Economic development, cargo handling methods and labour process change: The place of the Vietnamese dock worker in the 'global' history of dock work

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‘Economic development, cargo handling methods and labour process change: The place of the Vietnamese dock worker in the ‘global’ history of dock work’

Abstract

The advent of containerised cargo completely revolutionised shipping and world trade, also transforming the way that dock workers did their jobs. As a result, the docks are one of the most academically scrutinised industries. However, much of the research in this stream is limited to developed countries. Just as the economies of South East Asia are expanding rapidly and gaining increased attention, so more emphasis needs to be placed on the way economic growth and modernisation affect management, employment and administration of key industries in these countries. To these ends, this article will explore the modernisation of the Vietnamese dock industry and examine whether workers there have experienced similar challenges as their counterparts elsewhere, despite the country’s very different path and timing of economic development.

Keywords: Dock workers; ports; cargo handling; containerisation; Vietnam.

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Introduction

Historically, international trade has been reliant on moving goods and commodities via sea, while the relatively new innovation of mass transportation of container-borne cargo has contributed to the emergence of a global marketplace and the creeping dominance of multinational companies and global capital. It is no surprise then that the dock industry, as the nodal point where sea meets land and cargoes are forwarded to market, has been the subject of a varied and substantial body of academic research. Alongside practical studies relating to port performance, throughput and logistics, significant focus has been placed on management and employment at ports through historical and sociological examinations of workplace relationships in the context of the structural and technological progress of the shipping and dock industries.

One of the key concepts to emerge from this literature is that there are certain features of the dock industry that are universal, regardless of location. Precisely because of the uniformity of cargo handling, that is that the loading and unloading of a ship is strikingly similar in every country and region of the world, studies that consider employment in the dock industry usually cluster around several common themes. Fundamentally, until the container revolution, the process and methods of cargo handling had remained relatively unchanged for centuries. The complexities of handling break-bulk (non-containerised) cargo and the cyclical and market contingent nature of ship-borne trade traditionally lent themselves to temporary and casual engagement of a dock labour force (Turnbull & Sapsford, 1991; Phillips & Whiteside, 1985; Mangan, 1979). Reciprocally, this had an influence over hiring practices, payment systems and the way that work was organised and supervised (Davis, 2003; Green, 2000; Turnbull et al, 1992; Wilson, 1972; Jensen, 1964). It is argued that these structural characteristics of the shipping and dock industries, and their impact on the nature and location of dockland communities, had a major impact in shaping employment relationships, industrial relations and dock worker occupational culture (Panjwani, 2000; Turnbull, 1992a; Miller, 1969; Kerr & Siegel, 1964).

In the 1960s and 70s, advances in cargo handling technology revolutionised the shipping industry in developed economies, spurred on global trade and completely changed the way that dock workers did their jobs (Lindop, 1998; Herod, 1998; Turnbull & Wass, 1994; Phillips & Whiteside, 1985). Dock industries around the world had hitherto typically been labour intensive and often prone to industrial conflict (Mah, 2014; Davis 2003; McIlroy,

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1996; Sheridan 1994; Lindop, 1983). The transition to container-borne cargo demanded significant capital investment in machinery and equipment and therefore also forced rationalisation of the way that docks were regulated and administered. In Britain, for example, greater state intervention and regulation became a feature of the industry, at least in the initial and intermediate stages of modernisation, as the government sought to increase stability and improve industrial harmony (Joint Special Committee on the Ports Industry, 1972; Devlin 1965). Several other countries such as the US, the Netherlands and Australia had already moved to regulate employment in the industry to improve labour relations even prior to containerisation (Turnbull & Sapsford, 2001). Increasingly, more permanent engagement and enhanced terms and conditions for workers were traded-off against the prospect of workforce downsizing, the standardisation of work practices and the formalisation of the employment relationship to facilitate the introduction of container traffic to ports, although this was often an uneven and volatile process (Taylor, 2017; Green, 2000; Lindop 1998; Oram, 1970).

Many of the major ports in developed economies have been the subject of examination from some of these thematic points of departure. From London and New York (Davis, 2003; Lindop, 1983; Hill, 1976) to San Francisco and Hamburg (Cherny, 2000; Weinhauer, 1997) and Antwerp and Le Havre (Vanfraechem, 2002; Barzman, 2000) to Auckland and Montreal (Green, 2001; Bellamy-Foster, 1986), the nature of dock work and the changes and challenges those employed in it have faced have been examined within various national contexts. Several historically illustrious shipping hubs outside of the Western sphere such as Shanghai, Bombay, Lagos and Mombasa have also been the subject of analysis (Johnson, 2000; Panjwani, 2000; Cooper, 1987; Waterman, 1982). In turn, this has encouraged comparative studies of ports in different countries (see, for example: Davis, 2003; Turnbull & Sapsford, 2001; Saundry & Turnbull, 1999; Weinhauer, 1997; Knight & Liss, 1991; Jensen, 1964).

International comparative approaches serve to underline the commonalities of the dock industry that transcend national boundaries and highlight how these have manifested themselves in the history of work processes and employment relations. Usually, studies of this nature compare the system of employment in two different countries, or two particular ports, to draw conclusions on shared challenges for dock workers. However, Davies et al's (2000) two volume book *Dock Workers*, provided a fairly comprehensive attempt to draw together some of the global themes of dock work by combining individual port surveys with

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transnational thematic analyses of employment in dock industries. This collection of essays by historians and sociologists in the field covered twenty-two different ports from around the globe. It addressed many of the clustered themes outlined above and sought to identify some continuities and idiosyncrasies, in order to construct an international framework in which to conceptualise dock work, dock workers and the 'global' dock industry.

Despite the admirable scope and endeavour of the *Dock Workers* project, there were nevertheless a number of shortcomings. Firstly, the parameters of the study were limited to the years 1790 to 1970. Since containerisation was introduced on a wide scale to most developed economy ports in the late sixties and early seventies, the project was principally concerned with how employment in the industry developed in the break-bulk, general cargo era. The containerisation of cargo handling wrought radical and tumultuous changes to work processes, hiring practices, employment relations and manning levels. The result was a period of much instability as dock work was completely reconfigured. Although the project pointedly restricted its remit to the pre-container era, it arguably missed an opportunity to chart how containerisation affected dockers and dock work in countries around the world and the global industry more broadly.[1] Another (acknowledged) limitation of *Dock Workers* is that 'a more complete assessment of dock labour in its world historical context would benefit especially from fuller coverage of ports under communist regimes, ports in Latin America, and a wider sample of ports in Asia and Africa' (Cooper 2000: 523). With a few exceptions, the historiography more generally is also skewed towards ports in developed economies and therefore provides only a partial picture of the global features of dock work and the challenges faced by those employed in the industry (Davis, 2003; Barton & Turnbull, 2002; Turnbull & Sapsford, 2001).

