

LABOUR AGENCY
IN THE CUT FLOWER INDUSTRY IN ETHIOPIA:
SHOULD I STAY OR SHOULD I GO?

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INTRODUCTION

INTRODUCTION

Neoliberal policies in the 1980s focused on opening up markets through the enhancement of international capital mobility and intensified competition (Kotz & McDonough, 2010). It was believed that unregulated and competitive markets, free from any state regulation, were going to lead to economic development (Brenner & Theodore, 2002). The freedom of movement of capital however changed the balance between capital and labour decisively in capital's favour as it gave corporations the means to relocate their investments to low wage countries marked by low coverage of labour protection (Kotz & McDonough, 2010; Walker, 1999). The growing reach of capital has exceeded the ability of states to regulate it. These corporations have considerable leverage over national governments as they can threaten with removal of investment or transfer money to avoid high national taxes (Kiely, 1998).

By the mid-1980s and early 1990s, the consequences of trade liberalization for labour in global production systems became clear (Arnold & Bongiovi, 2012). Exposure from NGOs, trade unions and media raised awareness among western consumers about the precarious working conditions under which many of the consumer goods were produced (Barrientos & Smith, 2007). What followed was a proliferation of private social standards aiming at ensuring minimum social and environmental conditions (Riisgaard, 2011). Private social standards (PSS) constitute a new form of regulation whereby private actors such as NGOs and businesses enter into negotiations to design, monitor and enforce the rules and standards regulating firm behaviour (Riisgaard, 2011; Riisgaard & Hammer, 2011). These new forms of regulation are driven in part by the failures of traditional regulation by national governments (Haufler, 2003).

When exploring the social consequences for labour of global production systems and the potential of private social standards, labour as an actor seems an essential ingredient in the analysis (Riisgaard, 2009). It is then also surprising how little efforts have been made to include the voice of the workers themselves (Rodríguez-Garavito, 2005). Scholars, activists, governments and consumer groups have all engaged into debates on fair trade, ethical consumerism and corporate social responsibility (CSR) (Gereffi & Lee, 2016). However workers at the tail end of these value chains remain the '*missing element*' in this debate (Elliott & Freeman, 2003; Rodríguez-Garavito, 2005, p. 205). Labour is frequently reduced to just an '*input*' factor of the production process and as Coe and Jordhus-Lier (2011, p. 221) have described it, they have often been put aside as '*passive victims*' of capital's unstoppable global search for lower wages.

Recently, Coe and Jordhus-Lier (2011) called for more refined conceptualisations of labour. The starting point here is the recognition that workers are not mere reactors (i.e. responsive towards the

environments produced by capitalism), but that they are actors who have the ability to act and enhance their relative position vis-à-vis capital (Carswell & De Neve, 2013). In response to this recent call, several researchers have directed their research focus to explore the agency of labour (Carswell & De Neve, 2013; Lund-Thomsen, 2013).

Labour agency has been understood as those *'strategies that shift the capitalist status quo in favour of workers'* (Coe & Jordhus-Lier, 2011, p. 216). Following this definition, many researchers have focused on labour agency that is articulated as collectively organized strategies (Herod, 1998, 2001; Riisgaard, 2009; Wills, 2005). Indeed, the most visible strategies which aim to reform the existing system and to redistribute resources and to ensure better working conditions have been through collective organisation. But labour agency is not limited to the collective articulation of one's grievances by using its voice. Unorganized labour can also engage in significant forms of agency through their every day, micro-level decision-making processes (Lund-Thomsen, 2013). For example, when workers decide to start a job or not, to migrate or not, to swap factories or not, they consider their own interests, and these acts have ramifications for the wider structuring of the economy (Carswell & De Neve, 2013). It requires capital to act upon and to adjust to these acts. So even though workers are restricted in many ways, lacking material, social and human assets, they engage in different forms of agency to make viable lives and to make the best out of their situation (Carswell & De Neve, 2013; Lund-Thomsen, 2013). How small and hardly visible these acts may be, they do shape the landscape within which capital operates and need to be accounted for (Rogaly, 2009).

In this thesis, the objective is to examine the potential for labour agency in the cut flower industry in Ethiopia. I specifically seek to understand if and how workers themselves can improve their working conditions through two strategies: 'exit' and 'voice' (Hirschman, 1970). The 'exit' strategy refers to the quitting behaviour of flower farm workers. I argue that the 'exit' option which many individual flower farm workers opt for, is a significant form of agency because not only does it offer these workers a means to avoid an undesired, exploitative work situation and access to new sources of livelihood, it is also a strategy that capital has to reckon with and adjust to (Rogaly, 2009). An unpredictable, slippery workforce makes labour somewhat difficult to control, and possibly opens up opportunities to reconfigure social structures in favour of labour (Katz, 2004).

The 'voice' option then refers to collectively organized strategies. It entails the articulation of one's grievances (Hirschman, 1970; Wills, 2005). It builds on a critical consciousness of the exploitation of labour and it is about labour trying to actively rework the work environment by making changes in the current system (Carswell & De Neve, 2013; Katz, 2004). Cut flowers however are mostly produced in countries where unionization and collective bargaining tend to be lower than is the case in Europe and North America (Lund-Thomsen, 2013). With regards to Ethiopia, trade unionism has only a short

history and the majority of cut flower workers remain unorganized (Cramer, Johnston, Oya, & Sender, 2014; Praeg, 2006). The question that arises from this is why the 'voice' option in the cut flower industry in Ethiopia is a less likely chosen strategy and how this voice option could become more viable in the future.

In the following section, I introduce the research context and some key concepts to understand the objective of the research. Hereafter, I introduce the research questions which will be answered in this thesis which is then followed by a short outline of the methodology used to answer all three questions. Finally, I present the structure of the thesis. My research consists of three academic articles, each exploring a specific question to better understand the challenges labour agency faces at the bottom of the Global Value Chain.

THE CHALLENGES FOR LABOUR: CONTEXT AND CONCEPTS

Cut flower value chain

The cut flower sector has seen much structural change over the last decades. Whereas the number of producers globally increased, the number went down in Western Europe. These shifts in production have been made possible by the increased adoption of free market policies and trade agreements. The combination of environmental factors and a low-wage work force as well as reduced trade barriers made countries close to the equator less expensive places to produce flowers, even with shipping costs, than consumer countries situated in the northern hemisphere (Dehnen-Schmutz, Holdenrieder, Jeger, & Pautasso, 2010; Hughes, 2000; Miller, 2012; Steen, 2010).

South-American producers such as Ecuador and Colombia target the US market, while flowers produced in African countries such as Kenya, Zimbabwe, Zambia, Uganda and Ethiopia largely target the European market (Melese & Helmsing, 2010). Most flowers go through the auction market in the Netherlands before reaching their final destination (Riisgaard & Hammer, 2011). In recent years however, the direct market has gained importance. These direct chains are controlled by large retailers with strong market power (Riisgaard, 2009).

For many years, the cut flower industry has been a target for NGO and consumer campaigns who criticize the environmentally damaging production processes and poor working conditions set in the sector (Korovkin & Sanmiguel-Valderrama, 2007). Because of the seasonal demand for flowers, the sector has the reputation of hiring workers on an insecure basis. The perishability of flowers implies long working days, sometimes even during holidays, as critical tasks cannot be postponed. Working overtime is not exceptional nor is it always on a voluntary basis or at a better wage rate. Another concern is the potential health hazard workers face. The sector makes intensive use of chemicals and fertilizers to which workers are easily exposed to (Raynolds, 2012; Riisgaard, 2011; Tallontire, Dolan, Smith, & Barrientos, 2005). In response to these campaigns, the sector has adopted a range of private social standards since the mid-1990s. In total there are twenty different social and/or environmental standards for cut flower exports (Dolan & Opondo, 2005; Riisgaard, 2011).

The evolution of the Ethiopian cut flower industry

Ethiopia is a latecomer in this sector. The earliest records are of two Ethiopian farms producing summer flowers in the early nineties (Melese & Helmsing, 2010). Yet, their success remained limited and both farms stopped their operations after a few years of operation. It was only in 1999 when a first foreign investor, Golden Rose, arrived that Ethiopia started to see its potential to grow roses. In the years that followed, other investors entered the country so that at the beginning of 2004, Ethiopia

counted four flower producing companies. Since then, the sector expanded enormously and currently hosts between 80 to 90 farms (Mano, Yamano, Suzuki, & Matsumoto, 2011; Melese & Helmsing, 2010). The expansion of the sector can be explained by several factors. To begin with, the country has rich natural endowments making it possible to grow both large and small-bud flowers. In addition, the country has a comparative advantage over other African countries due to its close proximity to the European market (Belwal & Chala, 2008). Government support however is probably the best reason to explain the sector's rapid growth. The 'Plan for Accelerated and Sustained Development to End Poverty (PASDEP)' drafted in 2004 formulates the Ethiopian government's policy towards poverty reduction and economic growth. It focuses on the acceleration of private sector development and agricultural commercialization. In lines with these policy priorities, the Ethiopian government has relaxed taxation, relaxed regulations, offered affordable land rents and bank loans which all contributed to a positive investment climate (Gebreeyesus & Iizuka, 2012; Gebreeyesus & Sonobe, 2012; Melese & Helmsing, 2010). In addition, wages are low compared to other African countries (Mano et al., 2011). A final factor explaining the expansion of the Ethiopian cut flower industry is the shift of production sites from Kenya towards Ethiopia. Several reasons explain this shift: the water pollution in Lake Naivasha, the expiration of the WTO/GATT Waiver that continued the previous Lomé trade preferences for the ACP (until 2008) and the political violence in the aftermath of the presidential election in 2007, made that Kenya was perceived as unstable and unsafe for investments (Mano et al., 2011; Muhammad, D'Souza, & Amponsah, 2013).

Because of all these factors, the cut flower industry in Ethiopia has grown tremendously and is now the second largest exporter of small-bud flowers and third largest exporter of large-bud flowers of all African countries. This makes flowers one of the top exports of Ethiopia (346 million dollars), after coffee (732 million dollars), other vegetables (550 million dollars) and oilseeds (465 million dollars) (OEC, 2013).

As flowers are a perishable export commodity, flower farms are located in clusters around the capital Addis Ababa, in the vicinity of the airport. These clusters are to be found in the highlands, at an altitude of at least 2,000 meters above sea level (Melese & Helmsing, 2010). Out of the 67 farms that were operating in 2007, 42 percent were foreign owned, 36 percent were domestic owned and 22 percent were joint ventures. The majority of foreign owned firms belong to Dutch entrepreneurs, but there are also Indian and Israeli entrepreneurs investing in the cut flower sector (Gebreeyesus & Sonobe, 2012). Around 2,031 ha in Ethiopia are allocated to flower production and each farm grows between 3 to 10 varieties of roses (Mano et al., 2011; Melese & Helmsing, 2010).

The Ethiopian cut flower industry is an important generator of employment, though exact figures are missing. According to a study conducted by Melese and Helmsing (2010), the sector has generated around 15,200 permanent jobs and an additional 8,800 casual jobs. Mano et al. (2011) makes reference to 21,786 direct employees, while Islam and Islam (2015) estimate the job creation at 35,000 to 50,000 jobs. However, even when exact figures are lacking, it can still be said that the jobs created by the cut flower industry are an important source of income for many local people living in the surroundings of these flower farm clusters and that these new created job opportunities can help these people to diversify their income sources and lift them out of extreme poverty (Melese & Helmsing, 2010).

High levels of labour turnover

Against this background, I undertook an explorative fieldtrip In September-October 2012. The objective of this fieldtrip was to get familiarized with the sector and to identify the main challenges and opportunities this relatively new sector was facing at that time. One theme emerged during this explorative field study which drew my attention. Whenever I asked questions related to the workforce of the flower farm, managers responded a bit agitated. They mentioned that they were facing high levels of labour turnover and that this was a large concern requiring all their attention because it negatively affected their operations.

At first I had difficulties believing that high levels of labour turnover could be of major concern to managers. Ethiopia is a developing country, marked by high levels of unemployment. I could not believe that in such setting permanently hired workers would voluntarily give up their job. Yet, the issue of high labour turnover was raised by several managers, independently from each other, running farms located in different clusters and they complained that it was a serious concern.

Looking back to it now, I realise that I interviewed those managers in the midst of a high peak of labour turnover. I interviewed these managers in September, a month in which a whole range of workers left the farm: student returned to school, rural workers returned to their own fields and several workers left the farm to celebrate New Year and Meskel. This massive quitting had negative effects on the moral and stability of the remaining workers. These workers suddenly had to put in extra work to cover for those who left, making alternative job opportunities very attractive. However at that moment I did not have this information at hand and I decided to dig into this intriguing phenomenon and to devote my entire research to it.

Voluntary labour turnover

Labour turnover is 'the movement of people into and out of employment within an organisation' (Denvir & McMahon, 1992, p. 143). It can be voluntary or involuntary (Cheng & Brown, 1998). In this thesis I focus on the voluntary quitting behaviour of flower farm workers. Voluntary quitting a job might be usefully conceptualized with reference to the work of Hirschman (1970) who distinguishes two possible responses for when someone experiences dissatisfaction: one can exit (withdraw from a job); or, one can voice (articulate one's complaints and grievances to repair or improve the work situation).

Exit is considered a market-based economic response to discontent (Hirschman, 1970). It is straightforward, impersonal and indirect (Goodman, Louche, Van Cranenburgh, & Arenas, 2014). Exit provides a warning sign that something is wrong, but it does not provide reasons or explanations for what exactly is going wrong. There are various forms of 'exit behaviour': quitting a job, absenteeism, reduction of work effort or in extreme cases 'sabotage'. It destroys employer-employee relationships (Freeman, 1976). Voice on the other hand, represents a political response to dissatisfaction (Hirschman, 1970). It requires communication and the articulation of one's opinion. It is much more messy, direct and at times confrontational (Goodman et al., 2014). It is by nature more informative in the sense that it provides reasons for the dissatisfaction. It tries to re-work employer-employee relationships (Freeman, 1976).

While both exit and voice are responses to dissatisfaction, they are often, but not always, considered mutually exclusive options (Hirschman, 1970). What's more is that the greater the availability of the exit option, the less likely the voice option will be used. This general principle however needs to be nuanced. Within the context of employment, workers need to make a trade-off between the cost of exiting against the chances of changing something positively on the work floor through using their voice. In addition, workers need to outweigh the impact of using their voice. An individual worker who uses his or her voice, may be labelled as disloyal by management, miss out on promotions or even be fired (Elger & Smith, 1998; Freeman, 1976).

