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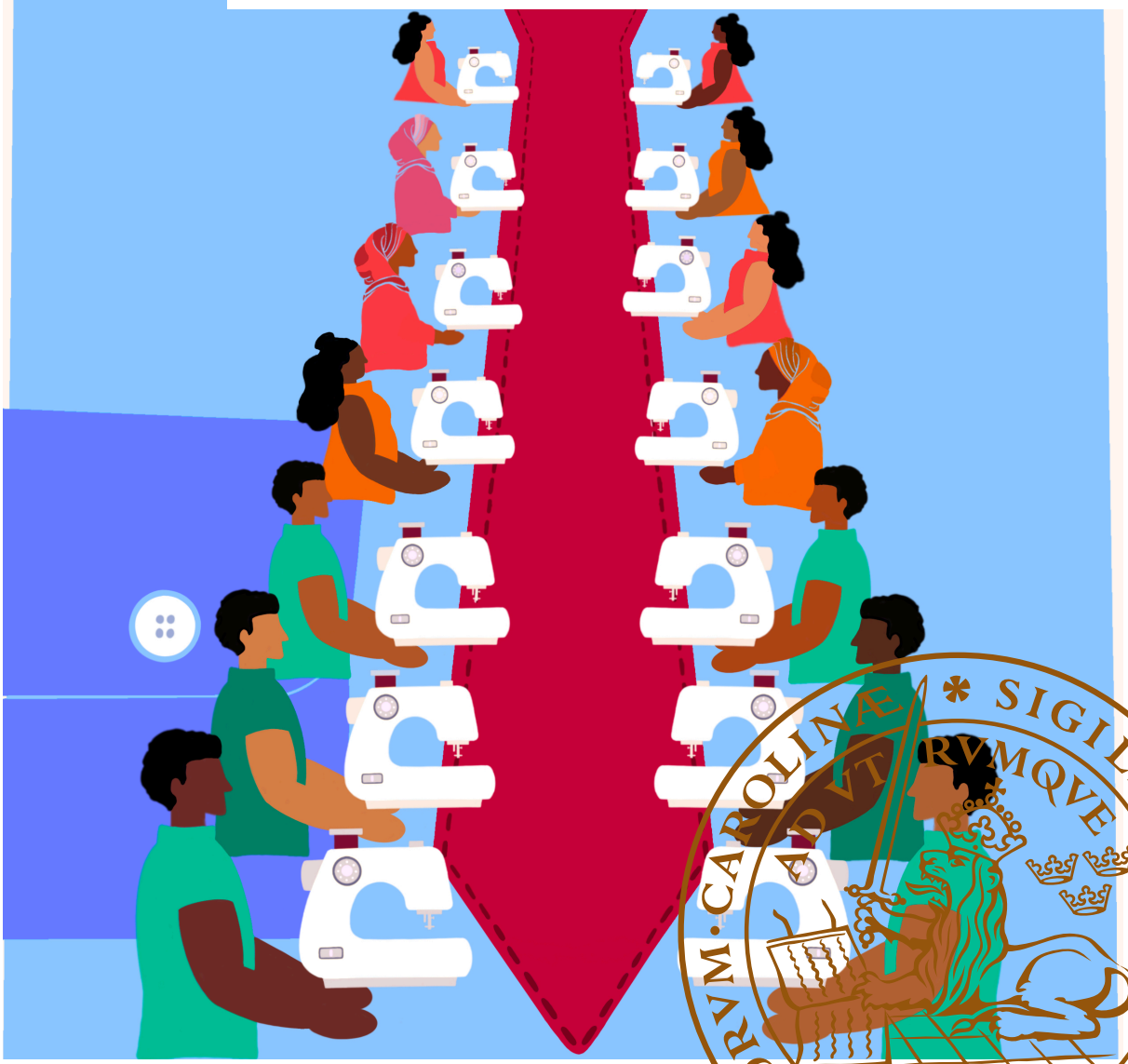

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Linn Ternsjö

LUND
UNIVERSITY

DOCTORAL DISSERTATION

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Abstract:

Manufacturing activities are highly prioritized by many low- and middle-income countries in the twenty-first century, yet there is an urgent need for these processes to be done in a way that bring about sustainable and inclusive development. As an African forerunner that has developed manufacturing, achieved sustained growth, and undergone structural transformation, Mauritius is an interesting case to learn from and for situating issues of what we mean by development. Many researchers have pointed to the country's establishment of export-oriented garment manufacturing as essential to Mauritius' success. Nonetheless, we know much less about the garment industry's impacts on labour relations, and different groups of garment workers' social outcomes, everyday experiences and resistance, all of which inevitably change over time as an industry is restructured to stay competitive. To what extent, and in what ways, has Mauritius' garment manufacturing industry been socially sustainable with regards to progress on issues of employment, and work across production and social reproduction? How have capital-labour-state relations shaped these dynamics? The thesis seeks to address these overarching questions with a particular focus on women and migrant labour.

Through multi-level and temporal analysis of the Mauritian garment manufacturing industry, informed by feminist political economy scholarship, structural development economics, and economic geography literature on labour, the thesis is comprised of four interrelated papers that contribute a nuanced and detailed understanding of the industry's social trajectory and outcomes for its workers. It does this through qualitative and quantitative methods, combining household surveys and data from fieldwork across the industry. The quantitative data builds a rich picture of garment workers' and work characteristics, also in relation to other sectors of the economy, whereas the qualitative data reveals more the causal role of workers' different and shifting resources of power in these processes.

Altogether, the thesis reveals the complex social underbelly of Mauritius' labour-intensive garment-based industrialization. While greater levels of social sustainability fundamentals and social upgrading have been achieved in some respects, they have been unevenly applied and have not happened simultaneously. Gender inequalities are persistent across the workforce, and garment manufacturing specifically. There are also overlapping inequalities between local and migrant labour. This points to ever-changing worker segmentations in Mauritius' garment industry trajectory, which has implications not only for worker power and outcomes but also for the evolving shape of the industry at large, as firms and the government attempt to resolve the multifaceted labour issue.

Key words: Garment manufacturing, Labour-intensive industrialization, Social sustainability, Mauritius, Worker power, Gender inequality, Migrant workers

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Acknowledgements

On a sunny morning in May 2018 when the cherry blossoms in Lund were in full bloom, I submitted my Master thesis in International Development and Management. It centred on a qualitative case study on the impacts of paid work in an export-oriented clothing factory in Ethiopia on women's decision-making within the household. I had spent eight months in Addis Ababa, combining an internship at the UNDP with fieldwork in an Industrial Park. At the time of submission, I remember my supervisor Agnes Djurfeldt asking me if I hadn't considered pursuing a PhD, but I felt eager to 'move on' with other endeavours outside of academia. Little did I know that less than two years later I would return to Lund University – this time at the Department of Economic History and the newly established interdisciplinary Agenda 2030 Graduate School. I was excited about the opportunity to deep-dive into a topic similar to that of my Master thesis but with more knowledge of different methods and how structural economic changes in historical perspective interact with everyday experiences of work more at the micro level.

Since then, I have had the privilege to develop my own research project and write this thesis. It has been the most challenging thing I have done thus far. Those close to me know how much I've doubted my abilities to complete it. At the same time, I am incredibly grateful for all I have learnt and the people I have met thanks to this opportunity.

First of all, I would like to thank my main supervisor, Ellen Hillbom, who has been a constant support from the very beginning and always willing to give guidance and feedback. Thanks to your project on the transformative capacity of small island developing states, I was able to be part of a friendly and collaborative research team that gave me many further insights. Thank you also to my co-supervisor, Anna Tegunimataka, for your kind enthusiasm and for always being very solution-oriented. Thank you also to Cristina Chaminade for your candid comments and interest in my work.

Thank you to Kristoffer Marslev and Malin Nilsson for your detailed and constructive comments on my final seminar draft. They were all instrumental for me to make large progress on my work and writing during the final stretch of the PhD. Thank you to Tobias Karlsson for reading very early drafts of my first two papers for my midway seminar. And thank you to Lindsay Whitfield and your colleagues for allowing me to join the Apparel Global Value Chains seminar series at Copenhagen Business School. I learnt so much from the intellectual exchanges during those discussions.

During these years at the department, I have been fortunate to get to know many friends and colleagues who supported me at various stages of the PhD and made the work much less solitary. Thank you Anneli, Mari, and Mats for making the department so welcoming. Thank you to Erik Green for your good humour and for

teaching me African Economic History together with Ellen. Thank you, Martin Andersson, for unhesitatingly taking me on as part of LUSEM's capacity-building programme 'Innovation, Transformation, and Resilience for Sustainable Development'. Working under your leadership and together with the rest of the Lund University team has been a highlight for me every spring these last four years and opened many doors professionally. I have also thoroughly enjoyed working with Tobias Axelsson as part of this programme. And thank you to my dear friend and PhD colleague Clara Dallaire-Fortier. It's a great inspiration to me working with such a kind and talented scholar and teacher as you.

There are many current and former colleagues who I have enjoyed working with or getting to know outside of teaching, research seminars and course work: Andrés, Kristin, Prince, Emelie, Mesfin, Jeanne, and Sascha. I am also very grateful for the PhD community at the Department. I came in between two 'cohorts' yet felt welcome from the start. Valeria – it has been a joy to share office with you all these years and to see each other's work progress. Thank you also to Mark, Johanne, Markus, Louise, Marcos, Elisa, Kimberly, Fatima, Jakob, Ben, Johanna, Jonas, Youssouf and more. I have enjoyed going to academic conferences together and sharing PhD 'fikas' on a regular basis.

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This thesis also owes a lot to the people I met in Mauritius. Even if I only got the chance to start my fieldwork two years into my thesis, I learnt so much from everyone I met while immersing myself in the country. Upon my first visit, SOAS alumni Krishnee and Myriam were incredibly helpful, enthusiastic about my work, and generous with their knowledge. The same goes for Naziah and Ravin. Thank you to Jess at the Mauritius National Archives who not only went out of his way to help me learn more about the EPZ and its history but also became my friend and introduced me to others who I am extremely grateful to have met and made my time

in Mauritius so enjoyable. Thank you especially to Zaynab, Ravish, Ian, and Aleksandra. My time in Mauritius would also not have been the same if it were not for Marie-Noëlle and Alain who hosted me in their home and made me feel so welcome. It was during my second round of fieldwork that I interviewed most people for this thesis, and I am very grateful to all of them for taking their time to generously share their knowledge, especially the garment workers who I know live very busy lives and work long days. Thank you to my interpreter Abdul (pseudonym) for helping me with several of the work story interviews and for taking me to so many spaces outside of actual garment factories on the weekends.

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List of Papers

1. Ternsjö, Linn. and Hillbom, Ellen. Labour-intensive Garment-based Industrialization with Social Sustainability? The case of Mauritius. *Accepted to Competition & Change.*

2. Ternsjö, Linn. and Tegunimataka, Anna. Female Labour Force Participation and Sectoral Inequalities in Mauritius' Development: Insights from Two Decades of Household Survey Data. *Submitted to Feminist Economics with a decision to revise and resubmit.*

3. Ternsjö, Linn. Worker Power, its Differentiation and Role in Social Outcomes: A Study of the Mauritian Garment Industry Trajectory. *Unpublished manuscript.*

4. Ternsjö, Linn. The Control and Everyday Lives of Local and Migrant Labour in and around Mauritian Garment Production. *Unpublished manuscript.*

For the first co-authored paper, the framing and writing were done jointly. Linn was responsible for literature review, conceptualization, data collection, operationalization of the analysis, and the discussion on implications for social sustainability. Ellen further developed the idea and structure of the paper and took charge of parts of the introduction and concluding remarks.

For the second co-authored paper, interpretation of the results was done jointly. Linn was responsible for framing, conceptualization, literature review, data acquisition, cleaning and organization, descriptive statistical analysis, and writing. Anna was responsible for the econometric analysis and validation.

1 Introduction

> *The factory grew and got deep into our lives […] Then they brought in Chinese workers that worked fast and good without complaining. Or maybe they were complaining in their own language, and nobody could understand them. They told the Mauritians they had to do the same if they wanted to keep their job. Some of them were fired. But my mother worked hard. She wasn't a loser […] She was fired when the factory closed since it cost too much to make sweaters and shirts here. My father said that between the American and Chinese giants our country was an ant that nobody noticed, even when stepping on us. Would you even think twice before crushing an ant? He asked. It's all the same to them. It's not injustice, it's just economic rationale.*
>
> Ananda Devi (2021 [2006], pp.64–66) in *Eve out of her Ruins*

Industrialization based on light manufacturing presents critical opportunities for structural change and socio-economic transformation. Historically, most people have enjoyed higher living standards in countries with growing productivity and manufacturing activities (Feinstein, 1998; Lindert & Williamson, 1983). Yet, capitalist development processes – starting with the Industrial Revolution – have also been uneven and generated contradictory results for various groups of workers involved directly, not least for women (Honeyman, 2000; Horrell & Humphries, 1995; Pinchbeck, 1985). Contradictory tendencies such as gender inequalities and labour oppression have also been widely documented in other geographical and more recent contexts of industrial development such as that in East Asia's successful growth economies during the late twentieth century (Berik, 2012; Seguino, 1997).

Against this backdrop, it is not surprising that manufacturing activities are highly prioritized by many low- and middle-income countries in the twenty-first century; at the same time there is a normative consensus that development should address social injustices and poor working conditions (Aiginger & Rodrik, 2020). Indeed, the globally negotiated Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) explicitly call for gender equality and empowerment for all (SDG 5), and decent work and economic growth (SDG 8). This is partly to be achieved through inclusive and sustainable industrialization (SDG 9) with rising shares of manufacturing employment and value added as indicators of success (United Nations, 2015). In fact, it was African policymakers and economists alongside other Global South countries that pushed

for industrialization and structural transformation to be a part of the SDGs' vision of development (Fukuda-Parr & Muchhala, 2020). This echoes structuralist framings of development with Global South origins (Wiegratz et al., 2023) arguing for the right to pursue catch-up strategies so that economies can be transformed to sustain growth and improve living standards (Mkandawire, 2011). These framings focus on issues of workers, or labouring groups, as directly related to the ways in which economies of the Global South are adversely incorporated into the global division of production between technologically advanced countries in the 'centre' and latecomer countries in the 'periphery' (Prebisch, 1950).

As one of the few African countries and Small Island Developing States (SIDS) that has developed manufacturing, achieved sustained growth, and undergone structural transformation, Mauritius is an interesting case to learn from and for situating issues of what we mean by development. On the one hand, it is largely uncontested as an African 'success story', 'democratic developmental state', and 'miracle' in relation to both human development and economic growth indicators in the post-independence period (Sandbrook, 2005; Stiglitz, 2011; Subramanian & Roy, 2001). Much of this literature has referred to the country's establishment of garment manufacturing – or the making of apparel and clothing – alongside the island-wide Export Processing Zone since 1970. It also stands out globally, alongside Costa Rica, for achieving the most promising trajectory between 1992 and 2015 in terms of meeting basic needs (social thresholds) while transgressing relatively few biophysical boundaries (Fanning et al., 2022). On the other hand, we know much less about the garment industry's impacts on workforce participation, labour relations, and different groups of workers' experiences and agency, all of which change over time as an industry is restructured to stay competitive.