The following analysis therefore attempts to address some of the limitations identified in the literature on the global dock industry. Little emphasis has been placed on the experience of dock workers in emerging economies.[2] There is doubtless value in charting whether the historic continuities found in many ports around the world extend into the dock industries of countries influenced by different historical, political, economic and cultural forces, or those that have had a belated or alternative path of economic development. There is also value in exploring the experience of the mechanisation and containerisation of cargo handling in such countries, particularly as this often occurred much later than in developed economies and in quite different political and economic climates, potentially resulting in divergent outcomes. To these ends, this study will seek to apply some of the common themes

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outlined to a previously undocumented dock industry to explore the concept of universality in dock worker experiences. Vietnam offers an exemplar in this respect. Although its political system is nominally communist/socialist, since the mid-1980s its government has embarked on a market liberalisation program that has gradually culminated in one of the fastest-growing GDPs per capita in the world (World Bank, 2016).[3] This was later accompanied by rapid modernisation and expansion of its ports and role in regional and world trade.

While modernisation of dock facilities in Vietnam has attracted academic attention related to the practical aspects of port administration, such as port capacity, efficiency, throughput, ship turnaround etc. (for example, see: Kutin, Nguyen & Vallee, 2017; Thai, Yeo & Park, 2016; Thai & Grewal, 2005), there has been no attempt to explore the development of the industry in relation to the dynamics of employment on the country's docks. In fact, the study of the sociology of work or labour history in all sectors of the Vietnamese economy is still very much in its infancy, with limited exceptions (Siu & Chan, 2015; Vo, 2009; Clarke, Lee & Do Quynh, 2007; Chan & Wang, 2004; Beresford & Nyland, 1998). A narrative approach, focusing on the development of the industry and the experiences of those engaged therein, will help to elucidate the challenges Vietnamese dock workers have faced in terms of regularity of work and earnings, job security and manning levels and how these have altered with technological advance and the 'commercialisation' of the global dock industry (Turnbull, 2012).

Vietnam has 49 seaports of various size. In terms of cargo handled, the largest in the south of the country is Ho Chi Minh City, while in the north is Hai Phong (Vietnam Ports Association, 2016). For the purposes of this study, Hai Phong will be the focus.[4] It has been the subject of considerable state and private investment in facilities and equipment, now handling 55 to 65% of all cargo throughput in the north of the country (Hai Phong Government Portal, 2016). Hai Phong Port consists of three main port areas subsumed under the authority of the joint stock company – Hoang Dieu Port (Main Port Area), Chua Ve Terminal and Tan Vu Terminal. A recent World Bank report (2016, p. 238) described Hai Phong as 'Hanoi's gateway to the world', while ongoing construction of the adjacent Lach Huyen deep-water container port promises to elevate its position to a key regional logistics hub.

The Port of Hai Phong dates back to 1874 and the city's economy has historically been largely port orientated. This is another primary reason for selecting it as the focus of

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this study. In this context, many of the inhabitants will have a family history relating to employment on the docks and workers at the port were more likely to identify with dock work as their permanent occupation. The belated modernisation of Vietnam's ports, and Hai Phong in particular, has meant that many workers still engaged in the industry have experienced the impact of technological change first-hand. They have witnessed a revolution in cargo handling techniques and major changes to the way the industry is administered and, as a result, are more likely to be able to reflect on changes to employment conditions, work groups, work tasks etc.

This study is principally concerned with the similarities and differences between the experiences of Vietnamese dock workers and their counterparts elsewhere in the pre- and post-containerisation eras, particularly what this articulates about the universality of employment in dock industries across the world. The existing literature emphasises the almost-uniformly negative effect of containerisation on workers' employment opportunities, labour process control, and long-term job security. However, dockers in Vietnam saw these revolutionary changes in a much more positive light because the introduction of container handling was gradual and not accompanied by wholesale rationalisation of the industry, as it had been elsewhere in the developed world. Also important was the development of the dock labour market in Western economies compared with Vietnam, particularly historical disparities in the way that workers were engaged by companies and the effect this had on how they identified with the industry, their colleagues and employers. The centralised nature of Vietnamese politics and aspects of its culture also influenced how workers were employed and how container work was administered once the technology was introduced widely to the country in the mid-2000s. The concluding section argues that the study is significant because, while acknowledging continuities in workers' experience of pre-container cargo handling regardless of time, place or prevailing economic model, it stresses that perceptions of containerisation outside of the Western sphere should be regarded as inherently contextual and contingent on local developmental and historical forces.

The paper will proceed as follows: 1) A more detailed exploration of the common perspectives and themes surrounding dock work and the impact of containerisation; 2) A narrative of Vietnamese dock workers' experiences of work and technological change, supported by interpretation of interview data, the analysis of official government statistics and other related resources;[5] 3) A comparison and assessment of where and how the

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experience of Vietnamese dock workers conforms to, or conflicts with, broader assumptions regarding the universality of elements of the global dock industry.

Work and employment in the pre-container era

As previously noted, the existing literature on dock work in the pre-container era identifies some common themes. Primarily, the nature of shipping and port transport activities made the dock industry unique in terms of the employment relationship and the manner in which workers were engaged. Prior to regulatory intervention in the second half of the twentieth century, many dockers across the world worked in an industry where casualism prevailed and employment opportunities were at best uneven. It was commonplace for workers to be recruited on a daily, or half-daily, basis or, in some extreme cases, even hourly. Traditionally, dockers gathered at their local docks or hiring hall for the 'call' where any number of shipping, stevedore and dock companies would occupy a stand or 'pen'. Most dockers assembled in their chosen 'gangs', which would then be selected by company foremen to work in the loading or unloading of ships. This process was obviously open to subjectivity and bias through favouritism, bribery, ethnicity and religious allegiance (Towers, 2011; Nelson, 2000; Panjwani 2000; Phillips & Whiteside, 1985; Jensen, 1964). Those who were not selected for employment went without a wage for that particular day and, dependent on port traffic, might struggle to earn for considerably longer. Dockers often did not work for the shipping lines directly and were instead usually employed by a plethora of small stevedoring contractors, exacerbating the temporaneous nature of engagement in the industry (Taylor, 2017; Davies, 2000). These were inherent traits of the industry and generations of dockers across the world faced the same relentless challenges 'most notably poverty, unemployment, underemployment, unequal job opportunities, low average earnings, favouritism… and demoralisation' (Turnbull et al, 1992: 7).