The 'exit' strategies of flower farm workers seemed to me powerful responses, sending the message that workers did not want to stay in these type of jobs. Somehow I was wondering if such actions, which I considered actions of resistance, could lead to positive changes on the work floor in favour of labour.

THESIS OBJECTIVE

The main objective of this thesis can be summarized as follows:

To examine the potential of workers to improve their working conditions through two strategies: 'exit' and 'voice'

Following this research objective, I formulated three research questions:

1. Why do workers voluntarily 'exit' their job?
2. How do managers make sense of high levels of labour turnover? What kind of strategies do they develop to deal with labour turnover?
3. Why do workers not use their 'voice' to formulate their grievances and improve their conditions of employment?

METHODOLOGY

The thesis objective and research questions were approached by means of a mixed methods approach (Creswell, 2013; Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004). I employed a combination of both qualitative and quantitative research to understand the complex phenomenon of labour turnover, given that the use of a single approach would have been inadequate to fully address the complexity. Whereas a quantitative approach was most suitable to test the hypotheses formulated in Article 1, a qualitative approach was more appropriate to advance our understandings of under researched topics studied in Articles 2 and 3.

There have been two primary data collection phases. Table 1 provides an overview of the multiple data which have been collected and where the data was used across the different articles. Each article (Articles 1-3) contains a section in which the methodology is explained and motivated. From these methodology sections it will become clear that though each type of data served the purpose of answering a specific research question, there was quite some overlap. Different types of data have been used in several papers to increase reliability as it provided a basis for data triangulation.

First round of data collection

The first round of data collection took place in September – October 2012. The main objective of this preliminary study was to get familiarized with the cut flower sector and to identify the main challenges and opportunities this relatively new sector was facing at that time.

I interviewed key stakeholders at sector level, including representatives of the Ethiopian Horticulture Producer Exporters Association (EHPEA), the Ethiopian Horticulture Development Agency (EHDA) and the Confederation of Ethiopian Trade Unions (CETU). Moreover I conducted 22 interviews with managers from 21 flower farms which were located in one of seven clusters Ethiopia counts. Most often, these interviews took place on the farms and also included a tour of the farm. This gave me the opportunity to observe the working conditions set in these farms and to ask the ‘tour guide’ questions informally. On average, an interview lasted one hour up to one hour and a half. Each interview was recorded and transcribed.

This set of data has been used to give further guidance to the research project. Upon my return, the analysis of this data revealed that the sole reason for flower farms to get certified was to access the direct market. Without certification flower farms could only sell their flowers to the auction strand. More interestingly, the analysis also showed that high levels of labour turnover had been raised by several managers independently from each other and was said to be a major concern.

Second round of data collection

The second round of data collection took place in June-July 2013. To investigate the phenomenon of high levels of labour turnover more in-depth, the research area was refined by focusing on one single cluster of flower farms. This specific cluster is located close to the city of Debre Zeyit. This cluster is particularly interesting because at the time of the study, light manufacturing companies (including garments, footwear and plastics) were starting operations in the city centre, causing additional competition for labour with the neighbouring flower farms.

The decision to focus on one single cluster of flower farms flows from the research objectives of this study. Focusing on a single cluster of flower farms allowed me to investigate the responses to high labour turnover by different farms situated in the same setting, and subjected to the same institutional pressures (Gibson & Birkinshaw, 2004), and to minimize extraneous variability (Eisenhardt, 1989). At the same time, this focus enabled me to investigate labour turnover meticulously and to collect data from multiple data sources who all viewed the phenomenon of labour turnover from different perspectives (Eisenhardt & Graebner, 2007).

There are of course potential risks involved with selecting a single cluster to focus on. It is not entirely certain that the findings of this study are generalizable to other flower farm clusters. Though the first round of data collection revealed that labour turnover was mentioned as a challenge by several managers operating in different clusters, the cluster of Debre Zeyit does have some features which makes this cluster also unique. For example, there are few flower farm clusters which are situated close to such a large city as is the city of Debre Zeyit (171,115 inhabitants according to Wikipedia). Moreover in recent years, this city has attracted many other investors. Hence, flower farm workers may have more job alternatives in this cluster than in any of the other flower farm clusters. By way of example, close to the city of Debre Zeyit, in Dukem (less than 20km away from Debre Zeyit), a Chinese shoe factory started its operations in 2011, creating over 4,000 jobs for low skilled labourers. Nevertheless, given the reasons above, selecting one cluster to focus on was the most appropriate method to get a thorough understanding of high levels of voluntary labour turnover.

Within a single cluster of flower farms, I mainly expected to find differences on the variables of interest of this study (working conditions, job satisfaction, levels of labour turnover, managerial practices and workers' access to voice strategies) between certified and non-certified farms. Consequently, I selected five farms which differed in terms of certification (3 adopters of private social standards (PSS) of which one was a very recent adopter; and 2 non-adopters of PSS) but which were very similar in terms of (Ethiopian) ownership, size and geographical location. This approach allowed me to study

potential differences between certified and non-certified farms while ruling out that any of the differences found between these farms could be attributed to other farm characteristics.

Again, while such an approach has its advantages, it also brings with it some limitations. Most importantly, the inclusion of only Ethiopian flower farms in the second round of data collection at the level of workers, raises again the question of generalizability. The findings of article 1 on job satisfaction and workers' quitting behaviour and the findings of article 3 on workers' voice strategies, need to be read in this light. I do not have data at workers' level from foreign owned flower farms (e.g. Dutch, Belgian, Indian or Israeli farms) and consequently cannot be certain that the findings in article 1 and 3 are applicable to all flower farms. Nonetheless, in article 2 I do show that both foreign and Ethiopian managers have a very similar interpretation of labour turnover and apply very similar practices in relation to turnover. This gives reasons to believe that our findings related to the exit and voice strategies of workers may have been similar in foreign owned farms. Yet, to be entirely certain further research would be required, examining more in-depth the differences and similarities between foreign and local owned flower farms in terms of workers' job satisfaction, quitting behaviour and union representation.

Within the cluster of Debre Zeyit, a team of three MSc students, five Ethiopian enumerators, one colleague and I, collected data at different levels (cluster level, management level, and workers level) and combined data collection methods (in-depth interviews, surveys and focus group discussions). As is shown in table 1, we managed to collect a comprehensive and impressive amount of data during only two months of data collection. Nevertheless, during both field trips I encountered some difficulties associated with the data collection. These difficulties are very common when undertaking research in a developing country context, and are aggravated when the researcher is a foreigner or outsider, unfamiliar with the cultural context. In the following paragraphs, I unfold the difficulties and consequently the methodological concerns there are with each type of data we've collected.

During both data collection rounds, poor infrastructure was one of the major challenges hampering the data collection. Given the poor quality of roads and the lack of street names, it was very time consuming to reach the flower farms which were situated in the rural surroundings of cities or highways. The dirt roads which were leading to the flower farms in Debre Zeyit were only allowed to be reached by private cars, which impacted the costs of data collection. Moreover, it was difficult to contact potential interviewees given the poor telephone penetration and telephone reception. In other words, poor infrastructure in general slowed down the data collection process substantially.

In the second round of data collection, I conducted one in-depth interview with two representatives of the Labour and Social Affairs department of the region of Debre Zeyit. This interview had a duration

of one hour and was recorded and transcribed. The information retrieved from these external informants provided me the specific understanding of the context within which the flower farms were operating. However, given the basic level of English of both interviewees, more detailed information may have been lost in translation.

At the level of managers, I interviewed 8 general managers of flower farms and one vegetable farm located in the cluster of Debre Zeyit. Six of these managers I also interviewed during the first data collection round. The purpose was to increase my understandings of the type of practices they engaged in to deal with labour turnover and how they perceived high turnover. An interview approximately took one hour and a half, was recorded and transcribed. During these interviews, I made use of timeline cards to visualise the labour turnover dynamics. A major advantage of these interviews was that there was no language barrier. All managers spoke fluent English (or Dutch). A disadvantage was that it appeared to be difficult to gain managers' trust. Several managers had to be convinced that I wasn't working for an NGO, and that I was not going to set up a negative publicity against these farms. The hesitance to cooperate of several managers hindsight that there may have been a potential desirability bias throughout the interviews. By this I mean that managers may have given answers that were meant to please me, a western researcher interested in decent working conditions and corporate social responsibility (CSR), rather than giving honest answers. To overcome this potential bias, I introduced myself as a researcher of Ghent University, and gave them a letter of Ghent University which included more details on the research. Moreover, at the beginning of each interview I assured the interviewee that the information would be treated as confidential, that there were no wrong answers, and that their names would be protected. Each interview also started with more general and easy questions as to make the interviewee feel at ease.

The in-depth interviews I undertook with labour union representatives (three in total) took place in an informal setting. These interviews had a duration of approximately one hour. Purpose of these interviews was to gain insights on the origins and structure of the union and the challenges and opportunities these representatives were facing. The most important challenge was the language barrier between the interviewees who only spoke Amharic and myself as researcher. In trying to overcome this challenge, one of the more experienced enumerators, fluent in both English and Amharic, served as mediator. The interviews were recorded and transcribed by another enumerator and a colleague as to cross check the data.

At workers level, we conducted six focus groups: one per farm and one focus group including workers from all five flower farms. Focus groups only targeted female workers and included 4 to 14 participants. Each focus group took approximately two hours and was held in an informal setting. Participants were asked about their experiences with high labour turnover, the causes of this turnover according to

them, and how this related with their personal situations. We made use of comparisons between farms and other job opportunities in the area in order to unravel the working conditions that really mattered and to gain more insights into workers' perceptions.

This type of data was probably the most challenging to obtain. Flower farms operate seven days on seven. While workers have one day off, this is not the same day for all workers. We chose to conduct the focus groups on a Thursday. One of the challenges we faced was to find female workers who also had their day off on a Thursday and who were willing to spend almost their entire free afternoon on a focus group, knowing that the advantages of participation were limited to none. Female workers were approached after working hours and given the time and place of the focus group. As most of these women did not have a telephone or an alternative way of contacting them, we could not be entirely sure of their attendance. This is nicely illustrated by the wide variation of attendance of participants: one focus group counted only 4 participants, while another focus group had up to 14 participants. Because of the constrained mobility of most female workers and the fact that they are responsible for many other tasks on their day off, each focus group started a bit chaotic. Often focus groups only started one hour later than planned as we had to wait until enough participants had arrived.

Next to this, the job of the moderator was not made easy. Most female workers were shy and very quiet at the beginning of the discussion. There was a language barrier between participants and the researcher. Because of this, the moderator had to translate the main narratives in between which slowed down the conversation substantially. Furthermore this also implicated that researcher could not get the full picture during the focus group discussion and so interesting information only came up while transcribing the focus group the day after. To aggravate the situation, there was sometimes also a language barrier between participants. Often it only became clear during the focus group that some participants spoke Oromo, whereas all others spoke Amharic. Hence, the job description of the moderator was highly demanding: the moderator had to be a woman who could connect easier with these female workers than probably a male moderator would have. She had to be capable of conversing in three languages (Amharic, Oromo and English) and she needed to have enough soft skills to make the participants feel comfortable in sharing their thoughts and feelings in a group setting. Though I could count on a great locally trained female moderator, we both shared the feeling that the participants, which were low-educated female flower farm workers, felt with times intimidated by this highly educated moderator with strong communication skills. Most of these female workers were not used to articulating their own opinion and this also affected the richness of data we could collect through this method.

Finally, at workers level we also collected survey data (n=375). The survey included questions on socio-demographics, working conditions, workers' perceptions of these working conditions, job satisfaction, and intentions-to-leave. The advantage of collecting survey data was that it allowed us to retrieve information from many workers in a relatively short time span. Per farm, we surveyed 75 workers who had different job functions within the farm. These functions included packaging, grading, spraying, crop maintenance and supervising. Data was collected both on and off farm. The main challenge was to convince workers to participate in the survey after working hours. In teams of two persons (one enumerator and one MSc student), we would wait at different bus stops for workers to arrive when their work shift was finished (this would be either at 4 p.m. or 5 p.m.) and invite them to participate in the survey. Given that most workers still needed to walk for quite some time to get to their homes, and that it gets dark at 6 p.m., many female workers were very hesitant at first to participate. Because of this, we invited two or three workers who lived closely to one another at the same time and we made them wait for each other until all three interviews were finished so that they could walk back home together. This meant that workers stayed with the enumerators for one hour and a half or more (while one interview lasted only 40 minutes). We also compensated their participation by giving them at the end of the survey 20 birr (0.83 euro) to thank them for their time and to cover their transportation. We checked whether there were differences in answers between the on and off farm surveys and found both on and off farm surveys to be reliable sources of information. The questionnaire was directly translated from English into Amharic or Oromo by Ethiopian Master's graduates who were trained before the data collection phase began. This training continued throughout the testing phase which lasted three days. During this training we made sure that all questions were correctly translated and that all enumerators had the same interpretation of each question. Nevertheless, given that these are standardized, mostly close-ended questions, a limitation of survey data is that the respondents are limited in the answers they can give. New and unexpected information may therefore be lost.

In sum, each type of data has its advantages and disadvantages. Because of this, we decided to collect data at different levels (workers, representatives, managers) and using different methods (surveys, focus groups, in-depth interviews). This approach allowed us to triangulate the data and to get a more in-depth understanding of the phenomenon of turnover than the use of a single method would have allowed us to. All data we've collected pointed in the same directions. In combining data, I was able to augment and to validate my findings.

As mentioned earlier, the data has been collected in two periods of time: in September-October 2012 and in June-July 2013. It is important to take into account that this also influenced the data we've collected. September is a month in which flower farms face a peak in labour turnover. Consequently it

is not surprising that managers mentioned high levels of turnover in the first round of data collection. It is possible however that if the first round of data collection would have taken place on another moment, labour turnover would not have been raised as a current issue requiring managers' attention. June and July are months in which there is a low demand of flowers. Consequently the answers we received from workers on questions related to working hours and overtime may have been entirely different than if we would have asked them these questions between February and May, when there is a peak demand for flowers. Nevertheless, though there are limitations with engaging in two short fieldwork experiences, there are also several advantages (budget and time) and practical considerations which needed to be taken into account. As an academic assistant it would not have been possible for me to stay for a long period of fieldwork given that I was responsible for assistant several courses throughout the academic year. Because of this, my fieldtrips took place in the summer (June-July) or early start of the semester (September-October). Luckily, this summer period is also a period of low demand for flowers. During peak production moments, when workers need to work up to 60 hours a week, it would have been extremely difficult to survey them or to have convinced them to participate in a focus group.