Interestingly, the export-oriented and inherently labour-intensive garment manufacturing industry has been prolonged to this day in Mauritius despite the country facing significant competition and acute labour shortages since the 1990s. A variety of measures have been taken on behalf of the government and individual firms to 'fix' this issue. The most obvious ones are automating production where possible, relocating the most low-value added segments of garment-making to other countries with lower labour costs as in the case of large firms, and across the board: importing migrant workers (Gibbon, 2008; Lincoln, 2009). These processes play a role in shaping the social and economic dynamics of workers' conditions and everyday lives. Therefore, it is important to study the evolving and differentiated nature of a prioritized industry over time, both with regards to its impacts on labour and how labour simultaneously affects the workings of the industry.

This thesis delves into the social dynamics and outcomes of industrialization based on export-oriented garment manufacturing in Mauritius. Through multi-level and temporal analysis of the industry, informed by feminist political economy scholarship, structural development economics, and economic geography literature on labour, it provides a detailed assessment of the industry's social trajectory.

Gender, migrant status, and class, as well as their intersections, are considered in analyses of the empirical material. Altogether it seeks to present a nuanced discussion of how the globally connected garment manufacturing industry has unfolded locally in Mauritius. This is done in light of pressing (social) sustainability and developmentalist challenges of our time.

As advocated for by feminist political economists interrogating work, labour processes and relations in contemporary capitalist processes (Mezzadri et al., 2021, 2025), the thesis uses several methods of enquiry. This allows for both in-depth understanding of the social specificities of work and everyday life in and around garment manufacturing in Mauritius and captures the complex structural features of this industry too. The data material predominantly includes different types of interviews (54 in total - also encompassing work stories), large-scale household survey data, and observations during multiple rounds of multi-sited fieldwork in Mauritius. In combining primary research and mixed methods, also with insights on the wider historical labour market conditions, the thesis juxtaposes qualitative and quantitative data to provide more comprehensive insight into work and working lives in the industry.

To this end, the thesis demonstrates how economic development in the form of industrialization, despite overarching indicators of 'success', can have a complex social underbelly that is only revealed once we examine the intricacies of work and employment issues, for whom and on what terms, as well as over a longer time period when an industry may experience both relative growth and decline as in the case of Mauritius. Here, the 'labour issue' pertains to both garment manufacturing as an industry struggling to find workers for those jobs that are available, as well as the actual – sometimes overlooked – working and living conditions of those socially embedded workers involved in this industry. The excerpt at the beginning of this section from Devi's (2006) novel on the rhythms and toil of daily life in a working-class neighbourhood outside Port Louis, Mauritius speaks to the latter issue. Conveying the impact of the garment factory on the life of her mother and family, it is an impactful account of how labour is deeply embedded in, and mutually shaped by, social relations and power asymmetries at both the global and local level. This captures what is emphasized in economic geography literature on labour process and global production, on the one hand (Smith et al., 2018; Wickramasingha & Coe, 2022), and feminist political economy literature on the co-constitution of production and social reproduction, on the other (Mezzadri, 2021). In recent years, these two bodies of literature have been increasingly merged to understand the impact on, and role of, workers in labour-intensive industries generally (Baglioni, 2022) and garment manufacturing specifically (Ruwanpura, 2022).

1.1 Motivation and main questions

The aim of this thesis is to contribute to a more in-depth understanding of the multi-level socio-economic dynamics that have affected garment manufacturing and the outcomes and social lives of garment workers in Mauritius. It pays attention to social relations, power, and intersectional complexities along lines of primarily gender and migrant-status. All in all, the thesis topic is motivated by the explicated need for countries' development processes in the twenty-first century to not only achieve structural transformation but to also encompass serious social issues such as that of labour, gender equality and the support of vulnerable groups – in short, issues of inclusion and social justice (Aiginger & Rodrik, 2020; Islam & Iversen, 2018).

Reflecting on how I arrived at this topic, with the use of aforementioned methods and perspectives from various literatures, brings me to my background in development studies. The interdisciplinary approach of this thesis has very much been influenced by my studies at SOAS, University of London. To this day, courses on feminist economics and 'issues of the working poor' have made an impact on the way I see processes of socio-economic change as having highly uneven effects. Internship stints at Sida and the UNDP, working on private sector development, issues of productive employment, and inclusive growth in Rwanda and Ethiopia, also shaped my perspective on the importance of (good quality) employment for development rather than, for example, focusing on strictly poverty alleviation programmes.

In fact, a few years before starting this research project, I was studying Ethiopia's developmental industrialization efforts to 'catch up' and subsequent incorporation of women into its relatively new garment industry. What was fascinating was the narrative of the country's rapidly growing young (female) labour force whose increasing employment in manufacturing was – at least discursively – assumed to have invariably positive effects for all involved (National Planning Commission, 2016). How have the everyday lives of those people working in the factories been affected? And what has been the impact of women's employment on different kinds of agency? I was thinking about these questions when I learnt that Ethiopia had partly been inspired by the success story of Mauritius' developmental state in setting up garment manufacturing. By pursuing this thesis in the Department of Economic History at Lund University, I have been able to better situate questions on work, labour and their experiences and local struggles in relation to historical processes and national institutional arrangements of capitalist development and structural change.

As for the choice of researching labour and development specifically with regards to garment (and textile) manufacturing, it is a historically significant industry that has been globally situated long before factory production took place and garment production started to be relocated (back) to East and Southeast Asia in the late

twentieth century (Meerkerk et al., 2010). During the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the production of cotton cloth based on the supply of raw materials from countries in the Global South played a pivotal role in driving structural change and industrialization in the Global North. After, in the late twentieth century, garment production was pivotal for triggering structural change across much of the Global South. Meanwhile, these macro-level developments and making of a globalized garment industry, based on global divisions of labour, cannot be separated from the violent and many times coercive process that it has been too. Whether through the early exploitation of slave labour or later in the form of wage labour, state policies have long facilitated capitalists' search for cheap(er) labour (Beckert, 2015).

Today, the garment industry provides jobs to approximately 94 million people globally (ILO, 2023). Against a backdrop of growing recognition of social injustices and the prevalence of deadly factory fires, building collapses, incidents of child labour and forced labour, and poor labour practices overall with non-livable wages historically to present-day, there have been efforts to make garment manufacturing more sustainable. The UN Alliance for Sustainable Fashion (2024), for instance, acknowledges that unsustainable practices will continue to have important detrimental impacts on social (and environmental) development indicators unless major changes are made to production processes and consumption patterns within the industry. Indeed, there has been a great rise in ethical codes based on the core conventions of the International Labour Organization (ILO) - especially after the 2013 collapse of the Rana Plaza garment manufacturing building in Bangladesh killing over 1000 workers (Prentice & Sumon, 2023). Just over 100 years earlier in 1911, a fire killed 146 garment workers at the Triangle Shirtwaist factory in New York City. Most of them were immigrant women and girls (Tsogas, 2020).

Nonetheless, global governance initiatives have been found to be rather toothless in systematically improving substandard conditions of work unless the state in producer countries is committed to labour regulation, and workers can exercise their labour rights. These are intimately connected to local and national institutional and historical legacies (Ruwanpura, 2016). They also hinge on shifting power inequalities on multiple levels, between and within countries, something not sufficiently acknowledged in universal proclamations such as the SDGs for sustainable development (Esquivel, 2016). This is why the thesis in its totality emphasizes the complex interplay between global production dynamics, state policy and informal and formal institutions, labour market conditions, and workers' own agency and power to mobilize for better prospects.

While there are academic studies that have explored issues to do with work(ers) and labour in Mauritius' post-independence development trajectory, the weight of the overall literature has been on evaluating Mauritius against traditional economic theory on achieving sustained growth. Some scholars have cast doubts on the Mauritian miracle, pointing to growing income inequalities and 'feminization of poverty', as large numbers of workers were retrenched from the female-dominated

export-oriented garment industry in the early 2000s (Bunwaree, 2014; Ramtohul, 2008). Notable for her use of mixed methods and feminist approach to work as a continuum along that of paid/unpaid, Blin (2008) studied the impacts of working in the garment industry compared to service sectors. She found that women's' work burdens were much worse in the former, but everyday realities also differed depending on socio-cultural gender norms within the household and close community.

These scholars have all contributed knowledge on the gendered consequences of Mauritius engaging in production processes of a globalized garment industry, and their work has been a valuable localized point of departure. Nonetheless, this thesis also considers male workers and migrant workers, as well as how power and social relations within and between the since-then changing workforce and restructured industry simultaneously affect the industry workings. This means it acknowledges structural domestic characteristics (such as the local labour market conditions and orientations of the state), as well as the structural features of global garment production for export, as essential in understanding the social trajectory of the industry and its workers, and how worker conditions come to be. In doing so, it strives to provide a more nuanced assessment of Mauritius' garment industry and to shed light on an aspect of it that has generally received much less attention, namely the implications for, and role of, labour in an industry that is sustained. This is something that quantitative macro-level assessments of Mauritius' so-called 'intermediate' upgrading trajectory compared to other export-oriented garment producing countries (Bernhardt & Pollak, 2016) cannot do. Neither can exclusively micro-level assessments capture the multi-level dynamics that shape workers' everyday lives and the industry they are involved in.

Relatedly, the thesis acknowledges the structural characteristics of Mauritius as a Global South country despite being counted as an upper-middle income country, even reaching temporary high-income status before the worst repercussions of the Covid-19 pandemic (World Bank, 2021). Mauritius was subordinated to historical colonialism based on the unequal exchange of labour and primary commodities, and while it has diversified its economy, it is still involved in economic activities at relatively low levels of value-added. These structural dependencies and hierarchies are acknowledged in heterodox literature on Mauritius' economic development (Behuria, 2022; Kothari & Wilkinson, 2013). At the same time, the thesis brings forth the important role of the state in shaping the organization of production and how workers are embedded in these social relations in production (Selwyn, 2013). This implies that workers are not a homogenous group solely impacted by exogenous factors but rather agents of social change with varying and sometimes conflicting worker identities based on their gender, race, age, nationality, and ethnicity as just some examples (ed. Bhattacharya, 2017; Mezzadri, 2016) that will influence an industry trajectory. For this reason, the thesis makes use of work story interviews with a variety of informants to shed light on everyday experiences of

work and their changes over time. These perspectives are otherwise commonly neglected in both mainstream economic development analyses and more structuralist labour market analyses.

Insights from the Mauritian case, with the use of more 'bottom-up' approaches as well, have the potential to inform industrial and social policies that steer development in a way that is more sensitive to inequities and the needs of women and migrant workers, both locally and in other settings. It speaks to broader questions raised by several other policy-makers and scholars on what can be done to 'leave no one behind' (United Nations, 2015) or practice 'economics as if all people mattered' (Benería et al., 2016). In other words: strive toward moral imperatives that ensure industrialization efforts based on light manufacturing activities achieve sustainable outcomes *even* when an industry is in decline in absolute employment numbers. Meanwhile, the thesis does not refrain from probing at more theoretical questions of how to make sense of the power resources that workers themselves have, in order to improve their conditions in relation to the power of the state and garment manufacturing firms.

Given these theoretical considerations on the development and prolongation of an export-oriented light manufacturing industry and its multi-scalar relations with labour, capital, and the state, this thesis explores the following research questions in the context of Mauritius:

1. To what extent and in what ways has garment manufacturing socially upgraded and progressed toward greater levels of social sustainability?
2. How have capital-labour-state relations shaped workers' bargaining power and their respective social outcomes?
3. What are the associations between individual and household characteristics of women and their labour force participation, as well as garment manufacturing employment? How does this compare to other sectors of the economy?
4. How do garment workers experience and navigate the mechanisms that factory managers and the state use to control workers across production and social reproduction?

The first question pertains to Paper 1, which addresses the social sustainability dimension of labour-intensive industrialization based on garment manufacturing, and Paper 3, which concentrates on social up- and downgrading. Paper 3 looks more at how this proceeded, which gets to question two on capital-labour-state relations and worker power in this process. Since labour market conditions and worker characteristics also matter for garment workers' structural and associational power resources to mobilize and gain concessions, the third question is tackled in Paper 2 on gendered labour market outcomes. As the household survey data used for this paper does not cover migrant workers, the scope of this question is limited to

different groups of Mauritian women (and men as another point of comparison) in the labour market. The final question is addressed in Paper 4, which narrows down on the everyday micro realities and lived experiences of garment manufacturing and related control mechanisms. Shifts in workforce composition and differentiated worker identities, especially along lines of gender and migrant status, are considered throughout the thesis wherever possible. The temporal scope is from the 1970s to present day except for in the last two questions which focus on developments in the twenty-first century.

1.2 Scope and contributions

Altogether the thesis makes an extensive empirical and timely contribution to the growing body of interdisciplinary literature that takes multi-level dynamics into consideration in analyses of labour and workers in export-oriented light manufacturing, specifically garment production. The empirical literature on workers' conditions and agency and their interrelations with changing structural conditions has almost exclusively focused on Asian contexts. Hence, the case of Mauritius is an apt contribution, especially since the longer-term outcomes of regional more nascent efforts to develop light manufacturing across sub-Saharan Africa remain to be seen. The garment and textile value chain is a priority for the Southern African Development Community and manufacturing overall is a priority area for the African Union's (2015) strategic framework, Agenda 2063, for a transformed continent delivering on inclusive and sustainable development. Therefore, the topic is also relevant for policy-making purposes.

By scrutinizing the garment manufacturing trajectory from a perspective influenced by feminist political economy, structural development economics, and economic geography literature on labour, the thesis builds nuanced and detailed knowledge on the complex processes that are involved in shaping the industry's social outcomes. It does so through a breadth of qualitative and quantitative methods.

Based on both primary and secondary data from a variety of sources, Paper 1 teases out the extent to which garment-based manufacturing activities contributed to the delivery of social sustainability over three different periods since 1970. Ellen Hillbom (co-author Paper 1) and I treat the concept of social sustainability as a cluster of fundamentals relevant to industrialization that brings about critical social goals based on a process of inclusiveness. We primarily build on structuralist perspectives to development (see i.e. Tregenna, 2023 and her discussion of Mkandawire's work) and new developmentalist research on ways (garment-based) industrialization can or cannot produce social sustainability (Andreoni & Chang, 2017). This means we examine the fulfilment of basic human needs, employment levels, and the quality of jobs in terms of working conditions, while also

interrogating the interplay between industrial and social policy in reconciling tensions of inequitable outcomes from the industrialization process. Altogether the paper traces and gives an overview of the labour-intensive industrialization process in Mauritius, specifically focusing on its export-oriented manufacturing activities that concentrated on garments since the start of the island-wide Export Processing Zone.