Another common feature of pre-container dock industries was the composition of work groups. Dockers' gangs normally comprised family members and/or close friends and work colleagues. Manning for gangs typically numbered in the mid-teens, although this varied slightly dependent on the type of ship, cargo or location. There were skill and experience divisions within each gang, between competing gangs and between the various dock grades such as stevedores, dockers, porters etc.[6] Stowing and handling of break-bulk cargoes, essentially loose or boxed/sacked goods painstakingly hand-loaded into a sling and

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winched into the ship's hold, required considerable skill to execute proficiently and maximise available space. Since ship turnaround time was paramount, the more experienced or skilled gangs often enjoyed prevalence at the call.

The gang format, and the dockland communities built around ports, bestowed a strong sense of occupational identity on dock workers and inversely this was emboldened further by the casual nature of the industry (Turnbull, 1992a; Miller, 1969). Casualism did not just affect the format of employment and engagement, but also the labour process and the way that work was planned and executed. It encouraged a *laissez-faire* approach from employers, insofar as responsibility for the organisation and management of specific tasks was largely placed in the hands of stevedores and dockers. This direct or hands-on control of the labour process reinforced dock worker identity and culture. Whereas scientific management and the division of labour had progressively de-skilled and divested workers of control in other industries, the unique format of dock work did not lend itself to these innovations (Green, 2000; Davies 2000).

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The structure of work groups undoubtedly cultivated a sense of camaraderie, accentuated by the hazardous nature of dock work itself and hence an 'emotional involvement' with work tasks and colleagues (Turnbull, 1992a; Magden, 1991). The industry was entirely male-dominated and the physically demanding nature of work encouraged an element of machismo in dock workers' self-image (Dubbeld, 2003; De Vries, 2000). Working conditions were often medieval prior to regulation, and even thereafter. The decentralised system of employment bred a lack of managerial responsibility, hence affording little provision for health and safety or welfare facilities. As a result of the tight-knit community, nepotistic work groups, peculiar extent of control over the labour process and hazardous nature of tasks, dock work was perceived from within 'like it wasn't a job to us, basically it was a way of life' (Author's interview, 2009; see also, Turnbull, 1992a; Miller, 1969).

Wages and payment systems were also affected by casualism and the short-termism it engendered. The piecework system of payment, essentially a 'by the job' or tonnage rate plus bonuses and allowances (for unexpected stoppages, quick turnaround, high value commodities etc.), was often preferred by employers (and also some dockers) as, in principle, it encouraged productivity and satisfied the desire to turn ships around as quickly as possible (Green, 2000; Wilson, 1972). However, workers used their unusual degree of control over

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the labour process to manipulate piecework to their own ends. Since the execution of work tasks were largely left in their hands, workers participated in the 'welt' (elsewhere called 'spelling'), which involved one or more of the gang taking a break whilst the rest cover for him/them. Similarly, if there was anything abnormal about a particular load or hatch to be worked, manning requirements and piece rates would often be exaggerated. The 'welt', playing the piecework game and occasional selective pilferage were seen by dockers as a means to improve their lot, demonstrate independence in the workplace and exercise control over their portion of the labour process (Johnson 2000; Turnbull, 1992a).

So, there were structural pressures on the dock industry that were common across borders. These created similar conditions and challenges for dock workers in different countries. Casual work and underemployment, indirect and subjective employment and recruitment practices, the gang work group format, hazardous conditions, a strong occupational culture and an unusual degree of control over the labour process all feature, albeit to different degrees, in the history of dock labour around the world. One of the aims of this study is to examine whether Vietnam's dock workers faced similar issues or whether the belated expansion of the industry there, the alternative path of national economic/political development, and different stage of global capitalism in which these occurred, led to divergent experiences where and when break-bulk cargoes were prevalent.

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Containerisation and dock work

The introduction of 'the box that changed the world' (Donovan & Bonney, 2006) required extensive port renovations and huge investment in equipment, encouraging shipping lines, port employers/authorities and governments to seek to overhaul the way that ports were organised and administered.[7] Primarily, the labour process, work tasks and centuries of custom and practice would need to be phased out and replaced with a much more formalised approach. However, while in principle containerisation and modernisation appeared poised to redress some of the traditionally more pernicious aspects of employment in the industry, namely the prevalence of casualism or semi-casualism, it also implied even more daunting alternatives.

Firstly, and most obviously, comprehensive mechanisation of cargo handling suggested a significantly reduced workforce. Whereas loading or unloading one break-bulk cargo ship was relatively labour intensive, the number of workers required is dramatically

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reduced for containers, replacing the perennial threat of casual underemployment with that of permanent unemployment (Turnbull & Sapsford, 2001). Secondly, dock worker occupational culture and 'way of life' would be upended by containerisation through the sweeping away of old skills and dilution of control over the labour process, articulating a juxtaposition to the flexible elements of the casual system that dockers valued. Finally, the hereditary traditions of dock work, maintained by nepotistic recruitment norms (i.e. that sons often followed their fathers onto the docks), were also threatened as a result of reduced manning requirements.

Governments and employers at many European and North American ports had already made efforts to at least partially eliminate casualism prior to the advent of containers, as the unusual employment relationship on the docks was frequently blamed for inefficiency and industrial unrest.[8] In order to address the emerging concerns of dock workers and their unions, and to formalise manning arrangements to allow for wholesale changes in cargo handling techniques, the state and/or port authorities typically moved to regulate employment through one or more of these means: the introduction of a dock labour register to which all employees must be signed up in order to be considered for work; permanent employment with a single port employer (or, failing this, centralisation of hiring procedures); the rationalisation of employers to create larger companies able to provide a stable flow of work for men. In Britain, the Devlin reforms, which took place between 1967 and 1972, built on the National Dock Labour Scheme (1947) to implement all of these mechanisms to regulate employment. Other European countries such as the Netherlands, France, Italy and Spain maintained a register of dock workers, while in the US, Belgium and Australasia there was either a closed shop or joint union-employer control of employment and manning negotiated in order to prepare the path for containerisation (Turnbull, 2012).

