conditions in other industries as well. This perspective is shared by NGOs and unions at global and national level alike, and still the ability to maintain coalitions outside of immediate campaigns is difficult.

In the context of neoliberal globalisation which has systematically disempowered workers and workers organisations, it is unlikely that trade unions can create supply chain bargaining solutions by themselves. They need to, at least initially, create the leverage which forces not just employers nationally but also brands and retailers internationally to the negotiating table. This can only occur through effective campaigns. This is where coalitions of global NGOs and union federations and national trade unions and labour NGOs with the support of TUSSOs should find ways to cooperate more effectively.

Chapter 9 – Conclusion

9.1 - Introduction

On May 1st 2017, during an international workers' day march, a group of workers held large banners and placards in English reading 'Living Wage Rights – Collective Bargaining for a Dignified Life'. Around their heads or upper arms all the workers at the march wore red bands which in Khmer writing said 'Our Rights'. This was remarkably different from the banners, T-Shirts and slogans used during demonstrations and strikes at the height of the national and global wage campaign for Cambodian workers in 2013 and 2014. Just three years earlier the banners read 'ZARA is starving workers', 'The buyer must provide a basic wage \$177', 'Brands must provide a Living Wage' or 'We need \$177'.

Around 3000 workers had gathered at the corner of Sotheros and National Assembly Boulevard, hoping to march to the Parliament and deliver a petition calling for a higher minimum wage and a reform of the restrictive new Trade Union Law. Police in full riot gear were blocking the road towards the National Assembly, however, and the situation looked and felt like it may deteriorate fast at any minute. A crackdown by the security forces did not materialise in 2017, however. Eventually the demonstration was allowed to proceed until a few hundred metres from the National Assembly building where a CPP politician came to greet the workers and receive the petition. They immediately turned the protest into a campaign rally speaking to the workers about how only the CPP could protect their interest and how they should therefore all vote CPP in the upcoming 2017 commune elections.

The change in campaign materials and the way the May Day march unfolded in 2017 illustrates the development in the ways and means unions and their allies have been organising and campaigning for higher wages in Cambodia's garment industry.

The 'living wage rights' banner and placards were IUF materials. The IUF is the International Union of Food, Agricultural, Hotel, Restaurant, Catering, Tobacco and Allied Workers' Association who have not played a role throughout this PhD because they are not responsible for the garment and footwear sector. Except for the banner

during the May Day march in 2017, I did not come across them throughout the four years of research. It was a little curious at first to see an IUF banner at the march in 2017. And one that so aptly summarised the recent priorities of the actors in the garment sector as well. The simple and clear demands of 'buyers must provide \$177' or 'brands must provide a living wage' of course have not disappeared, but rather the focus of the unions and allies working on wages in Cambodia's garment and footwear industry have developed from specific and rather detailed demands to much more systemic issues. Independent unions in Cambodia began to focus more on the work through the national minimum wage setting processes — which was delivering higher wages every year — and together with IndustriALL are looking at the potential for sectoral collective bargaining agreements linked to brand purchasing practices through the ACT process. These new strategic priorities meant that they moved away from trying to organise large demonstrations and protests like the popular mobilisation in 2013 and 2014. 'Collective Bargaining for a Dignified Life', therefore, could have just as well been an IndustriALL or CLC banner.

The initial grassroots workers protests and strikes in 2013 and the subsequent transnational activist campaigns (TAC) in 2014 delivered real wage increases in Cambodia. The TAC which included the Clean Clothes Campaign and other global labour NGOs as well as the Global Union Federations IndustriALL and UNIGlobal, was effective in pressuring brands and retailers sourcing from Cambodia to speak out in support of the union wage demands. The campaign in 2014 and subsequent industrial relations organising attempts by unions have increased wages substantially – from 80 USD a month to 170 USD a month in 2018 - an extremely strong increase by any international standard.

At the same time, in the aftermath of the labour unrests in December 2013 and January 2014, the Cambodian state also embarked on a strategy of coercion and consent through intimidation, law reform and a new minimum wage process which implied a significant wage increase as facilitator to develop a hegemonic labour control regime. The combination of intimidation and then engagement with and celebration of the unions which the May Day march displayed was a clear representation of this dynamic and the state's strategy.