While our narrative analysis relies extensively on secondary literature, we review this literature in light of new questions and twenty-first century challenges for leveraging labour-intensive manufacturing activities for social sustainability. We also substantiate our arguments on the changing social sustainability fundamentals with descriptive statistics related to employment numbers, worker composition, and average earnings, mostly from Statistics Mauritius, as well as some interview data and government document material from fieldwork in Mauritius that triangulated our other data. In total, we find that Mauritius followed a socioeconomic trajectory largely upheld by new developmentalist research but there have been plenty of tensions therein related to dwindling employment numbers over time, for example, and the difficulties in incorporating former (female) factory employees into other sectors of the economy. Together with increasing reliance on migrant workers and indications of rising inequalities since the early 2000s, the analysis shows that labour-intensive industrialization and garment manufacturing can only be socially sustainable to a certain extent and that it is difficult for all fundamentals to occur at once, even in the longer term.

As a contribution to new developmentalist research, we argue that an industrialization trajectory cannot be deemed socially sustainable on the basis of the state seemingly succeeding in managing potential conflicts as a collective between workers and capitalists so that a manufacturing industry can be developed and sustained. Upon considering secondary divides, beyond class, we find that there are specific groups of workers that have been adversely included in (or even excluded from) the country's structural transformation. The paper concludes with three interrelated lessons from the Mauritian experience of labour-intensive garment-based manufacturing regarding to what extent and in what ways sectoral change and social sustainability can develop together. Even if the global landscape is constantly changing, one transferable lesson is the importance of crafting an 'exit strategy' early on. Altogether, the lessons are intended for countries in the Global South currently launching their industrialization strategies in pursuits for socially sustainable development.

Whereas Paper 1 departs from the overarching Mauritian 'success story' narrative, Paper 2 departs from the relatively low female labour force participation level in Mauritius and investigates micro-level socio-economic factors that influence women's (and men's) labour force participation, as well as women's employment in garment manufacturing and other sectors over the course of the twenty-first century. The analysis is done after our first contribution, which entails the building

of a database using rich individual and household-level data from nineteen waves of household survey data in Mauritius covering the years 1999-2018. As far as we know, this is the first time that data from all household surveys over these years have been compiled, streamlined and analysed in a systematic way, something Anna Tegunimataka (co-author Paper 2) and I do specifically for the purpose of this study.

Through econometric analysis, we demonstrate the relationship between individual and household characteristics, on both FLFP and women's sectoral employment over almost two decades. As another point of comparison, we compare outcomes related to labour force participation for women vis-à-vis men. In turn, this provides a detailed understanding of worker characteristics and the gendered post-industrial labour market of Mauritius. This is analysed against a contextual backdrop of Mauritius where we acknowledge the country's decrease in both manufacturing share in total employment and manufacturing value added since 1999 and 2001 respectively. We also complement our understanding of the associations between micro-level factors and women's labour force participation and sectoral employment using descriptive statistics. With added knowledge on household work burdens, for instance, and keeping in mind structural shifts in the Mauritian economy and the nature of employment in female-dominated sectors, we draw on theories from neoclassical economics, institutionalist approaches, and feminist economics, to frame the analysis and interpret our results. In its totality, the paper contributes to related studies on Mauritius (Gaddis & Ranzani, 2020; Tandrayen-Ragoobur et al., 2011) but extends the time frame by many years and contributes to a meticulous empirical contribution on different groups of women's labour force participation and their concentration into different segments of the local labour market.

Paper 3 examines power relations between the state, capital and labour to unpack contextual factors that have led to differences, and changes, in worker outcomes in Mauritius' garment industry. Incorporating a structuralist perspective and dividing the analysis according to the same periodization as in Paper 1, it tackles a similar question but with explicit attention also to workers' role and agency in explaining social developments of the industry and worker conditions therein. Based on extensive fieldwork incorporating work story interviews with current and former workers, and other interviews with industrialists and government officials among other key informants, it finds that the concept of worker power (Marslev et al., 2022; Marslev & Whitfield, 2025) is helpful in explaining social up- and downgrading processes in Mauritius. Nonetheless, workers' power resources have also differed as per worker groups within the same industry. Indeed, by considering multi-scalar perspectives and the associational and structural power of different worker groups, such as migrants who have received comparatively little attention, the paper contributes to an in-depth and contextual understanding of how and why the situation for garment workers has been mixed and far from generalizable across the workforce as a group. Thanks to the incorporation of household survey data on

Mauritian garment workers between the years 1999 to 2018, the paper also provides a level of detail that has not been considered in other studies thus far on the Mauritian garment industry trajectory. Together with its historical anchoring, the paper contributes a nuanced case study analysis to the relatively nascent but growing economic geography literature that has started to place labour centre stage to uncover complex interactions between social up- and downgrading (and economic restructuring more broadly), and worker power.

Finally, Paper 4 zooms in on workers' everyday experiences of work in and around Mauritius' garment industry. It considers workers' perceptions and resistance and juxtaposes these with factory managers' and the state's use of control mechanisms spanning production and social reproduction. By adopting a social reproduction lens and theoretical perspective informed by feminist political economy (Mezzadri et al., 2021), it reveals how national political economies such as the state and more informal institutions, like norms actively used by factory managers, interact with micro realities at the level of individual experiences. While, for example, Blin (2008) has studied female Mauritian garment workers' experiences of work burdens and Puygrenier (2021) has studied manufacturing employers' preferences for migrant workers because this group is seen as not having a family to care for, social reproduction and the everyday have been widely overlooked in the Mauritian literature. Where garment workers' experiences have actively been considered, encompassing also life outside of the factory, they tend to focus on one delineated group (Sambajee & Scholarios, 2023). To this end, the paper is largely based on in-depth interviews with migrant and local workers, encompassing both men and women, to shed light on the dynamics of work and relations between social reproduction and production that characterize the Mauritian garment industry.

It finds that a number of labour control mechanisms are used across the garment industry and its workplaces. Labour is, for instance, segmented along lines that are both racialized and gendered. The extent of this control is more fully captured by looking *beyond* the sphere of production (factory workplace) to everyday life such as food provisions, something this paper actively does. Ergo, it reveals workers' individual and collective experiences of resistance that are less organized than traditional conceptualizations of resistance. It also helps clarify why there may be so-called persistent 'labour issues' on multiple fronts.

Unlike in Paper 3, which focuses more on workers' (collective) organization in opposition to the state and capital, and subsequent material gains for workers in the sphere of production, Paper 4 sheds light on everyday acts of resistance to exploitation in the sphere of social reproduction. In doing so, the paper pluralizes knowledge on labour dynamics across the Mauritian garment industry. Concretely, it also shows tensions between what various groups of workers consider to be important and what the state and garment firms otherwise assume. While there are evident contrasting experiences of migrant workers and local workers engaged in

the industry, there are more subtle differences therein which relate to gender and nationality too.

Figure 1 illustrates the temporal and analytical scope of the thesis. Slightly differing for each paper, the thesis eventually narrows down on situated worker experiences in Paper 4. While the scope is in some ways narrower, focusing on the everyday experiences of garment workers in the 2000s, it also opens the analysis more explicitly to the overlapping sphere of social reproduction.

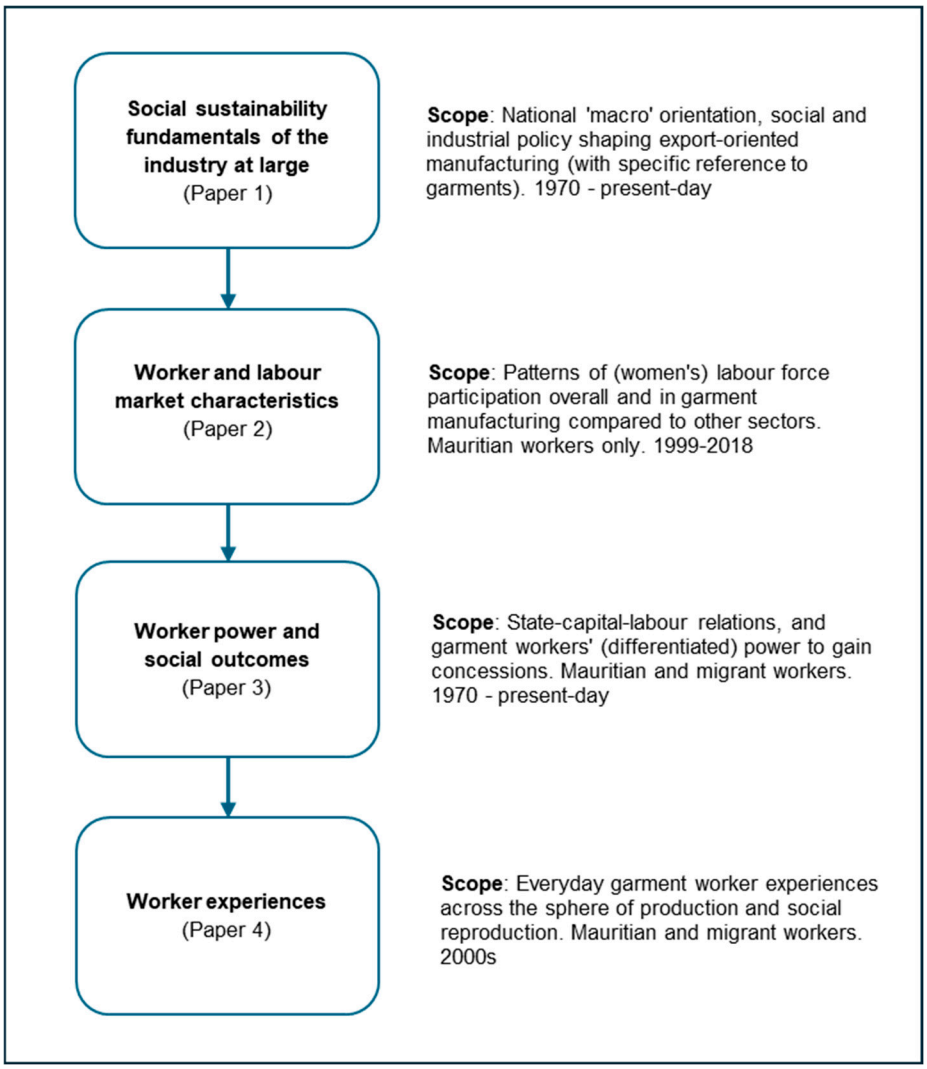

Figure 1. Temporal and analytical scope of the papers

2 Empirics and theoretical considerations

This section aims to introduce the literature on structural change in development and what it does to labour; labour in export-oriented manufacturing industries in the Global South; as well as impacts on labour, and labour as an agent in global supply chains. Given the broad and interdisciplinary research field that this thesis is situated in, the focus lies on the academic literature that is most relevant to the main research questions. For example, when presenting literature tackling the topic of labour specifically with regards to industrial development processes involving export-oriented industries in the Global South, focus is mainly on outlining some key perspectives from feminist political economy and global labour studies. Several concepts, especially those outlined in sections 2.2 and 2.3, are expanded on in more detail within the scope of the theoretical sections of Papers 3 and 4.

2.1 Structural change, manufacturing in development, and what it does to labour

The growth of industrial activities has long been considered essential for low-income countries to achieve sustained economic growth and poverty reduction, and to catch up with other countries (Kuznets, 1966; Lewis, 1954; Rostow, 1960). This relates to processes of structural change, which refer to the reallocation of economic activity across agriculture, industry, and services. As countries develop economically, the share of workers engaging in agriculture tends to decline, whereas industry gains importance when the population becomes more urban. Eventually, the share of workers in industry is also deemed to decline, but by not as much as in agriculture. Services will keep rising throughout the process (Kuznets, 1966). Indeed, the shift away from relying on agriculture has been a main feature of long-term economic growth of all present-day high-income countries, often known as 'developed' industrialized countries. The special role of reallocating resources has also been highlighted – such as capital and labour – from traditional sectors to specifically manufacturing industries (Lewis, 1954). Some of the main reasons are

its contribution to rapid GDP and productivity growth, as well as backward and forward linkages to other sectors of the economy (Hirschman, 1958; Kaldor, 1966).

All in all, these theories hinge on structuralist perspectives to development, which emphasize the importance of countries diversifying their economies, so that their societies can become more prosperous and resilient to macroeconomic shocks (Lewis, 1954). Countries with a manufacturing sector, for example, are considered less economically vulnerable compared to poorly diversified and primary commodity-dependent economies highly exposed to external shocks and international price fluctuations, causing them to experience 'booms and busts' growth patterns (Jerven, 2010). Diversification refers to both shifts between sectors and within sectors, ultimately leading to not only structural change but also to structural transformation through movements up the ladder of productivity, value-addition, and technology. Economic or industrial upgrading refers to similar processes but has been considered more at the firm-level with reference to Asian countries' successful industrialization (Gereffi, 1999). Structuralist perspectives also place much emphasis on the potential for technological and organizational learning by doing production (Amsden, 2010, 2012; Andreoni & Chang, 2017; Kaldor, 1966). Relatedly, shifting a country's production structures towards higher-productivity economic activities, namely manufacturing through industrialization, is seen as key for latecomer countries not needing to pioneer innovations and knowledge-building from scratch to catch up with industrialized countries in material well-being (Gerschenkron, 1962; Mkandawire, 2011). By contrast, dependency theorists have a more critical outlook. With their roots in Latin American structuralism, they point to the fundamentally unequal relationship between rich industrialized countries and former colonial powers, on the one hand, and developing economies in the Global South on the other (Prebisch, 1950). For this reason, import-substituting industrialization (ISI) is advocated whereby strategic industrial policies are used to foster and temporarily protect infant industries before gradually opening up to trade liberalization.

Indeed, the use of industrial policy – or government intervention aimed at changing economic structures through the reallocation of resources to more dynamic and higher productivity activities – has been key to many historical experiences of development and catching up according to heterodox economists (Chang, 2007). The primacy given to structural change and the role of manufacturing in development also owes much to empirical evidence of the Asian 'growth miracles'. These include Japan, South Korea, Taiwan, Singapore and Hong Kong – later also joined by China – all of which succeeded in making a high-speed economic transition between the 1960s and 1990s (Rodrik, 2014). Detailed country case studies demonstrate the fundamental role that relatively autonomous East Asian governments had in their respective industrialization processes (Amsden, 1989; Johnson, 1982; Wade, 1990). While at the beginning, these countries all had the prevalence and comparative advantage of low-cost labour, scholars show that it was

insufficient for labour-intensive industries like garment manufacturing to take off. These views on the state's role in industrialization stands in contrast to the type of market-oriented pathway traditionally advocated in more orthodox studies of development, although industrial policy has recently started to gain traction beyond heterodox scholarship (Chérif & Hasanov, 2019).

In the case of Mauritius, the active role of the state has often been widely acknowledged in the literature on the country's successful growth trajectory and corresponding establishment and expansion of labour-intensive manufacturing activities. Even if interpretations differ as to what is emphasized exactly, there are a few common explanations: 1) The visionary leadership, especially during the first phase of Mauritius' industrialization (Bunwaree, 2014). 2) The economic strategies of the consensus-seeking democratic government and the public-private collaborations (Bräutigam, 1997; Meisenhelder, 1997; Sandbrook, 2005). 3) The high-quality domestic institutions supporting the Export Processing Zone (EPZ) against a backdrop of unique historical conditions such as beneficial trade agreements (Subramanian and Roy, 2001). 4) The capacity to identify new markets and take advantage of foreign investments and transnational networks (Whitfield, 2023). Finally, and going beyond manufacturing, active government intervention has been lifted as having a prominent role in developing other long-term growth-driving sectors of the economy such as offshore finance (Behuria, 2022).

