

CHAPTER 4

Capital over Labor: Health and Safety
in Export Processing Zone Garment
Production since 1947

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The textile and garment industry is one of those sectors in which the globalization of sourcing, production, and retailing has been closely linked with the worldwide spread of export processing zones (EPZs) (Neveling 2015d).¹ It is impossible to understand the global proliferation of EPZs to more than 3,500 zones with more than 70 million workers in 130 or so nations (Boyenge 2007) without reference to the textile and garment industry and the working conditions of its more than 60 million workers, and vice versa. This chapter traces the link between EPZs and the textile and garment industry in regard to health and safety concerns. From the opening of the world's first EPZ in Puerto Rico in 1947 onward, the zones have had considerable impact on labor relations in the global garment sector. In fact, EPZs may be regarded as a mode of governing labor conditions in their own right, and this mode maintains low standards of health and safety for labor and high standards of safety for return on capital investments.

Linking the historical development of EPZs with that of the global garment sector is not a common genealogy. So far the sector's infamously unsafe and unhealthy working conditions have mainly been regarded in the light of a salient and catchy term, the "sweatshop." From Ellen Rosen's outstanding monograph *Making Sweatshops: The Globalization of the U.S. Apparel Industry* (Rosen 2002) to Naomi Klein's highly popular *No Logo* (Klein 2000), the

genealogy of sweatshops is commonly traced back to the textile and garment businesses that emerged in New York's Lower East Side in the late nineteenth century. While such linkages are undeniable, an overemphasis on them has nurtured a decoupling of EPZs—where the majority of garment factories are located globally—and the industry itself. This enables pro-EPZ lobbyists to praise the rapid growth of EPZs in Bangladesh and to recommend replicating its EPZ program in African nations (e.g., Farole 2011, 83) without even mentioning how Bangladesh's EPZ growth rates thrived on unsafe and unhealthy labor conditions that created the amazing profit margins attracting investors.

As the following shows, abandoning the U.S.-centric analytical angle and inserting the historical spread of EPZs into the sweatshop genealogy enables us to link the killings of workers in the Rana Plaza factory—and the plight of tens of millions of garment workers and their families—to EPZs as a particular mode of capitalist exploitation. This does not take the sweatshop out of the equation, but instead shows how powerful coalitions of actors and institutions from World Bank research departments to private consulting corporations and UN agencies have collaborated over considerable periods of time to create EPZs as a particular global economic condition that is now embedded in social structures worldwide. Based on this analytical shift, the genealogy offered in this chapter seeks to understand global processes and the particularities they generate in space and time. For such processes have contributed to the collapse of the Rana Plaza factory building in Bangladesh in 2013, where the national government has promoted EPZs, often as bonded warehouses, since the 1970s (Rhee 1990), as much as to the 1911 Triangle Shirtwaist Factory fire in New York City in 1911, which is often cited as the paradigmatic historical example for the worst of sweatshop conditions (Rosen 2002, 1; Bair et al. this volume). At the same time, EPZs often have an undeserved reputation as a policy tool that creates miraculous economic growth. Zones have often been compared to the Californian and earlier gold rushes, the famous Klondike, and the infamous El Dorado. Obviously, workers in the zones hardly stand a chance to amass unforeseen riches overnight. Rather, EPZs are a standard feature in nation-states wishing to achieve economic growth by attracting export-oriented industries; the set of policies that makes an EPZ is first and foremost designed to assist national and multinational capital (Neveling 2014c).

Unfortunately, mainstream development policy reviews of EPZs never get to the bottom of these important structural determinants. The definitions

of EPZs and SEZs (special economic zones) they offer are technical at best, and the examples that they feature are success stories throughout. Browsing through such pamphlets one encounters partial descriptions of ever-the-same success cases (e.g., Akinci et al. 2008, 29–31). Therefore, we need better definitions, and this is what the first section of this chapter develops based on empirically verifiable features of seventy years of EPZ operations, which still apply today, such as in the bonded warehouse facilities granted to all textile and garment companies operating in the Rana Plaza building before its collapse.

The second section retraces the emergence of EPZs in Puerto Rico in 1947. The third section sketches how EPZs went global in the decades after, with a special focus on health and safety policies and on South Asia. In sum, these sections offer a historical anthropology of a global neoliberal regime, which enables anthropology to analyze health and labor issues in garment factories on a global scale. Such an approach progresses from the discipline's current investment in "worm's eye view" (Cross 2010, 358) methodologies, which consider factories as isolated social units with culture-specific "relations in production" and which produce workers without history and zones without history, toward a comparative and historical analysis of the "relations of production" present in all those factories (see Burawoy 1983). The historical anthropology proposed here then moves beyond a moralist empathy for the plight of EPZ workers toward an anthropological contribution to the struggle against the ongoing global attack on garment workers' health and safety by producing comprehensive evidence of structural patterns of exploitation and abuse. Such evidence highlights the very existence of a global EPZ regime, which was the product of often coincidental interactions of national, transnational, and global players since the late 1940s—those actors and institutions are the "Natives" that have determined whether an interest in health and safety in EPZs was with the health and safety of capital or that of labor.

In line with a global historical anthropology approach, which I detail elsewhere in regard to methodology and theoretical implications (Neveling 2016), the concluding remarks offer examples that illustrate the limits of workers' rights movements over more than seventy years of EPZ operations. I juxtapose a long-standing, strong concern with capital's health and safety with an equally long-standing lack of concern for labor's health and safety. Finally, I revisit briefly the relations between capital, state, and labor that continue to enable this difference in concern.

