

CENTER FOR GLOBAL WORKERS' RIGHTS

FALL SEMESTER 2017

We are off to the start of another exciting academic year for the Center and the MPS program in Labor and Global Workers' Rights (LGWR). This year, we have launched the largest research project to date thanks to a generous grant from the Ford Foundation, which is about workers' rights in the Indian apparel export sector (p.3). This follows an exciting symposium on workers' health in global supply chains (p.2). The MPS program has entered its fourth year with a dynamic group of students (p.2) Professor Mary Bellman is participating in a Massive Open Online Course (MOOC) on fair wage strategies in a global economy, which is now accepting registrations (p.6). The Center has welcomed to the School visiting faculty Alexander Galas. Alex gave the Center's first talk of the year on his book, "The Thatcherite Offensive: A Neo-Poulantzasian Analysis" (p.3). The Center has also welcomed Postdoctoral Scholar Katherine Maich who teaches on comparative labor movements (p.5). Center faculty continue to publish on a range of topics related to workers rights. This includes the recent release of a report by the Center Director, Mark Anner, on Vietnam (p.2). In this issue, we offer our first 'alumni update.' Many of our MPS alumni are successfully organizing and researching post graduation (p.4).

Center Hosts Symposium on Worker Health in Global Supply Chains

From garment workers in Bangladesh to mobile phone workers in India and Brazil, stories of disease, deadly collapsed buildings, and factory closures have brought into sharp focus the working conditions in the global supply chains of big garment and electronics retailers. To dig deeper into these issues, the Center brought together more than twenty practitioners, university researchers, trade unionists and representatives of international organizations from different parts of the world to Penn State for its annual Spring Symposium, which was held on March 23 and 24, 2017. Participants discussed key labor issues within global supply chains—for example, poor working conditions, reproductive health issues of young women workers, home-based work, employment conditions, state responses to unionization, as well as national and international legislation and frameworks governing supply chains. The goal was to have frank discussions on what is working, what should be done differently, and how synergies amongst researchers and practitioners can be created to address the persistent problems. As part of the symposium, the Center also organized a public screening of the film "Death by Design, The Dirty Secret of our Digital Addiction." The movie highlighted the impacts of consumer electronics on the environment and workers' health. The screening was followed by a Q&A session with symposium panelists featured in the film. More than 150 students participated in the film screening.



Spring Symposium, March 23-24, 2017

MPS in Labor in Global Workers' Rights Program Enters Fourth Year

The Center for Global Workers' Rights started the fourth year of the MPS program in August. The main focus of the program is on globalization and workers' rights. This includes courses on labor standards, gender and race at work, strategic corporate research and campaigns, comparative employment relations with a strong focus on Latin America and China, and decent work in global supply chains. Students also do a summer internship with labor unions and advocacy groups. (If you have any ideas for internships, please let us know!)

Three cohorts of GLU students have now graduated through our program – all in all, 17 students. The majority are women (59 percent) and the majority have been from the global south (73 percent). Students in the 2017-2018 program represent diverse backgrounds; they are from Hong Kong, China, Liberia and the United States. Prior groups included students from Jamaica, Italy, China, Brazil, Indonesia, India, South Korea, Tanzania, and the United States.

The Penn State program is part of the Global Labour University (GLU) network that includes universities in Germany, South Africa, Brazil, and India. Our course on labor standards does sessions via teleconferencing with the GLU program in Brazil and our course on decent work in global supply chains has coordinated exchanges with the GLU program in South Africa. Penn State professors are also involved in teaching Massive Open Online Courses through the GLU. This includes the new course, "Fair Wage Strategies in a Global Economy" (p.8).

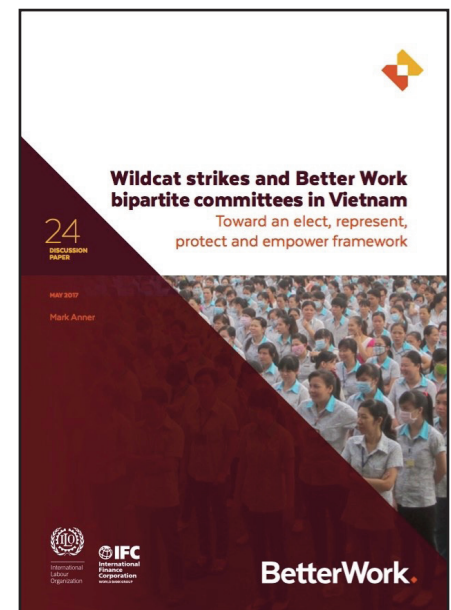


2017-2018 MPS Students and Faculty
Photo: Erin Hetzel, Graduate Program Staff Assistant

New Research Highlights Limits of CSR Worker Committees in Global Supply Chains

Despite well over two decades of activist campaigns, media exposés, and institutional pressure, corporate social responsibility (CSR) programs continue to display considerable deficiencies in their attempts to enforce freedom of association rights, particularly in low-cost manufacturing sectors in developing countries. To fill this gap, many CSR programs are requiring supplier factories to establish worker participation committees. The goal is to give workers voice in contexts where labor unions are weak. These committees are designed to ensure respect for internationally recognized labor standards, to empower workers, and to reduce labor unrest.