What then happens to labour in these processes of development? According to Lewis' (1954) theorization of structural change, surplus labour gets gradually absorbed since there are limited available job options. Eventually this leads to labour shortages in the economy which should make wages rise in the manufacturing sector, ultimately implying positive effects on workers. Although these classical development theories acknowledge modern economic growth processes to be associated with rapid changes in social and institutional aspects such as family formation, work experiences, and views of what it means to lead an accomplished life (Kuznets, 1973), they have been criticized early on for largely assuming that development is a largely linear and gender-neutral process.

Boserup's (1970) work has been influential here, where she demonstrates that industrial development – although an otherwise beneficial process for countries at large – marginalizes women. Societal expectations primarily assume women to be the ones engaged in unpaid reproductive care and domestic work, which leads to their lower status. Women are also left behind relative to men because modern manufacturing enterprises do not employ them. Her theories were later taken on by Goldin (1995) who showed that as the US economy shifted away from agriculture toward industry, women at first reduced their labour force participation rates, but over time they increased again as the country grew richer. Since then, several scholars – notably economic historians and feminist economists studying structural change and gender – have probed at the feminization-U curve, showing there are a range of trajectories and associations regarding women's labour force participation

(Çağatay & Özler, 1995; Humphries & Sarasúa, 2012). These are considered in more detail in Paper 2 of this thesis. Defeminization of labour has also been found in later stages of development based on labour-intensive manufacturing industries, whereby women's employment shares have declined to that of men (Kucera & Tejani, 2014; Tejani & Milberg, 2016). All in all, this points to differentiated and contradictory outcomes for women and labour overall, something this thesis probes at throughout its different papers.

Scholars are divided, however, as to how women, and workers more generally, have fared during industrialization processes. De Vries (2008), for instance, is sceptical of the view that workers were 'oppressed' during the industrial revolution He rather has a positive outlook emphasizing women's access to employment and greater possibilities for empowerment and consumption. Pinchbeck (1985) emphasizes this too, even if she also acknowledges changing and disparate outcomes. In contrast, Horrell and Humphries (1995) point to fewer opportunities for women in light of the male-breadwinner bias. Moreover, while structuralist perspectives to development have placed less emphasis on differentiated labour outcomes and their underlying factors, it is important to note that the call for state intervention – both with regards to industrial policy and social policy – is still closely related to the ambition that industrialization should be inclusive and socially sustainable (Andreoni, 2022; Mkandawire, 2007). This has especially been emphasized in the literature on industrialization in the twenty-first century context and is discussed more in Paper 1. All in all, the thesis addresses the above issues, although in a different temporal and geographical context.

2.2 Labour in export-oriented manufacturing in the Global South

As a point of comparison, mainstream approaches to export-oriented and labour-intensive industrialization in the Global South broadly echo economist Robinson's (1964 [1962], p.46) statement that the "the misery of being exploited by capitalists is nothing compared to the misery of not being exploited at all". This was later picked up by Krugman (1997) in an essay called "In Praise of Cheap Labor: Bad Jobs at Bad Wages are Better than No Jobs at All". Neoclassical economics and neoliberal views on processes of development underly these statements, whereby labour is seen more as a commodity or factor of production. The implication is that labour is an equal agent to that of capital or employers, and any issues to do with working conditions or labour rights are rather seen as something temporary. Therefore, this literature rarely considers labour relations or social relations in attempts to understand worker outcomes, something that political economy approaches have been critical of. Likewise, but at another analytical level,

integration into global value chains (GVCs) is merely seen as an opportunity for developing countries.

Feminist scholarship, by contrast, has contributed much to the revelation that capital accumulation – at both the macro- and micro-level at workplaces globally – is gendered and racialized (Mies, 1986). Early feminist analyses of neoliberal globalization mostly focused on demonstrating the widespread mobilization of female labour and following devaluation of industrial work (feminization). Notably, Elson and Pearson (1981) highlighted how stereotypes of young women as docile, dexterous and cheap made them attractive as employees in labour-intensive export-oriented industries located in the Global South. Feminist political economy studies have since then focused on how and why gender matters in globalized production processes for export (Bair, 2010). Along with studies on feminized labour and its construction in the Mexican maquiladoras (Salzinger, 2003), several scholars showed how norms and stereotypes were utilized as control mechanisms on and off the factory floors of export processing zones across Asia (Caraway, 2005; Ong, 2010; Pun, 2005). These studies nuanced observations of feminization, since they also pointed to the employment of specific categories of workers and the variety of strategies used on behalf of the government and firms to make labour readily available for just-in-time production of manufactured goods for export. Feminist analyses have also highlighted migrant (male) workers' circulation across factories, and the co-constitution of informal and formal work, as a key dynamic in labour processes across export-oriented garment manufacturing (see i.e. Carswell & De Neve, 2013; Mezzadri & Fan, 2018 for detailed studies on this in the context of India and China).

An analytical lens on workers' social reproduction, and how it co-constitutes production, has been a key tenet to this scholarship. Social reproduction involves all (un)paid work and socio-cultural practices, institutions and sectors that are necessary for our lives, economies and societies to regenerate on a daily and intergenerational basis (Cantillon et al., 2023). The premise is that workers' labour produces capital accumulation, so it is in capitalist interests to also control workers in the sphere of social reproduction (Bhattacharya, 2017). Employer-provided accommodation and/or dormitories is just one manifestation of labour control to ensure flexible cheap labour (Pun, 2007). By effect, a social reproduction lens focuses on the reproduction of the actual workforce, and daily components, such as care, cleaning, food preparation, and social networking in and of themselves essential for sustaining everyday life, not least from a person's own standpoint (Mitchell et al., 2003). Social reproduction is, therefore, the everyday production of life itself (Elias & Rai, 2019), and it is by focusing on its relation with production that a more holistic understanding of processes and experiences related to work, labour, and exploitation can take place (Mezzadri et al., 2021). It is for this reason that Paper 4 explicitly examines garment workers' experiences and resistance of

factory managers' and the state's control mechanisms across production and social reproduction.

In turn, the thesis speaks to the body of feminist scholarship that has moved beyond deciphering whether work in capitalist development processes is merely positive or negative for workers' experiences and socio-economic outcomes. The daily realities and effects of working in export-oriented industries will always be mixed depending on the type of work that is carried out (both paid and unpaid within the sphere of production and social reproduction), and the constellation of workers' social relations and identities at the workplace and beyond (Bhattacharya, 2017). This relates to intersectional inequalities with its roots in Crenshaw's (1989) critique that race, gender, and class should not be treated as separate social categories. Other feminist scholars from the field of economics have pointed to the importance of considering wider labour market conditions, options, and variations across the Global South in examinations of workers' socio-economic outcomes (Benería, 2001; Benería et al., 2016). Hence, this literature is critical of the earlier assessments of women simply being marginalized in development processes (i.e. Boserup, 1970).

Considerations of the overall labour market (i.e. its 'tightness' or extent of labour shortages) and balances of associational and structural power in specific local/national contexts, and how they change over time, is something that labour scholars and sociologists have examined at the global level with regards to workers' capacities to achieve concessions from capitalists (Silver, 2003; Wright, 2000). The recognition of capital mobility (Silver, 2003), and its detrimental effects on workers, has connections to dependency theory. Nonetheless, this work on labour also recognizes workers' abilities to organize and resist capitalist development processes. This segways into the next section on the literature on labour in the context of GVCs/Global Production Networks (GPNs).

2.3 Impacts on labour, and labour as an agent in global supply chains

GVCs, GPNs, and global supply chains broadly refer to the transnational fragmentation and subcontracting of economic activities for production. Happening alongside financialization, it has led to limited policy space and squeezed supplier firms' profits and workers' wages in labour-intensive industries in the Global South (Anner, 2020; Milberg & Winkler, 2013). As an illustration, many higher value-added economic activities, such as research, development and design, as well as marketing and retail are usually located in the Global North under the domination of transnational corporations whereas manufacturing assembly is concentrated in the Global South (Selwyn, 2019). This relationship has been visualized as a 'smile

curve' characterizing GVCs, which even appears to be deepening in today's world economy (Hauge, 2023). The implication is that labour in Global South countries is priced differently, becomes undervalued (made cheap) and more exploited (Suwandi, 2019). This points to the continued relevance of dependency and hierarchy in global production processes (Kvangraven, 2021).

Labour governance literature has highlighted that industrial upgrading will not necessarily lead to social upgrading because of inter-firm power relations across GVCs/GPNs (Barrientos et al., 2011; Gereffi, 2019; Rossi, 2013). In other words, just because a country's manufacturers are able to increase their competitiveness through higher value-added production and automation, it does not mean that working conditions and enabling rights encompassing measurable standards such as wage levels, contractual terms and working hours, as well as freedom of association and collective bargaining, non-discrimination, voice and empowerment will also improve. Economic and labour geographers criticized this research for focusing their attention on how buyer firms affect labour (or social up- and downgrading), at the expense of recognizing the role that local/national state-labour relations and labour agency have for shaping social upgrading outcomes (Coe & Jordhus-Lier, 2011; Cumbers et al., 2008; Newsome et al., 2015, 2015; Ruwanpura, 2016; Selwyn, 2012, 2013).

In light of this critique of firm-centrism, there is a growing but nascent body of multidisciplinary literature on employment dynamics and outcomes in globalized industries that combine insights from labour geography, structuralist political economy perspectives, and – in some cases – feminist scholarship that sees work through social reproduction. This has led to a growing literature on labour regimes (Baglioni, 2022; Baglioni et al., 2022; Smith et al., 2018; Wickramasingha & Coe, 2022). Using a similar type of multi-level analysis, Marslev et al. (2022) brought in the concept of worker power to help explain the causal processes of social upgrading in the garment industries of Cambodia and Vietnam. In very recent work, structural transformation processes and workers' political influence have also been highlighted as key in explaining how and why labour regimes, or labour outcomes – as in material gains –, change over time, specifically with regards to the global garment industry and how it takes place in specific country-contexts (Marslev & Whitfield, 2025). This brings us back full circle to structuralist approaches to development but with explicit consideration of ideas from global labour studies. Worker power is explained in detail in Paper 3 of this thesis.

3 Historical background to Mauritius

This section gives brief historical context to Mauritius' development trajectory, after a few remarks on Mauritius' population and geography. It proceeds by highlighting some labour history and the overarching socio-economic and political conditions that have shaped the country's garment manufacturing industry. Since all papers of the thesis give relevant background information and contextualized empirical contributions, the section is just an introduction.

3.1 Population and geography

Located in the South-West Indian Ocean, Mauritius is classified as a small island developing state just over 1100km away from the eastern coast of Madagascar (see Figure 2). With a subtropical climate, it is administratively part of sub-Saharan Africa and has a population of just over 1.2 million residents as of the 2022 Population Census (Statistics Mauritius, 2024). The population is almost entirely concentrated on and spread across the island of Mauritius with approximately 40,000 people residing on the island of Rodrigues, located further east of the main island. Together they make up the Republic of Mauritius. Despite its geographic isolation in some respects, it is surrounded by a vast exclusive economic zone of 2.3 million square kilometers, which encompasses coastal tourism, fishing, seafood processing and seaport activities.

Figure 2. Map of Mauritius
Source: Encyclopedia Britannica, 2025

The population of Mauritius is a heterogeneous society with all residents by definition being (mostly uprooted) immigrants. The country has no indigenous population, and the majority of Mauritians are descendants of slavery or indentured labour following waves of colonizers including the Portuguese, Dutch, French, and the British. In other words, the importation of migrant workers is a centuries-old practice.

3.2 Development and divisions of labour before independence

While Mauritius was first sighted by the Arabs, followed by the Portuguese in the early 16th century, it was first inhabited in the late 17th century by the Dutch who settled in Mauritius until 1710. The French followed by more permanently settling on the island as of 1715, until the British took over in 1810 and stayed in Mauritius until the country gained independence. One of the main motivations of these groups was to control the trade route to India. Hence, Mauritius was considered a strategic location for commercial reasons. Nonetheless, there was an acute need for labour, hence there was a reliance on forced labour early on to help 'develop' the island and its sugar industry. Notably, the slave population rose drastically under the governorship of General Labourdonnais, whereby slaves were imported from Madagascar and Mozambique, among other places, to work on the sugar

plantations. Between 1735 and 1807, the population of slaves rose from less than 1000 to 65,400 (David, 2010).

While the British abolished slavery in 1835, it was only the start of a new type of forced labour regime, namely the indentured labour system. This came with distinct methods of recruiting and organizing labour in production i.e. labour processes (Bernstein, 2010). Alongside expansion of sugar plantations and newly freed slaves refusing to work in the fields, sugar planters pressured the British colonial government to find alternative sources of labour. This was despite a transition period of institutionalized 'mandatory apprenticeship' forcing former slave labourers to continue working until 1839 (Kothari, 2013). Indeed, early attempts to control immigrant labour through vagrancy laws largely failed, and there were countless reports of labour abuses and poor working conditions that caused ill-health among immigrants (Boodhoo, 2010).

It was in this period that the indentured labour system in the British Empire started. 451,000 Indian indentured men, women and children were brought to Mauritius from 1834 until this type of government-sanctioned contract system ended in 1910 (Kothari, 2013). During this time, their contracts were systematically extended, even if they were bound to a specific employer. Indeed, there are interesting parallels that can be drawn between the historical indentured labour system as a response to labour shortages, and the contemporary contractual system of migrant labour in Mauritius to compensate for local workers leaving comparatively low-wage and low-status sectors such as the garment industry (Kothari, 2013; Lincoln, 2009). Likewise, indentured labour had the right to return to their place of origin after their contracts were over (with the employer paying for their crossing). However, over 294,000 remained in Mauritius, making Indians comprise two-thirds of the island population already by the late 19th century (Allen, 1999, pp.16–17). There are few indications of class solidarity between the Indian labourers and the former slave population at this time (Hand, 2010), and work was still considered highly precarious in the sugar factories despite improvements in measurable standards with regards to working conditions in the early 1900s (David, 2010). It is around this time that rising labour discontent with the sugar sector led to the launch of the Mauritius Labour Party in 1936 and subsequent mobilizations in the form of strikes and rioting (Seekings, 2011). More details on the start of this labour movement can be found in the analysis of Paper 3 on worker power.

Until the mid-20th century, Franco-Mauritian men held political and economic power, and it was only in 1956 that the British government conceded universal adult suffrage (not based on property and educational requirements) in Mauritius. In fact, during the run-up to independence in 1968, there were plenty of negotiations and disagreements between political parties representing various ethnic groups and the British colonizers (Bräutigam, 1997), thereby leading to the new constitution based on the 'best loser system' safeguarding the representation of all the country's ethnic groups (Ramtohul, 2015). Muslims were designated a separate category from

Hindus in the colonial census, partly because of the cultural, religious and economic differences between those that came as traders versus labourers. This gap was further strengthened by the partition of the Indian subcontinent in 1947. The new constitution as of 1947 was enforced in response to various local groups' interests and concerns with minority communities (the General Population) in fact opposing independence with the prospects of a Hindu numeric majority holding onto long-term political power. Indo-Mauritians, however, were pro-independence seeing the Franco Mauritians and gens-du-couleur as their oppressors in terms of class (Hand, 2010).