Verifiable Definitions of EPZs as Main Production Sites for the Global Textile and Garment Industry

Definitions of EPZs are dominated by the research departments of international organizations such as the World Bank and the International Labour Organization (e.g., Akinci et al. 2008; Boyenge 2007). Because their ambition is often to promote the global spread of these zones, these definitions focus on technical and legal aspects and have little concern for the historical reality of EPZ operations. We therefore need better definitions—definitions that represent EPZs as having a history and workers in the zones as having histories that have produced legacies of struggle. I identify six defining features of EPZs that are rooted in the historical development and present-day expressions of relations between capital, state, and labor since the late 1940s. For the relations of these meta-actors dominate social and economic interaction in the zones and their factories. Such relations change, but as with any other cultural setting, they also persist and are therefore crucial determinants in a global setting that saw the Rana Plaza killings in Bangladesh unfold in 2013.

First, national governments, and often also regional administrations, offer tax and customs breaks for a given number of years to encourage the relocation of manufacturing capital. This means that the regions establishing EPZs declare themselves and their workforce unworthy/undeserving of manufacturing investment in the first place and, in reverse, portray taxes and customs as a burden for capital, from which it deserves “holidays” (Neveling 2012, 347–89). This, like all the following defining features of EPZs, has considerable impact on how workers in textile and garment factories are treated, and the notion of an unworthy/undeserving workforce severely restricts the bargaining position of workers and their representatives.

Second, development agencies, funded by the state and/or public-private partnerships, cultivate land and build so-called “turnkey factories” in industrial estates and zones, which are then offered at low leases to investors wishing to set up manufacturing and other enterprises. States, in other words, put up significant investments in fixed capital in EPZs and thereby become entrepreneurs who take on a substantial share of the risks involved in the competitive realm of global capitalist production.

Third, in the past, this risky entrepreneurial activity of national governments was aggravated when developing nations guaranteed exchange rates of their currencies against “hard” currencies such as the U.S. dollar, creating a flat world for transactions by EPZ investors. In the volatile global currency market

of the post-Bretton Woods regime, such guarantees turned out to be an entrepreneurial gamble. Such high-risk monetary policies remain in place as national development banks offer comparatively low-interest loans for the acquisition of means of production (Rosen 2002, esp. 33–35; cf. Neveling 2014b).

Fourth, most national EPZ laws lowered minimum wages for the zones, banned collective bargaining and unionization, and protected investors from nationalization of industries by any future government. One effect of these EPZ measures is super-exploitation, meaning that wages are insufficient to reproduce labor power. This creates what I call “exploitation chains” because households, extended kin-groups, and modes of self-help activated by EPZ workers ultimately contribute to investor profits (Fröbel et al. 1981; Latimer 2015; Neveling 2015a).

Fifth, EPZs are a one-way street into sustained misery for developing nations with few exceptional success stories (for example, the Shenzhen region). One reason for this is export-oriented production, which means insecurity as no nation without command over a superior armed force can be sure to maintain its export markets. Efforts to catch up with industrially advanced nations have distorted effects, as ever lower-cost labor enters the assembly lines of multinational and local corporations, retailing or subcontracting the production of garments. Directions of exports may have changed over the past seven decades, but the bulk of EPZ garments moves from poorer to richer people and regions. The beneficiary of EPZ incentives is capital, not labor or the overall wealth of nations.

Sixth, whether nations advance or decline from consumer to producer or vice versa has (had) less to do with EPZ incentives than with the structuration of the global trading system, where bilateral and multilateral trade agreements and regional trading blocs define which garment exporting nations have access to important markets. Examples include the 1974 Multi-Fiber Arrangement (MFA), the current U.S. African Growth and Opportunity Act, the European Union (EU), and the North American Free Trade Area (NAFTA) (Carswell and De Neve 2014; Gereffi et al. 2002; Neveling 2015a).

So far, social science research has not fully come to terms with these six defining features that make for a global EPZ regime. Often, researchers stick to definitions from international organizations, which focus on the technical and legal aspects of EPZs as ideal types. Such ideal types neither reflect the relations on the ground, in a given zone or a given zone factory, nor do they reflect the relations on wider scales, such as in a national economy with a high share of EPZ output, or how EPZs shape relations of production in the

global textile and garment industry. In short, it is the actors within the global EPZ business that provide the funding for such definitions and their focus on technical and legal matters, which means that the definitions have no superior authority but they are a “Native’s Point of View” (Carrier 2012) as good as any other. In order to deepen an alternative understanding, it is now time to assess the global spread of EPZs since 1947 and how their diffusion has shaped health and safety standards in the global textile and garment industry.

Capital, State, and Labor Relations in the Global EPZ Regime Since 1947

All of the above definitions highlight the particular relations between capital, state, and labor in EPZs and, thus, in the global garment sector. That these definitions are axiomatic for any assessment of health and safety concerns in the sector has to do with the fact that EPZs went global and became a regime in the process of diffusion. Zones set up in the past seven decades all, in one way or another, emerged from the first EPZ established in Puerto Rico in 1947. The zone model refined itself as it spread globally. The following illustrates, by way of example, which variations stuck with a particular zone and which were added to the global EPZ regime that millions of workers have been subjected to.