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As a result of these developments, dockers across the developed world generally enjoyed an increase in wages and greater permanency of employment, at least in the medium term. Despite being described as 'the biggest bribe ever made to labour' (Oram, 1965: 52) and 'the most unusual and most controversial labor arrangements in the history of American business' (Levinson, 2006: 124), formalisation could be regarded as a trade-off in the context of the advance of containerisation, as the need to reduce the size of the dock labour force was inexorable (Davies, 2000). This was achieved as far as possible through natural wastage, no new recruitment and either the reduction of retirement age or the provision of state-sponsored voluntary lump sum severance schemes (International Labour Organisation, 1973).

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So, from the workers' perspective, the perceived threat from containerisation was partially addressed by the introduction or strengthening of employment regulation, a higher degree of permanency and/or more favourable terms and conditions. Nevertheless, it was a far from smooth process with many incidents of industrial unrest relating to the wholesale adjustment of the industry, often surrounding jurisdiction over container 'stuffing and stripping' (filling/emptying), worker discontent with labour schemes or administering boards, interpretation of the rulebook etc.[9] Some European ports such as Antwerp and Rotterdam witnessed major disputes in the aftermath of the introduction of containers (Weber, 2013; Vanfraechem, 2002; Kagen, 1990). More persistently, both the British and Antipodean dock industries endured sustained industrial action in the early seventies, while New York suffered the most tumultuous period of labour unrest in its history (Taylor, 2017; Turnbull, 2012; Lindop 1998; Turnbull, 1992b; Jensen, 1974). However, the introduction of containerisation did not always necessarily result in industrial strife. The extent to which this was the case depended largely on how successful individual ports were in introducing measures and grievance procedures that both reassured dockers *and* satisfied employers that the necessary gains in efficiency and productivity would be realised (Turnbull, 2012; Turnbull & Sapsford, 2001).

In those major ports where industrial peace proved elusive in the containerised era, clamour for change amongst global shipping lines and port employers was reaching fever pitch and coincided with the neoliberal turn of the 1980s. Reorientation of Western political economy towards market supremacy resulted in escalating privatisation of ports. As well as a commitment to monetarist economics, this paradigmatic shift also sought to remove barriers to the free market. Two such perceived anachronisms were government intervention and the influence of organised labour. Whereas the status quo had previously been that the state had a role in either administering employment regulation schemes or ports themselves, the new orthodoxy in some Western economies was for governments to turn over responsibility to the private sector (Thomas, 1994). In 1989, the schemes regulating employment in New Zealand and Britain were abolished, followed by those in France and Australia in 1992 (Tull & Reveley, 2008). Ports in other countries, such as the US, where employment was jointly managed by unions and employers, faced similar challenges relating to the primacy of market forces and greater global competition. Dock workers in many developed economies, now shorn of the protection of government-administered schemes or ports, faced escalating redundancies, an employer offensive on terms and conditions and, in the case of those ports

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where workers had a reputation for industrial militancy, an assault on trade union organisation (Taylor, 2018; Weber 2013; Turnbull & Wass, 2007; Reveley, 1999).

Britain proved a particularly extreme example of the commercialisation model, where ports were transferred entirely into private hands. Elsewhere, concerns surrounding monopolisation, foreign ownership and national security often encouraged a hybrid approach, where the state remained the port landowner but port operations are privatised, allowing for private investment in facilities and equipment (Tull & Reveley, 2008; Song, 2008; Baird, 2000). Nevertheless, dockers now joined workers in other sectors as being subject to market forces and the standard employment relationship. The control over portions of the labour process that dock workers enjoyed in the casualised era, and the influence they managed to maintain through joint consultative or administrative mechanisms even after containerisation, were significantly eroded by privatisation and the undermining of organised labour. Their once privileged position had evaporated and by the 1990s dock work was 'the greatest game no more' (Turnbull & Wass, 1994).

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The Vietnamese docker and dock work under general cargo

Although the provenance of maritime trade in Vietnam can be traced back to the 1st century BC, in the contemporary era port facilities and investment remained distinctly rudimentary until the United States introduced container-handling equipment to the country as part of its war effort in the 1960s and 70s. Since the government-led transformation of the Vietnamese economy in the mid-1980s, the country has enjoyed impressive growth and trade with other nations, particularly exportation of raw commodities such as coffee and rice, and manufacturing activities at the low end of the global value chain, such as apparel. Nevertheless, by the mid-1990s, Vietnam's ports only handled around 500,000 Twenty Foot Equivalent Units (TEUs) of container traffic per year (Vietnam Ports Association, 2016). Compare this, say, to the Port of Hamburg (Germany) which handled approximately 2.7 million TEUs in 1995, some five times more than all Vietnamese ports combined (Port of Hamburg, 2017). In acknowledgement of the vital role that Vietnam's ports will play in future economic prosperity, the government introduced two long-term 'Master Plans' in 1999 and 2009, the latter adjusted in 2014, to develop the ocean shipping and dock industries (*Decision No.202/1999/QĐ-TTg, 1999*; *Decision No.2190/QĐ-TTg*, 2009). These initiatives

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placed an emphasis on building new deep-water ports to receive large container ships, improving existing dock systems and upgrading obsolete equipment and infrastructure.

As Turnbull (2012) notes, dock workers in the Western world encountered three distinct stages of cargo handling/port administration – the break-bulk casual era, the introduction of containers accompanied by decasualisation and/or regulation, and finally the encroachment of private capital, free market economics and global competition, or the 'commercialised' era. However, in many rapidly developing economies that have come to the fore since the turn of the century, the process of commercialisation and containerisation often occurred in parallel (Turnbull, 2012; Tull & Reveley, 2008). In fact, the break-bulk cargo era persisted to such an extent in Vietnam that partial commercialisation of its ports under the government-sponsored Master Plans of 1999 and 2009 actually took place *prior* to extensive containerisation. Break-bulk cargo remained dominant in Vietnamese ports well into the twenty-first century, meaning dock workers did not face the onset of containerisation until much later than their peers in other countries. This is an important temporal difference when compared with the chronology of the Western-centric history of dock work.