Taking a step back, Mauritian society is partly divided along ethno-religious affiliations which requires some comment. The Indo-Mauritians are divided along lines of Hindus (making up the majority group and political elite) and Muslims. Most Hindus and Muslims are descendants of indentured labourers from the Indian sub-continent, but some Muslims have ancestors who came as affluent traders (Auerbach et al., 2020). Hindus are further divided along lines of class, language and caste (Ramtohul, 2015). The Franco-Mauritians are the capital elites, owning most of the land and wealth in the country. They are descendants of the French settlers. Together with the Creoles, who are descendants of former slaves of African and mixed descent, as well as the 'gens du couleur' (mixed race group emerging from the children of Franco-Mauritian plantation owners and slave women) this group is officially known as the 'General Population' and are mainly Catholic. The final recognized minority group are the Sino-Mauritians, who are descendants of Chinese immigrants who settled on the island in the 1830s as merchants and traders. They are both Buddhists and Catholics.

While neither census or household survey data collects, or at least makes public, recent information on ethno-religious affiliation, the population is estimated to consist of six main 'ethnic communities', including Hindus (40 percent), Creoles of African or mixed African descent (28 percent), Muslims (17 percent), Tamils (7 percent), Sino-Mauritians (3 percent) and Franco-Mauritians (about 2 percent) (Ramtohul, 2015). The official languages are English (the language used in Government and schools), French, and Creole, a French-based patois that is the country's lingua franca (Ibid.).

Even if Mauritius is known for ethnic tolerance and democracy, intergroup ethnic conflict broke out in the weeks leading up to independence, leading to a dire need for political stability and power-sharing coalitions (Sanches et al., 2022). This was a formative experience, as the British-trained and Fabian Society member Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam, from the Mauritian Labour Party, took office as Mauritius' first Prime Minister. It was he who started negotiating for a national unity government that would foster stability, promote economic cooperation, and encourage investment with the intention of stimulating employment growth that was an urgent priority (Bräutigam, 1997, 2005)

3.3 Development in the post-independence era

One of the most significant industrial policies of the post-independence government was the establishment of the Export Processing Zone in 1970 to promote manufactured exports and attract foreign investors. At the time, the Mauritian economy was still highly dependent on sugar exports even if there was a domestic manufacturing industry too. This industry focused on aloe fibre and sold all products to the government, whereby part of the manufactured produce was used for making sacks in the local sugar industry and the rest was sold abroad (Government of Mauritius, 1971). Together with recommendations from Lim Fat, a Sino-Mauritian businessman and professor in engineering with expansive international networks, the government formed carefully designed industrial policies whereby private sector firms were allowed to set up bonded factories almost anywhere on the island. The government also took many more steps to attract investments from abroad, including ten-year tax exemptions on profits with the possibility for extensions, and duty-free imports of raw materials and capital goods (Whitfield, 2023). Mauritius also had a readily available supply of female workers that the country's industrial policy deliberately sought to mobilize. Women were spoken of as easily trained, enabling firms to stay competitive and to keep costs of production low as many relocated from Hong Kong (Gokulsing & Tandrayen-Ragoobur, 2014).

After some vulnerabilities stemming from political turmoil, the international oil crises and severe cyclones throughout the 1970s, leading to structural adjustment programmes, the EPZ took off in the early 1980s, quickly leading to employment growth in the industry, feminization, and lower rates of unemployment in the economy overall (Ramtohul, 2020). Nonetheless, the garment-dominated EPZ started facing rising competitive pressures from other garment-producing countries in low(er)-wage settings in Southeast Asia by the 1990s. Alongside local labour shortages, firms adopted various strategies ranging from investing in labour-saving technology and moving into product design and marketing, on the one hand, and employing migrant labour and delocalizing the most labour-intensive operations to countries (most notably Madagascar) with lower labour costs, on the other. By the turn of the 21st century, Mauritius was one of the largest global producers of fully fashioned knitwear and a major supplier of T-shirts for global brands (Gibbon, 2003). With the global Multi-Fibre Arrangement (MFA) quota system expiring by late 2004, however, some of the original investors departed altogether. Employment numbers permanently declined after 2001, alongside factory closures and relocations, fewer orders, and continued declines in the number of firms holding Export Processing Zone certificates (also known as export-oriented enterprises, EOEs) (Statistics Mauritius, 2024a, 2024b). All papers of this thesis, especially Papers 1 and 3, go into more detail on the trajectory of this, also in relation to structural change of the wider economy.

In the meantime, Mauritius had stable and peaceful elections with coalition governments. Nonetheless, Mauritius has since independence only had five different Prime Ministers, four of whom have been Hindus and two of whom have been sons of former Prime Ministers. All have been men, something not surprising given the strong patriarchal culture of Mauritian society whereby women have largely been discouraged from participating in politics and social movements (Ramtohul, 2015).

Today Mauritius is an upper-middle income country, actually reaching high-income status for just one year in 2019 before the Covid-19 pandemic. In only five decades, the economy underwent significant structural transformation while providing free basic healthcare and education up to tertiary for all. While some scholars claim that almost all Mauritians have benefited from the country's economic success, other scholars (see i.e. Kasenally, 2011a, 2011b, 2021) have cast doubts on the so-called 'Mauritian miracle'. Pockets of poverty still exist throughout the country, especially the Creole community, who originally represented the working class (together with the Indo-Mauritians). Women have historically also been marginalized socio-economically and politically (Ramtohul, 2015; Tandrayen-Ragoobur et al., 2021), despite increased access to employment starting with the implementation of the EPZ.

Starting in the late 1980s and early 1990s, scholars started debated the impacts of the Mauritian EPZ. Some pointed to the characteristics of the EPZ as inherent to that of 'dependent underdevelopment', creating social, economic and geographical enclaves for foreign capital (Alladin, 1986 in Rogerson, 1993). Others pointed to the employment-generating impacts of the EPZ as well as its potential for spurring technological upgrading (Hein, 1988 and Minogue, 1987 in Rogerson, 1993). Decades later, the picture is more nuanced. Local capital, in fact, dominates the industry which is geographically spread out throughout the island of Mauritius. Yet the EPZ, or export-oriented industries as they are presently called, has not always been employment generating. Today, the industry continues to be a pillar of the national economy, but it is acutely dependent on migrant workers who make up 60 percent of the export-oriented garment industry alone (see Figure 1 in Paper 4 of the thesis).

What is striking in Mauritius is its sustained growth and impressive social development outcomes at the macro level with regards to educational attainment and health outcomes across its population since independence. Nonetheless, the country fares poorly in terms of women's economic participation and opportunity (counting labour force participation rate, wage equality, income, and occupational seniority) and political empowerment (counting women in parliament and ministerial positions, as well as years with female/male head of state). It ranks among the lower half of countries in sub-Saharan Africa and has demonstrated a negative trend since the Global Gender Gap Index was launched in 2006 (World Economic Forum, 2024). This tension and gender inequitable outcome are something this thesis takes a closer look at with regards to the garment industry. The thesis also explicitly considers migrant (male) workers given the industry's evolving workforce.

4 Methodologies and limitations

This section provides an overview of the methodological choices made with regards to the research project, as well as the methods used for collecting and analysing the empirical material for each paper. First is a sub-section on how I view my positionality and reflexivity in doing research. It is followed by a larger sub-section on my fieldwork, and, subsequently, sub-sections on household survey data, other data, and limitations.

In its entirety, the thesis relies on an embedded case study design (Yin, 2014) where Mauritius' garment industry is the one main case, and a variety of sub-units within make up the units of analysis. These primarily involve factory workers, industrialists from various garment firms, and government officials representing the state, all of which allow a multi-scalar analysis of the relations between labour, capital, and the state. Factory workers and various groups therein (women and men, migrants and locals) are especially considered in the analysis given the thesis' focus on garment worker outcomes and everyday experiences, and the role of labour in the industry trajectory. The thesis also makes use of both quantitative and primary qualitative research, in order to shed light on the topic from different angles and to build a more complete picture of Mauritius' garment manufacturing industry and its workers over time. All in all, the thesis is inspired by feminist approaches to research as will be highlighted below.

4.1 Positionality and reflexivity

Feminist epistemologies often adopt a social constructivist perspective in seeking to counter male-biased accounts of reality while recognizing women and marginalized people as agents of knowledge. Drawing on this, feminist methodology has long emphasized the importance of reflexive research practice that recognizes the positionality of the researcher irrespective of the methods used (Berik, 1997; Harding, 1987; Jackson, 2006). In an interview setting, for example, the researcher's positionality can affect what information is shared. This is not in and of itself a problem but requires acknowledgement that the interviewer shapes the (co-)constructed narrative, either through what they do or who they are in the eyes of the interviewee or narrator (Murray, 2018). As a white, highly educated European carrying out research in a postcolonial African country (where Mauritians of French

origin – Franco-Mauritians – have high socio-economic status and large capital assets), there are many complexities and sensitivities that warranted critical reflection throughout the research planning, data collection, analysis and write-up. To start, I would not have embarked on this research if I did not already have prior knowledge of the export-oriented garment industry and issues of work therein.

As alluded to in the introduction, I took highly formative classes in feminist economics, 'issues of the working poor', and African economic development, as well as introductory courses in social anthropology as a former student at SOAS, University of London. To this day, these studies with a critical outlook have shaped my topical research interests, worldview, choice of methods and their application. Combined with a training on gender sensitive research methodology – co-organized by the University of Addis Ababa and UN Women – and fieldwork in an export-oriented garment factory in Ethiopia in 2018, I consider myself to have appropriate experience for undertaking fieldwork on a similar topic for this PhD research. Nonetheless, the specific setting and sensitivities of labour dynamics in Mauritius was new to me, which required ample time to build relationships and familiarize myself with Mauritius' culture and socio-economic history. The way I went about this, and the subsequent use of specific methods, is expanded on in the sub-sections below on fieldwork and ethical considerations.

4.2 Fieldwork

A sizeable portion of the data for this thesis comes from three rounds of multi-sited fieldwork totally five months. To begin, I spent two months in Mauritius in early 2022 where I took the time to meet with a variety of people as part of – what I call – preparatory fieldwork. A few interviews with key informants, such as a former director of a large garment firm and policy officer at the International Organization for Migration (IOM) were used for the final study and opened up doors for other interviews upon my return. Above all, however, these two months were critical for adding to my understanding of Mauritius and the garment industry trajectory overall. Apart from a few key informant interviews, I visited the National Archives, the National Library, national monuments and museums, and read Mauritian novels. Until this first round of fieldwork, I had reviewed the secondary literature, and gathered and organized household survey data since the year 1999, but it was while being in Mauritius that my project took more concrete shape. As an example, I had previously not realized the extent of migrant workers in the garment industry, partly because of this community being entirely disregarded in the nationwide household survey data. For this reason, it became clear to me that including their perspectives was essential and that migrant status was a social and worker identity that I would have to be extra attentive to in addition to that of gender and class.

Data gathered by myself during the second round of fieldwork (two months in early 2023) make up the bulk of material used for the latter half of the thesis: Paper 3 on capital-labour-state relations, the implications for worker power and social outcomes, and Paper 4 on garment workers' experience and navigation of mechanisms that factory managers and the state use to control workers across production and social reproduction. A few of the most insightful key informant interviews were also selectively used to support the analysis and discussion in Paper 1 on social sustainability of the industry. In preparing for this second round of fieldwork, I sought ethical approval from the Swedish Ethical Review Authority (drn 2023-00065-01) considering that my research for Papers 3 and 4 would involve the collection of sensitive personal data.

In my research design for this part of the thesis, the intended informants were divided according to two broad overarching categories given the different types of questions I would be asking and different ethical considerations. First there were the key informants in general (factory managers, government officials, union leaders, and other stakeholders) speaking more on behalf of key changes in the local garment industry, the politics surrounding it over time, and industrial relations. Interview guides were adapted according to the key informant 'type'. Secondly, there were the garment workers who spoke more about their own lived experiences of work (primarily considered in Paper 4). The former involved the collection and processing of personal data (not necessarily requiring an ethical review process yet still involving ethical considerations), whereas the latter involved sensitive personal data hence requiring an ethical approval. Some of the most important ethical considerations are outlined further down.

Relationship-building via both informal and formal channels was essential for conducting fieldwork, especially that which highlights the accounts of local and migrant workers. I approached none of the garment workers via their employer, and no workers except two, worked in factories that I spent time in myself during multiple day visits with factory and production managers showing me around. Rather, it was through the local trade union Confédération des Travailleurs des Secteurs Publique et Privé (CTSP), and thanks to close dialogue with their two Presidents, that I was able to access current Mauritian garment workers and even two migrant workers who were interested in participating via word of mouth. The CTSP is affiliated with the IndustriALL Global Union and has a Migrant Resource Centre at their premises since 2022. As for former garment workers, a prominent long-term trade union leader and spokesperson for the General Workers Federation (interview code KI09), as well as his colleague, introduced me to people who wanted to share their story.

It was helpful to speak to long-term former garment workers, since their stories captured everyday experiences and local realities of work with some perspective, as well as changes in the industry over time. Combining these work stories of current and former garment workers (the main unit of analysis) with information from other

informants and sources, and juxtaposing them to more macro- structural happenings recalled by a wide range of stakeholders at other 'levels', thus enabled me to make links between everyday experiences and local realities of work with socio-economic changes at the national and global level. This enables a more holistic understanding and is advocated in feminist international political economy scholarship (Elias & Rai, 2019).

Another pivotal gatekeeper was a Bangladeshi shopkeeper (interview code KI20), who the policy officer at the IOM introduced me to. KI20 sometimes worked on the side as an interpreter for the Ministry of Labour and had good rapport with Bangladeshi migrant workers who would come to his shop, near to one of the main industrial areas where several garment factories were located, to do some errands, socialize, receive help with remitting money through more informal channels, or ask for general advice. I 'hung out' at his shop on most weekends and it was from here that I conducted most of the work story interviews with migrant workers during quieter hours. On a limited number of occasions, they were interrupted shortly by customers who wanted the attention of the interpreter, and his son was for some reason unavailable to assist. Nonetheless these situations were not too disruptive apart from me having to restate the question. The Bangladeshi interpreter and I got along well, his English was excellent, and I had prior research experience of working with an interpreter. To avoid any misunderstandings, we asked each other follow-up questions whenever something was unclear.

Returning to my positionality as a researcher from the Global North, there are evident issues related to power relations and data gathering on the lives of workers who are exposed to daily exploitation and oppression (Mezzadri et al., 2021). Apart from trying to mitigate these via close dialogue and building of trust with local gatekeepers, another way was to deconstruct pre-existing ideas of the exact papers I wanted to write. This meant that my interview questions were open and genuinely interested in the viewpoints, priorities, and daily experiences of current and former garment workers involved in the garment industry, as well as what changes they had seen over time. For example, the probes in the work story interviews were about their decisions to begin working in the garment factory, their normal workday and routines at home and in the factory, what they liked or did not like about their work, and their views on the industry more generally, its working conditions and changes over time.