The historical development of intransparent production and transactions is particularly evident within the garment-EPZ nexus. This is evidenced also in other chapters in this volume (Ashraf this volume; Bair et al. this volume), which show how the Rana Plaza killings put a spotlight on the sector’s global sourcing strategies. Today, even multinational retail corporations such as Primark and H&M can claim to be unable to see the myriad trajectories of commodity chains that end in their retail stores. Surprisingly, though, social scientists with their much slimmer research budgets can point out how these chains incorporate subcontracting firms, individual (women’s) home labor, or putting out style production (Prentice 2008; Mezzadri this volume). Also, according to expert estimates I collected during many years of research on the global spread of EPZs, most garment orders today are placed through “middleman” agents such as Hong Kong’s Li & Fung.

This ramification of commodity chains in the global textile and garment industry, which allows for retailers’ false claims of intransparency, can be traced back to the very beginnings of the EPZ model. Already in 1947,

sourcing agents, albeit of a different kind, were indispensable for establishing what would be the world's first EPZ and rapidly expanding garment businesses. Some historical background is needed for understanding the conjunctures on which their operations blossomed. Back then, Puerto Rico, a Caribbean island and a U.S. dependency since 1898, showed all the symptoms of the neo-Malthusian dilemma that became a leading explanatory device in development policies during the era of the Cold War and decolonization. Population size nearly tripled between 1900 and the 1950s, whereas agriculture, increasingly driven by U.S. trusts controlling sugar cane, tobacco, and coffee plantations and milling, remained the island's mainstay economic activity. A needlework industry emerged in the 1920s. Production and sales to the U.S. mainland increased rapidly. Nevertheless, employment figures of 60,000 workers in that industry were insufficient to counter rising unemployment among an increasingly unhappy youth. Tens of thousands of Puerto Ricans migrated to U.S. mainland cities on the East Coast, where they were employed under sweatshop conditions, if at all. Anti-colonial ideas from India, the Soviet Union, Latin America, and elsewhere soon made their way from mainland Puerto Rican communities back to the island. During the 1930s, a new political party, the Partido Popular (later Partido Popular Democrático, PPD), rose to power and won elections in 1940. The blow to U.S. mainland capital's interests this served was short-lived, though (Neveling 2015b). Early New Deal-style measures that the PPD leadership put in place after establishing an alliance with the Roosevelt administration and the American governor of Puerto Rico, Rexford Tugwell, soon came under assault from a Puerto Rican version of what has been described for the U.S. mainland as a "businessmen's crusade against the New Deal" (Phillips-Fein 2009).

In order to understand the success of that crusade it is important to highlight another movement. This is the spread of ideas for a different political economy from the U.S. "Silicon Valley" of its day, the Boston/Cambridge region with its university campuses at the Massachusetts Institute for Technology (MIT) and Harvard. Puerto Rican New Deal money initially went into establishing a set of local government agencies, such as a planning board and an industrial development corporation (initially Fomento Industrial, later widely known as Puerto Rican Industrial Development Corporation, PRIDCO). Import-substitution industries were promoted, aiming to produce locally what might otherwise be expensive imports from the mainland, such as shoes, cement, and garments. Another initiative, which never came to completion, was for a government-owned sugar mill that would offer an alternative outlet

for small planters and give them independence from the U.S. trust-owned mills and, this way, challenge the trust's capacity to dictate purchase prices and milling fees. Instead of all this coming to fruition, import-substitution policies were scrapped to privatize state-owned enterprises on a large scale. As the *Wall Street Journal* put it, a "Puerto Rican lure" (Diefenderrer 1946) was set up, with the island's government offering what later became the central features of EPZs: low-cost leases or purchases of government-owned factories, tax and customs exemptions, backed by an all-out promotion campaign also highlighting cheap and docile workers and the pleasant Puerto Rican climate. This was masterminded by the Boston consulting company Arthur D. Little Incorporated (now ADL), which, among a plethora of services, supplied the relocation of a leading U.S. textile and garment manufacturer by way of kinship networks to Puerto Rico (Neveling 2015a).

This was Royal W. Little, the nephew and later the adopted son of Arthur D. Little, owner of ADL. His company, Textron Limited, was among the first to relocate from the U.S. northeast heartlands in New Hampshire and Massachusetts to Puerto Rico, seeking greater competitiveness in a heated market with lots of mergers among U.S. textile and garment manufacturers during and after the Second World War. According to an internal Fomento study, Royal Little had a "[g]old rush psychology [that] is apparently still a part of the American scene and the possibility of making a killing seems to be much more of an attraction to many businessmen than does the rather high probability of a more moderate return" (quoted in Fernandez 1992, 168–69).

However, without the shift from import-substitution to export-oriented EPZ policies, and a coalition backing this that encompassed local government and federal agencies, consulting corporations, and, ultimately, investors, no Royal Little ever would have descended on Puerto Rico, or, possibly, on any other setting. In fact, a much more significant global conjuncture helped maintain the Puerto Rican scheme and, at the same time, spread it to other parts of the world, thereby creating the island's ultimate downfall.