Vietnamese dock workers faced some of the same challenges as their counterparts elsewhere when handling break-bulk cargo. The nature of ship-borne trade, at the mercy of weather and economic pressures, meant that the issue of under-engagement and inconsistent earnings featured as strongly in the experiences of workers at the Port of Hai Phong and others in Vietnam as it did in the 'global' history of dock work. Similar to general cargo handling at ports across the world, workers were paid using a piecework system that compounded irregularity of income and resulted in high intensity bouts of labour, offset by extended periods of idleness when port traffic was slack (Author's interviews, 2017). However, whereas dockers in developed economies were often subject to the 'turn', 'call' and casualism until the post-war era, their counterparts in Vietnam have always been directly employed by the port, enjoying a degree of permanency. They were paid a basic, albeit paltry, day wage which was bolstered by piecework rates when a ship was worked (Author's interviews, 2017). So, although dockers in Vietnam did not face the inhumanity and uncertainty of the 'pen' every day, they still endured challenges relating to inconsistent engagement and income, in effect many of the trappings of casualism despite being permanently employed.

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The structure of work groups appears as another universal element of dock work. Efficient loading and unloading of cargo demands that workers are arranged in a team format, regardless of location. In the casualised era of *laissez-faire* management, dockers often chose who they worked with by arranging themselves in their own 'gangs', usually comprised of friends and family, encouraging identification with, and loyalty towards, the work group. However, in Vietnam, this arrangement did not exist. Historically, because Vietnamese dock workers were direct, permanent employees of state-owned port companies, employers controlled how work gangs were organised. This is not to say that there was no tradition of hereditary recruitment at Vietnam's ports, particularly in a port city like Hai Phong, rather that family members did not usually work together in the same gangs (Author's interviews, 2017). Vietnamese dockers were subject to a much more standard and formalised employment relationship when handling break-bulk cargoes than their casualised counterparts in the Western sphere and this is indicative of Vietnam's history as a centrally controlled socialist economy, where major industries are typically state controlled and the government is responsible for providing permanent jobs for its citizens.

Another area of shared experience relates to the hazards of handling non-containerised cargoes. Dockers in Vietnam were subject to dangerous conditions working on general cargo ships, often forced to handle 'toxic' cargoes with little room for recourse with management (Author's interview, 2017; *Tuoi Tre News*, 2015; *Bao Binh Dinh News*, 2014). As was the case elsewhere, experience and physical strength were important attributes required for dock work. From the employers' perspective, this ensured expedient turnaround times, for the worker it translates into maximisation of earnings in the piecework context. At the Port of Hai Phong, 'workers who lacked adequate skills to do the job or have limit in their physical strength' were moved to 'back operations', that is less time-pressurised but also lower-earning potential warehousing duties within the dock estate (Author's interviews, 2017). So, unsurprisingly, pre-containerised cargo handling tended to be a dirty, inconsistent and physically demanding job. However, whereas dockers in the developed world used industrial activism or their influence over the labour process to ameliorate some of the more challenging aspects of working general cargo, these mechanisms were not usually available to workers in Vietnam.[10]

During interviews, dock workers at the Port of Hai Phong recounted in depth how jobs were allocated and the typical work process of loading and unloading both general and containerised cargoes. Just as recruitment and the composition of work gangs was controlled

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by port employers, so scope for autonomy in the execution of tasks was severely limited. Micromanagement of employees' work is commonplace in Confucian cultures, resulting in 'group leaders' closely monitoring and directing tasks and the work process more broadly (see, for example: Hofstede, 2010; House et al, 2004). The group leader is essentially a company foreman in charge of a team of workers from that particular shift, a stark contrast to the role and provenance of the gang leader during the era of pre-containerised dock work at many ports in the developed world.[11] This meant that Vietnamese dock workers had far less freedom over how they did their jobs and little scope to control the pace and timing of their work. The team members change on a shift to shift and ship to ship basis, breeding less familiarity and social identity between workers. In this context, and in contrast to their casualised counterparts elsewhere during the general cargo era, Vietnamese dockers' affinity is to their employer, rather than the gang. Several workers expressed their 'pride' at working for Hai Phong port (Author's interviews, 2017), demonstrating that the camaraderie surrounding the gang was much less tangible for Vietnamese dockers, although some of the occupational machismo encouraged by the hazardous and physical nature of the job remained.

Societies influenced by Confucian traditions also emphasise the importance of hierarchy, respecting authority and loyalty to the boss, stressing the importance of 'face saving' and the avoidance of conflict. These ideals mean that workplace relationships in some Eastern cultures are far removed from those elsewhere, particularly in relation to the dock industries of developed economies where worker-employer bonds were casualised and adversarial industrial relations were often in the ascendancy (Laulusa, 2008; de Silva, 1998). In terms of occupational identity, these cultural influences and the centralised nature of the dock industry's labour market in Vietnam have a deleterious effect, as social kinship develops from a clear perception of belonging to a group/team over a period of time. The transient composition of the gang, respect for hierarchy, and the limitations placed on workplace autonomy indicate a less defined and widely shared occupational culture on the docks in Vietnam, where loyalty to the firm is much more prevalent.

The Vietnamese docker and dock work in the containerised era

Despite efforts to liberalise the economy, Vietnam remains a heavily bureaucratic country with strong centralised control over economic restructuring. The dock industry in particular

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was slow to encourage private investment and went through several protracted phases of evolution.[12] This held back meaningful containerisation of Vietnam's ports and its integration into the global supply chain. The 1999 state-steered Master Plan included the ambitious goal of transforming Vietnam into a global hub for shipping. To these ends, from 2000 onwards, foreign companies were allowed to invest in equipment and facilities and administer operations at new joint investment ports, however berths and quays were still built and owned by the government, while the land also remained state property. These highly conditional terms and onerous bureaucracy inspired only cautious initial investment, illustrated by the relatively gradual increase in throughput in the immediate proceeding years, rising from approximately 1 million to 1.5 million TEUs from 2000 to 2003.[13]

It was not until the late-2000s that modernisation began to increase momentum, with accompanying gains in container traffic. One of the primary drivers for this was the new 2009 Ports Master Plan introduced by the government. Under the 2009 plan, wholly foreign owned, constructed and administered terminals were now permitted on land rented from the state adjacent to existing port facilities, subject to licensing by regional government. This encouraged major port operators such as Hutchison Port Holdings and DP World, to build terminals and over the next five years container volume passing through Vietnamese ports doubled from approximately five to ten million TEUs.[14] Despite 2009 heralding the true liberalisation of the industry and marked gains in container traffic, problems persisted. Hai Phong's falling share of container traffic (see Appendix 1) is symptomatic of some of the structural issues the ports system, and country more broadly, is facing. Although the Master Plans imply a centralised strategy, development of new facilities has been a relatively haphazard and ad hoc process. Regional government has a large degree of autonomy in terms of granting licences for new terminals and this has created 'the most fragmented container terminal market in the world… the only market where each of the top four global port operators – PSA, Hutchison Port Holdings, DP World, and APM Terminals – are engaged in direct competition' (Blancas et al. 2014, p. 42). This rivalry has led to overcapacity in some parts of the country, forcing down prices and increasing inter-port competition, with historic major ports most acutely affected.