As a result of the change in priorities, increased wages and a more restrictive political environment, the global and national coalition which campaigned on wages in the garment sector also changed. Unions were collaborating less with global and national labour NGOs and focusing less on campaigning and more on capacity and union building activities through their relationships with TUSSOs and global unions.

This concluding chapter briefly summarises how the research traced the development of the strategies of the network of activists working on wages in the Cambodian garment and footwear industry – both at a global and a national level – in order to answer the question of how are trade unions and their allies organizing for higher wages in the Cambodian garment and footwear industry? First, an overview of the key findings and contributions to the wider body of knowledge is used to point to some possible implications of the developments in Cambodia. The following section outlines some of the limitations of the thesis and identifies possible areas of further research. In the final sections I make a few broader concluding remarks.

9.2 – Key Findings, Contributions and Implications for Cambodia and Beyond

Chapter 3 outlined the political economic structure of wages in global garment supply chains and how capitalist globalisation has transformed the position and power of labour. This theoretical structure focuses on the vertical (inter-firm relations and structures of surplus accumulations) and horizontal relationships (constituted by the labour control regime in Cambodia) of the global garment supply chain. This provided a theoretical crutch for the thorough discussion of national and global labour strategies on improving wages that followed.

Chapter 4 shows the strategies, structures and identities of the national labour movement with a focus on the labour unrest in 2013/2014, the violent state crackdown and the subsequent global wage campaign. The chapter contributes to existing body of labour studies and social movement research in showing how the Cambodian labour movement was successful in driving up wages by a) making wages a contentious political issue in Cambodia and b) simultaneously advocating

for a supply chain solution and demanding that brands and retailers deliver higher wages.

The thesis then showed, **in Chapter 5**, how the Cambodian state responded by engaging in a process of reform to establish a hegemonic labour control regime. The state used the combination of laws and intimidation to limit the space for legitimate union activity. The new Trade Union Law in combination with the determination of minimum wage increases through a reformed and overly technocratic minimum wage setting process limited legitimate trade union activity. The chapter contributes to the literature on labour control regimes and trade union strategies of resistance in global supply chains, by developing a new type of labour control regime and showing how it is gradually implemented. Trade unions in Cambodia need to re-evaluate their engagement with the minimum wage process, to determine if the process continues to be important to them. The independent unions in Cambodia may decide that, at least in terms of the garment and footwear sector, a wider sectoral bargaining process will deliver better compromise for workers.

Chapter 6 develops the global aspects of the wage campaign and further organising. By examining the organisational nature and strategic priorities of the different unions, NGOs and trade union solidarity support organisations, this research contributes to the labour studies literature on organising strategies under globalisation. The chapter uses the framework of transnational activist pathways, to show how the different actors contribute to wage developments in Cambodia. In doing so it contributes additional case studies to Zajak's (2017) recent conceptualisation of transnational pathways of activism. This chapter also contributes to the discussion on 'living wages' by discussing how the lack of a clear and shared definition (with the global movement), means that there may be a risk that concept in itself becomes a destabilising factor at national level. Nevertheless, it provided a simple and straight forward goal and catalyst for a global campaign to unite behind and helped pressure brands and retailers to examine their responsibility across their chains by recognising that their purchasing practices are at the core of conditions and wages in garment factories around the world.

Chapter 7 shows the beginnings of what the above change in responsibility may look like in practice. By examining the early developments of the ACT process – and

attempt by IndustriALL and a number of brands and retailers to develop a supply chain industrial relations framework on wages. This chapter is the first in-depth study of the process and its application in Cambodia. I had unprecedented access to the early stages of the ACT process and followed as it developed over the last year. I argue that as the first initiative on wages which attempts to address the systemic wage constraints of global supply chains by focusing on sectoral collective bargaining agreements supported by brand and retailer commitments — so both horizontal and vertical supply chain political economic constraints — it represents an innovative strategy for the global garment industry.