After the Second World War, development through industrialization became popular in many postcolonial nations as they sought to overcome the status of suppliers of raw materials for manufacturing industries located in industrialized capitalist nations. An important aspect of this was the Prebisch–Singer thesis, formulated in 1950, which pointed out this particular relationship as well as the fact that it was one between former colonizers, benefiting from the deal, and former colonized, suffering from the deal (Bair 2009). Several years later, this was framed by dependency theory and world systems theory

scholars as a persistent and global pattern of unequal exchange. By then, the Puerto Rican model had already provided a triumph for neoclassical development economists, as it seemed to prove that their policy measures could generate rapid growth. The model quickly spread into national and international development agencies as proof for the famous Kuznets curve predictions that a rising tide of economic growth would lift all boats.

Such triumph had to do with the fact that since the late 1940s, successive U.S. administrations had promoted Puerto Rico to young postcolonial nations, praising the island's short takeoff phase as an inroad to sustainable industrialization, fueled by cheap labor, tax incentives, and government subsidies. Puerto Rican politicians were sent around Latin American capitals to praise the benevolence of the U.S. government and mainland capital—an all-out better ally than Moscow. ADL won contracts with Caribbean development agencies. The company sold the same package of tax incentives, state-funded infrastructure for industries, promotion campaigns, and so forth, again and again and received substantial financial backing from U.S. government development programs for developing nations and Latin America in the 1950s and 1960s. Some country programs were designed to counter socialist-leaning political movements—in Egypt and Honduras, for example. Elsewhere, the aim was to back anticommunist bastions, like the Republic of China under Chiang Kai-Shek and the Philippines, with EPZ programs. In the early 1960s, ADL also co-designed those Mexican EPZs in border cities with the United States that the 1990s anti-sweatshop campaign would make infamous globally as *maquiladoras* (Neveling 2015b; cf. Kahn 1986).

An irony of history is that the EPZ “gold rush” capitalism increased the future need to battle unhappy, socialist-leaning workers. Royal Little, for example, used relocations to Puerto Rico to downsize an empire of textile and garment factories he had built during the Second World War. He fired 10,000 unionized workers in New Hampshire in 1948 and moved some of the production to a PRIDCO-funded factory in Ponce. Hailed a hero in Puerto Rico, he came under attack on the mainland, but was able to brush off a U.S. Senate subcommittee inquiry in 1948, citing time-motion studies as proof of lower worker productivity in the U.S. northeast and generously “saving” 1,000 jobs in a New Hampshire sheeting mill.

The shape that EPZs took in Puerto Rico thus furnished one group of actors—investors/capital—with significant gains in bargaining power over another group of actors—workers/labor. The U.S. federal government and the local Puerto Rican government facilitated this by acting as if government had

“to compensate investors for setting up production facilities and for exploiting workers” (Neveling 2015a, 172).

Health and Safety in the Global EPZ Regime

In such a climate, the health and safety of workers was of little concern. A fire in the changing rooms of a Textron factory in Ponce in August 1954 received minor newspaper coverage. The focus was on \$2,000 financial damage despite the fact that the cigar that reportedly started the fire could have caused a much larger blaze that might well have cost the lives of workers (Rivera 1954).

In a study contracted by PRIDCO for the tenth anniversary of the EPZ incentives schemes, we encounter an even more striking imbalance between an interest in the safety of capital and securing profit margins for investors on the one hand and the safety of workers on the other hand. The 1957 PRIDCO report listed all government institutions and agencies involved, which reveals that among the specialized and well-funded agencies catering for the EPZ, none were concerned with health and safety. Instead, the positive evaluation of PRIDCO focused solely on attracting investors and boosting their exports from Puerto Rico to the mainland (Stead 1958, 61–62). The evaluation category “industrial failures” only meant closures and not accidents and worker injuries (*ibid.*, 74–78), despite indications that few or no safety inspections were in place. Investors, for example, complained about limited contact with government officials once plants were running and about a labor force trained “through a crash program of vocational training and by many ingenious methods of on-the-job training” (*ibid.*, 82). Other sections acknowledged health and safety concerns, only to contradict the very existence of such measures a few pages further on. For example, one section stated that “[i]n general, working conditions are very good. The new factories conform to modern codes of health, sanitation, and safety—all carefully enforced by the Departments of Labor and Health” (*ibid.*, 92), while it was soon stated that the very same government Departments of Labor and Health handled their EPZ tasks inefficiently compared with “corporations” such as PRIDCO (*ibid.*, 112–24).

With these particular features—maximized safety for capital and minimized safety for labor—the Puerto Rican model went global (Neveling 2015a, 2015b, 2015d). Of course, concern for capital’s and workers’ health and safety would spread unevenly in the process, and there may well have been a racist element to this. The first European EPZ in the Republic of

Ireland benefited from a national setting dominated by paranoid anti-communism and a solid grounding in the capitalist bloc. Therefore, from its opening in 1959, workers in the Shannon Free Zone (SFZ) had fairly strong unions and the Shannon Free Airport Development Corporation (SFADCo) ran the zone with an ombudsman system in place to mediate between workers, their unions, and multinational capital (personal conversation with SFADCo staff, August 2010). In Taiwan, where the Kaohsiung Export Processing Zone (KEPZ) was one of the first Asian EPZs, anti-communism came in the form of a dictatorship that preached development as a national effort. The health and safety aspects of KEPZ were much closer to those in Puerto Rico than to those in Shannon. The KEPZ became operational as part of a large international container harbor in 1965, built upon advice from the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) and funded by USAID and United Nations technical assistance money. Taiwan, like any other U.S.-leaning developmental dictatorship in East and Southeast Asia, until today regards the environmental damages, the poor health and safety conditions in factories operated by Japanese, U.S., Hong Kong, and homegrown multinationals as essential sacrifices on the road to economic prosperity and world-market production.