Table 1. Summary table of data

	Source level	Type of data	Main purpose of data
1st round of data collection September-October 2012 Cut flower industry Ethiopia	Sector	<i>In-depth interviews (3) with representatives of Ethiopian Horticulture Producer Exporters Association (EHPEA), Ethiopian Horticulture Development Agency (EHDA), and Confederation of Ethiopian Trade Unions (CETU)</i>	<i>Familiarizing with cut flower industry</i> <i>Triangulation and corroboration of research results</i>
	Management	<i>In-depth interviews (22) with general managers of 21 flower farms (12 in Ethiopian ownership, 9 in foreign ownership)</i>	<i>Article 2: How do managers make sense of high levels of turnover? What kind of strategies do they develop to deal with turnover?</i>
2nd round of data collection June-July 2013 Cut flower cluster Debre Zeyit	Cluster	<i>In-depth interview (1) with 2 representatives of the labour and social affairs department situated in Debre Zeyit</i>	<i>Triangulation and corroboration of research results</i>
	Management	<i>In-depth interviews (8) with general managers of 7 flower farms (5 Ethiopian ownership, 2 foreign ownership) and 1 vegetable farm (foreign ownership)</i>	<i>Article 2: How do managers make sense of high levels of turnover? What kind of strategies do they develop to deal with turnover?</i>
	Union	<i>In-depth interviews (3) with union representatives from three flower farms</i>	<i>Article 3: Why do workers not use their 'voice'?</i>
	Workers	<i>Focus group discussions (6) were organised, 1 per targeted farm (4 to 14 female participants) and 1 bringing together workers from all five farms (9 female participants)</i> <i>Surveys (375) of workers from five targeted farms in Debre Zeyit</i>	<i>Article 1: Why do workers voluntarily 'exit' their job?</i> <i>Article 3: Why do workers not use their 'voice'?</i> <i>Article 1: Why do workers voluntarily 'exit' their job?</i> <i>Article 3: Why do workers not use their 'voice'?</i>

THESIS STRUCTURE AND ARTICLE FLOW

This thesis is built around three academic articles. Figure 1 below presents the overall structure of the chapters and the flow of the dissertation in a graphical manner, illustrating the way each article builds further on each other.

I first lay out the **Context** in which flower farm workers are employed. To understand the potential of workers to improve their working conditions, one must first have a clear understanding of the current working conditions of flower farm workers. In the next section, I give an overview of the existing governance systems which have been developed to regulate working conditions in the Ethiopian context and compare nine social criteria set by these different systems. Finally, I examine the implementation of these nine criteria in the five flower farms studied in this PhD project. I show that there are differences in working conditions between the three certified farms (inserted in the direct market strand) and the two non-certified farms (selling at the auction).

Central in this thesis is the quitting behaviour of flower farm workers. **Article 1** seeks to understand why flower farm workers exited their formal wage work in the flower farms. To do so, I turn to the literature of human resources (HR). Past research has shown that there is a clear link between job satisfaction and labour turnover/ decisions about quitting (Mobley, 1977; Mueller & Price, 1990). In the absence of high levels of job satisfaction, one might expect high rates of labour turnover, here defined as voluntary leaving a job (Jiang, Baker, & Frazier, 2009). According to HR literature, the most important predictors of job satisfaction are the characteristics of a job (Aletraris, 2010), which can be separated into extrinsic rewards and intrinsic rewards. Extrinsic rewards include work aspects not directly associated with the job activity itself, which are more a by-product of the work (Tietjen & Myers, 1998). They occur as a consequence of job performance (e.g. wage, a contract). By contrast, intrinsic rewards are said to be related with the job activity itself (Aletraris, 2010). They satisfy workers' immaterial needs by allowing for self-expression, giving a worker the feeling that he/she accomplishes something worthwhile on the job (e.g. job variation, job autonomy) (Linz & Semykina, 2012). Article 1 investigates two linkages. First, it explores the link between job satisfaction and workers' quitting behaviour. Second, it explores the link between job satisfaction and job characteristics (left panel of figure 1). Both linkages serve the purpose of improving our understandings of why flower farm workers voluntarily 'exited' or left their job. The results show that workers left their formal wage work because they were dissatisfied with the extrinsic job rewards (wage, job security and a healthy work environment) offered by flower farms. Hence, this article concludes with the powerful message that flower farms aiming at securing a stable work force need to focus on improving these three job attributes.

Article 2 researches how managers made sense of high levels of labour turnover and the type of strategies they developed to deal with this turnover. If the purpose was to reduce high labour turnover, one might expect that managers came up with actions to increase workers' job satisfaction (Porter, Steers, Mowday, & Boulian, 1974). Much scholarly attention has been devoted to understand the impact of human resource management (HRM) policies and practices on workers performance. An increasing body of work contains the argument that the use of certain HRM practices can increase motivation and enhance retention among workers (Becker & Gerhart, 1996; Huselid, 1995; Tooksoon, 2011). In particular, those job characteristics which are the factors that trigger job dissatisfaction and are leading to workers' exiting or quitting a job, need to be adjusted (Firth, Mellor, Moore, & Loquet, 2004). In theory, it could thus be argued that when managers interpreted the exit strategies of workers as warning signs of job dissatisfaction and accordingly undertook practices to improve those working conditions which mattered to flower farm workers, then the exit strategies of workers indeed had great potential for workers to improve their working conditions. The analysis however shows that managers did not attempt to reduce turnover, instead they engaged in practices that sustained labour turnover. This is because labour turnover was considered functional: the costs of facing labour turnover were lower than the costs of actually reducing turnover (Wallace & Gaylor, 2012). In the second part of this article I then explain how managers legitimized having high levels of labour turnover on their work floor. I show that managers constructed a mind-set that supported the notion that labour turnover was entirely caused by external institutional elements and had nothing to do with the work environment.

Article 3 examines why workers did not use their 'voice' to formulate their grievances and to improve their conditions of employment. Given that the exit option which many flower farm workers exercised, did not result in positive changes in favour of labour, the question arises why workers did not exploit other options, such as the 'voice' option. From a political perspective the voice option is a higher form of response (Dowding, John, Mergoupis, & Vugt, 2000). It includes different degrees of activity and leadership and attempts to achieve changes 'from within' (Hirschman, 1970). Though it is more costly and messy because it involves the articulation of one's thoughts (Goodman et al., 2014), it is more informative in the sense that it provides reasons for dissatisfaction and therefore could be more effective in re-working the capital-labour relation in favour of labour. Several flower farms had to allow trade unions on the work floor because of their private social standards (Barrientos & Smith, 2007; Riisgaard, 2011). In essence, the trade union represents the 'voice' option for workers to articulate their grievances. However, the fact that workers were choosing the 'exit' option signals that the 'voice' option was not a credible option (Hirschman, 1970). Article 3 examines why workers did not use their 'voice' to formulate their grievances and to improve their conditions of employment. This is

represented with the dotted line in figure 1. In this article, we build a two-levels framework to identify the impediments to workplace unionism in the cut flower industry in Ethiopia. This framework recognises the need to study both 'vertical' (structure and governance of GVCs) and 'horizontal' (the socio-economic context) barriers to collective organizing at the work floor. The article concludes with providing recommendations on how to overcome these impediments.

The **Conclusion** summarizes and discusses the main findings of the thesis. The findings of the thesis suggest that the potential of workers to improve their own working conditions through exit and voice is limited. In this chapter I argue for a more participatory approach to improve working conditions in flower farms. I offer suggestions on how several actors could be of more assistance and could become more effective in improving working conditions in line with workers' needs.

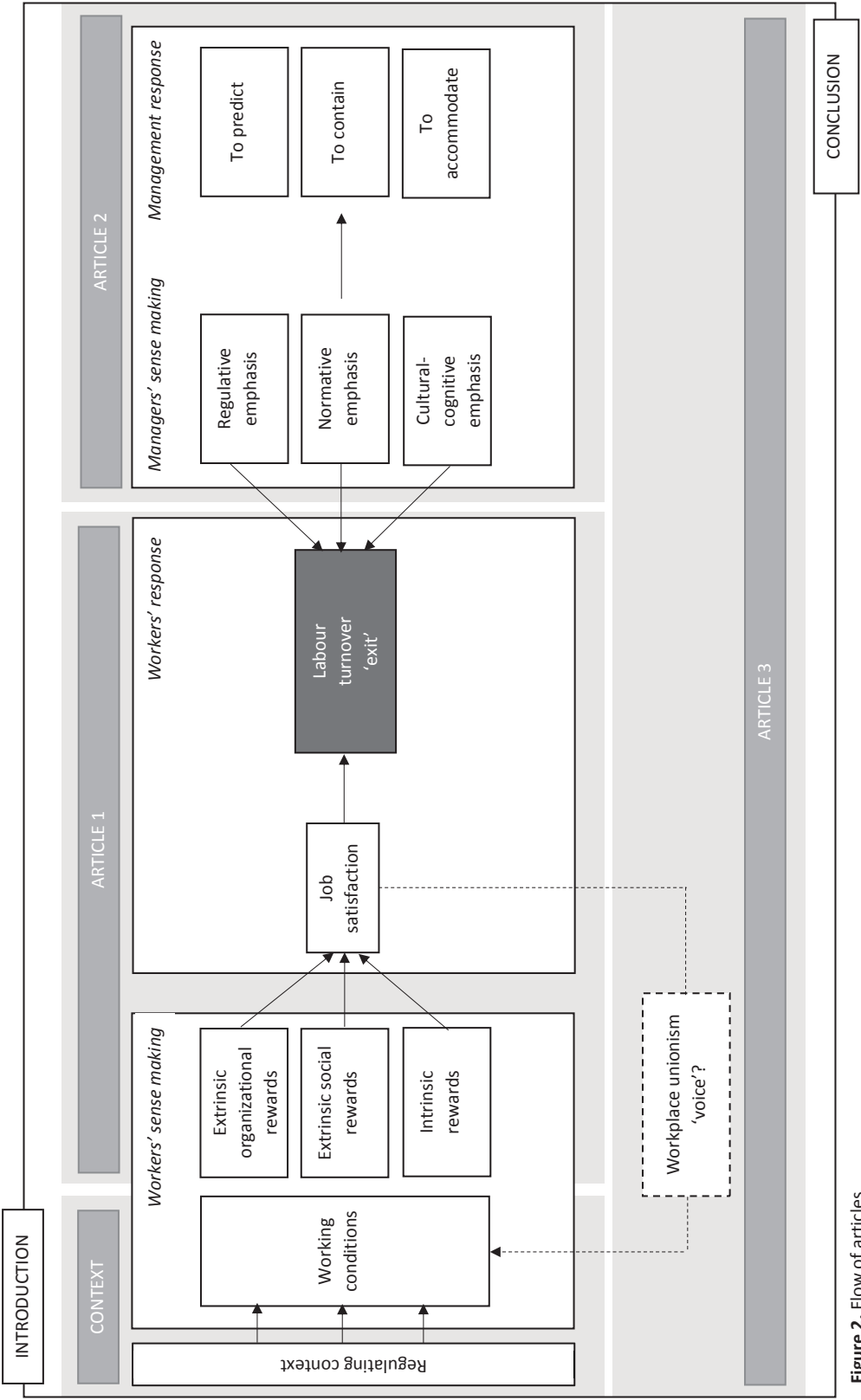


Figure 2. Flow of articles

CONTEXT

Abstract. There are multiple and overlapping governance systems aiming at regulating the working conditions in the cut flower industry in Ethiopia. In this chapter we first give an overview of the development of the cut flower sector and its main characteristics. Next, we provide an overview of the existing governance systems and compare how these systems regulate or standardise nine social criteria related to the working conditions in the cut flower farms. We then investigate the implementation of the nine social criteria in the five flower farms studied in this PhD project.

INTRODUCTION

This chapter draws the background for this dissertation. Because the potential for labour agency in the cut flower industry in Ethiopia must be understood in the context in which flower farm workers are employed, the purpose of this chapter is to give the reader a detailed overview of the current working conditions of flower farm workers.

This chapter has four main parts. First, it gives an overview of the development of the cut flower sector and its main characteristics. Second, it gives an overview of the existing governance systems which have been developed to regulate working conditions in the Ethiopian context. Third, it provides a detailed comparison of nine social criteria/ regulations set by these different governance systems. Fourth, it presents an examination of the implementation of these nine social criteria in the five flower farms studied in this PhD project.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION ON THE ETHIOPIAN CUT FLOWER INDUSTRY

The objective of this section is make the reader familiar with the cut flower sector in Ethiopia. We first give a brief overview of the development of the sector, highlighting some key moments that steered the development of the Ethiopian cut flower industry. Next, we provide some more information about the geographical location of this sector in Ethiopia. Finally, we describe the daily practices and routines of the sector.

Brief history

After the fall of the Derg regime in 1991, two flower farms pioneered floriculture in Ethiopia: Ethioflora and Meskel Flower. These farms produced summer flowers. By the mid-nineties, Meskel Flower shifted its production to roses. However, due to limited experience and an unfavourable investment climate, both operations faced difficulties especially in acquiring sufficient inputs, financing and transporting the flowers to the market. It was only in 1999 when the first foreign investor from the United Kingdom, Golden Rose, arrived that Ethiopia started to see its potential to grow roses (Melese & Helmsing, 2010). From the end of 2002 and onwards, the government provided sector-specific supports (Mano, Yamano, Suzuki, & Matsumoto, 2011). In that same year, the Ethiopian Horticulture Producer Exporters Association (EHPEA) was established. This association represents the interests of the horticulture farms and promotes the expansion of the horticulture export sector in Ethiopia.

An important reason why Ethiopia became attractive to grow roses was its 'Plan for Accelerated and Sustained Development to End Poverty (PASDEP)' which was drafted in 2004 and formulates the Ethiopian government's policy towards poverty reduction and economic growth. It focuses on the

acceleration of private sector development and agricultural commercialization. In line with these policy priorities, the Ethiopian government has relaxed taxation, relaxed regulations, offered affordable land rents and bank loans which all contributed to a positive investment climate (Gebreeyesus & Iizuka, 2012; Gebreeyesus & Sonobe, 2012; Melese & Helmsing, 2010). At the end of 2004, there were four companies exporting roses: ENYI Rose (Ethiopian ownership), Summit (Ethiopian ownership), Ethio-Dream (joint venture) and Golden Rose (UK ownership) (Melese & Helmsing, 2010).