However, new research by Center Director, Mark Anner indicates that these committees are a weak form of worker voice and, in countries such as Vietnam, worker unrest remains common. In many cases observed by Dr. Anner, workers were afraid to even speak up at meetings, much less bargain for improvements. The report argues that this is because lead firms in these CSR programs are imposing a 'sourcing squeeze' on supplier factors by reducing the prices and production times they allot to their suppliers, which undermines efforts by committees to address cost-sensitive issues and overtime violations. At the same time, the sourcing squeeze increases strike leverage, providing workers with a much more effective source of worker voice.



To access the article, go to: <http://lser.la.psu.edu/gwr/documents/2017AnnerStrikesBetterWorkandPICCsVietnam.pdf>.

Center Launches New Project on Supply Chains and Workers' Rights in India

The Center has launched its largest research project to date thanks to a generous grant from the Ford Foundation. The project will explore the relationship between the purchasing practices of large apparel brands and workers' rights in the Indian apparel export sector. Center 2016-2017 postdoctoral scholar, Madhumita Dutta, and Center Director, Mark Anner, visited India in June 2017 to set up survey teams in Delhi and Bangalore. They also had the opportunity to visit several factories and talk to workers in their homes.



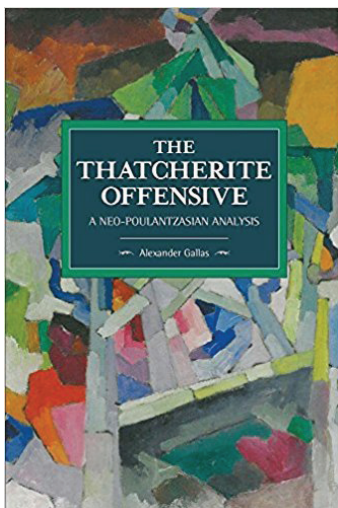
Mark Anner and Madhumita Dutta visited India in June 2017 for a new research project by CGWR.

The pattern that is emerging is one in which large U.S. and European buyers are imposing lower prices and shorter lead times on factory owners and factory owners, in turn, are keeping wages very low and demanding workers perform excessive and forced overtime hours. At times, overtime hours are paid at half the legally-mandated rate. Sometimes, if workers have missed a production target, they may be forced to work overtime hours without pay. During the field research, some workers indicated that they have been on six-month renewable contracts for the same firm for more than twenty years. As the cost of rent and children's schooling goes up, families often buy less nutritious food. Workers and their families often live in 100 square foot rooms and share one toilet with 12 other families.

The Center aims to complete the survey by early next year. Madhumita and Mark will then travel to India to share their findings at workshops in Delhi and Bangalore during the summer of 2018. Their goal is to start a meaningful discussion about more sustainable sourcing practices.

CGWR Book Event: Dr. Alexander Gallas on "The Thatcherite Offensive: A Neo-Poulantzian Analysis"

In September, Dr. Alexander Gallas, visiting CGWR faculty, academic writer, translator and occasional journalist, joined our Speaker Series for a talk on his new book, "The Thatcherite Offensive: A Neo-Poulantzian Analysis." The book provides a class-centered political analysis of Thatcherism. Gallas shows that Thatcherism's success and novelty, including its unity as a political project, lay in the fact that the Thatcher governments profoundly shifted class relations in Britain in favor of capital and restructured the institutions underpinning class domination. According to Gallas, it was an integral part of the Thatcherite project to directly intervene in labor relations and smash militant trade unionism.



Dr. Gallas based his book on his Ph.D. thesis. He became interested in the topic in the early 2000's after massive political shifts in Germany moved the country in the direction of neoliberalism. He wanted to explore how neoliberalism came about and decided to look at its historical roots. This led to his examination of the Thatcher government. Gallas recognized that he does not agree with one common view that globalization and neoliberalism are the result of step-by-step, incremental changes since the 1970's. Instead, he believes neoliberalization, to a certain degree, was premeditated and planned. In the case of Britain, he argues that it was part and parcel of the neoliberal project to undermine organized labor, which is visible, for example, in the handling of the 1984-5 miners' strike by the Thatcher government. His book documents how the Conservative Party in Britain started planning in the 1970s to sideline organized labor and how it moved forward with implementing its plan once it assumed power. Gallas used historical documents as a basis for his book, some of which had been classified in the Thatcher era.