This is best illustrated by juxtaposing the following historical snapshots and their uneven representation in the present. On the one hand, Kaohsiung is home to the burial tomb of twenty-five young women EPZ factory workers who drowned in 1973 when the overcrowded ferry that took them to work each morning sank. On the other hand, Kaohsiung is the location for a 1978 production by the Central Motion Picture Corporation, celebrating their stamina and sacrifices in *The Story of a Female Worker*. The colorful, high-quality print book celebrating the forty-fifth anniversary of setting up an EPZ in Taiwan mentions only the official movie, although the other event also has nationwide renown, not least because of a famous ghost story that has one dead “maiden” taking a taxi from the tomb to the EPZ and back in search of a husband (Export Processing Zone Administration [MOEA] 2011; Lee and Tang 2010).

In sum, Puerto Rico, Shannon, and Kaohsiung have been central sites for the distribution of the EPZ model from the 1950s to the 1980s. Despite the variations mentioned above, this model has had a consistently negative impact on workers' health and safety and a consistently positive impact on capital's health and safety. It is now time to find out how this uneven concern for health and safety traveled along with the EPZ model.

In Puerto Rico, a well-networked group of individual EPZ experts emerged. They provided similar kinds of training for Shannon and Kaohsiung bureaucrats, and in the late 1960s all three groups of trained EPZ experts found their way into the United Nations Industrial Development Organization's (UNIDO) consultancy books. UNIDO played a crucial role in establishing what macro-sociologists, who counted seventy-nine operational EPZs in 1975 in more than twenty countries with 725,000 workers, called "The New International Division of Labour" (Fröbel et al. 1981). And, in that division, health and safety—unless they were for investors and their money—remained a minor concern for the next two decades. Based on a 1970 global survey of zones, UNIDO codified what in practice already was a global EPZ regime. A 1971 brochure on "Industrial Free Zones as Incentives to Promote Export-Oriented Industries" (UNIDO 1971) was soon followed by the first edition of a "Handbook on Export Free Zones," commissioned by UNIDO's Export Promotions Division (EPD) and written by a SFADCo employee (Kelleher 1976).

The handbook itself was based on the training workshops that UNIDO had organized in Shannon and elsewhere. Safety, to UNIDO, was foremost the safety of investors. As one Indian EPZ official, who contributed his experience from the establishment of Kandla Foreign Trade Zone (KFTZ) in Western India to UNIDO's pool, put it: "A free trade zone or an export processing zone must be visible to the world at large as being essentially one of government initiatives backed by the full force of government authority, with *assurances and guarantees regarding the safety of investment* against any moves of nationalization. The nature of government must be permanent, in the form of legislative enactment, ensuring a climate in which export industries can develop" (Singh 1974, 49 of PDF document, emphasis mine).

UNIDO's EPD operated in an international setting still largely defined by the Cold War in the 1970s, albeit shaped by the increasing decline of the non-aligned movement (NAM). Leading NAM nations had called for limiting the power of multinational corporations and for introducing better global labor standards. But many of the administrations involved in these calls had been hit by U.S.-backed coups, which brought right-wing parties, backed by religious movements, to power, for example in Indonesia in 1965 and in Chile in 1973. There, as elsewhere, setting up EPZs was the order of the day. Even in the lost case of Saigon the U.S.-backed South Vietnamese government sought UNIDO and other technical assistance for an EPZ as late as 1974 and 1975 (UNIDO 1975).

South Asia, which today is home to major EPZs with textile and garment production, showed a somewhat diverse trajectory, although its zones replicate the regime's global defining features. The decoupling of EPZs as a miraculous development policy on the one hand and the textile and garment industry as a problematic sector on the other hand is strikingly evident in the South Asian zones. India was officially the first Asian country to have an EPZ up and running. This was the Kandla Foreign Trade Zone (KFTZ), which opened in 1965 under an Indian government administration that was commonly regarded as socialist leaning. The KFTZ is yet another example showing that neoliberalism did not emerge from a radical rupture in the 1970s. Instead, EPZ regimes emerged much earlier from neoliberal states, which privatized public enterprises and acted as entrepreneurs to facilitate capital mobility and profit. In the Indian setting, this "untimely coincidence of neoliberalism with other capitalist modes of production" (Neveling 2014b, 24–25, 2014c) was fueled by U.S. expertise that informed the establishment of KFTZ and of Santacruz Electronics Export Processing Zone (SEEPZ) in Mumbai, while there was also a continuity of institutional arrangements from the colonial period (Maruschke 2015).