Just as containerisation took a very different path of timing and development in Vietnam, predictably workers' experiences of changing cargo handling methods have also diverged significantly from those of their Western counterparts. Fundamentally, Vietnamese dock workers did not face the looming threat of unemployment because of the growth of

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containerised cargo. The expansionist strategy engendered in the Master Plans ensured that port size and capacity has grown alongside the transition to containerised cargo. Even more importantly, container groupage work, that is 'stuffing and stripping' of containers, is still mainly carried out on port complexes using dock workers in Vietnam. This was a principal, but largely unrealised, demand of many groups of dockers around the world during the proliferation period of containerisation, conceived with the intention of safeguarding jobs in the face of workforce rationalisation (Taylor 2017; Turnbull & Sapsford, 2001; Lindop 1998; Kagen, 1990). These two factors – the expansion strategy for Vietnamese ports and the preservation of 'stuffing and stripping' duties for dock workers inside the dock estate – meant that employment levels in Hai Phong and other large ports in Vietnam remained consistent, even after containerised cargo became dominant. For example, between 1995 and 2016, container throughput in Vietnamese ports increased from 500,000 to approximately 14 million TEUs. Over the same period, the total national workforce plateaued with only very minor fluctuations at around 18,200 workers.[15] A similar trend is apparent at Hai Phong also.[16] This is a key distinguishing feature of the introduction of container traffic to ports in Vietnam compared with Europe, North America and Australasia, contributing to divergent experiences and perceptions of containerisation amongst Vietnamese dockers compared with their counterparts elsewhere.

There were other factors that led to a more positive reception of containerisation from the Vietnamese workers' perspective. When questioned about the differences between handling break-bulk cargo and containers, those interviewed emphasised stability of work and wages when working containerised cargoes (Author's interviews, 2017). Although nominally permanently engaged, Vietnamese dock workers faced some of the vagaries associated with casualism when handling break-bulk cargoes, particularly irregular engagement and income. While still paid via a similar basic rate plus tonnage system under containers as they were under break-bulk, the country's integration into the global economy and the more predictable flow of work that characterises containerised cargoes meant that workers enjoyed more reliable engagement. This resulted in more consistency in their wage packets, although not necessarily higher wage rates as increased competition for traffic forced down profit margins for terminal operators. Crucially also, the work they performed was far less physically demanding than before, giving the impression of less work for more consistent salary, in better conditions.

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Containerisation brought formalisation of work practices to the docks. However, where this was viewed with suspicion and animosity by dock workers in developed economies, it was in fact welcomed by their counterparts in Vietnam. Part of the remit of the second state-sponsored Master Plan was to encourage greater private sector involvement in the industry in order to provide investment for modernisation. As previously noted, private entities, particularly global terminal operators, were eventually invited to invest in the operational side by providing equipment on leased quays, purchasing shares in joint stock companies, and later building and operating their own terminals. This has led to an increasingly professional operational approach at Vietnamese ports, in which handling and safety procedures have been standardised through the use of global industry benchmarks. Dock workers are provided with approximately five months training on operations and health and safety procedures before they are permitted to work on the quayside handling containers, as well as annual refresher courses. As a result, workers feel like containerisation has upskilled and professionalised their occupation (Author's interviews, 2017).

Wholesale changes to methods of cargo handling was the cause of significant industrial conflict when containerisation was introduced to the ports of developed economies in the 1960s and 70s. Centuries of tradition, skill specialism, flexibility and custom were challenged by increasingly formalised work practices which threatened to divest dock workers of the degree of control they held over the labour process. It was as much these intangible menaces as the threat of redundancy that provoked resistance amongst those dockers affected. In its entirety, containerisation was an existential threat to the historic practice of dock work, dock worker occupational identity *and* employment in the industry. However, as noted earlier, occupational culture was not as conspicuous amongst Vietnamese dock workers. This was because workers in the industry had no experience of a casual system and were employed under a much more typical and formalised employment relationship. A cultural predisposition towards hierarchy and authority also mitigated against orientation towards the 'gang'. As a result, the historic hands-off managerial approach that casualism encouraged and the effect this had on gang-level identification and worker control over the labour process never materialised. Of course, the machismo attached to the physicality of break-bulk cargo handling remained, but the sense of ownership of the industry and the perception of dock work as a birth right did not form part of their outlook. As far as Vietnamese dockers were concerned, containerisation did not articulate a threat to skill distinctions, jobs, or way of life and this is a key difference between these workers and their

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peers in other parts of the world. Instead, containerisation was broadly viewed by workers as a positive development for both their occupation and the dock industry in Vietnam.

Conclusions: The Vietnamese docker and the 'global' history of dock work

The last fifty years have witnessed a revolution in cargo handling in the dock industry, which has played a major role in the progress of world trade and the inexorable trend towards globalisation. There is a considerable body of literature that focuses on labour process, work culture and the employment relationship in the industry, particularly in relation to the long history of pre-container cargo handling. This is accompanied by cross-disciplinary analyses of how the introduction of containerisation transformed every aspect of port transport. While ports in the developing world, such as Vietnam, have received some attention relating to port performance, logistics etc., the bulk of academic endeavour relating to employment relations, port administration and workforce management in the industry has been focused on those in the Western sphere.

The transnational turn in the study of labour in the dock industry has led to an emphasis on shared challenges that arise from the structural features of ship-borne trade and the issues faced as a result of the containerised revolution of handling methods. Analyses of ports in developed economies have highlighted universal features of the break-bulk era such as underemployment and short-term and irregular engagement, that in turn led to certain attitudes, behaviours and social identities to develop amongst dock workers. Similarly, the ways in which the industry has changed since the introduction of containers has also encouraged the identification of some common themes. Firstly, during the initial stage of containerisation, worker anxieties surrounding reduced manpower requirements were addressed by regulating employment and improving terms and conditions. Later, the commercialisation of ports and the rise of the 'free' market in the 1980s witnessed the rationalisation of workforces that was initially feared, accompanied by an employer re-offensive and the retrenchment of dock labour schemes.