Dr. Gallas has given several talks on the book in Britain and Germany and plans to continue to share his account of Thatcherism with new audiences in the future.

LGWR Alumni Spotlight

Michela Cirioni (LGWR 2014-2015): Michela works as a Research Analyst in the Department of Labor Issues and Collective Bargaining of the International Association of Fire Fighters (IAFF). The department provides labor relations assistance related to collective bargaining to IAFF locals across the USA and Canada. It supports affiliated locals with technical tools such as financial analysis, wage comparable and collective bargaining agreement analysis. It also offers technical assistance for negotiations and arbitration.

Shirley Price (LGWR 2014-2015): Shirley is the President of the Jamaica Household Workers' Union and a social worker at the National Housing Trust. She is the chairperson of the Caribbean Domestic Workers Network, an executive member of the International Domestic Workers Federation, founder of the Anti-Antigua Domestic Workers' Association, founder and president of the Caribbean Domestic Workers Network, board member of the Association of Women's Organization of Jamaica, and a member of the Caribbean Advocacy Group to the United Nations on Women and Gender Issues. She recently won the prestigious CARICOM 'Woman of the Year' award for her advocacy for equal rights and better pay for domestic workers as well as her outstanding contribution to trade unionism, women, and development in the Caribbean Community.



Zhihang Ruan (LGWR 2014-2015): Zhihang is a Ph.D. student in political science at Northwestern University. He has two research projects. One is about unions, strikes and collective bargaining in southern China and the other is about the reform of China's Hukou system and how migrant workers from rural China react to the reform.

Anjali Sinha (LGWR 2015-2016): Anjali is currently based in New York and is working on her book, "The Proletariat." The idea of this book is to cover people who are actively working in the labor movement from policy makers to authors, professors, and film-makers. To learn more about the book visit: www.theproletariatist.org.

Denny Monteneiro (LGWR 2015-2016): Denny is researching the working conditions of the mobile phone industry for the ILO with Dr. Anner. He will be collecting data in Brazil in the coming months.



Hyunsu Hwang (LGWR 2015-2016): Hyunsu is teaching 10th and 11th graders in a girls high school and also serves as the International Director of the Korean Teachers Education Workers Union (KTU). He will be attending the 8th Regional Conference of Education International Asia Pacific (EIAP) in Nepal in October and has started a labor study course at the Sungkonghoe University in Korea. He hopes to use the course to share what he learned at Penn State with Korean labor union activists.

Rairis Martins (LGWR 2016-2017): Rairis works at the SEIU Local 32 BJ in New York, organizing airport workers from companies subcontracted by airlines to perform customer service. The current goal of the campaign in New York and New Jersey is to secure a collective agreement for Primeflight workers at the JFK, Newark, and LaGuardia airports and to pass the Safe Transportation Jobs and Fair Employment Rules Act, which would guarantee a minimum wage of \$18 an hour and other benefits for all airport and transit workers.

Samwel Gilbert (LGWR 2016-2017): Samwel is finishing research for the Solidarity Center. He is exploring how trade unions in Africa can use the African Court on Human and Peoples' Rights and the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights to investigate violations of workers' rights (freedom of association, wage theft, etc.). The aim is to encourage trade unions to use these two forums to fight for workers rights when they cannot do so in their home countries.

Kristen Schumacher (LGWR 2016-2017): Kristen works as a Research Specialist at the International Federation of Professional & Technical Engineers (IFPTE) Local 21 in San Francisco, CA. She conducts financial and political research on how cities and counties organize their budgets, performs market wage studies to support pay increases for their members, and conducts research on the impact of labor policy on public sector workers' wages and benefits in California and in other states.



Spotlight Shines on Alexander Gallas, Visiting Faculty, Center for Global Workers' Rights

We are delighted to welcome Dr. Alexander Gallas to the CGWR team for the Fall 2017 semester. Dr. Gallas visits us from the University of Kassel, where he is an assistant professor at the Department of Politics. While at Penn State, he is teaching a course called “Academic Writing and Research Methods for Labor Practitioners.” Previously, Alex served as a lecturer at Berlin School of Economics and Law, Humboldt University of Berlin, Bremen University of Applied Sciences, and Liverpool John Moores University.

In 2015, he published “The Thatcherite Offensive: A Neo-Poulantzasian Analysis, which provides a class-centered political analysis of Thatcherism. His current research is focused on examining how strikes contribute to class formation. This research will be used for his second thesis (‘Habilitation’) and a second book.



Alexander Gallas

Dr. Gallas has been a long time activist involved in labor issues and academia. He first became involved with the Global Labour University (GLU) as a coordinator for a research project called “Combating Inequality” that was based in Berlin and then moved to University of Kassel to become an assistant professor, where he continues to work for the German GLU program. He currently serves on the editorial board of the Global Labor Journal, a publication that features in-depth scholarly analyses of labor movements and reports on current events around the world that are relevant for labor. He is also involved with a unionization effort at University of Kassel.