While my ambition was to interview at least 20 garment factory workers of various social positions, the most important aspect was to first always think about the workers and what they were getting from my research, rather than seeing them as 'just data providers'. In the end I conducted 12 work-story interviews and two focus group discussions (FGDs) with 18 current and former garment workers in total. I only interviewed those who actively wanted to speak to me and share their story at a time that was convenient to them. Some of them I met with several times, both to interview and/or to just spend time with, in settings such as their homes, the

Bangladeshi shop, or spaces outside the factories where some of the migrant workers either sold or consumed street food and 'hung out' on their time off.

Given the risk that I may have been perceived as having more influence than I do when it came to interviews with garment workers, I thought very carefully about how I would introduce myself and was honest about my positionality as a research student and not being associated with industrialists. I always emphasized that I was genuinely interested in how they experienced work, and I got the impression that those workers I interviewed were genuinely happy to help me and share their experiences.

As revealed above, I worked with a male interpreter for the interviews with all migrant workers from Bangladesh. This needs to be further situated. I got the impression that all informants were very at ease and comfortable in his presence, and in my own. This can be validated by some joking, and the fact that several of the migrant workers openly shared and explained in detail how they do income-generating activities on the side of their job tied to a specific work permit in the garment industry. I believe sharing this information followed quite naturally given that the work story interviews were held in spaces outside of the factory with an interpreter who many of the migrants were at least familiar with. Additionally, the revelation can be contrasted to the fact that other informants, such as the Assistant Director at the Ministry of Labour (interview code KI01), forcefully said migrant workers would never tell me about these activities prohibited by law. Importantly, two of the migrant workers were women, so my interpreter's male gender may have influenced the way that they responded to my questions. This was, nonetheless, outweighed I believe by the fact that the women themselves approached me out of interest (on what turned out to be their only day off that month) when I spent time purchasing and eating various Bangladeshi snacks in one of these 'weekend enclaves' (Seo & Skelton, 2017).

The Mauritian workers were either interviewed in one of Mauritius' official languages, English, or they spoke in their mother tongue Creole, whereby a union representative affiliated with either the CTSP or General Workers Federation helped translate. In two work story interviews, a worker negotiator and legal advisor (interview code KI14) acted as the interpreter, and the host mum in the family I was staying with interpreted another work story interview (with whom I had already met but in the company of CTSP). This combination of interpreters for the Mauritian work story interviews was sometimes challenging and required more time to explain what I meant. Nonetheless, all informants seemed at ease and my knowledge of French and very limited French-based Creole language also helped me to validate some of what was said.

As for the interviewed factory owners, managers and other informants, I also got the impression that they were happy to speak to me. The industrialists were all accommodating and willing to be interviewed and show the factory premises.

Several were, in fact, intrigued and showed pleasant surprise that a young woman on her own from Sweden was interested in the industry. This can be seen in light of the local context whereby (especially young) Mauritians are not so interested in working in the industry compared to other sectors of the economy. The only occasions that I felt some reluctance by industrialists were when I asked to see the dormitories for migrant workers (during work hours when they were empty). In two of the firms with dormitories present on the factory grounds, I did not get access.

I approached most factories via publicly available contact information on their websites, and then later via snowball sampling. I knew that I wanted to interview informants from a variety of garment factories, hence all except one (interview code IND16) are export-oriented and they range in size from small (less than 250 employees) to medium (250-1000 employees) and large size (over 1000 employees). The firms they represent are also both foreign- and locally owned. Two industrialists (interview codes IND01 and IND16) were introduced to me via the Mauritian family I lived with for two months. One of them went to the same church, and the other was a regular customer at the café that my host family ran in the centre of Port Louis. Staying with this middle-class Sino-Mauritian family in the working-class area of Baie du Tombeau, with mostly a Creole population, outside of Port Louis was extremely valuable in allowing myself to immerse into Mauritian society. I got to know the family by chance during my first round of fieldwork in 2022, as I would sometimes go to their café close to one of the main public transportation terminals before taking the bus home.

There was no dependency relationship between the informants and myself, and all informants knew there were no direct material benefits from participating in the research project. Moreover, I remunerated no one financially, except my interpreter in the case of interviews with migrant workers. He comprised one of the key informant interviews. I did, however, pay for soft drinks, shared food and snacks whenever this was appropriate. Sharing food and snacks was also a way of giving a sense of being human and fostering a comfortable environment for those involved.

In mid-2024, I returned to Mauritius for one month. During this time, I had my base at the University of Mauritius and was mostly writing. I did not interview any more workers, although I informally met with several of the union leaders and worker negotiators again, and I did follow-up interviews with two separate government officials and one more interview with the new Human Resource (HR) Manager at a factory I had visited on multiple occasions the year before. I also did observations of a workers' council meeting at this factory. Via my interpreter, who I became friends with and his family, I learnt that several of the Bangladeshis I had interviewed were no longer in Mauritius. Some were also not reachable since they had changed their phone numbers after a government policy in 2023/2024 for all people to re-register their sim cards. I kept in touch with some of the Mauritian workers, but we did not find the time to meet again in person. All in all, this month was crucial for me to immerse myself once again in Mauritian society and to foster

relations for future possibilities to share my thesis findings upon completion. I was able to acquire some final data from Statistics Mauritius, and to closely follow media coverage, which was especially lively prior to the national elections that took place less than six months after my stay.

4.2.1 Informant interviews and focus groups discussions

During my fieldwork I collected in-depth semi-structured work stories with current and former workers in the garment industry (n=12), as well as conducted focus group discussions (FGDs) with current workers in the industry (n=2 with 3 workers in one group and 5 workers in the other, two of whom were later also individually interviewed). The work-story interviews and FGDs were with both men and women, spread across migrants (all from Bangladesh) and Mauritians, all of whom work(ed) in formal factory enterprises. The spread of worker interviews across these worker identities was purposefully done except Bangladeshi workers were only included as migrant workers for reasons pertaining to both access and their dominance in the Mauritian garment industry. Another main data source from fieldwork are interviews with 42 other stakeholders, encompassing industrialists (n=16 including factory owners, human resource managers and general production managers), officials from Mauritian government authorities (n=5), union leaders and worker negotiators (n=5), and other stakeholders including industry and business associations in and around the garment industry, academics and so on (n=16). In total, this adds up to 54 individual interviews and two FGDs with a total of eight workers. These individual interviews are outlined at an aggregate level in Table 1.

Table 1. The individual interview material

Informant Type	Informant details	Number
Labour	Current and former workers in the Mauritian garment industry	12
Labour	Union leaders and worker negotiators	5
Firms	Industrialists, including factory managers, CEOs, and owners	16
State	Government officials from Ministry of Labour, Ministry of Industrial Development, and Economic Development Board	5
Other	Mauritius Export Association (MEXA), high-profile economists, IOM, textile trader, High Commissioner of Bangladesh, academics at University of Mauritius etc	16
Total		54

Source: Fieldwork conducted 2022-2024; own compilation. Notes: more details on date and place of each individual interview, as well as interview characteristics can be found in the appendices of Papers 3 and 4 of the thesis. Information on the eight additional workers interviewed as part of the two FGDs can also be found there.

The work stories were helpful for looking back on and conjuring up feelings and meanings formed in particular times and places (Dutta, 2016). In many ways, they resemble life histories, as advocated by feminist political economists (Mezzadri et al., 2021), but I chose to call them work stories or narratives of personal experience of work because of their scope. The FGDs were useful for teasing out memories and comparisons of work processes between workers themselves. The FGD with a mix of Mauritian women and Bangladeshi men was especially helpful in revealing how workers relate and respond to each other. Altogether, the work stories were essential for bringing in other ways of knowing in complementary ways to dominant narratives of the garment industry in Mauritius. They are explicitly utilized in Paper 4 on workers' different experiences, and they also feature in Paper 3 on worker power and capital-labour-state relations. The interviews with the other 42 informants were valuable for gathering knowledge on key changes in the local garment industry, labour issues and tensions, challenges, and mechanisms to improve working conditions, and the politics surrounding it over time. This was useful for both Papers 3 and 4 on the government and firm 'management' of the industry and its workforce.

Each interview guide had three overarching parts. The first focused on introductions and outlining informant characteristics to gather their positionality. In the case of workers, I started by asking them an open question to tell me a bit about themselves and their work. This was followed by probes about their age, level of education, place of origin, family and household situation, the characteristics of the factory, and whether they were member of any union. The guide was adapted slightly depending on whether they were a current or former worker in the garment industry. The rest of the interview focused on four main topics: the person's work in the factory and choice to begin; the person's perception of work in the garment factory and experience thereof; the person's division of labour at home/in the dormitory and in the factory; and the person's view of the garment industry more generally, its working conditions and developments. Each part had probes that I resorted to whenever needed, although each interview was unique in that I was flexible and sensitive to listen to what the person thought was important to share about their experiences and perceptions. To close the interview, I always asked if there was anything else they wished to share that we had not talked about. This sometimes led to new information coming up that could be expanded on.

The interviews with industrialists focused on the characteristics of production in the factory and its history, their collaboration with the government, the extent to which social equity and labour rights were a priority, their views on labour, and the key challenges that their factory faces and how they differ in relation to the garment industry in Mauritius overall. Throughout the process of my fieldwork, I sometimes came across strong and/or repeated statements such as "*the minimum wage has killed the industry*" (KI25) or that there was a "*labour issue*" with the "*last generation of Mauritian workers in the industry*" (IND16, first interview March

2022). As the fieldwork progressed, I sometimes asked industrialists for their opinion on these types of statements that I had come across.

As for interview guides for interviews with government officials, they were focused on understanding the government's priorities for the country's garment industry, the industrial relations with firms and workers in the industry, what the main issues are, and what the reasons were for changes in workers' rights in the industry over the last few years. Interviews with other key informants were adapted according to their positionality and expertise. Just to name a few, they ranged from high-profile economists with a wealth of knowledge of the industry trajectory, to a coordinator at the Mauritius Export Association Agency (MEXA) representing export-oriented garment firms, to the Chairperson of the Manufacturing Sector Workers Welfare Fund.

All interviews and FGDs were recorded using an audio recorder and transcribed verbatim by myself. This was a very time-consuming process, yet it made me extremely familiar with the material. Afterward I went through the transcripts line-by-line and coded via the qualitative data analysis software NVivo. I began the analysis for Paper 4 on worker experiences before Paper 3, and while there were similarities, there were also a few differences in my approach. For the work story interviews, I developed codes as I went along and once I had acquired over twenty codes, I regrouped some into larger more analytical codes. I looked out for anything related to social reproduction, and experiences of work and resistance, so the coding process was highly inductive. This process was further guided by Richard's (2009) practical advice to be reflexive and actively think about *what is interesting* (as a way of identifying a passage on which to focus), *why it is interesting* (as a way of identifying a descriptive code), and *why I am interested in that* (as a way of getting me to think more conceptually or at the abstract level).

Meanwhile I created a memo in NVivo for each 'case', meaning an informant whom I saw as a complete entity with context. This included general information on where the interview was held, how I got to know the person (pseudonymized at this point), and any other relevant circumstances and notes from my fieldwork diary in relation to that informant. As I progressed with the coding, I also filled these memos with ideas and insights from the interview material. The memos provided a fruitful way for me to separate the analysis from the material I was analysing, while keeping them inherently linked. They also helped to better understand the informant's perspective and to keep a holistic view of the work story, even as I extracted quotes for the write-up of the papers. It was important for me to embed these quotes within the narrative and positionality of the worker who shared the story.

In some cases, the informant spoke with multiple voices, partly illustrating their own viewpoint and then speaking on behalf of someone else. FW11, for instance, was interviewed with regards to her own former experience as a sewing machine operator over the course of 13 years. While this was the focus of her work story, she

would sometimes switch perspective and lift the voices of current Mauritian sewing machine operators at a factory that she was trying to organize in her current role as a full-time labour organizer for a union. Rather than seeing this as a problem, it gave me more material to compare and contextualize even if I was careful to distinguish between what was her own experience and that of other workers she came across. Keeping a frequently updated project journal in NVivo helped me keep track of my progress and record how I was categorizing codes as they became too many.

I conducted thematic analysis of all interviews and FGDs, which later allowed me to illustrate common themes and aspects that came up across the different interviews. For Paper 3, the worker power conceptual framework explicitly guided the thematic analysis of the interview material across different informants. Social up- and downgrading was clarified as the first step of analysis whereby interview data was coded according to social up-/downgrading and/or industrial up-/downgrading. Then worker power was coded according to whether it was associational or structural, and who held these power resources. Data pertaining to class conflict and everyday acts of resistance were also coded in NVivo with the use of separate codes.

4.2.2 Observation

Field visits and observations also make up some of the material for this thesis. The purpose was to generate dense descriptions of the context and institutional relations in and around garment factories that affect workers' lived experiences. In total I made nine factory visits, which each lasted a few hours. One of these factories I visited on three occasions. Another I visited twice. I made observations of shop-floors and related facilities such as mess rooms and dormitories, workers' council and production meetings at two different medium-sized factories (those visited on multiple occasions), paying close attention to work conditions and intensity, labour practices, and interactions between workers themselves and between managers and workers. Occasionally, I took photos of the factory premises, ensuring that no faces were visible. I always received permission to do this beforehand. The same goes for photos I took of one garment worker's (FW09) weekend home – a small studio that he rented together with some other garment workers to spend time with his spouse and prepare food for his informal cooking business on the side. The work story interview was held in the same location.

Relatedly, observations were made of social activities in adjacent spaces to factory grounds where migrant workers would meet for casual gatherings and small informal business activities. Altogether, these more ethnographic elements were a good way of gaining valuable contextual information into the 'how' of everyday life and the institutional processes that shape it (the focus of Paper 4), and worker power and capital-labour-state relations (the focus of Paper 3). Some of these are also not always verbalized, since they may be seen as obvious. It was thanks to these field

visits and observations that I gained insight into how (many times starkly) factories and related facilities such as dormitories and food provision in mess rooms are divided according to migrants and Mauritians, men and women, and even along nationalities of migrant workers. My field notes from spending time in these settings were recorded immediately afterward, as I did not want to distract.

The only exception to this was my participation at a 'Trend Forum on Fashion and Manufacturing' in August 2024 where I had been invited by one of the EDB directors (also interviewed). I attended as part of a larger audience consisting of a wide range of garment firm representatives and students in fashion and technical aspects of garment making. The Forum introduced a capacity building programme for the textile and apparel sector and was widely attended by a range of garment firms. Participating in this forum and listening to the speeches by high-level representatives from the EDB, University of Mauritius, and the Minister of Industrial Development, SMEs and Cooperatives, as well as a Mauritian designer was all very valuable for gaining further insights into the general discourse at this level pertaining to the industry's opportunities and challenges with regards to various types of social and economic upgrading. It added to my understanding of state-capital relations with regards to the garment industry in Mauritius. It was striking that migrant workers were not mentioned, despite their overwhelming presence in the industry. In informal exchanges with three separate industrialists after the keynote speeches, however, labour came up repeatedly as a difficult issue – both with regards to attracting locals to the industry, securing work permits on time, and retaining migrant workers. They explained that they were under a lot of pressure since minimum wages had increased significantly while, in their experience, buyers were demanding more and paying less. These exchanges did not make up the analysed material for this thesis, but it triangulated what I had already gathered.