Another milestone for the sector was the start of Sher Ethiopia Ltd's operations in June 2005. Sher Ethiopia is a subsidiary of Sher Holland BV, which is the largest rose company in the world. It is located in Ziway and leases 350 hectares of land from the Ethiopian government. Sher Ethiopia Ltd prepares 'ready to operate' greenhouses which it rents out to other investors. In this way, Sher Ethiopia facilitated the entry of new growers (Melese & Helmsing, 2010). In the years that followed, the sector expanded rapidly and almost 80 farms were actively operating by 2008 (Mano et al., 2011).

In 2008, the Ethiopian Horticulture Development Agency (EHDA) was created under the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development. This agency was the upgraded version of the Horticulture Development Team which had been established in 2002. It is a governmental organization which aims to direct the sector and to provide holistic support to investors particularly in the areas of investment support, capacity building and marketing (Gebreeyesus & Iizuka, 2012). In that same year however, the global financial crisis hit the economy. The wholesale market prices for cut flowers in the Netherlands declined substantially. For the cut flower industry in Ethiopia this meant that only 47% of a projected \$280 million from flower exports was earned. Several flower farms faced difficulties to repay their debts to the Development Bank of Ethiopia (Te Velde et al., 2010).

Geographical structure

Currently there are 77 farms situated in 7 clusters of flower farms, which are located within a 200 km radius of Addis Ababa (see figure 1). By clusters we mean *those 'geographical spaces, or regions, where farms in similar and cognate activities are located within well-defined spatial boundaries wherein proximity promotes a range of economic benefits'* (Lund-Thomsen & Nadvi, 2010, p. 204). The reason why flower farms are located so close to one another is because they have the same needs: a geographical proximity to the national airport, abundant water and land resources, and a location in the highlands (at an altitude of 2000 meters above sea level). Being part of a cluster also has several advantages. Farms that are closely located to one another often maintain a good relationship. They discuss common problems (e.g. a problem related to a customs or taxation issue, bad roads, problems related to safety and burglary) and try to come up with solutions themselves or decide to lobby for solutions together at government level. Farms from the same cluster also often take initiatives

together (e.g. building a school together, engaging in social activities) and exchange knowledge and information.

In the first round of data collection (September-October 2012), I interviewed 22 managers from farms situated in different clusters. In the second round of data collection (June-July 2013), I focused on one single cluster of flower farms situated nearby the city of Debre Zeyit. In total, there are 10 flower farms in this cluster. From these 10 farms, I selected 5 flower farms which were very similar in terms of ownership, size and geographical location, they did differ in terms of certification: two of the flower farms were already certified for more than three years with at least one PSS, one flower farm had recently been certified with MPS-SQ and the other two flower farms had not adopted any internationally recognized PSS. More detailed information on these five farms is given in the final section of this chapter.

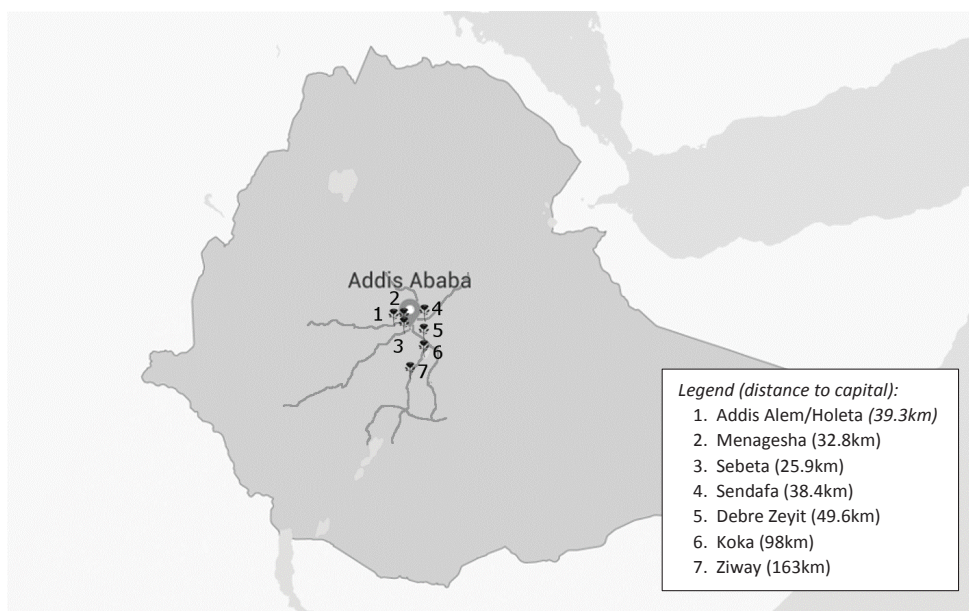


Figure 1. Map of Ethiopian flower farm clusters

Practices

There are four main components in the cut flower value chain: farming, post-harvest, transport and marketing (Melese & Helmsing, 2010). The first component 'farming' includes activities such as selecting the appropriate variety, planting, weeding, irrigating and providing the necessary inputs such that the flowers grow at the required quality while controlling for diseases. Given that the right variety of flowers is a decisive determinant of the success of the farm, breeders are essential actors in the

chain. In Ethiopia, there used to be three breeders: Olij Roses (Dutch ownership), Joy Tech Plc. (joint venture Israel- Ethiopia), and Ethio Plants Plc. (Dutch ownership). The latter stopped its operations in 2013 because the government had decided that the new railway that would link the capital Addis Ababa to the port of Djibouti was going to cross the land of this flower farm.

In the greenhouses, there are both male and female workers. Male workers are mainly involved in spraying, irrigation and maintenance sections. Female workers are mainly involved in the production and harvesting sections. Female workers responsible for a number of beds of flowers. Their tasks include weeding, cleaning and harvesting the flowers according to their cut stage and quality. On a normal day, greenhouse workers harvest three times a day. Once the flowers are harvested, they are brought to the pack houses where the post-harvesting takes place. In the pack houses female workers sort, cut, bunch and pack the flowers according to length and quality. The flowers are then brought to the refrigerators. This is a task mainly undertaken by male workers. From there, flowers are transported in cool trucks to the airport in Addis Ababa. Officers of the Ethiopian Customs Authority (ECA) and the Ministry of Agriculture inspect the flowers at the airport. Ethiopian Airlines transports is the main airfreight carrier of flower. Other flight companies that transport flowers are KLM, Lufthansa and Etihad. The majority of flowers (67%) are sold at the auctions in The Netherlands (Melese & Helmsing, 2010).

IDENTIFYING ACTORS AND GOVERNANCE SYSTEMS

The objective of this section is to identify the actors who are involved in providing standards to improve or guaranty (good) working conditions in the cut flower farms in Ethiopia. For this purpose we draw on the typology of governance systems developed by Gereffi and Lee (2016). According to Gereffi and Lee (2016) governance systems differ in terms of scope and in terms of actors.

In terms of scope, Gereffi and Lee (2016) distinguish between horizontal (cluster) governance which refers to place-based forms of governance and vertical (Global Value Chain) governance which is cross-national by nature, operating along the value chain. In terms of actors, they identify a wide range of actors across value chains and clusters, including 'public actors' such as national governments and international organisations as the International Labour Organisation (ILO), 'private actors' such as global lead firms and cluster firms, and 'social actors' such as civil society actors like non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and trade unions (Gereffi & Lee, 2016; Lund-Thomsen & Lindgreen, 2014).

Whereas some of these actors operate at the horizontal governance level, other actors operate at the vertical governance level. These levels interact and produce various forms of 'synergistic' governance which aim to improve social conditions. By good social conditions we refer to the quality of the

employment environment. It includes issues such as fair remuneration, job security, good physical environmentally safe working conditions, rights of collective bargaining, opportunities for social dialogue and absence of child labour (Pyke & Lund-Thomsen, 2015).

Public governance

Public governance is exercised by public actors. At the horizontal level, we identified the Ethiopian government as the most important public actor influencing both directly and indirectly the social conditions in the cut flower industry in Ethiopia. On the one hand, through the Ethiopian labour law the Ethiopian government directly affects various aspects of labour conditions and standards to which flower farms need to adhere to. On the other hand, favourable investment laws and incentives promulgated by the state have an indirect effect on workers because they create an investment environment which facilitates and constrains actions affecting social conditions. For example, to attract foreign investors, the Ethiopian government relaxed taxation, relaxed regulations, offered affordable land rents and bank loans. More importantly however, they also advertised Ethiopian labour as to be 'abundant' and 'cheap' (Ethiopian Embassy, 2005; Getu, 2009). Such discourse creates a climate in which investors seemingly are allowed to pay extremely low wages. A point which was also raised by one of the union representatives I interviewed during the data collection phase in June-July 2013:

“One thing we expect from the government is: When investors come to this country, they will tell them that they can get extra manpower for a cheap price. But if they wouldn't do this, they [investors] would respect the workers more. And they [government] don't follow up what 's going on in the companies after they gave a license” (union representative, non-certified farm)

Government regulations have a strong legal basis and are mandatory. However in many developing countries, governments lack the desire or capacity to enforce labour standards. Moreover labour regulations often seem ill designed or incomplete which raises the question to which extent they actually are designed to raise social conditions (Candland, 2007; Gereffi & Lee, 2016; Pyke & Lund-Thomsen, 2015). Especially in the neo-liberal world of today, there has been a trend towards 'deregulating' labour markets, whereby countries that provided labour protection often were being accused of providing a poor investment climate or of being 'anti-competitive' (Utting, 2005).

At the vertical (GVC) governance level, public governance is exercised by international organisations such as the International Labour Organisation (ILO) or World Trade Organisation (WTO). It can also be exercised through bilateral or multilateral trade agreements, such as the African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA) (Gereffi & Lee, 2016). With regards to social conditions in the Ethiopian cut flower industry, Core Conventions of the ILO constitute a central element of flower farms

accountability. These Conventions have been negotiated at an international level on a tripartite basis between governments, employers and trade unions (Barrientos & Smith, 2007). ILO Conventions are widely referred to in social labels regulating the cut flower sector and often form the basis for national laws, such as the Ethiopian labour law.

Private governance

Private governance at the horizontal level often involves business associations whose main objective is representing and promoting the interests of the industry at local, national and international levels (Pyke & Lund-Thomsen, 2015). In the context of governing social conditions, business associations may develop their own Codes of Practice to monitor and self-regulate the sector (Gereffi & Lee, 2016). They don't do this out of altruistic motivations but because self-regulation is in the industry's self-interest. There are several reasons why industries would conduct codes of conduct, ranging from managing risks, being pressured by investors, consumers and/or activists, or a desire to retain and attract employees (Graham & Woods, 2006). Some practitioners worry that self-regulation may be an attempt to avoid stricter state regulations and as such need to be considered as a threat to local labour institutions and trade unions (Amengual, 2010).

In Ethiopia, cut flower farms are united in the Ethiopian Horticulture Producers and Exporters Association (EHPEA). This association has developed a Code of Practice together with the Ethiopia Netherlands Horticulture Partnership Programme in 2006-2007. The Code includes three levels: bronze, silver and gold. The bronze level sets minimum standards for operation. The silver level sets standards which are equivalent to internationally recognized social standards. Finally the gold level goes beyond the sector benchmarks. Adherence to the bronze level is a prerequisite for farms who want to export their flowers. Silver and gold levels are voluntary and were at the time of data collection (2012-2013) still under development.

According to EHPEA, the main motivation of the association to develop this Code of Practice is because they recognise the need and responsibility of the industry to implement sustainable practices, to provide safe working conditions and to protect the local environment. By doing so they hope to remain competitive and to enhance the reputation of the Ethiopian flower sector at international level. Moreover this code of practice tries to be a response to the concerns raised by the Ethiopian government, civil society and the wider international public.

The sector is very vulnerable to negative publicity. Cut flowers are a luxury product which are often bought as a gift to friends or relatives. Flowers are easily substitutable. One can simply decide to buy a bottle of wine or chocolates instead of flowers to give as a present (Alexandra Hughes, 2000; Rodriguez, Hernandez, & Quevedo, 2015). Hence, it is very important that the sector maintains a good

reputation. Especially because consumers do not know from which farm the flowers originate, there is the potential risk that one badly performing farm damages the reputation of the entire sector.

Because of the vulnerable position the sector finds itself in, there are also industry initiatives taken at the vertical (GVC) governance level. Most important initiative came from the Netherlands, which is the international market leader for flowers. In 1995, Dutch growers together with the Dutch flower auctions founded a business standard called Milieu Programma Sierteelt (MPS). It is one of the oldest labelling schemes for flowers and until today one of the most popular schemes for the sector. It is active in more than 55 countries, counting over 4000 certified growers. It has an environmental label (MPS A, B and C) with a social option (MPS-SQ). The social option is based on universal human rights and requires the enforcement of core ILO conventions, including promoting freedom of association and collective bargaining, no discrimination, no child and no forced labour (Barrientos, 2008).

Social governance

In the 1980s it became clear that host governments were not able to defend labour rights and so civil society actors, such as NGOs and trade unions, became favoured partners for guaranteeing decent working conditions in the 1990s and beyond (Amengual, 2010). It was believed that the social standards these actors were setting, were much more efficient and therefore more able to pressure firms to adhere to minimum labour practices than host government regulations (Graham & Woods, 2006).

This form of governance is mostly voluntary, and generally relies on the willingness and actions of firms to implement these standards and to allow third-party audits to take place on their factories. Partly for this reason, most social governance systems involve multiple stakeholders (including public, private and civil society actors) pursuing common goals and acting together to regulate workers' rights and labour conditions (Gereffi & Lee, 2016).

This form of joint governance can be more effective than one type of governance alone in achieving improved social conditions (Gereffi & Lee, 2016; Locke, 2013; Mayer, 2014). Moreover, social governance can complement public regulation. Instead of replacing state labour regulation, social governance actors can relieve pressure from scarce state resources so that local governments can use these scarce resources to those sectors in the country which are exclusively producing for the domestic market and which are often characterised by even worse labour conditions than found in export-oriented industries (Amengual, 2010).