The aim of this study has been to examine some existing assumptions about the shared experiences of dock workers in the break-bulk and containerised handling eras, specifically whether these are common across the global industry and can be attributed to the way that it is organised. Clearly, in the case of Vietnam, with its alternative political system and belated economic development, it would be expected that there is a degree of variance

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between the evolution of ports there when compared to those elsewhere and, as a result, divergence in experiences of dock workers. Nevertheless, if some similarities and continuities could be discerned in the somewhat atypical case of the Vietnamese dock industry, then this would support the idea that universal structural features present similar conditions and challenges for dock workers, regardless of location.

To summarise then, where and when break-bulk cargo was prevalent there were indeed certain structural features of the shipping and dock industries that resulted in shared challenges and experiences for dock workers, even allowing for significant temporal and developmental differences. Underemployment and irregular income, sometimes dangerous, sometimes unhealthy work, and team-based cargo handling appear as universals in the global history of pre-container dock work and were also identified in Vietnam. However, because of the centrally-managed nature of the Vietnamese economy prior to, and even after, liberalisation, there was also a number of divergent features surrounding the dock labour market and the manner in which workers were engaged by port employers and, hence, the way that work groups and dock work were organised and supervised. The very different path of political and economic development that Vietnam took and the orientation towards authority and hierarchy in Confucian cultures also meant that union organisation and activism did not play a distinctive part in the history of dock work there, as it did in many Western countries.

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While dockers in Vietnam faced some similar challenges to their counterparts in developed economies in the break-bulk era, the introduction of containerisation to Vietnamese ports presents a different narrative. There are two principal reasons for the marked divergence in experience between dockers in Vietnam and their counterparts elsewhere. Fundamentally, the broader context and the timing of containerisation in Vietnam's ports played a part in its relatively seamless implementation. In many developed countries, containerisation took place against the backdrop of the 'high tide of trade unionism' (McIlroy et al, 1999), where nascent global capitalism was locked in a wider struggle against worker control and the influence of organised labour. While this was being fought out, the government of North Vietnam was locked in an entirely different battle of its own with the United States. By the time the country had begun to emerge from the ravages of war and made meaningful attempts to join the world economy, the zeitgeist had changed significantly and free market neoliberalism was in the ascendancy. Containerised cargo, commercialised ports and an increasingly interlinked and internationalised dock industry

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were standard and moving towards this model was perceived as 'catching up', part and parcel of modernisation rather than a threat to jobs, the status quo or privilege. A combination of an alternative trajectory of economic development, completely different culture and tradition of workplace relationships and the prevailing global political economy of the day meant that containerisation was viewed as a logical progression by those workers affected.

Even more significant than the broader macro developmental features of the industry and contemporary economic paradigm, the absence of a tradition of casual engagement is central to the alternative experience and outlook of the Vietnamese dock worker towards containerisation. Occupational culture and identity underpinned by centuries of custom and practice did not develop as it did in many ports in the Western sphere. Casualism was not a feature of the employment relationship in Vietnam because workers on the docks were directly and permanently employed by state-owned dock companies and this owed its provenance to the centrally planned socialist economy that had been instituted in North Vietnam since 1956. In turn, this led to variation in the way that dockers in Vietnam perceived their role in the industry, the relationship to their colleagues and their occupation more broadly. When containerisation was introduced on a wide scale to Vietnamese ports, it was largely welcomed by workers as it did not signify a watershed break with the past or dilution of control over the labour process, because this was something that they had never enjoyed. Of course, it implied a complete change to the way that cargo would be handled, but it did not threaten their jobs or their way of life. If anything, containerisation improved their lot.

To conclude, although the structural features of handling break-bulk cargoes presented challenges for workers employed in the dock industry regardless of location, mode and timing of economic development, the experience of containerisation for Vietnamese dock workers was significantly different. The belated modernisation and expansion of the port system in Vietnam, which has occurred alongside the country's rapid economic development since the turn of the century, ensured the maintenance of existing employment levels, in stark contrast to the experience of dock workers elsewhere. The gradual proliferation of containerised cargo at Vietnamese ports, over a period spanning two decades, might have also mitigated against the resistance that technological change faced when it was swiftly introduced to the dock industries of developed economies. Moreover, containerisation did not impinge upon an occupational sub-culture founded on centuries of casualism and custom practice, nor was it accompanied by the looming spectre of redundancy. Instead, the

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standardisation to global benchmarks that Vietnam's ports experienced as a result of modernisation and private investment meant that its dock workers regarded containerisation as a broadly positive development in relation to their occupation and livelihoods. The case presented here invites further study of the historical experience of dockworkers in other rapidly-developing countries around the world to provide meso-contextual accounts of the impact of containerisation on job opportunities, work culture, and labour process control in specific locations.

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Appendix 1

	1994-95	1996-97	1998-99	2000-2001	2002-03	2004-05
Employees at Vietnamese ports[1]	18,000 - 18,200	18,500 - 18,900	19,570 - 19,850	18,800 - 18,620	18,545 - 18,430	18,100 - 18,060
Employees at Hai Phong port[2]	2,860 - 2,985	2,880 - 2,945	2,985 - 2,990	2,846 - 2,850	2,720 - 2,700	2,725 - 2,720
Container TEUs/yr at Vietnamese ports[3]	488,347 - 519,387	653,412 - 730,375	816,401 - 919,264	1,027,341 - 1,027,362	1,235,262 - 1,521,039	1,922,908 - 2,293,548
Container TEUs/yr at Hai Phong ports[4]	102,500 - 117,600	149,100 - 166,400	184,000 - 200,000	219,000 - 228,000	335,000 - 377,000	398,300 - 421, 500
	2006-07	**2008-09**	**2010-2011**	**2012-13**	**2014-15**	**2016**
Employees at Vietnamese ports	17,980 - 17,850	17,800 - 17,650	17,630 - 17,520	17,630 - 17,710	18,260 - 18,350	18,500
Employees at Hai Phong port	2,675 - 2,682	2,650 - 2,635	2,625 - 2,610	2,580 - 2,565	2,540 - 2,500	2,496
Container TEUs/yr at Vietnamese ports	2,777,219 - 4,287,430	4,964,046 - 5,399,102	6,429,897 - 6,902,630	7,587,836 - 8,452,250	10,009,364 - 11,089,557	13,745,809
Container TEUs/yr at Hai Phong ports	464,000 - 683,689	808,000 - 816,000	953,646 - 1,018,794	964,000 - 1,040,000	1,002,987 - 1,019,767	1,086,550

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[1] Source: Vietnam Maritime Administration Department archives, Hanoi, Vietnam (Dock workers and admin staff).
[2] Source: Hai Phong Port database (Dock workers and admin staff).
[3] Source: Vietnam Ports Association database.
[4] Source: Hai Phong Port database.