4.2.3 Ethical considerations

Since this thesis partly investigates personal experiences of work and labour organization in and around the Mauritian garment industry, the research topic and interview questions are considered delicate in nature. More concretely, I asked all workers if they were a member of a union, which requires ethical approval (successfully granted – see drn 2023-00065-01). Similarly, I was aware that political stances and aspects to do with health and well-being could come up in the interviews. While I never ended up asking about ethno-religious identities, sometimes this came up spontaneously in the interviews as relevant to that person's positionality and experience. All these aspects require serious ethical considerations.

A comprehensive information sheet was given to all interviewees that provided details about the research project and what it meant for them to participate. It

included information on what happens to their data (including pseudonymization of the transcripts and presentation of results in such a way that individual workers cannot be identified), contact details to my main supervisor and myself, as well as information on how they can take part of the project results. My interpreters were well informed about this information sheet and went through it verbally with the workers before we found a suitable time to interview. I did the same in cases where I did the interviews by myself. Voluntary participation, as well as the right to withdraw at any point without needing to explain why, was stressed in the information sheet as well as by myself in person. All the informants had the opportunity to ask any questions before starting the interview. Consent was then given orally and written in the form of a name, signature, place and date. In some cases, the informant did not feel comfortable writing, so only oral consent and their signature was given.

It was critical that all interviews were held in an environment that the informant felt comfortable in and could speak freely. Moreover, all recordings and transcriptions were saved according to a file name indicating the date and number of the interview. Specific references to factories were also pseudonymized. The cases were then labelled according to FW01-18 in the case of workers in the garment industry; IND01-16 in the case of industrialists from a variety of garment firms; and KI01-26 in the case of other key informants spread across government officials, union leaders and worker negotiators representing labour (but not speaking on their own experiences), and others. In cases where key informant interviewees (KI01-26) spoke on behalf of their organization or with respect to their official role at this organization, their general title is referred to in text. Once again, this information has been given with informed consent. Upon returning to Lund University, all signed physical consent forms and field notes, audio files (the raw data), photos and code-keys were stored on an unmarked USB-drive that was kept in a locked data safe in the office of one of the administrative staff at the Department of Economic History.

With regards to the analysis and presentation of findings, the papers try to accurately and in detail convey various workers' experiences as described by themselves. The same active voice applies for the other informants, although they did not speak about their personal lived experiences in the same way, and they are not considered a vulnerable group (as are garment workers and migrant workers). I will never be able to speak for the subaltern (woman), as is emphasized in feminist postcolonial perspectives (Spivak, 1988), but I can be purposeful, empathetic and provide thick descriptions including people's own voices wherever possible in the writing. This was something I actively tried to pursue throughout the writing process, pushing for a plurality of perspectives and recognition of agency. I am aware that some informants, especially in the case of industrialists, expressed themselves in a way that was quite stigmatizing of certain worker groups. While these views are still included in the presentation of the findings in Papers 3 and 4, they are

counterbalanced by careful analysis and juxtaposition of workers' own perspectives and actions. Workers' experiences of control, everyday resistance, and worker power overall are also strived to be understood as shaped by structural practices and context at the point of garment production and beyond, rather than as inherent features of being a 'worker' or 'migrant'.

4.3 Household survey data

A different key data source is the use of CMPHS micro data acquired by permission from Statistics Mauritius for the years 1999-2018 (except year 2000 for which no survey was conducted). This survey data was specifically retrieved, organized and analysed for the purpose of Paper 2 which examines the associations between female labour force participation and individual and household-level characteristics. Given the richness of this micro-level data and its ability to provide information on employment in various economic sectors, including garment manufacturing, associations were also examined between employment in various sectors of the Mauritian economy and individual characteristics. This enabled gendered economic analysis. It also helped build a richer picture of Mauritian garment workers' and work characteristics. Some of this descriptive data on concrete worker outcomes, such as occupations, earnings and working hours, was useful as a rigorous complement to Paper 3 where the main data source was otherwise qualitative data from fieldwork which concentrated more on the 'how' of social up- and downgrading, the role of workers' different and shifting power sources in these processes, and counter-strategies by capital and the state, as well as their implications for workers.

For each year, the CMPHS asks comparable detailed questions about individual and work characteristics, including educational attainment, age, region, marital status, participation in the labour force, sector, activity, and household composition. It is the main national source of information designed to compile annual demographic and socioeconomic data throughout Mauritius. Households are selected according to a two-stage sampling design. To identify households, primary sampling units (PSUs) are first selected in proportion to the square root of the total number of households in each geographical district. In the second stage, a fixed number of households are selected from each PSU, according to a stratification criteria of community, household size and average monthly household expenditure (derived from population census data). Between 1999 and 2003, around 6,500 households were covered each year; in 2004, the sample increased to 8,640 households, and as from 2005, the sample increased to 11,280. This results in observations ranging from 18,316 to 37,383 per year.

Before conducting the econometric analysis, I had to manually clean, codify and harmonize the raw data for each year. This was because the data files provided by Statistics Mauritius included data in many different formats and levels of detail. Codes were missing for some years, which required follow-up and close communication with Statistics Mauritius both in person and virtually. I also made productive use of a 'master' excel file early on that helped organize all possible questions of interest to this part of the research project. In total, it included 24 questions or variables across the years 1999-2018 that I reviewed manually while colour-coding according to those that were either okay, missing for a certain year, or in need of recoding and clarifications from Statistics Mauritius. Although the CMPHS questionnaire is supposed to be standardized, it became evident that some questions and variables were missing for several years. For example: whether the respondent had received training for the job. Despite this limitation in consistency between some years, I was still able to use a wide range of variables that subsequently shed light on the labour market in Mauritius over time.

Individual FLFP was applied as the key dependent variable, and level of educational attainment and civil status as the key explanatory variables. To estimate the likelihood of being in the labour force, I constructed a binary dependent variable (FLFP=1), where a person was defined as being in the labour force if she/he is of working age (16-64 age group) and who has worked for pay, profit or family gain for at least one hour during the reference week of a month. It includes individuals temporarily absent from work for reasons such as leave with or without pay, temporary work disruptions, and those who are unemployed (not working but looking for and available for work). There is little reason to suspect underreporting of LFP since the survey asks detailed questions about own-account work (a person who operates his/her own business or trade but does not hire employees) and contributing family work/domestic workers, both of which have much higher likelihood of involving informal work arrangements. Additionally, a person's work in a particular sector is defined as a categorical variable and coded according to their reported economic activity.

To examine the probability that women versus men – as well as women with different education and civil status – work in particular sectors, I allocated sector employment based on adapted versions of the International Standard Industrial Classification (ISIC) Rev. 3 and 4. Educational attainment was defined as a categorical variable and was coded as per the national standard classification of education (NSCED-97). Civil status was also defined as a categorical variable, and all models control for age, age^2; district; total household income from employment excluding the woman's own income; and the educational attainment of the husband and the presence of an elderly person in the case of married women. Presence of children is another family circumstance that is controlled for.

As for the empirical methods, the analysis applied logistic regressions, since we have a binary outcome, to test our various hypotheses and to extract a more detailed

picture of the supply-side determinants of FLFP in the Mauritian economy overall, as well as by sector, over approximately twenty years. We further extended our analysis by displaying the results through the application of predictive margins, which makes the results more tangible and easier to interpret and compare across groups. Sometimes, this analysis was segmented into three time periods versus by year. The results were then further discussed in relation to descriptive data.

4.4 Other data

This thesis also applies publicly available data from international organizations, such as the World Bank and ILO, as well as Statistics Mauritius. This includes information on aggregate employment composition and numbers, and work permits, average earnings, and strike activity. Data on the sectoral workforce composition in historical perspective from 1970-2018 (referred to in Papers 2 and 3) originally comes from various databases on economic transformation from the GGDC/WIDER projects. The 1960-1990 data was linked to the 1990-2018 data by Melles (2024), which was valuable for giving a long-run perspective on structural changes to the Mauritian labour market. These, in turn, play a role for workers' power resources.

A combination of data from previous studies, openly available descriptive statistics, and government policy documents were used for the analysis of Paper 1. This was complemented at a later stage by a few interviews from the fieldwork described previously. This material in its entirety was used to construct our narrative on the garment industry's progress according to four social sustainability fundamentals identified by ourselves. Policy documents, information brochures to migrant workers, and regulations related to the Employment Relations Act and Workers' Rights Act as of 2019 were also retrieved during fieldwork. This provided valuable information on the regulatory context of industrial relations.

4.5 Limitations

This thesis has a wide scope and tackles complex issues. This requires using a range of data sources and methods, some of which are hard to compare, such as in the case of quantitative and qualitative data. While they provide a wealth of complementary knowledge with regards to unveiling tensions and contradictions of work and social reproduction, as well as their connections to the trajectory of an industry (Mezzadri et al., 2021), they also open up for limitations.

First, the data presented and analysed in each paper has been subject to issues of availability and accessibility. Sometimes, valuable data such as the prevalence of strikes in manufacturing has been found but for a different number of years compared to other indicators of worker agency and labour mobilization. Similarly, some data is on manufacturing in the EPZ, garment manufacturing overall (in large versus small establishments), and/or export-oriented garment manufacturing. I have tried to be as clear as possible about the parameter of each presented data, while always keeping the big picture in mind - that the focus of this study is on the garment industry in Mauritius, the vast majority of which is export-oriented and produced in larger factories. Nonetheless, informal garment-making for larger firms does occur to a small extent in home-based production units. Sub-contracting to these units came up in a few of the interviews with industrialists and other key informants. However, no garment workers involved in this type of garment-making were interviewed directly. This means that this perspective is missing, even if the scope is estimated to be small (yet probably underestimated) based on data from Statistics Mauritius on the number of garment 'outworkers' working with materials from and for export-oriented enterprises. Several interviewed migrant workers did, however, do informal work on the side. This practice is examined in Paper 4 as a way of better understanding everyday experiences of work.

Relatedly, even if I interviewed former garment workers too, the focus was not on their lives afterward but rather on their past industrial experience of working in the garment industry in Mauritius. While these experiences are obviously relational and related, future research could benefit from examining the life cycle and timing of changes in work in closer detail. This is something that feminist political economists have advocated as a response to the linear narratives of development and/or labour force participation (Mezzadri & Majumder, 2020)

Importantly, the thesis does not claim to represent all the experiences of workers in the Mauritian garment industry, even if it tries to lift several different perspectives. The results are inherently biased, as they do not include workers of other nationalities than Bangladeshis and Mauritians. Nevertheless, Bangladeshis constitute the bulk of garment manufacturing migrant workers in Mauritius since at least fifteen years back, so they represent an important and distinct group of workers in the industry. Moreover, my sample of Mauritian workers included Hindus, Muslims, Creoles, or unknown. The local Mauritian factory owners were either Franco-Mauritian, Hindu, Sino-Mauritian or unknown. Yet, I never ended up explicating Mauritian workers' ethno-religious identity, even if this could be an avenue for further examination of how this has affected, for instance, worker power and everyday lived experiences. In the Mauritian context, class and ethnicity are in many ways blurred so this is a limitation of the thesis, since it does not explicitly study religious or ethnic structures and their interaction with workers' experiences. The thesis does, however, examine the role of citizenship in labour control mechanisms and experiences. It also studies informal institutions, such as socio-

cultural and gender norms and their role in female labour force participation (discussed in Paper 2). Racialized articulations of different groups of workers are also considered, as this came up extensively in especially managers' discourses of workers. These are considered in Paper 4.

Moreover, the thesis deploys a feminist standpoint yet uses relatively traditional methods of data enquiry compared to participatory methods and research that is more actively co-produced with the informants. This is a limitation that I have tried to dampen via reflexivity over power relations and careful consideration of how I use the methods.

As for the household survey data, ethnicity or religion is also not recorded even if the questions are asked. Above all, no migrants are included in the surveys. This means that results pertaining to labour force participation and sector of work can only be applied to Mauritian workers. If migrants had been surveyed, the thesis could have studied segmentation and overlapping inequalities in more detail across the labour market in Mauritius overall, and the garment manufacturing industry specifically. Presence of children was only included in the household data for the years 1999–2005 and 2013–2018 for reasons out of our control. This prevented us from controlling for children in the main models of Paper 2. Additionally, no CMPHS data was collected in 2000, posing another limitation to the study. Nonetheless, it is still an incredibly detailed data source with plenty of rich individual-level data at the micro-level. Future research could make use of the very detailed sectoral and occupational data compiled in our database to further understand the changing labour market in Mauritius. This could potentially be complemented with demand-side factors from other data sources in order to further understand what shapes labour force participation and sectoral segmentation in Mauritius.

5 Summary of papers

Paper 1: Labour-intensive Garment-based Industrialization with Social Sustainability? The case of Mauritius

This paper addresses the social sustainability dimension of labour-intensive industrialization (LII) and light manufacturing activities and applies it to the analysis of Mauritius, a regional forerunner in garment production. While the country's socio-economic development trajectory has caused several scholars to label it as an African success story (Meisenhelder, 1997; Subramanian & Roy, 2001), we do not evaluate its industrialization against traditional economic theory on achieving sustained growth. Instead, we interrogate the LII component based on garment manufacturing from the early 1970s onwards against a criteria of social sustainability.

To this end, the paper asks: To what extent and in what ways has Mauritius' garment-based industrialization process from the 1970s to the present day progressed toward greater levels of social sustainability? What enabled or inhibited this type of manufacturing to contribute to socially sustainable development over time? Based on primary and secondary data, and building on new developmentalist research, the paper examines the fulfilment of basic human needs, employment levels, and the quality of jobs in terms of working conditions, with indications (or absence) of inclusiveness as a cross-cutting theme. Moreover, the paper addresses the role of social policy in complementing industrial policy and reconciling tensions of inequitable outcomes from industrialization.

The evaluation criteria are based on a succinct review of various approaches to the social dimension of sustainable development and their implications for labour-intensive industrial production in the Global South today. This ranges from growth-centric to degrowth approaches (Hickel, 2021), and the human development approach (Sen, 1999), as well as those that convincingly emphasize the importance for countries to create or support 'productive coalitions' willing to invest in collective productive capabilities (Chang & Andreoni, 2020). The latter fits under the umbrella of 'new developmentalist research' shedding light on the importance of industrial and social policy (Andreoni, 2022; Andreoni & Chang, 2017; Mkandawire, 2001).

The analysis of Mauritius' social and garment-based industrial history is divided into three approximate periods which the paper calls: (1) Initial transformation

1970-1983; (2) The 'golden years' (1984-2001); and (3) Major restructuring (2002-present). In each sub-section of the analysis, the social sustainability fundamentals are addressed that are particularly pertinent in new developmentalist research. This is then followed by a discussion further addressing the implications for social sustainability, and the present state of major challenges for garment manufacturing in this regard.

The empirical material is derived from a range of sources that we combine to construct our narrative. Apart from engaging with prior studies on labour-intensive manufacturing and inclusive development in Mauritius, we apply descriptive statistics on employment numbers, worker composition, and average earnings in Mauritius' Export Processing Zone (EPZ), which is dominated by garment manufacturing, to support our arguments on changing social sustainability fundamentals. Our analysis and discussion are also informed by data collected from a variety of stakeholders in the form of interviews during extensive fieldwork.