On the other hand however, the proliferation of 'sustainability' standard initiatives has created an entire market of standards leading to competition between these standard initiatives. This competition can be counterproductive in terms of empowerment, making room for a race towards the lowest

standards. Past studies have warned us for the potential risk that certifications which seek to raise social expectations, are going to be challenged by those certification schemes that simply seek to uphold current conditions (Raynolds, Murray, & Heller, 2007; Riisgaard, 2011).

The cut flower industry is a textbook example of an industry in which many certification schemes exist in parallel. In all, there are at least 20 different social and/ or environmental schemes regulating cut flower export¹ (Dolan & Opondo, 2005; Riisgaard, 2011). With regards to the cut flower industry in Ethiopia, there are two well-established certification schemes operating, with new initiatives entering Ethiopia in recent years. The two well-known multi-stakeholder initiatives in Ethiopia are the Ethical Trading Initiative (ETI) and Fair Flowers Fair Plants (FFP).

The Ethical Trading Initiative (ETI) originates from an alliance of UK companies, NGOs and trade unions. This UK initiative promotes the implementation of corporate codes of practice, covering international supply chain working conditions. It is a generic label, focusing on a broad range of products including flowers, clothing, shoes, food and drinks and other products (Barrientos & Smith, 2007; Alex Hughes, Buttle, & Wrigley, 2007). As is stated on the MPS website, MPS-SQ is practically equal to the ETI label.

Fair Flowers Fair Plants (FFP) was founded in 2005 by the international floricultural trade association Union Fleurs and several NGOs and unions (Riisgaard, 2011). It is estimated that FFP has around 160 flower growers certified (of which 65 cut flowers) in four countries (the Netherlands, Kenya, Ecuador and Ethiopia). Together these growers have a 4% market share of worldwide production volume (ITC, 2013). It has both an environmental and a social component. Growers who have implemented MPS-A together with MPS-SQ, can easily obtain FFP as both MPS schemes have been benchmarked to FFP.

In terms of horizontal social governance in Ethiopia, local NGOs and civil society organisations (CSOs) in Ethiopia face many legal barriers posed by the government. Hence, social governance at the horizontal level is considered the weakest form of governance for pressuring good social conditions in the Ethiopian cut flower industry. In 2009, the Ethiopian government adopted the Charities and Societies Proclamation (CSP) which has made the work of NGOs and human rights organisations virtually impossible. The law violates ILO standards relating to the freedom of association, especially with regards to access to funding. The Proclamation restricts NGOs and CSOs that receive more than 10% of their funding from abroad from involvement and participation in essentially all human rights and advocacy activities. This Proclamation has been heavily criticised by international organisations because the legal barriers this Proclamation sets for civil society seem to serve one purpose only and that is of silencing civil society in Ethiopia (Bader, 2013; ICNL, 2015).

Nevertheless, there are some civil society organisations which advocate and lobby at the national level for improving or implementing labour laws aiming to improve the working conditions on flower farms.

These organisations include for instance Women Working Worldwide (WWW) and Global Horticultural Workers and Environmental Rights Network (GHOWERN). WWW is a leading member of the Gender Working Group with the ETI. Their main activities are to support and empower female workers employed in value chains supplying to European markets. GHOWERN is a regional network of activists and trade unionists across East Africa. Their aim is to eliminate sexual harassment from the workplace and communities surround the farms (Women Working Worldwide, 2012). To end, the Confederation of Ethiopian Trade Unions is the largest workers' organisation in Ethiopia whose main purpose is to defend workers' rights and labour conditions. Table 1 summarises the distinct forms of governance regulating the cut flower industry in Ethiopia.

Table 1. Distinct forms of governance regulating the cut flower industry in Ethiopia

<i>Actor</i>	<i>Scope</i>	
	<i>Horizontal (cluster) governance</i>	<i>Vertical (GVC) governance</i>
<i>Public governance</i>	<i>Ethiopian labour law</i>	<i>ILO Conventions</i>
<i>Private governance</i>	<i>EHPEA's Code of Practice</i>	<i>MPS-SQ (business standard)</i>
<i>Social governance</i>	<i>Local civil society (GHOWERN, WWW) and trade union (CETU)</i>	<i>ETI, FFP (collective standards)</i>

Based on Gereffi and Lee (2016)

COMPARING THE GOVERNANCE SYSTEMS

In this section we examine all governance systems identified in the previous section, with the exception of social governance systems at the horizontal level. Though the trade union (CETU) and local civil society organisations (GHOWERN, WWW) are important advocates of good working conditions, they do not set out specific criteria governing the cut flower industry. Hence, these governance actors are left out of the analysis in this section.

We compare the other five governance systems through the examination of nine social criteria. We selected these nine criteria based on the checklist of the international business standard MPS-SQ, because this standard is the most comprehensive one governing the cut flower industry. With the exception of three criteria -discrimination, maternity leave and forced labour-, all social criteria listed in MPS-SQ were included in the analysis. The other three criteria were excluded because of the following reasons: with regards to discrimination, we did not have the data to check whether there was no discrimination in hiring, compensation, access to training, promotion, termination or retirement. With regards to maternity leave, only 7 respondents (of a total of 237 female respondents) answered they had been pregnant while working on a flower farm. Though this is an interesting finding in itself, the lack of sufficient responses makes it difficult to make conclusive statements on this matter. Finally, forced labour was not an issue on these flower farms.

Table 2 provides an overview of the nine social criteria and how the different actors of the five governance systems analysed, take these criteria into account. The first column provides a detailed explanation of each criteria as set by MPS-SQ. The second column presents the corresponding ILO Conventions which are widely referred to in the social standards governing the cut flower industry and which form the basis for the Ethiopian labour law. In the following columns, it is shown if public (the Ethiopian labour law), private (MPS-SQ and Code of Practice bronze and silver level) and social (ETI and FFP) governance systems, demand adherence to each specific social criteria or not. Where there is written a 'minor' it means that according to that specific standard, the criteria is a 'minor must'.

The Ethiopian labour law is less strict than the vertical governance systems in terms of wages, paid leave, healthy work environment, trade union rights and child labour. With regards to wages, the Ethiopian government does not set minimum wages nor does it make reference to what would be an appropriate minimum standard of wage. Payments in kind are allowed (as long as it does not exceed 30% of the wage paid) and in certain situations wage deductions as disciplinary measures are also allowed (as long as it does not exceed one-third of a monthly wage). With regards to the other social criteria, it is shown that the labour law is less strict in terms of paid leave (2 weeks instead of 3 weeks),

has not ratified the chemical convention (C170) and the Workers' Representatives Convention (C135), and allows child labour from the age of 14 years onwards (instead of 15 years) (C138).

When studying the internationally recognized private social standards, it is clear that MPS-SQ is the most comprehensive standard setting the strictest regulations. FFP is almost the same as MPS-SQ and uses this standard as a benchmark. The only difference is that FFP does not make explicit reference to wage deductions whereas MPS-SQ does.

ETI differs from both standards in the sense that this standard is less comprehensive. It comprises nine principles which are based on core ILO and related Conventions. This standard does not mention anything about paid leave nor about the necessity of a women's committee. It is less detailed with regards to criteria on health and safety. Moreover ETI's definition of child labour is less strict than MPS-SQ and FFP. They consider the local minimum age law which is set at 14 years of age appropriate because it is in accordance to developing country exceptions under ILO Convention 138.

With regards to EHPEA's Code of Practice it is clear that the minimum bronze level which is necessary for flower farms to be able to export their flowers, follows to a large extent the Ethiopian labour law. Criteria set on wages and paid leave are copied from the labour law. In addition, the bronze level is less strict when it comes to monitoring workers' health and safety because it is limited to personnel handling pesticides. The silver level of EHPEA's Code of Practice on the other hand includes requirements which are already more equivalent to the content of the internationally recognized standards. With the exception of paid leave which is still set at 2 weeks rather than 3 weeks, it is similar to the criteria set by MPS-SQ.

Hence, from the analysis of the different criteria summarized in table 2 it follows that the horizontal governance systems (Ethiopian labour law and EHPEA's minimum Code of Practice Bronze) are less strict than the vertical governance systems (ILO Conventions, MPS-SQ, ETI, FFP) in terms of setting working conditions.

Table 2. Working conditions set by different governance systems

	ILO Conv.	Labour law	MPS-SQ	ETI	FFP	CoP bronze	CoP silver
Wage							
Wages shall, at the least, meet national legal or industry (CBA) minimum standards, whichever is higher, and always be sufficient to meet basic needs and to provide some discretionary income	110	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
Pay should be in cash		No ⁱⁱ	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Information on wages shall be available to workers in an understandable and detailed form		No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Minor	Minor
deductions are not to be used as disciplinary measure		No ⁱⁱⁱ	Yes	Yes	No	Yes ^{iv}	Yes
Contract							
All employees must be issued with a written employment contract which is legally binding		Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
A person may be employed for a probation period which shall not exceed 45 consecutive days		Yes	No	No	No	Yes	Yes
A contract of employment may be concluded for a definite period in the case of seasonal works	110, 170	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Work hours and overtime							
Normal hours of work shall not exceed eight hours a day or 48 hours a week		Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Overtime shall be voluntary and not exceed 12 hours per week; is compensated at a premium rate		Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Paid leave							
Workers must have at least 3 weeks of paid leave per year		No ^v	Yes	No	Yes	No ^{vi}	No ^{vii}
Healthy work environment							
Companies shall comply with internationally recognized health and safety standards	170	No	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
There is a coherent policy for Occupational Safety, Health and Working Environment	155	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
There should be regular monitoring of workers' health and safety		Yes	Yes	No	Yes	No ^{viii}	Yes
All employees have access to drinking water, clean toilets, suitable rooms with eating and storage facilities		No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Work clothing							
The company must supply its employees, free of charge, with suitable clean working clothes that, preferably, are to be washed by the company in order to avoid contamination in the workers house		Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Child labour							
No workers under the age of 15 years shall be employed	182, 138	No ^k	Yes	No ^x	Yes	Yes	Yes
Young persons under 18 shall not be employed at night or under hazardous and unhealthy conditions	184	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Trade union							
The rights of all workers to form and join trade unions and bargain collectively, shall be recognized	87, 98	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Workers representatives shall not be subject of discrimination and shall have access to all workplaces necessary to enable them to carry out their representation functions	135	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Women committee							
The farm should encourage the election and implementation of a Workers Committee for Women, whose role is defined by gender related issues		No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes

ANALYSING THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE GOVERNANCE SYSTEMS IN THE FARMS

After comparing the social criteria set by the different governance systems, we now continue by analysing if and how the five flower farms in this study implemented these nine criteria. Table 3 gives an overview of the five farms and the private social standards (PSS) these farms were certified with. At the time of the fieldwork, two of the flower farms were already certified for more than three years with at least one PSS, one flower farm had recently^{xi} been certified with MPS-SQ and the other two flower farms had not adopted any internationally recognized PSS. All five farms of course had to follow the Ethiopian labour law and the bronze level of the Code of Practice to be permitted to export.

Table 3. Description of farms

		Start of operation	Number of workers	Internationally recognized PSS?	Since when recognized?
<i>Certified farms</i>	Farm A	2005	400-450	MPS-SQ FFP ETI	2010 2011 2013
	Farm B	2005	390-455	MPS-SQ	2010
	Farm C	2005	300-340	MPS-SQ	2013
<i>Recently certified farm</i>	Farm C	2005	300-340	MPS-SQ	2013
<i>Non-certified farms</i>	Farm D	2006	260-330	-	
	Farm E	2008	220-250	-	

To analyse the nine social criteria in the flower farms, we built on several of the data collected for the thesis: the survey, the focus groups and the interviews with managers. We surveyed about 75 workers per farm. These workers performed different job functions within the farm, including packaging, grading, spraying, crop maintenance and supervising. The survey included, among other things, questions related to the nine working conditions criteria examined in this study. In total we surveyed 375 workers and after removal of uncompleted questionnaires, we obtained a final sample of 358 cases (237 women, 121 men). To help to interpret the empirical data, we conducted six focus group discussions: one per farm and one combining workers from all five farms. These focus groups only targeted female workers and included 4 to 14 participants. During these discussions we compared working conditions between farms and other job opportunities in the area to understand which working conditions really mattered and to gain insights into workers' perceptions about these conditions. All focus groups were recorded and transcribed.

Throughout the result section we also draw on quotes from managements' in-depth interviews, which we conducted in June-July 2013 on each of the five flower farms. These quotes serve the purpose of illustrating how labour turnover sometimes affected the implementation of the criteria set. Each of

these five interviews took approximately one to one hour and a half, and was recorded and transcribed. In the following sub-sections, we now turn our attention to explain each of the nine social criteria and how these have been implemented in the certified farms, recently certified farm and non-certified farms.

Wage

All farms paid similar wages to their workers. On average a monthly wage was between 550 and 600 birr/ month (23 to 25 euro/ month). The main reason we found such similar wages across both certified and non-certified farms can be attributed to the high levels of labour turnover that these farms were facing: in order to reduce internal competition, flower farms had entered into unofficial wage agreements which included paying comparable wages and increasing wage rates on the same day.

This oral, informal collusion at cluster level however kept wages low. Around 84% of our respondents answered that their wages were not enough to meet their basic needs, meaning that their wages were not enough for the worker and his/her dependents to feed, clothe and house themselves. During the focus groups, women explained that because their wages were too low, they had to restrict their needs. Examples of how to do so included buying second hand clothing instead of new clothing, buying cosmetics or shoes only twice or three times a year, renting a cheap house and sharing one room with two or three people. Others said they were living on a 'credit after credit' basis.

“When we start working, we didn't expect the money to cover all our expenses. At least, the money would cover half of our expenses and our family would support the other half of our expenses. For example, for me the money I get paid is only for home rent and for school for my kid” (focus group participant, certified farm)

“When I think of the work and the money I get paid, sometimes I'll get angry. This is my first work and when I think of it, it's true that I deserve 50 birr a day. But we don't have a choice” (focus group participant, certified farm)

Moreover, the survey data and focus groups highlighted that workers did not understand how their wages were structured. Besides their formal wage, they also received bonuses and penalties for a variety of reasons, making it very hard for workers to understand why their wages differed from month to month. Reasons given by workers why they sometimes received a bonus included: hard working, no absenteeism (attendance bonus), having met targets (productivity bonus) and working during holidays (overtime premium rate). Reasons given by workers for being disciplined in the form of a wage deduction included: absenteeism, losing or breaking material, laziness and having a poor record system. All farms seemed to have adopted this complex carrot-stick approach, with the exception of

one farm. This farm, which was a not-certified farm, did not believe in bonuses but only foresaw in penalties. Though managers argued that a carrot-stick approach was the best way to motivate workers, our findings suggest the need to make the wage structure more transparent and more simple than it was at the time of our data collection.