Through an analysis of the development of key coalitions responsible for the wage campaign and industrial relations developments, Chapter 8 developed a novel contribution the literature on union/NGO relationships and transnational activist campaigns. The 'campaign coalitions' in 2013 and 2014 began to deteriorate when unions moved more into their industrial relations role - both nationally and internationally. I argue that 'effective solidarity' during straightforward confrontational campaigns turns into 'disconnected solidarities' amongst unions and between unions and NGOs when industrial relations institutions are being developed and trade union begin to collaborate and negotiate on a statutory level with capital. I argue, however, the difference between NGOs and union organisational structures and priorities should be welcomed and celebrated as these are the way in which workers can build pressure in globalised industries where strikes in a single geographical location are unlikely to pressure global brands into changing their purchasing practices. This heterogenous movement based on a large network of different and politically not necessarily aligned actors is crucial in overcoming the inherent power structures in global supply chains by building leverage for trade unions across the supply chain.

Methodological Conclusions and Contributions

The research developed in unforeseen and unforeseeable directions. Ultimately, I ended up following in real time the unprecedented and unexpected wage increases for Cambodian workers. I conducted my research in a tense and deteriorating domestic political environment while unions are trying to set up an innovative and new wage initiative and while wages in supply chains became a global priority for unions and NGOs.

When the research began, I thought the Cambodian campaign in 2014 could be an interesting case of global solidarity. I could not have imagined that it would develop the way it did. I was fortunate to have been able to follow the events as they unfolded and be actively involved in the developments in Cambodia through a series of small research projects, participation in strategy workshops, an internship with ACT and long research trips to Phnom Penh.

Chapter 2 outlines why I chose to design and conduct a global ethnography of the broad network of organisations and actors involved in the wage campaigning in 2014. Though the methodology seemed perfect to allow me to conduct, as I set out, a more focused (wages in Cambodia) but at the same time broad (all actors involved) study than most of the labour movement studies available. I did not know, in 2014. just how appropriate the research design would become for such a dynamic, ongoing, rapidly developing situation. Only by positioning myself at the centre of the developments was I in a position to study them. The methodology I chose allowed me to show how the network of unions and NGOs has successfully increased wages in the garment industry in Cambodia since December 2013, how their strategies and relationships developed and how the complex political economic structures of the global garment industry constraint their activism. Of course, the rapid development of the case that I so serendipitously chose meant that the way it is written up here has moved onward from what I had originally envisaged. The thesis describes and analyses processes more so than it does actors. The full description of the 'culture' of global activism on wages is missing and would have been impossible to address in more detail here as it is far beyond the scope of this study. I therefore think that a number of other global ethnographies of the trade unions and their allies working on wages in the global garment industry would enhance the research significantly.

Overall by developing a study which focuses on one topic in one national context – wages for garment and footwear workers in Cambodia – but studying the strategies and development of the whole network of actors involved, this thesis provides a novel contribution to the study of labour movements and social movements under neoliberal globalisation and shows how in a restrictive and hyper-exploitative global industry wages can improve.

9.4 – Limitations & Areas for Further Research

The project was designed to be a study of the efforts of a large network of actors on wages in Cambodia. This by default means that some areas could not be addressed in as much detail as they deserve. One of the key limitations is the way in which I have addressed gender dynamics in the trade union movement. The Cambodian garment and footwear industry consists of over 85% women workers and yet only 2 trade union federations in 2018 were led by women. This stark underrepresentation of women in leadership positions in Cambodian trade unions and labour NGOs, is hugely problematic and without a doubt significant in the success or failure of the trade union movement. More broadly Cambodian society continues to be patriarchal in a way that those women trade unionists speaking out and attempting to organise face very gendered threats and abuse at the workplace and more widely. How these societal characteristics impact on the nature and effectiveness of Trade Unions was not and could not be addressed by this research. In general, the focus on the ins and outs of the structure of trade unions in factories and the day to day organising attempts by Cambodian unions was not addressed in detail. The focus of this study was not the Cambodian trade union movement or the experience of garment workers trying to organise internally, but rather the attempts by unions and activists working on wages in Cambodia and globally. I could therefore observe the lack of adequate representation of Cambodian women in the trade union movement but had very little data on the ways in which the male-controlled nature of the movement has affected its organising.