All in all, the paper provides a more nuanced understanding of Mauritius' industrialization trajectory by highlighting its mixed outcomes that have temporal limitations. While it finds that some social sustainability fundamentals improved in the latter period, they have been unevenly applied, thereby jeopardizing social sustainability in its true meaning. The paper also offers some possible lessons learned for countries in the Global South currently forming their industrialization strategies, so that sectoral change and social sustainability can develop together. Above all, the case of Mauritius' garment-based industrialization shows the importance of the state in close collaboration with firms and workers to have an 'exit strategy' early on that ensures inclusive development and economic diversification.

Paper 2: Female Labour Force Participation and Sectoral Inequalities in Mauritius' Development: Insights from Two Decades of Household Survey Data

This study builds a database based on detailed household survey data on a number of individual-level variables that are relevant for a study of the Mauritian labour market and related gender inequalities. Covering nineteen years of data, it then closely examines developments in female labour force participation (FLFP) and women's work in particular sectors. Specifically, it studies the micro-level socio-economic factors that are associated with women's (and men's) labour force participation and changes thereof. It also examines these associations with regards to five sectors in which at least ten percent of Mauritian women active in the labour force have been involved in over the years 1999-2018. These include garment manufacturing, trade services, community and domestic services, government services, and business services. The three main questions that guide the paper can be summarized as: How do women's labour force participation, and their work in

garment manufacturing and other sectors of Mauritius' economy, compare to that of men? How are women's individual and household characteristics associated with FLFP, as well as their likelihood of working in these sectors? How do the associations change over time?

Through econometric analysis, via the application of logistic regressions, the paper finds that civil status and educational attainment, especially, play a significant role for FLFP throughout the study period (1999-2018). Highly educated women have a significantly higher likelihood of participating in the labour force, which is to be expected, and educational attainment up to a minimum level of education (having achieved lower secondary education) has just a small positive association with FLFP compared to primary education. Divorced or separated women are also significantly more likely to participate in the labour force compared to women of other civil status, of the same age, and educational attainment. Nonetheless, there is a slight increasing likelihood that married women are entering the labour force compared to earlier years. This complements our finding that FLFP overall is increasing, as predicted by the feminization-U hypothesis, but it is very slow and starts from a low level. Moreover, the results show that household income is negatively associated with married women's labour force participation. The same applies to the presence of a child or elder in the household, possibly suggesting the prevalence of a triple burden.

While it is beyond the study's scope to determine the causal processes behind the results, we discuss our results in relation to theories from neoclassical economics, institutionalist approaches, and feminist economics. Complementary descriptive statistics indicate that most women out of the labour force entirely are hindered primarily by household responsibilities. Hence, Mauritian women's reproductive work burdens, together with sticky gender norms, are likely to matter for our findings.

The results also show persistent sectoral differences between men and women. Importantly, low-educated women are overrepresented in sectors with mostly low-skill and low-paid jobs. This holds true over the years, and the likelihood even increases over time that it is the lowest educated women who work in trade services, and community and domestic services. Meanwhile, women with (in)complete primary education continue to be more likely to work in the relatively low-status garment manufacturing industry than women who are more highly educated, but the longer-term trend is that the likelihood is declining. All main results are displayed through the application of predictive margins to ease interpretation and group comparisons. We also show our results as odds ratios and average marginal effects in tables found in the appendices.

Altogether the findings suggest that, despite some progress in FLFP, there are gender and intra-group disparities in Mauritius' labour market. The paper concludes with a few policy suggestions to be incorporated into Mauritius' future development

ambitions, one of which is to target policies toward those women who already have lower education and skills levels. Another includes policy measures, such as more affordable and widely accessible childcare and more extensive parental leave, to help alleviate work-life balance inequities. This is important for all groups of women, even those (likely to be higher educated) entering growing economic activities such as business services.

Paper 3: Worker Power, its Differentiation and Role in Social Outcomes: A Study of the Mauritian Garment Industry Trajectory

Whereas Paper 1 of the thesis examines the social sustainability of Mauritius' garment-based industrialization, this paper goes more into the 'how' behind some of the results. The focus is also on workers' social outcomes versus social fundamentals of the industry at large, but the periodization from the 1970s to present-day is the same. It aims to unpack the multi-level contextual factors that have led to differences in worker power – the ability of workers to influence conditions within their workplace – as well as to use the concept of worker power to explain some of the changing and contradictory social outcomes over time in Mauritius' garment industry. To this end, the two main research questions are: How has social up- and downgrading proceeded in the Mauritian garment industry? How have capital-labour-state relations affected (different groups of) workers' bargaining power and their respective social outcomes?

The paper tackles these questions from perspectives lifted in literatures spanning feminist scholarship on labour relations, critical economic geography scholarship on social upgrading, and structural development economics, and labour processes especially characterizing garment manufacturing in the Global South. Specifically, the worker power conceptual framework is inspired by Wright's (2000) original work separating associational power from structural power, as well as Silver's (2003) work proposing the distinction between marketplace and workplace bargaining power within the realm of structural power. These concepts were later applied by Marslev et al. (2022) and Marslev and Whitfield (2025) to comprehend the timing of changes in worker power and subsequent worker outcomes across the garment industries in Vietnam, Cambodia and Madagascar. However, potential differences within workers as a group were only partly considered.

The data source for this paper is both qualitative data gathered from extensive fieldwork and interviews with a range of stakeholders in Mauritius, representing labour, capital, and the state. Importantly, both migrant workers and Mauritian workers were interviewed. This is also complemented with quantitative data, including work stoppages, real wage developments, and detailed evidence on garment manufacturing jobs and conditions of work (for Mauritians) from the household survey data collected and organized for the database outlined above.

The first period (1970-1983) saw the gradual rise of an industrial working class that was able to push for some concessions from the Mauritian welfare state to compensate for low wages. The leftist movements of the 1970s gave rise to growing worker solidarities in this period, yet marketplace bargaining power was low for a variety of structural reasons such as few available alternatives for work and high unemployment. This changed by the 1980s when surplus labour quickly became absorbed and real wages for workers in the export-oriented manufacturing industry improved. Significantly, garment firms responded in two main ways to workers' rising power resources The first was to relocate their lowest value-added manufacturing activities to locations with cheaper labour (Madagascar). The second was importing migrant labour as of the early 1990s. Both these 'fixes' marked the start of workforce segmentation (most clearly according to Mauritians and migrants), mixed power resources, and social up- and downgrading occurring simultaneously in the 2000s. Although this points to relatively low worker power, the paper shows that it has been far from static and consistent across the garment manufacturing workforce. Migrant labour has, for instance, undermined Mauritians' originally high marketplace bargaining power that they had historically. There are also differences within these broader categories of workers, as pertains to gender and nationality. Finally, the paper shows that despite low unionization rates and difficulties in collective bargaining, garment workers have still had associational power to gain concessions from capitalists and the state. Migrant workers, especially, appear to have mobilized via wildcat strikes, and garment workers overall have benefited from indirect solidarity relationships with other worker groups in Mauritius that have in recent years had more political influence. Everyday acts of resistance at the factories have also continued, even in periods of lower worker power overall.

Paper 4: The Control and Everyday Lives of Local and Migrant Labour in and around Mauritian Garment Production

Through empirical and analytical engagement with garment workers' perceptions of various labour control strategies across the garment industry in Mauritius, this paper aims to uncover garment workers' everyday experiences of labour control strategies deployed by factory managers and the state in Mauritius. It provides detailed insights into work dynamics across the sphere of production and social reproduction and thus contributes to a detailed understanding of how everyday lived experiences are embedded in structural practices of exploitation and control.

Explicitly guided by a social reproduction lens to work and a theoretical perspective informed by feminist political economy (Mezzadri et al., 2021), the research questions it asks are: How do garment workers perceive and experience the strategies that factory managers and the state use to control different groups of workers, across production and social reproduction? How do these workers navigate

and resist the control mechanisms shaping their everyday lives? Finally, what can the shift in workforce composition to more migrant (male) workers and interrelated control mechanisms tell us about the attempts by factory management and the government to resolve the local garment industry's so-called 'labour issue'?

The study is based on an embedded case study method and qualitative primary research conducted in the form of multi-sited fieldwork over a period of five months. Specifically, work stories of 18 former and current garment workers are analysed in addition to semi-structured interviews with industrialists, government officials, union leaders and negotiators, and other stakeholders. The work story interviews primarily inform the first two research questions, while the other interviews enable a deeper understanding of the various control strategies and macro-scale structural processes shaping the industry workings, and by extension, everyday realities.

Deploying thematic analysis, it finds that state policy, factory manager practices, and informal institutions, such as discriminatory norms and worker stereotypes, are pivotal to the everyday workings and labour control of the Mauritian garment industry, as well as workers' respective lived experiences in and around the productive sphere. This can be likened to many other contexts of neoliberal capitalist development. Moreover, the findings are at tension with overarching discourses of the Mauritian government and export-oriented enterprises in the industry claiming to enforce 'ethical labour management' with fair and equal treatment of labour.

Several labour control mechanisms are used across the garment industry (extending to, for instance, overtime work allocation, food provision and dormitories) in ways that are both racialized and gendered. This has shaped different labour experiences and ways of navigating and resisting control in workers' everyday lives across factory production and social reproduction. An important marker of different experiences is whether you are a migrant or Mauritian, but this is made more complex considering gender.

6 Conclusions

Given the urgent need for countries to transform their economies in a way that brings about sustainable and inclusive development, this thesis sets out to assess the multi-level socio-economic dynamics that have affected the trajectory of a globalized manufacturing industry and the lives of those workers directly involved. The export-oriented garment industry, located in Mauritius, was the central case for this inquiry due to a number of reasons. One is the special properties of manufacturing, especially for low- and middle-income countries, as is recognized in structuralist approaches to development. Yet, manufacturing is heterogeneous, which leads to the reason for why one particular industry, namely garment manufacturing, was chosen for this study. Not only is it a historically significant industry that has been pivotal for predominantly early stages of structural change and transformation, but it is also a labour-intensive, light manufacturing industry that may create many jobs, something highly prioritized in low-income countries today with high population growth. Moreover, context- and temporally specific dynamics always play an important role in shaping the degree to which a country undergoing structural change may deliver ever greater social sustainability outcomes. These dynamics are specific to both the local/national context and the global situatedness of a country's development. Therefore, socio-cultural norms, the labour market, and actions of – and the relations between – government, firms, and workers all matter.

Against this backdrop, Mauritius is an interesting case to examine issues of development, specifically with regards to social outcomes and labour. There is no doubt that the country successfully structurally transformed its economy since independence in 1968 and that it stands out in the region of sub-Saharan Africa as a development forerunner in this respect. Nonetheless, the core of this thesis is to move beyond just a macro- and meso- sectoral perspective to more closely examine interdependent dynamics at other levels of analysis. In this way, it critically engages with the intricacies of socio-economic processes and outcomes closely related to garment manufacturing and its workers. In addition, it also moves beyond solely looking at the micro level outcomes and experiences of workers in the industry.

Through extensive use of both qualitative primary data from fieldwork and quantitative household survey data, together with some other source material, this thesis contributes to a more complete understanding of Mauritius' garment manufacturing trajectory, whereby working lives and issues of labour are carefully examined as part of a totality. It nuances the 'success story' narrative and finds that

achieving a higher degree of social sustainability has been done in some respects while not in others (the focus of Paper 1). Fundamentally, the Mauritian case shows that initial job creation was challenging to sustain over time. Over the decades, the industry became more automated and moved toward higher-value added production processes – commonly referred to as economic upgrading – while lower-value added segments of garment-making were delocalized to countries with lower labour costs. While this, per se, does not need to be a problem for social sustainability in a country provided workers who left, or were disposed, from the industry are included in other sectors of the economy, it appears this was not the case in Mauritius. Factory closures and stalls in the industry's employment creation in the 1990s and early 2000s coincided with rapidly rising and high levels of unemployment for women. While unemployment has been brought down since then, as the country has continued to structurally transform its economy, household survey data reveals that the lowest-educated women are concentrated in sectors of the economy with higher shares of vulnerable employment and jobs at lower ends of the occupational/skills distribution (found in Paper 2). This entails evident issues for social sustainability and inclusion, even if Mauritius has grown more prosperous and wealthier as a country over the decades. Moreover, social policy has been applied over the years in close conjunction with industrial policy in attempts to both provide a minimum level of welfare to its population and to manage domestic power inequalities between workers and garment industrialists.

Nevertheless, working conditions and enabling rights have always been unevenly applied across groups of garment workers. This thesis reveals not only gender inequalities across the workforce, and garment manufacturing specifically, but also overlapping inequalities between local and non-citizen (predominantly male) migrant labour. While very recent new developmentalist research (Andreoni, 2024) on structural transformation has acknowledged that industrialization processes have different effects on male and female workers (as feminist scholars have long highlighted), this thesis makes a case for also considering other groups of workers and ever-changing worker segmentations. It appears it is these hierarchies that largely prop up an industry like garments, not least at later stages of development when it is assumed that a country should no longer want to keep garment assembly.

Indeed, the thesis points to the importance of being wary of how the composition and relations of various labouring groups change over time, even in cases where data is limited. Here, the worker power conceptual framework (applied in Paper 3) and a feminist social reproduction lens to work (applied in Paper 4) are useful. They help explain both how workers' lives are affected through engagements in a globalized industry and how workers' direct and indirect resistance ultimately shape development trajectories. An interesting future avenue for research on these topics in the case of Mauritius, especially being a small island developing state, would be to consider how climate change might affect workers' power resources, everyday experiences and resistance.

Just as workers cannot be viewed as an isolated group, the social processes and outcomes of garment manufacturing cannot be viewed in isolation from the rest of the economy. After a certain point of development, it is questionable if an industry like garment manufacturing even serves its original developmental purpose of creating jobs and triggering structural change. The case of Mauritius shows us that just because the industry has been sustained, still employs people who might otherwise have been worse off, or contributes to the country's export revenues for example, these parameters do not entail ever greater levels of social sustainability. This is evident from the industry's restructuring and the various government and local garment firms' fixes to the 'labour issue(s)' in Mauritius' development.

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Garment Workers and the Labour Issue in Development

Manufacturing activities are highly prioritized by many low- and middle-income countries in the twenty-first century, yet there is an urgent need for these processes to be done in a way that bring about sustainable and inclusive development. As an African forerunner that has developed manufacturing, achieved sustained growth, and undergone structural transformation, Mauritius is an interesting case to learn from and for situating issues of what we mean by development. Many researchers have pointed to the country's establishment of export-oriented garment manufacturing as essential to Mauritius' success. Nonetheless, we know much less about the garment industry's impacts on labour relations, and different groups of garment workers' social outcomes, everyday experiences and resistance, all of which inevitably change over time as an industry is restructured to stay competitive. To what extent, and in what ways, has Mauritius' garment manufacturing industry been socially sustainable with regards to progress on issues of employment, and work across production and social reproduction? How have capital-labour-state relations shaped these dynamics? The thesis seeks to address these overarching questions with a particular focus on women and migrant labour.

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