“If you're absent, you know that you'll get a reduction of wage, it's obvious. But this one is... they'll say sometimes it's the fault of the computer. That it [the computer] made a mistake. For example, we get 530 birr a month, but sometimes we'll get 500 or 490 birr. We will just talk to each other that they reduced our salary, but we won't say anything to the management, because you don't have any choice” (focus group participant, not-certified farm).

Contract

The majority of the workers we interviewed (68%) had a permanent contract. The main reason explaining why workers did not have a permanent contract was because they were still in their probation period (which has a duration of 45 days). However, we did find some small differences between certified and non-certified farms. In the two certified farms, it was shown that only 10% of the workers we interviewed, were employed on a temporary basis whereas over 28% of the workers in the newly certified and non-certified farms were employed on a temporary basis. Moreover, whereas all workers in the old certified farms received a permanent contract after their probation period, this did not appear to be the case in the newly certified and non-certified farms where we found several workers stating they still were employed on a temporary basis even after having worked there for more than two or three months.

At first sight it may seem surprising that so many workers were hired on a permanent basis given the seasonal nature of flower production, however there are two reasons explaining our high figures. First, data collection took place in the low season and so there was no demand for seasonal labour. Second, in a context marked by high levels of labour turnover, giving workers a permanent contract is easily done. Managers are counting on the fact that workers will voluntarily leave their wage work after a given period. The fact that managers even admitted to hire more labour than was actually necessary, really shows that workers were considered a ‘disposable good’, having an expiration date, regardless of the type of contract they were employed on:

“At least 40% are permanent, stable here. Then, about 30% you can take them, either next year they will go in the 40% or they will join the turnover. 30% is always [on the move]...” (manager, certified farm)

What is more is that this criteria which aims to give workers a sense of job security, though well-intended, had a undesirable side effect of inducing labour turnover. Workers who received a permanent contract after 45 days, saw their wage decline because they suddenly had to start paying taxes and pensions contributions. Because the wages were already considered extremely low, several workers didn't like this and therefore they continuously tried to move in and out of the farm, juggling between short term assignments like road construction and their flower farm job:

“And then, maybe by that time they will come here to work for us and then when they get that advantage [of finding a short term alternative job opportunity] again, they will return back. And then also in the government policy, also they have to pay pension. So if they become permanent, after the 45 days, it means the wage will include to pay pension for them. It is the government regulation, we have to adapt! So they don't want. They don't want to pay for a pension [and because of this they leave]” (manager, certified farm)

Work hours and overtime

A regular working day consists of 8 working hours and a maximum of 2 overtime hours. Workers are allowed to work six days in a week and need to have one day off. In general, respondents answered they worked 48 hours per week. One limitation of our survey was that it did not ask workers about the maximum amount of overtime they did in one week, so we do not have any information on this. Nonetheless, our survey results did show that working overtime was mostly considered voluntary and that it was compensated at a premium rate. The majority of workers (70%) strongly agreed with the statement 'I like to work overtime'. Our focus group discussions revealed that this was because workers heavily relied on overtime to make ends meet. So with regards to working hours and overtime all farms were complying with the regulations. However it needs to be mentioned that not all female workers were enthusiastic about having a work week of 48 hours, possibly topped with 12 hours overtime a week:

“One thing that makes me really upset about [certified farm] is working very late night time. Because it is not safe when we walk home after the bus. Especially for ladies, it's really dangerous to walk home late at night. And after they get home, they have to cook and do other things; so they will go to sleep very late and wake up early to go to work” (focus group participant, certified farm)

“That one day is never enough. And six days, in which you have to stand the whole day; and only one day you get off, and you have to go to the market and visit people, so it's not enough to get some rest” (focus group participant, not-certified farm)

Paid leave

Probably the most pronounced difference between certified and non-certified farms was in terms of paid leave. Whereas workers employed in certified farms stated they received 3 weeks of paid leave, workers employed in the two non-certified farms indicated they only had 2 weeks of holidays. Here it is clear that non-certified farms simply followed the Ethiopian labour law, while certified farms adhered to the criteria set by the social standards. This paid leave was also very much appreciated by workers in the certified farms because it gave them the opportunity to sometimes be absent without having a deduction in wage:

“I don't think [certified farm] has a bad side. It's my first farm where I started working, and one thing that I like about [this farm] is that if we are absent with a reason, we can change that day to our annual leave” (focus group participant, certified farm)

Managers of certified farms also indicated that these three weeks of paid leave was an important tool to reduce absenteeism. Whereas in the past many workers became demotivated of having lost their attendance bonus when having been absent for one work day, or fired after having been absent for five consecutive days, they were now taught to inform their supervisors in advance and to use the paid leave to cover their absenteeism:

“Sometimes most of the absenteeism is on a market days. In Debre Zeyit that is on Saturday and on Wednesday, yeah. You will find some absenteeism on that. But comparing to the previous, now it is better. Because we started teaching them a lot. We have a training officer. Every supervisor is training his people on duties and responsibilities, policies of the company. And they get to know that one. They have leave of maybe 21 days. They did not use it, they were just being absent without informing you. Once they were absent, they lost their wage, they lost their advantage. But now they are more aware of this policy. They have the right to ask leave and so absenteeism is now getting low” (manager, certified farm)

“They will inform you to make the leave. And mostly they will take the leave. Absenteeism, no. absenteeism nowadays is low. Only in one department, mostly they are processing their passport, you know to go to Arab countries, for such things they will not take a leave. They will be afraid that you know and as such... such mentality” (manager, certified farm)

Healthy work environment

With regards to the first two criteria on health and safety issues (corresponding to ILO Conventions 170 and 55) our data does not provide the necessary information to be able to evaluate these criteria.

However throughout all focus group discussions, examples were given indicating that safety regulations sometimes were bended or violated when there was time pressure:

“If there are a lot of flower to harvest, they'll give them only ten minutes [for re-entering the greenhouses]” (focus group participant, certified farm)

“Long time ago, I got in a fight with my supervisor, because I said I won't go in because the chemicals were not dry yet. But the others got in. Then they called me to the office and they took some money from my wage” (focus group participant, certified farm)

With regards to the third criteria, our survey data revealed that workers in certified farms received medical check-ups whereas workers employed in non-certified farms did not. In the recently certified farm the number of workers having received a medical check-up was however substantially lower than in the other certified farms. Throughout the focus group discussions it became also clear that workers in certified farms received better health care than workers employed in non-certified farms when they got sick or when there was a work-related accident:

“[In the certified farm] they 'll take us to the hospital immediately if we get sick. And there is no one who will abuse your rights and all workers know there rights and duties. And also, after spraying in [the certified farm] you don't have to work. You have to wait some time. But in [the not-certified farm], you have to work” (focus group participant, certified farm)

“[In the not-certified farm] when we get sick, they'll take us to hospital, but they have only a limited budget for healthcare. So we get only painkillers. They give you a paper and when you take that paper to the hospital, they know that it is credit and that they can only give you painkillers and paracetamol” (focus group participant, not-certified farm)

More specifically with regards to these medical examinations, both the Ethiopian labour law and social standards expect that the flower farms arranged a medical examination of newly employed workers and for those workers engaging in hazardous work. Given the high rate of labour turnover however, this brought in an extra cost to flower farm operations:

“Look, with our turnover, they ask medical check-up upon employment. Okay, I can do it. It is costly, but I can do it. But how often? Turnover per month is going to be around 35% on average for the last year. 35, you employ them, check him, next month he's out” (manager, certified farm)

To end, based on the observations during field visits to the farms I concluded that workers in certified farms had access to drinking water, toilets, a cafeteria and storage facilities for food and drinks. In the non-certified farms most of this infrastructure was missing. In one not-certified farm there was only

one toilet for the entire pack house whereby workers had to ask for the key to unlock the toilet to the general manager. The general manager explained that this was to avoid sexual harassment taking place in the restrooms.

Work clothing

In terms of work clothing there was a large difference between certified and non-certified farms. In all three certified farms the majority of workers received overalls and gloves. Workers employed in the greenhouses sometimes also received boots. Workers employed in the non-certified farms however often just received gloves:

“They [workers employed in certified farm] have overall clothing, and everything is complete. They have gloves. But in our farm [non-certified] we only have gloves and we work with our own clothes” (focus group participant, not-certified farm)

In four out of the five flower farms, all sprayers received an overall, gloves, boots and respirators. In the non-certified farm which was breaching this criteria, sprayers only received gloves and a mask. Everyone (including sprayers, greenhouse and pack house workers) who received work clothing had to wash the clothing themselves.

Work clothing was one of the major points that workers complained about. Our survey data shows that there was a gap between workers thinking they needed work clothing (75% strongly agreed with the statement ‘I need protective work clothing during my job’) and workers who actually received work clothing (only 63% received work clothing). During the focus group discussions, several workers complained that their own clothing became dirty and wet while working, or that the thorns snagged their clothing. Moreover they complained that they didn’t got soap to wash their clothing.

Child labour

Whereas the Ethiopian labour law and ETI prescribe that workers from the age of 14 years can be employed, all other governance systems prohibit the employment of workers under the age of 15 years. Hence, as flower farms need to adhere to at least the bronze level of the Code of Practice to be able to export their flowers and ornamentals, one can expect that there are no workers under the age of 15 working in the flower farms. Our survey sample however counted two child workers (12 and 14 years old). Though this does not guarantee that these are very big exceptions, we do find it appropriate to nuance this non-compliance found both in a recently certified and in a non-certified farm. Both children were still school-going and both of them reported the highest intention to leave the farm. This suggests that they were approaching their work in the flower farm as a student job and that they were planning on returning to school once the academic year started again.

With regards to the employment of young persons under 18, all certified farms hired from the age of sixteen (with the exception of the child worker of 12 years old) and onwards while non-certified farms hired from the age of fifteen and onwards (with the exception of the child worker of 14 years old). None of these workers however worked at night or were employed as sprayers. The motivation of certified farms to only start hiring at the age of 16 was that some of them had finished school at that age, while all 15 year olds were still supposed to attend school to finish their secondary education.

Trade union

When focusing solely on the criteria set out by different governance systems to regulate workers' freedom of association and collective bargaining, it could be concluded that certified farms complied with this in practice. In all certified farms there are workers being a member of the trade union which indicates that the rights of all workers to form and join trade unions and bargain collectively, are recognized and workers representatives have access to all workplaces necessary to enable them to carry out their representation functions. A limitation of the workers' survey is that it did not capture questions related to possible discrimination of workers representatives or members, making it hard to evaluate this condition. Trade union rights in the non-certified farms however show an entirely different picture. In one farm there was no union established while in the other farm, management strongly opposed the union. However as will be discussed in the third article on the impediments to workplace unionism, all existing unions were facing tremendous difficulties and were lacking serious bargaining power.

Women committee

Four out of five farms had a women committee established. Yet, the level of awareness amongst female workers of its existence differed between the farms. In the old certified farms, half of the respondents knew there was a women committee. In the newly certified, 33% of the respondents were aware of this committee whereas only 22% of the respondents in the non-certified farm knew that there was a women committee. Low levels of awareness may be attributed to the high rotation of workers. Regardless of these low levels of awareness, this women committee did appear to be useful for gender related issues:

Moderator: "if you have a problem, can you talk to her [responsible of women committee] easily and can she change anything or help you?"

Respondent: "Yes, for example, when I gave birth, she convinced the management that I could come on the second bus at 8 a.m." (focus group participant, certified farm)

Summary of the nine social criteria

Table 4 summarizes the working conditions set by the different governance systems and shows whether the different farms (certified, recently certified and non-certified farms) complied with the criteria set by the different standards (yes/no). Where it was considered relevant to show differences in levels of non-compliances, a distinction was made between ‘minor non-compliance’ and ‘major non-compliance’. An * means that the farm was not in compliance with the strict regulations set by the private social standards, but that they were complying with the less strict regulations set by the Ethiopian government.

Our findings suggest that certified farms indeed complied with the criteria of social standards. The findings also suggest that there may be a learning curve: whereas the older certified farms seemed to comply entirely with private social standards, we did encounter some violations of standard criteria in the newly certified farm. Given that standard criteria were in several aspects stricter than national regulations, certified farms performed better in terms of social conditions than non-certified farms. More specifically, we found better conditions in the certified farms in terms of job security, healthy work environment, paid leave and work clothing.

Non-certified farms only had to comply to the Ethiopian labour law and the bronze level of EHPEA’s Code of Practice, both of which are very similar in terms of content. In the non-certified farms we did identify some breaches of these regulations. In these farms, workers often lacked work clothing and hadn’t received a medical check-up upon employment. Some of them were also employed on a daily contract, even after their probation period of 45 days. In one of the non-certified farms there was also no trade union nor was there a women committee. There are several potential explanations for these non-compliances. One explanation is that the Ethiopian government does not have the means to enforce these regulations (Amengual, 2010). It has often been argued that private social standards are in response to government’s failure to regulate foreign investments because they lack the resources to do so (Locke et al., 2009). Another explanation could be that the Ethiopian government is reluctant to punish investors for not complying with the law while they are still ‘starting up’ their businesses. The Ethiopian government has made tremendous efforts to attract flower farms, promising them abundant labour supplies and much lower wages than other flower producing countries (Gebreyesus & Sonobe, 2012). Hence, it could be that the government doesn’t want to scare off current and future investors. A final explanation could be that some of the criteria are not considered a priority by the government. For instance, trade unions or women committees are probably not much valued by the Ethiopian government given that this government has tried to silence its own civil society in recent years (Bader, 2013).