He joined the team at Penn State because he is interested in learning about other GLU programs and wants to contribute to fostering closer connections between the different GLU campuses. Other goals for the semester include getting a firsthand account of the U.S. labor movement and hearing more about the current political situation in the U.S. He looks forward to learning how universities operate in the U.S. and how Europe is viewed from the outside.

Spotlight Shines on Katherine Maich, Postdoctoral Scholar, Center for Global Workers' Rights

Dr. Katherine Maich’s interest in labor began during college, where she worked on campaigns with housekeepers, recycling plant workers, and migrant farm workers. While living in Camden, NJ, she saw firsthand the social consequences of job loss and then decided to join the Labor Center at UMass Amherst to study workers’ practices of everyday resistance. Her work has since continued to draw connections between gender, race, and inequality in the U.S. and Latin America and she collaborates with two global research networks for workers’ rights.



Katherine Maich

Kate comes to Penn State from the University of California, Berkeley, where her dissertation examined landmark labor protections for domestic workers—predominantly immigrant and indigenous women of color—in Lima, Peru and New York City. Drawing from 18 months of ethnographic fieldwork and 120 in-depth interviews, her study reveals how the industry’s historic roots in colonial and racialized relations shape its legal regulation and thus reproduce those inequalities in practice inside the home. She is currently in the process of turning her dissertation into a book.

Dr. Maich is a distinguished scholar and has been awarded a number of honors for her research and teaching, including the 2017 Cheryl Allyn Miller Award from Sociologists for Women in Society. Kate is excited to join the team at Penn State because the CGWR is doing grounded and innovative research on important directions in the labor movement. She is organizing a trip exploring informal work in NYC this fall and a symposium on precarious labor next spring.

GLU Launches Free MOOC on Fair Wage Strategies in a Global Economy

Starting on October 24, 2017, this eight week online course will discuss how income inequalities continue to increase in so many countries, the role collective bargaining and minimum wages can play in reducing social and economic inequalities, and what constitutes a fair wage. Based on a careful mix of video lectures, readings, online resources, and interviews with activists and labor scholars from around the world—including Penn State Professor Mary Bellman!—participants will be better prepared for research and negotiations for fair wages.



See: <https://glu.iversity.org/en/courses/fair-wage-strategies-in-a-global-economy>.

Recent Publications by Center Team Members

Anner, Mark. 2017. "Monitoring Workers' Rights: The Limits of Voluntary Social Compliance Initiatives in Labor Repressive Regimes." *Global Policy*, 8 (S3): 56-65.

Anner, Mark. 2017. "Wildcat Strikes and Better Work Bipartite Committees in Vietnam: Toward an Elect, Represent, Protect and Empower Framework." *Better Work Discussion Paper #24*. International Labour Office.

Gallas, Alexander. 2017. "The Thatcherite Offensive: A Neo-Poulantzian Analysis." Chicago: Haymarket.

Gallas, Alexander. 2017. "Revisiting Conjunctural Marxism: Althusser and Poulantzas on the State." *Rethinking Marxism*, 29: (2).

Maich, Katherine Eva. 2017. "Review of Household Workers Unite: The Untold Story of African American Women Who Built a Movement by Premilla Nadasen." Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 2016. *Labor Studies Journal*, online first publication.

Maich, Katherine Eva and Gowri Vijayakumar. Forthcoming, 2017. "Politicizing Gender: Feminist Movements." *The Social Life of Gender*, edited by Raka Ray, Jennifer Carlson and Abigail Andrews. London: Sage, in print.

Whitehead, Paul, Paul F. Clark, Lois S. Gray. (2017). "Adapting Union Administrative Practices to New Realities: Results of a Twenty-Year Longitudinal Study." *Advances in Labor and Industrial Relations*, 24, in print.

Center Post-doctoral and Visiting Scholar Positions

For more information, write the Center Director, Mark Anner, at msa10@psu.edu.

Global Labour Journal

The GLJ is an open access, online journal co-hosted by the CGWR. The September 2017 issue has just been published.

See: <https://escarpmentpress.org/globallabour>.

Center for Global Workers' Rights Office
501 G Keller, University Park, PA 16802

Phone: 814-865-0751 Fax: 814-867-4169

Email: cgwr@psu.edu

Website: <http://lser.la.psu.edu/gwr/>



This publication is available in alternative media on request. Penn State is an equal opportunity, affirmative action employer, and is committed to providing employment opportunities to all qualified applicants without regard to race, color, religion, age, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, national origin, disability or protected veteran status. U Ed. LBS 18-181.