Similarly, I only interacted with a small number of workers and did not explore the organising attempts and strategies of workers in factories in great detail. Exploring the relationship of workers to their unions and the ability of unions to genuinely represent the lived experience of workers further, would have undoubtedly strengthened the study and would be an important area for further research.

Throughout the research I have spent the most amount of time with local independent unions and IndustriALL Global Union, who have been much more focused on developing new institutional mechanisms for supply chain collective bargaining, and less with the global NGOs running large scale campaigns against multinational brands and retailers. The global NGO perspective may therefore not

be represented as much as I would have liked. Further research on joint union/NGO campaigning should look further into the role of NGOs during non-emergency campaigns and if they can or should play a role during collective bargaining or negotiations on wages.

Further research should also asses how the wage dynamics are addressed by unions and their allies in different political and economic context and different labour control regimes. Finally, a key area of further research will be the development of supply chain collective bargaining and the ACT approach. If and how the approach will develop should be a key area of research on labour studies and global supply chain governance.

9.5 – Concluding Remarks

In 1997, in his epic contribution to the study of globalisation, Manuel Castells wrote that as finance and production are internationalising, labour is unable to adapt an as a consequence and "fades away as a major source of social cohesion and worker representation" (Castells 1997, p.354 cf. Munck 2010). The French sociologist Alain Touraine similarly dismissed labour's ability to defend itself and society and declared labour an old social movement (Anner 2011). He claimed that the role of "tradeunionism is not over, but the history of the workers' movement is" and that "trade unionisms is becoming one of the principle actors on the political stage, and less of a social movement" (Touraine et al. 1987, p.290 cf. Vaillancourt 1990). I think most labour studies scholars and labour activists today would reject this and point to the myriad of ways in which trade unions, community and women's organisations, informal workers and those structurally removed from their industrial power (famously in the gig economy) are finding ways to reinvent the labour movement almost daily. The lack of a coherent ideological or industrial base is not necessarily evidence of decline and weakness but rather opportunity and if anything evidence of a more inclusive vibrant labour movement.

Labour researchers, and I think to some extent social movement researchers more broadly, tend to avoid overly positive descriptions of campaigns and movements. This is perhaps because in Bourdieu's terminology, as the challenger in the field cooption is unavoidable, or because trade union campaigns often end in a new capital-

labour compromise. So while movements and worker organising may clearly lead to material improvements which should be celebrated, there is a simultaneous intellectual understanding that the fundamental logic of exploitation and poverty is rarely seriously challenged and more often than not simply accommodated.

It is difficult, however, not to be positive about the developments in Cambodia over the last few years. Of course, not the increased repression of trade unions or the ongoing patriarchal structures in the Cambodian union movement. Some will even criticise with the willingness of unions at a global and national level to collaborate with capital to the extent that it is happening now. It is also true that there is no broad consensus on a revived and progressive social movement unionism in Cambodia, or even at global level. And yet, while some unions are beginning to be 'political actors' and moving in and out of more or less 'market-oriented' union identities, no one can claim that the last five years have not seen a vibrant labour movement and improvements in the real income of a large proportion of the Cambodian working population.

Of course, neoliberal capitalist globalisation has thrown everything it has got at revolting workers and their allies. And still we saw a heterogenous movement made up of local, national and global activists and unionists grow into well-functioning coalitions. Time bound coalitions which subsequently deteriorated and gave way to new approaches to protecting workers and their wages in the global garment industry. Deteriorating coalitions from which we can learn a lot. The conflicts between unions and NGOs and amongst the union movement are difficult and frustrating at times but part of a vibrant movement, a sign I think that labour is absolutely not fading away. Such a heterogenous movement is also a guarantee that while it – and actors within it – may purposefully fluctuate from confrontation to collaboration it has not been and will not easily be controlled or co-opted.



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