Table 4. Working conditions set by different governance systems

	Certified farms		Recent certified farm	Non-certified farms
Wage				
Wages shall, at the least, meet national legal or industry (CBA) minimum standards, whichever is higher, and always be sufficient to meet basic needs and to provide some discretionary income	No*	No*	No*	No*
Pay should be in cash	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Information to wages shall be available to workers in an understandable and detailed form	No*	No*	No*	No*
Deductions are not to be used as disciplinary measure	No*	No*	No*	No*
Contract				
All employees must be issued with a written employment contract which is legally binding	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
A person may be employed for a probation period which shall not exceed 45 consecutive days	Yes	No	No	No
A contract of employment may be concluded for a definite period in the case of seasonal works	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Work hours and overtime				
Normal hours of work shall not exceed eight hours a day or 48 hours a week	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Overtime shall be voluntary and not exceed 12 hours per week; is compensated at a premium rate	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Paid leave				
Workers must have at least 3 weeks of paid leave per year	Yes	Yes	Yes	No*
Healthy work environment				
Companies shall comply with internationally recognized health and safety standards	-	-	-	-
There is a coherent policy for Occupational Safety, Health and Working Environment	-	-	-	-
There should be regular monitoring of workers' health and safety	Yes	No, minor	No, minor	No, major
All employees have access to drinking water, clean toilets, suitable rooms with eating and storage facilities	Yes	Yes	Yes	No*
Work clothing				
The company must supply its employees, free of charge, with suitable clean working clothes that, preferably, are to be washed by the company in order to avoid contamination in the workers house	No, minor	No, minor	No, minor	No, major
Child labour				
No workers under the age of 15 years shall be employed	Yes	No, minor	No, minor	No*
Young persons under 18 shall not be employed at night or under hazardous and unhealthy conditions	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Trade union				
The rights of all workers to form and join trade unions and bargain collectively, shall be recognized	Yes	Yes	Yes	No, major
Workers representatives shall not be subject of discrimination and shall have access to all workplaces necessary to enable them to carry out their representation functions	Yes	Yes	Yes	No*
Women committee				
The farm should encourage the election and implementation of a Workers Committee for Women, whose role is defined by gender related issues	Yes	Yes	Yes	No*

When there is an * it means that the farm is adhering to the Ethiopian labour law

ⁱ Riisgaard (2011) identified 20 social and environmental standards in cut flowers. These standards differ in geographical scope, origins and structure. Not all of these standards can be found in Ethiopia. Those that can be found in Ethiopia include: MPS-ABC, MPS-SQ, FFP, ETI, FLO, GlobalGAP. In this study we only focus on the three most popular private and social schemes regulating working conditions (MPS-SQ, FFP and ETI).

ⁱⁱ Payment in kind is possible as long as it does not exceed 30% of wage paid in cash

ⁱⁱⁱ Except where it is provided otherwise by law or collective agreement or work rules or in accordance with a court order or a written agreement of the worker. The amount in aggregate that may be deducted at any one time, from the worker's wage shall in no case exceed one-third of his monthly wages

^{iv} Follows the Ethiopian labour law

^v Workers must have at least 2 weeks of paid leave per year

^{vi} Follows the Ethiopian labour law

^{vii} Follows the Ethiopian labour law

^{viii} Only health of personnel handling pesticides must be monitored

^{ix} It is prohibited to employ persons under 14 years of age

^x Follows the Ethiopian labour law

^{xi} This farm was certified six months before the data collection took place

ARTICLE 1

Predicting Job Satisfaction and Workers' Intentions to Leave at the bottom of the High Value Agricultural Chain: Evidence from the Ethiopian Cut Flower Industry

Abstract. While there is a large body of research focusing on working conditions in labour intensive industries, none has yet considered how workers themselves perceive their own working conditions. This article draws on a sample of workers from the cut flower sector industry in Ethiopia to examine the extent to which workers are satisfied with their jobs and to explore the relationship between job satisfaction and intention to leave. Results suggest that a positive evaluation of extrinsic organizational rewards (wage, job security and healthy environment) contributes to workers' job satisfaction. Dissatisfied workers report higher intentions to leave their job in the flower farms. In addition to low levels of job satisfaction, having alternative livelihood strategies is a key determining factor in the intention to leave. Interestingly, being a member of an informal savings net organized at the work floor mitigates the intention to leave. The article ends with some implications for managers and policy makers, along with limitations and suggestions for future research.

Based on:

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INTRODUCTION

Globalization and global competition has led to a relocation of low technology, labour intensive industries towards countries where labour is cheaper (Scott, 2006). These industries are often referred to as engines of growth in developing countries, since they perform well in terms of job creation and generating foreign earnings (Scott, 2006; Ulrich, 2014). At the same time however, there is a growing concern that the contributions these labour intensive industries make to development are highly uneven distributed within these countries as the workers themselves often face long working hours for low wages under poor working conditions (Hale & Opondo, 2005; Riisgaard, 2009).

Past research has focused on the social and human consequences for workers employed in these industries. These studies mainly used objective measures of job quality in attempts to critically evaluate current working conditions (Hale & Opondo, 2005), analysing the existing disparities between current work practices and benchmarks for working conditions that are framed in several certification schemes, codes of conducts and in labour regulations (Barrientos & Smith, 2007; Locke, Amengual, & Mangla, 2009; Reynolds, 2012; Riisgaard, 2011; Yu, 2008) and researching the potential of different actors (including labour unions, local NGOs and accreditation bodies) to improve current working conditions (Lund-Thomsen & Nadvi, 2010; Riisgaard, 2009, 2011). To date, what is missing in this field of research is any inclusion of workers' own perceptions about their working conditions; how workers themselves evaluate the quality of their working life.

We consider this an important research gap in literature on working conditions at the bottom of global value chains, especially because several papers have demonstrated a clear link between workers' levels of job satisfaction and labour market behaviour (Mobley, 1977; Mueller & Price, 1990). Workers with high levels of job satisfaction are less likely to quit (Aguiar Do Monte, 2012; Jiang, Baker, & Frazier, 2009), tend to show positive workplace behaviour and perform better (Ellickson & Logsdon, 2001). Conversely, low levels of job satisfaction result in higher absenteeism and labour turnover rates (Aletraris, 2010; Lee & Bruvold, 2003; Linz & Semykina, 2012). To our knowledge, the theorised link between job satisfaction and voluntary labour turnover has not yet been empirically examined in the context of labour intensive industries where low skilled workers have few alternative job opportunities to turn to.

This paper draws on the cut flower industry in Ethiopia, a sector chosen as it exhibits the key characteristics of a labour intensive industry. This paper addresses two research questions. What are the determinants of job satisfaction in cut flower farms in Ethiopia? And, does job satisfaction influence workers' intentions to leave their job? This study is unique as it directly investigates workers' own judgments about labour conditions at the bottom of a high value agricultural chain (in this case for

roses). In a country where agriculture provides work to many households and contributes significantly to export earnings, it is highly relevant for employers and policy makers alike to consider job satisfaction levels and quitting behaviour.

From an employers' perspective, this study may offer valuable information about workers' labour market behaviour. Labour intensive industries are mostly part of buyer-driven value chains which means that key decisions about delivery, cost and quality of the products are taken by large retailers (Dolan & Humphrey, 2000). Adherence to these external requirements is decisive for companies inclusion within the chain, but requires a steady workforce, willing to work long hours and capable of providing high quality produce within specified delivery times (Riisgaard, 2009). Having satisfied workers with positive job attitudes (that is to say a steady and disciplined workforce) is a key ingredient in meeting these goals.

From the perspective of development policy, our findings highlight the importance of having policies that do not limit themselves to job creation as it would be a too narrow approach. Job satisfaction has been recognised to be an important component of individual well-being (Green, 2010; OECD, 2013; Sousa-Poza & Sousa-Poza, 2000). Hence, policy makers need to take into account both the objective (externally evaluated) and the subjective (as perceived by workers) quality of the jobs provided, but the latter is under-researched for workers at the bottom of agricultural value chains. Understanding what makes people (dis)satisfied with their jobs should be central to any employment-oriented development policy.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

This section introduces the theoretical considerations that underpin our research. First, we review the literature on job satisfaction and its determinants and we contextualize these theoretical underpinnings by applying them to the Ethiopian cut flower industry. Second, building from human resource management we explore the link between job satisfaction and labour turnover/ decisions about quitting. We combine these insights with literature on livelihood strategies to identify the alternatives that workers have, which may play an influential role in their decision about quitting.

Job satisfaction

Job satisfaction has been defined in different ways, from the degree to which someone likes his/her job (Spector, 1997, p. 2), to the degree of fit between actual job rewards and workers expected job rewards (Clark, Oswald, & Warr, 1996), to job satisfaction as a positive (or negative) evaluative judgment one makes about one's job or job situation (Weiss, 2002, p. 6). Implicit in all definitions is

the importance of on the one hand affect or feeling, and on the other hand cognition or thinking (Lan, Okechuku, Zhang, & Cao, 2013; Saari & Judge, 2004).

Much research has attempted to predict job satisfaction. Theory explaining the determinants of job satisfaction can be categorized into content and process theories. Content theories assume that all individuals have needs and values which need to be met for employees to be satisfied with their job. Content theories include Maslow's (1954) need hierarchy theory and Herzberg's two-factor theory (Herzberg, Mausner, and Snyderman, 1958). Process theories on the other hand, attach less importance to the role of needs, and focus on the overall or cognitive process leading to job (dis)satisfaction. Process theories include expectancy (Vroom, 1964) and equity theories (Adams, 1963).

Both needs and content perspectives agree that job characteristics are the most important predictors of job satisfaction. We separate job characteristics into extrinsic rewards and intrinsic rewards (Aletraris, 2010). Extrinsic rewards include work aspects not directly associated with the job activity itself, which are more a by-product of the work (Tietjen & Myers, 1998). They occur as a consequence of job performance. They include both organizational and social rewards (Mottaz, 1985). The organizational dimension covers those rewards that are provided by the organization to motivate task performance while the social dimension covers those rewards that are derived from interacting with others in the workplace (Mulinge & Mueller, 1998).

By contrast, intrinsic rewards are said to be related with the job activity itself (Aletraris, 2010). They satisfy a workers' immaterial needs by allowing for self-expression, giving a worker the feeling that they accomplish something worthwhile on the job (Linz & Semykina, 2012). Both sets of rewards are considered important in predicting job satisfaction (Abdulla, Djebarni, & Mellahi, 2011; Mottaz, 1985).

The aim of this study is to examine the determinants of job satisfaction among workers in the Ethiopian cut flower industry. In the following sub-section, we review how past studies on working conditions in the cut flower value chain have evaluated the extrinsic and intrinsic rewards associated with these jobs. Based on this discussion and the theoretical background, we then develop the hypotheses.

Job satisfaction in the Ethiopian cut flower industry

Labour conditions in high value agricultural chains have been subject to much criticism. This is especially true for the cut flower industry which has been regularly confronted with NGO campaigns, especially around Valentine's Day, demanding better labour conditions for workers in the South (Riisgaard, 2009).

Cut flower value chains are increasingly organised along vertical south-north lines (Melese & Helmsing, 2010). Producing countries are mainly situated nearby the equator, while consumers are mainly found in more affluent markets in the northern hemisphere. Flowers are a non-edible, perishable product and their production follows a seasonal demand. The demand for flowers peaks during western festivities such as Valentine's Day, Mother's Day and Easter, while the demand drops during the summer period in the northern hemisphere (Hale & Opondo, 2005).

Because of these features the labour conditions within the industry are quite distinct. Extrinsic organizational rewards are generally limited. Workers are often hired on a seasonal or even less secure basis (Riisgaard, 2011) and wages are considered to be low (Hale & Opondo, 2005). Workers in the Ethiopian cut flower industry earn between US\$0.78 and 1.67 a day, less than in other comparable flower producing countries (Melese & Helmsing, 2010). The industry makes intensive use of chemicals and fertilisers, more than are used on edible food products. Workers are often exposed to these agrochemicals which can pose a health hazard on them (Hale & Opondo, 2005; Riisgaard, 2011).

By contrast the extrinsic social rewards are said to be positive, especially for female workers who make up the workforce in most agricultural chains (Barrientos, Dolan, & Tallontire, 2003). Most job functions (60-70%) are taken up by women as they are said to be more productive, more skilled at handling delicate flowers with care and more socially flexible than their male counterparts (Barrientos et al., 2003). Much research has been done on the 'feminization' of this workforce. One theme to emerge from these studies is that women may have positive experiences of the new social relationships that come about through being in touch with other female colleagues or through committees organised at the workplace (for example a women's committee, a labour union) (Friedemann-Sánchez, 2006; Kabeer, 2002).

The intrinsic rewards appear to be mixed. On one hand, working in flower farms involves monotonous, repetitive work which requires little or no qualifications. The daily tasks for women consists of picking, sorting and packing the flowers while men are hired for jobs such as spraying, and maintaining and constructing the greenhouses (Melese & Helmsing, 2010). Equally, for most workers, it seems that this is their first experience with formal employment. Research has shown that wage employment in high value agricultural chains can be empowering and can increase women's bargaining power (Friedemann-Sánchez, 2006). As such these workers may well have a sense of accomplishing something and doing something worthwhile.

Following the lines of reasoning set out above, we might expect flower farm workers to evaluate the individual work facets related to intrinsic rewards and extrinsic social rewards as positive, but to report low levels of *overall* job satisfaction. Previous studies have shown that the importance of extrinsic

organizational rewards should not be underestimated. In the absence of decent wages or a sense of job security, low levels of job satisfaction are often found. This is because extrinsic organizational rewards are related to satisfying one's basic needs and if these are not fulfilled, the other rewards may seem to matter less. Consequently, when basic needs such as income, job security and safety at the work place are met, workers will start to strive for more sophisticated needs related to extrinsic social rewards and intrinsic rewards (Centers & Bugental, 1966; Gruenberg, 1980).

Therefore, the following hypotheses have been developed:

H1: Job satisfaction is positively related to extrinsic organizational rewards

H2: Extrinsic rewards moderate the positive relationship between intrinsic rewards and job satisfaction, such that when extrinsic rewards are low these rewards are not related to job satisfaction but when extrinsic rewards are high they are positively related to job satisfaction

H3: Extrinsic rewards moderate the positive relationship between extrinsic social rewards and job satisfaction such that when extrinsic rewards are low these extrinsic social rewards are not related to job satisfaction but when extrinsic rewards are high, extrinsic social rewards are positively related to job satisfaction

Intention to leave

In the second part of the study we explore the link between job satisfaction and workers' intention to leave. Many scholars have argued that job satisfaction directly influences absenteeism, levels of stress, individual wellbeing and general life satisfaction (Aletraris, 2010; Lee & Bruvold, 2003; Linz & Semykina, 2012). Previous research has shown that workers' dissatisfaction often results in higher probability of quitting one's job (Mobley, 1977; Mobley, Griffeth, Hand, & Meglino, 1979). In the absence of high levels of job satisfaction, one might expect high rates of labour turnover, here defined as voluntary leaving a job. Hence, research in this area leads to the following hypothesis:

H4: Job satisfaction is negatively related to workers' intentions to leave

However, it has also been noted that the link between job satisfaction and the quitting decision is complex and influenced by labour market variables (such as the availability of alternative job opportunities) (Lee, Mitchell, Wise, & Fireman, 1996). Labour turnover is generally seen as a consequence of low job satisfaction combined with alternative job opportunities that are perceived by an individual worker as having a higher utility (Jiang et al., 2009; Lambert, Hogan, & Barton, 2001; Mobley et al., 1979; Mueller & Price, 1990). While formal alternative job opportunities may be lacking for many of poorly educated workers in Ethiopia, there are other activities that workers can draw upon

to build their livelihoods, and the availability of these may influence their decision to quit their jobs at the flower farm.