U.S. involvement and colonial continuities in the Indian zones also point to what I propose to call a "myth of independent invention" of EPZ regimes. This myth does excellent service to pre-scientific claims that inhumane health and safety were caused by weak regional or national structures of governance or by rogue individuals and corporations. It is for good reason that such a myth of independent invention is strikingly visible in writings on Bangladesh's EPZs. A story first published by a World Bank consultant has a Bangladeshi army general, Noorul Quader, as incidental hero and catalyst for the takeoff of the Bangladesh ready-made garment (RMG) industry in the 1970s. Daewoo, a South Korean *chaebol* founded in 1967, is Quader's business partner. The South Koreans want to do business in Bangladesh but obstacles only disappear after Quader somewhat randomly passed by at Daewoo's European headquarters in Paris in the mid-1970s, and the two sides agreed on the opening of the Desh Garment Company and the training of 130 Bangladeshi workers in Daewoo's plant in Pusan, South Korea (Rhee 1990, 335–40). Ever since, the rise of Quader to leading entrepreneur in Bangladesh has been explained by an ingenious Schumpeterian spirit. He and his daughter emerge as the human faces of self-made entrepreneurs keeping the Bangladeshi garment sector afloat (Bradsher 2004; Hossain 2013). Now, how is such a myth of independent invention relevant to the issue of health and safety in the global

garment industry? And in what ways can demystification inspire a “better” anthropology—openly and analytically at odds with the vicissitudes of EPZ capitalism?

First, demystification highlights the nexus between the trajectory of anthropological research on EPZs and the future-oriented policy prescriptions of international development organizations that I have outlined above. The attraction of journalists and development planners to such myths of independent invention as the Bangladeshi one reveals the analytical limits of a focus on individuals or on developments in single factories and zones. It is as if one would allow capital to decide on the roles, the plot, and the cast of actors in a play and then only analyze a single performance with a focus on nothing but the stage, while behind the scenes, it is the global EPZ regime that determines the dramatic structure and variations of the plot, as the Cold War setting changes, ends, and at the same time survives in its neoliberal drive to increase global inequality in favor of capital. Writings on Bangladesh “forget” that Quader served as an army general in a military dictatorship that emerged from mass killings and environmental disasters, which, in many ways, fertilized the ground for an EPZ infrastructure. Without this infrastructure and the provision of preferential export quotas under the MFA, no RMG sector could have risen to what it is in the present.

Importantly, an anthropology interested in demystifying independent invention is required to venture into the archives and into the published outputs of international organizations involved in setting up the EPZ in Bangladesh. For example, one former World Bank consultant detailed in a journal article that it was in fact Robert McNamara, acting World Bank president and former director of Ford Motor Company and U.S. Secretary of Defense, who recommended establishing an EPZ to the president of Bangladesh in 1976 (Dowla 1997, 562). Another obvious contradiction to the myth of independent invention comes to light from research in the archives of UNIDO. In 1980, Peter Ryan, head of EPD’s institutional successor, emphasized that UNIDO’s 1973 pre-feasibility study (jointly funded with the Irish government) and its funding for a study tour for Bangladeshi government officials to India, Ireland, the Republic of Korea, and the Philippines in March 1979 led the Bangladeshi government to build the Chittagong EPZ. Ultimately, this would become a UNIDO flagship project, with an Irish consultant sitting in the Dhaka Sheraton and typing reports on hotel paper sent by international carbon copy to Vienna (Ryan 1980). Given this central role of UNIDO in Bangladesh and most other EPZs planned and realized since the 1970s, it is

important to take a look at the organization's concerns for workplace health and safety.

As already mentioned, UNIDO was closely linked to the non-aligned movement initiative of the 1960s and, in fact, it needed several years of political pressure from those nations before the UN Council approved the establishment of the agency. When UNIDO was inaugurated at an international conference in Athens in 1967, the agency explicitly put workers' health and safety standards on the agenda (cf. UNIDO and ILO 1967). However, not all of its fourteen internal groups made this the mainstay of their activities. The EPD's handbook on EPZ establishment did not feature such concerns. Safety comes in the form of recommendations to bury power supply cables underground when cultivating industrial land, whereas health appears as a possible cause of extra production costs in zones with regional climatic conditions that could "influence worker productivity or incur additional costs on such things as special health care services, air conditioning and dust control" (Kelleher 1976, 26 and 36).

It is thus no wonder that for the 1970s, UNIDO's vast Industrial Development Abstracts database only shows a single EPZ-related document with "safety" as a keyword (and none with "health"). This is about workers' "Safety, Health and Welfare" in the Malaysian pioneer EPZ of Petaling Jaya, which was a redevelopment of an industrial estate adjacent to a 1950s British colonial rehousing program for Kuala Lumpur's squatters. The newly founded Petaling Jaya Development Corporation added EPZ features in the 1960s. By 1967, 264 factories employed 10,000 workers on the estate (Neilson 1976, 20). Despite the document title, the section on health and safety has only one page, which reprints government statistics and commends the Factories and Machinery Act of 1970 for regulating "Fencing of Machinery and Safety" and "Safety, Health and Welfare," "enforced by inspectorate with offices in most estates" (ibid., 31–32). What comes as "success statistics" is a reduction in the annual number of accidents per 1,000 workers from 19.5 in 1968 to 16.0 in 1972. Although no major accidents are listed, the absolute number of fatal accidents per annum is high. Their peaks in 1972 amounted to seventy-five dead workers. Still, the UNIDO consultant praised a number of achievements: "good guarding of moving parts," safety clothing provisions in large factories, widespread use of goggles, and those regulations prescribing medical facilities, such as first-aid cabinets with specified dressings in smaller establishments, a "clinic with a trained full-time attendant and visiting or resident doctor" serving the entire EPZ,

and additional clinics maintained by larger factories that are also open to workers' families (*ibid.*, 31).