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[1] To be fair to those involved in the *Dock Workers* project, the two volumes contained thirty-five essays and stretched to 863 pages, arguably ambitious enough without addressing the complex effect containerisation had on the docks.

[2] While there are an increasing number of studies that focus on port economics and administration in rapidly developing economies, this trend is not repeated in relation to worker perspectives. See, for example: Reveley & Tull (2008), Thai et al (2016), Kutin (2017).

[3] The 1986 *Đổi Mới*, or 'renovation', program sought to transition the Vietnamese economy from centrally controlled socialist to market oriented. Before the *Đổi Mới*, the national economy relied mainly on two forms of ownership, SOEs (State-Owned Enterprise) and COEs (Collective-Owned Enterprise). Since then it has shifted to a multi-sectoral economy operating with market mechanisms. Correspondingly, the number of these two types of organisation have decreased sharply throughout the reform process. Two newly emerging-types, Domestic-Private Enterprises (DPEs) and foreign-invested enterprises, have risen substantially in number thanks to changes in government policy. These sectors play a crucial role in employment and job creation and, as of 2010, have helped provide jobs to over one-third of the total workforce. By 2018, the number of 100% state-own companies has decreased from 588 companies since 1992 to 13 companies by 2012, with the vast majority becoming joint-stock companies. For more detail on the *Đổi Mới* see, for example: Collins (2009); Beresford (2008); Irvin (1995).

[4] Accessibility was one of the other principal reasons for the selection of Hai Phong as the focus for the project. Foreigners would usually not be allowed to visit port complexes or interview workers, but permission was granted because of personal contacts.

[5] In addition to an interview with the Deputy General Director of Tan Vu area of Hai Phong Port, twenty-five semi-structured interviews were conducted with dock workers from two of the main terminals at the port. Interviews were conducted in Vietnamese and audio recorded, then transcribed and translated into English for analysis. Interview data was supplemented by operational information on the cargo handling process and how Vietnamese ports are organised and administered from the ex-Head of the Division of Logistics & Supply Chain Management, Vietnam Maritime University (Hai Phong) and Director of the Japan-Mekong Logistics Training Center, Hai Phong. Statistical data was also collected on employment numbers and container Twenty-foot Equivalent Units (TEUs) throughput at Vietnamese ports from various institutional and online sources, see Appendix 1 for more details.

[6] The broad difference between the duties of stevedores and dockers was simple: stevedores worked on the ship handling and organising cargoes which dockers on the quayside sent aboard, usually by sling. Both categories of worker are often subsumed under the generic title of 'dockers'. Porters were responsible for the transportation of cargoes to/from warehouses on the dock estate. There were also many other grades of dock worker operating on the quayside and docks more broadly in the pre-containerised era.

[7] Many ports around the world had already been subject to regulation in the immediate post-war era. Nevertheless, containerisation increased urgency and broadened implementation of efforts to formalise the labour process and workplace relationships, in order to remove casual practices completely from ports. For more detail on regulation and administration in UK, Europe, US, Australia, New Zealand, see for example: Taylor (2017); Turnbull (2012); Davis (2003); Sapsford & Turnbull (2001); Reveley (1999); Sheridan (1994).

[8] Just as employers preferred the flexibility that a casual workforce offered, so some dockers valued the autonomy to pick and choose when and whom to work for, particularly those with specialist skills or experience. This corresponded with their sense of autonomy and control over the way that they did their jobs. Such was the affinity for casual engagement in some ports and countries, that not all dispensed with the casual system of employment in the preamble to containerisation, instead regulating their industry through dock labour schemes or joint union-employer control of work allocation. For example, the casual arrangement persisted in both France and Belgium (Source: Turnbull, 2012).

[9] Directly attributable to the advent of containerisation was the growing trend of outsourcing of container-stripping duties, whereby cargo would pass through a port in a container and be loaded or unloaded ('stuffed and stripped') at depots outside the dockland area. These inland depots were often not in the vicinity of the docks and hence were not governed by dock labour schemes. In effect this meant that a growing amount of dockers' work was being done by road haulage companies at these groupage centres, using cheaper labour.

[10] In particular, because of the one-party system, the functions of trade unions in Vietnam are markedly different from those in the West. Similar to the situation in China, the Vietnam General Confederation of Labour (VGCL) is directly overseen by the Communist Party of Vietnam and all trade unions must be affiliated to it (see Chen, 2010). Although strikes are not unheard of in Vietnam (see Siu & Chan, 2015), they are nevertheless relatively rare and labour activism is not conspicuous like it was on the docks in many Western countries in the post-war era. Questions surrounding labour activism, organisation and industrial conflict can be politically

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sensitive and, as a result, were not broached during interviews. For more detail on the VGCL and strikes in Vietnam, see, for example: Siu & Chan (2015); Kerkvliet (2011); Beresford & Nyland (1998).

[11] Dockers at the Port of Hai Phong work three six hour shifts across a two-day (48 hour) period. Each shift must be separated by 12 hours down time.

[12] The proceeding chronology of the development of the Vietnamese dock industry 1990-present is based on the Vietnamese government's 2009 Master Plan document (see reference list), an interview with a member of the Board of Directors at Hai Phong Port in 2018 and a 2014 report by Ms. Nguyen Thi Phuong Hien, Vietnamese Ministry of Transport, presented at the *Logistics and transport conference to exchange best practices on regulations and experiences in the ASEAN region*, 10-11 December 2014, Hanoi, Vietnam.

[13] See Appendix 1 for more information.

[14] See Appendix 1 for more information.

[15] See Appendix 1 for more information.

[16] In 1995, Hai Phong port handled approximately 117,000 TEUs, rising to around 1.1 million by 2016. Over the same period employment remained relatively constant, from 2850 workers in 1996 to 2,500 in 2016, a 14% decrease (Source: Hai Phong Port database, 2017). See Appendix 1 for more detail.

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