UNIDO's 1970s and 1980s technical assistance projects in the EPZ realm (or in the garment sector) are too numerous to assess here. Even in the 1990s, after it had incurred significant financial losses from the United States, Canada, and other Western nations cancelling their non-mandatory membership in this specialized UN agency, UNIDO still played an important role in establishing EPZs in Eastern Europe and supporting China's booming industrial sectors. Since the late 1980s, workers' health and safety was central to UNIDO technical assistance, although working groups promoting EPZs picked this up a bit later (as happened with UNIDO's turn to "sustainability" and the Rio Agenda, see Luken 2009). A 1978 Handbook on Industrial Estates emphasized that they facilitated keeping factories in check (UNIDO 1978, 86), and a 1987 reprint recommended, "[w]ithout authorization no changes in the purpose of buildings, subletting or alterations may take place" (UNIDO 1987, 39).

In sum, then, an analysis of UNIDO consultancy papers, myths of independent invention, and the lack of attention to historical continuities reveals how national and international EPZ development policy guidelines offered little in regard to health and safety measures for workers up to the late 1980s. Although UNIDO and other organizations (the World Bank followed in the 1990s) took a more cautious approach to EPZ promotion from then on, it is striking that this was applied to new zones only. In fact, there was never any larger international initiative to refurbish and upgrade zones established in the 1960s and 1970s, many of which remain operational today.

Concluding Remarks: The Politics of Foxes Guarding Henhouses (with Codes)

The global spread of EPZs sketched above reveals a gradual shift, at best, from a sole concern with the health and safety of capital and capitalists to a consideration of the health and safety of workers. Recent efforts acknowledge the need for governments to properly monitor the operations of investors and enforce restrictions on their practices in EPZs—and here is the Catch 22 situation for any government operating an EPZ. Most investments in EPZs are not made because those moving money, machinery, production, and knowledge arrive to better the lives and times of workers. What they want

is to better their own lives, the lives of their shareholders, their leading personnel, and possibly the lives and times of their customers, who, for the most part of the history of the global EPZ regime, have been shoppers in Western advanced capitalist nations. So, if anyone involved in the operations of a given EPZ wanted to enforce the regulations for health and safety laid out in that UNIDO handbook, for example, they would have to do so within a global setting that offers investors thousands of competing EPZs for relocation. And relocations are encouraged because it is governments that put up fixed capital, not investors.

This particularity of capital mobility and the logic of industrial relocation in EPZs has, for many decades now, meant that any emphasis on health and safety concerns for workers in textile and garment factories does not incentivize relocation or subcontracting to a given EPZ, but instead would appear as a disincentive and thus reduce that very EPZ's competitiveness in a global market, pitting the zones against each other in bids for industrial relocations and subcontracting. These findings are vividly exemplified in one 1977 UNIDO report. In that report, the chairman administrator of the Export Processing Zones Authority (EPZA) of the Philippines describes in detail and frames as policy advice how his EPZA stripped the local municipality of all its rights to regulate the Bataan Export Processing Zone (BEPZ). This happened after the municipality had tried to enforce various regulations in the EPZ, among them health and safety measures. Once investors refused to comply, violent confrontations erupted between municipal police and zone police, acting on behalf of the investors (Pena 1977). EPZA then delegated rights for regulation back to individual zone authorities, not least the right for policing. The following example from the 1990s illustrates how, in the long run, this introduced highly abusive modes of rule by EPZ authorities in the Philippines: "The Subic Bay EPZ in the Philippines . . . was built on an abandoned U.S. Army airbase. Richard Gordon, who ran the zone, established a military style regime, forcing job seekers to work several months without wages in order to qualify for employment. Radio features of the German journalist Karl Roessel tell of a Subic Bay zone workforce that had to wear T-shirts praising Gordon, EPZ factory managers, and investors, as they were forced to participate in regular street parades" (Neveling 2014a).

Given what I have said in this chapter and given the range of actors that I discussed, many readers may be inclined to ask: "What about labor and resistance in the face of all these grave injustices?" That is a valid question, but the answers are not enchanting.

First, post–Second World War Puerto Rico was not just a testing ground for globalizing EPZ regimes. As many U.S. investors came with trade unions in tow that gave little support to workers, Puerto Rico was also the testing ground for what has been analyzed as a “Secret War against Developing Countries’ Workers” by the American Federation of Labor and the Congress of Industrial Organizations (AFL-CIO) (Scipes 2010). Collaboration with the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency during the Cold War meant that the AFL-CIO’s five big labor research centers for Asia, Africa, Latin America, Southern Europe, and the global solidarity campaigns largely operated to support anti-communist dictatorships in developing nations.

Second, the ILO could have campaigned against the emerging global EPZ regime from the 1960s onward. However, by then the ILO was no longer the sole auditor for social and welfare issues, which it had been under the League of Nations system. When the UN created more and more agencies from the 1950s, this weakened the ILO. UNIDO was set up in 1966 to better the global positioning of developing nations. It took over ILO’s policy fields and, in the long run, developed a neoliberal industrialization agenda with little regard for worker health or workplace safety. The ILO rather accidentally became aware of the EPZ regime in the early 1970s, when one Japanese freelance consultant pointed out that Japanese enterprises operated in South Korean and Taiwanese EPZs and were now relocating to Mexican *maquiladoras* to fetch better export quotas to the United States.² In the late 1970s, the ILO stepped up its research on EPZs in concert with the United Nations Centre on Transnational Corporations (UNCTC), only for the UNCTC to be scrapped after sustained attacks from U.S. neoliberal policy powerhouses (Bair 2009). This triggered a policy shift from the 1970s ambitions to oblige multinational corporations to honor certain production standards, to a 1990s “global compact” with a weak self-imposed and self-regulated corporate commitment.

Instead, in South Korea, Mauritius, and elsewhere, nationalist discourses of the 1970s portrayed EPZ labor as a necessary sacrifice in the development process. Often, workers in textile and garment factories in EPZs were subject to malevolent double-movements. Such movements became manifest as religious and right-wing factions in postcolonial societies sought to dislocate themselves from the impact that EPZ labor relations had on households and society more generally. Dislocation came by way of discriminating against female workers because they were women and therefore “deserved” lower wages than men and because they worked in the EPZ, which was regarded

as an arena of moral decline (Neveling 2015c; cf. Hewamanne this volume). Capital initiated its own double-movement. In EPZs, this extended beyond pressure groups in national economies. Instead, an ever-increasing number of multinational corporations produced myriad replica of Royal W. Little's relocation from New Hampshire to Puerto Rico and farther afield. Like Royal, even today, multinational corporations commonly move elsewhere once their ten-year "tax holidays" in a given EPZ come to an end (Neveling 2014c).

In the face of such powerful alliances, workers' resistance was confined to the factory or the region for many years. Global resistance emerged only in the 1970s and 1980s and from an international grassroots level as activists and scholars jointly analyzed and battled the new international division of labor (Chisolm et al. 1986; Fröbel 1981; War on Want 1985[1984]). A turning point came when in 1996 the International Conference of Free Trade Unions published a survey of global EPZ operations that described patterns of killing trade unionists, intimidations, and generally antisocial behavior patterns of EPZ corporations (ICFTU 1996). This, again only briefly, limited World Bank and UNIDO promotions of EPZs until the World Bank's public-private partnership wing, the IFC, embarked on a massive campaign to whitewash what were EPZs with the new label SEZ (Neveling 2015d).

Social anthropologists have only had a limited influence on anti-EPZ campaigns since the 1980s cultural turn subjected the discipline to a neoliberal, postmodernist backlash (Carrier 2012; Neveling 2016). Now, anthropologists again deconstruct high-flying and low-achieving notions such as "corporate social responsibility" (De Neve 2014), and the contributions of this volume will surely strengthen this focus. My contribution to this renewed alliance of anthropologists and labor activists reveals the particular relationship between capital, state, and labor established in EPZs that devalues labor outright, while capital is misrepresented as a benevolent donor. Under such circumstances, it has been and will be impossible to arrive at standards that are sufficient to guarantee the long-term health and safety of workers in the textile and garment industry. As the many recent nonfatal and fatal accidents in the textile and garment industry show, the introduction of self-imposed ethical codes for corporate capital can never be more than the fox guarding the henhouse.

For this relationship to change, there needs to be an end to the myths of independent invention, and to the legends of foreign exchange earnings and of the great leaps forward that the zones are said to enable. The social sciences

often sustain such legends by turning away from history and toward “newness,” the false coins of neoliberal dreams, which can only be desecrated when the focus is on the global praxis of neoliberal and other capitalist regimes (Baca 2005; for EPZs in particular Neveling 2006).

The global reality of EPZs is one historical example of neoliberal praxis. EPZs have created a race to the bottom in corporate taxation and in labor standards. This has been facilitated in part by the fact that the history of EPZs is constantly rewritten in a very particular way. The present generation of SEZs is promoted with reference to the People’s Republic of China’s establishment of such zones since the late 1970s and the promise that opening an SEZ will enable any nation to follow in the footsteps of its economic boom. What is not said is that the zones in the People’s Republic of China were built on an earlier model, that of the Irish zones first emerging in Shannon, and how these zones were built with the consultancy of Arthur D. Little based on the Puerto Rican experience. If the latter were emphasized, it would be a lot more evident that the sacrifices of export-oriented, EPZ-driven development are not in the interest of national development or for the betterment of the social and economic conditions of future generations. Instead, such sacrifices are called for by the false preachers and fake healers of global capitalism—those neoliberal development economists and capitalist corporations promoting the spread of EPZs. It is such corporations that in Puerto Rico in the 1970s and in Ireland in the 2010s moved on and left the local populations queuing for food stamps, while the legacies of bustling EPZs with poor health and safety conditions for workers evaporated and vanished.

Notes

1. I here use “export processing zone” as the umbrella term for special economic zones (SEZ), free trade zones (FTZ), foreign trade zones (FTZ), free enterprise zones (FEZ), bonded warehouses, and so forth. For several decades, EPZ was the common term among academics and practitioners (Boyenge 2007; Murayama and Yokota 2008). Recently, the International Finance Corporation (IFC), the public-private partnership arm of the World Bank, started promoting SEZ as the new label. I deal with this misguided, neoliberal usage in detail elsewhere (Neveling 2015d).

2. The history of ILO engagement with EPZs remains to be written (Neveling in preparation). Early engagement, which is largely driven by the Japanese consultant Susumu Watanabe, is documented in the following folder in the ILO Archives in

Geneva: ILO-BIT, Registry/150496, MULTI RCH 3–8, 1975–1982, “Multi Enterprises Programme—Research—Export processing zones.”

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