The availability of livelihood alternatives and the intention to leave in the Ethiopian context

Households are said to draw on a portfolio of activities and social support capabilities on which they build their livelihoods (Ellis, 1998). The choice and combination of activities differs between households as it is influenced by many different factors such as location, access to assets (for example land), barriers to entry or seasonality. The goal however is the same, to survive and to improve one's standards of living (Barrett, Reardon, & Webb, 2001; Ellis, 1998). The possibility of engaging in such activities can therefore play a role in each and every workers' intention to leave.

Urban and rural workers. The labour force is made up of both rural and urban workers (Mano, Yamano, Suzuki & Matsumoto, 2011). Rural workers come to the farms by foot, while urban workers are bussed in. Most of the rural workers live in households that rely on smallholder farming activities for their income and subsistence (Salami, Kamara & Brixioya, 2010). In the highlands, where the flower farms thrive, smallholder farmers cultivate teff on a seasonal basis (Lemlem, Bishop-Sambook, Puskur & Tesema, 2010). The land is prepared by the men during the rainy season (in June and July) while the women are responsible for weeding from September onwards. Both men and women join in the harvesting: a task which finishes at the end of January (Lemlem, Bishop-Sambook, Puskur & Tesema, 2010). For rural households close to flower farms, a job in these farms may be attractive during those periods when their labour is not needed for their own farming activities. In other words, rural workers have alternative livelihood sources at certain periods of the year which the urban workers do not have. This may influence their intention to leave the flower farm. We hypothesize:

H5: Rural workers report higher intentions to leave than urban workers

Students. A job at a flower farm can also be attractive for students wanting to supplement the household income during the summer holidays. Ethiopia has made substantial improvements in terms of education and is on track to achieve the second Millennium Development Goal related to universal primary education (Wakiaga, Kibret, & Mamuye, 2014). Over the last decade Ethiopian households have increasingly chosen to invest in educating their children as a way of improving their future standard of living. The cut flower industry is a highly codified industry where different certification schemes and codes of conduct set strict social standards (Riisgaard, 2011). As a result, the farms are reluctant to hire workers under the age of 15. However at the end of the school year (at the end of May), many students aged 15 and older may try to find a short term job in the flower farms. Yet, at the end of May the cut flower season is almost over. Because of the low demand for cut flowers during the subsequent months (June until September), flower farms need less or even no temporary workers.

Rather they prefer to hire workers who want to become permanent workers so that they can train these workers during this slack period and turn them into experienced workers by the time there is again a peak demand for flowers (e.g. Christmas period, followed by Valentine's day and Mother's day). Students know that managers are reluctant to hire them and tend to hide they are students only seeking a temporary job. Still, they probably plan to return to their schooling activities at the beginning of September, when school restarts. We hypothesize:

H6: Students report higher intentions to leave than workers who no longer attend school

Social support. Workers at the flower farms have a very specific way of organizing themselves to create social support. They organize informal savings schemes called 'ikub' (sometimes spelled differently as 'iqub' or 'iqqub') at the work unit level (for example a single greenhouse). People can voluntarily join a group which involves committing themselves to making a monthly financial contribution. All contributions are brought together into one 'pot' and the money is distributed by means of a rotation scheme (Baker, 1992). These ikubs are very common in Ethiopian society and have been described as the traditional means of savings (Begashaw, 1978). It implies that you -as a member- trust all the other ikub members and commit yourself for a lengthy period of time: one cannot simply leave the system without having made enough contributions. (Baker, 1992). As such, an ikub binds workers together but also binds them to the farm. Indeed if they want to benefit from an ikub they cannot leave. In other words, it can be said that these workers are embedded in their jobs (Allen, Bryant, & Vardaman, 2010). By job embeddedness we refer to 'a net or a web in which an individual can become stuck' (Mitchell, Holtom, Lee, Sablinski, & Erez, 2001, p. 1104). Because ikub members are linked to other ikub members on the work floor, leaving their job would sever the established links with other ikub members. In line with previous studies on job embeddedness (Allen et al., 2010; Mitchell et al., 2001), we therefore hypothesize:

H7: Ikub members are more embedded in their jobs than non-members and therefore they report lower intentions to leave than non-members

METHODS

Data

The empirical data were collected through worker surveys undertaken in June-July 2013 in five floriculture farms in the Debre Zeit area. The total sample consisted of 375 responses. After removal of uncompleted questionnaires, we obtained a final sample of 358 cases (237 women, 121 men). The total number of flower farms at the time of research was estimated at about 80. Out of these, five farms were selected on the basis of comparabilityⁱ. They were located relatively close to one another. All five farms produced roses destined for export, were rather similar in size and they were all owned by Ethiopian investors. Within each farm, random sampling procedures were used to ensure an adequate representation of on average 75 workers who had different job functions within the farm. These job functions included packaging, grading, spraying, crop maintenance and supervising.

Due to time constraints of the research project, data was collected both on and off farm. We checked whether this biased between people's answers and found both on and off farm surveys to be reliable sources of information. The questionnaire was directly translated from English into Amharic or Oromo by Ethiopian Master's graduates who were trained before the data collection phase began. This training continued throughout the testing phase which lasted three days. At the end of this pilot test, we decided to exclude three survey questions which were meant to test workers' awareness and knowledge of the existence of private social standards because we received a high number of non-responses. The final questionnaire included questions on socio-demographics, working conditions, overall job satisfaction and job rewards.

To enhance the quality of the answers and to reduce common method bias (Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Lee, & Podsakoff, 2003), respondents were assured anonymity at the start of the study. We emphasized that their responses were confidential and that individual responses were not communicated to their employer. We asked respondents to answer the questions as honestly as possible and that there were no right or wrong answers. To end, it was made explicit that their participation was voluntary, that they could choose not to answer a question or even choose to stop the discussion at any time.

In addition, we organised five focus groups with workers, one per farm. The purpose of these focus groups was to obtain a deeper understanding of workers' perceptions of their working life. The focus groups targeted female workers and included between 4 and 14 participants. Each focus group lasted almost two hours and took place on the participants' day off. Focus groups were conducted on the university campus and were held in a separate classroom. This location was chosen because of its proximity to the city centre and because it was a well-known location among the workers. Each focus

group discussion was conducted by a moderator (an Ethiopian female Master's student, fluent in Amharic and Oromo) and assisted by one of the authors of this article. The Ethiopian moderator received training in how to conduct focus groups and at the end of each focus group, both moderators discussed the quality of the discussions and how to potentially improve the next focus group discussion. There was a discussion guide, which was not intended to be strictly followed but to aid the researcher and moderator during the discussions. A range of themes were discussed related to working conditions, workers' aspirations and needs and their perception of their ability to change their working conditions. The focus groups were tape recorded and transcribed into English, and during the focus group discussions the accompanying researcher took extensive notes. The survey data was quantitatively analysed and the focus groups provided qualitative data that enabled a deeper understanding and interpretation of the quantitative results.

Variables

Job satisfaction. There are two approaches to measuring job satisfaction. A single item may be used whereby individuals are asked to evaluate their overall job satisfaction by answering one single question, for example 'how satisfied are you overall with your job, taking all facets into account?' (Scarpello & Campbell, 1983; Sousa-Poza & Sousa-Poza, 2000; Wanous, Reichers, & Hudy, 1997). Alternatively job satisfaction can be constructed as the sum of the levels of satisfaction with specific job facets such as the wage and level of autonomy (Kalleberg, 1977; Skalli, Theodossiou, & Vasileiou, 2008). Several authors (Highhouse & Becker, 1993; Linz & Semykina, 2012) have argued that a single concept of job satisfaction might be preferred to a constructed measure as overall job satisfaction is more than just a combination of different facets. Equally, single-item measures appear to be less likely to be influenced by temporal factors such as today's emotions linked to a particular job facet (for example the evaluation of the job facet 'work load' may vary as a deadline approaches). Following this reasoning, we used a single item measure of job satisfaction in this study. Respondents were asked to answer the question 'How satisfied are you with your overall job, considering all the job's facets?' on a five point Likert scale (ranging from 'very dissatisfied' (1) to 'very satisfied' (5)).

Work environment factors. To identify those job attributes that contribute to job satisfaction, we included 10 aspects of work that are aligned with Herzberg et al. (1959) two-factor theory. We drew on commonly used questions and scales for measuring workers' perceptions. The scales of the variables wage, job security, supervisory support, co-worker support, freedom at work, learning new skills and variation on the job were inspired by the work of Delobelle et al. (2011), the HILDA survey (2012) and Mulinge and Mueller (1998). Where ever possible each work aspect was measured using multiple items. Respondents were asked to rate each item on a five point Likert scale. During the focus

groups, two additional work aspects emerged which were also included in the analysis. The work aspect of a 'healthy environment' was included, as the use of pesticides and chemicals and their potential impact on workers' health was a theme which emerged during each of the focus group discussions and appeared to be a major concern among female workers. This work aspect was measured using a multiple item based on three questions which were rated on a five point Likert scale. Secondly, we included a dichotomous variable 'formal group cohesion' which provides information on whether a respondent is a member of a formal organization such as a labour union, women's committee or another type of committee. Appendix 1 gives a detailed overview of the different constructs for each work aspect.

Demographic factors. Gender, age, educational level, work experience and rural-urban background have been theorised, and empirically shown, to be significant predictors of job satisfaction (Clark, 1997; Hunt & Saul, 1975; Mobley et al., 1979; Schuler, 1973) and/ or voluntary labour turnover (Lambert et al., 2001; Mobley, 1977; Mobley et al., 1979). Hence these five demographic were included and controlled for in this study.

Intention to leave. According to the literature, intent to leave is a good predictor of actual leaving (Jiang et al., 2009; Lambert et al., 2001). Intent to leave is the final cognitive step in the decision making process of quitting one's job (Mobley, 1977). For this reason most studies include the variable that measures one's intention to leave. In our study the variable reflecting one's intention to leave was captured by the statement 'I intend to leave my job in the near future' which was rated on a five point Likert scale (ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5)).

Livelihood activities and social support capabilities. A final area that was measured is the alternative livelihood activities workers have next to working in the flower farm and their social support capabilities. We included the variables 'Are you currently attending school?' (yes = 1/ no = 0), 'where do you live?' (rural = 0/ urban = 1) and 'are you a member of an ikub?' (yes = 1/ no = 0).

Data analysis

The research objectives were analysed using Stata 13.0 software. Due to the ordinal nature of our dependent variable we used an ordered probit model to determine the effects of both work environment and demographic factors on overall job satisfaction. This is a commonly used approach in job satisfaction research (Aguar do Monte, 2012; Carr & Mellizo, 2013; Ferrer-i-Carbonell & Frijters, 2004; Lange, Pacheco, & Shrotryia, 2010; Linz & Semykina, 2012; Litchfield, Reilly, & Veneziani, 2012; Sousa-Poza & Sousa-Poza, 2000).

The basic structure of the model is as follows (Liu & Nunnenkamp, 2011; Violette et al., 2013):

$$\gamma_i^* = X_i\beta + \varepsilon_i$$

$$\gamma_i = \begin{cases} 1 & \text{if } \gamma_i^* \leq \mu_1 \\ 2 & \text{if } \mu_1 < \gamma_i^* \leq \mu_2 \\ 3 & \text{if } \mu_2 < \gamma_i^* \leq \mu_3 \\ 4 & \text{if } \mu_3 \leq \mu_4 \\ 5 & \text{if } \mu_4 < \gamma_i^* \end{cases}$$

Where γ_i^* represents the latent cardinal valuation of job satisfaction of the i^{th} worker, which is grouped into one of the five ordinal response options, γ_i , according to where γ_i^* falls relative to the unobserved cut points $\mu_1 - \mu_3$. X_i is a vector of explanatory variables. β is a vector of the parameters to be estimated and ε_i is the random error term.

The full set of independent variables (X) include the following five subgroups:

$$X_i = (X_i^{\text{extror}}, X_i^{\text{extrsoc}}, X_i^{\text{intr}}, X_i^{\text{demo}}, X_i^{\text{farm}})$$

Where X_i^{extror} refers to the extrinsic organizational rewards, X_i^{extrsoc} to extrinsic social rewards, X_i^{intr} to intrinsic rewards, X_i^{demo} to the demographic characteristics of the worker and X_i^{farm} to the farm's characteristics (see below).

We then used a probit model to identify the determinants of a workers' intention to leave. Because of the ease of interpretation, we decided to assign workers into two categories on the basis of their responses to the item 'I intent to leave my job in the near future'. Those who 'strongly agreed' (5) and 'agreed' (4) to the statement were considered most likely to leave the farm, while those who disagreed with the statement or answered neutral (score 1 to 3) were considered most likely to stay. This is a conservative approach as we considered those who answered 'neutral' were still undecided and therefore less likely to leave the farm, at least in the near future.

There may well be unobserved differences in working conditions between the five farms in the sample and these could explain differences in job satisfaction and intention to leave between the farms, which could, in turn, bias the coefficients of our variables. To rule this out, all the estimations included farm specific dummies. It turned out that including or excluding these dummies did not alter the results, only improving the fit of the models. For conciseness, only the estimations that include the farm specific dummies will be reported.

RESULTS

Descriptive statistics

The descriptive data are summarised in table 1. The respondents' ages ranged from 12 to 60 years oldⁱⁱ, and 69% of the sample were 25 years or younger. Most workers did not receive any education at all or only some primary or secondary education. The length of employment at the flower farms was rather low. On average, respondents had worked on the farm for 18.5 months, and 67% of the respondents indicated they had less than one year of work experience on their respective farms. This is an interesting finding as the Ethiopian labour law prescribes that any worker should receive a permanent contract after working for 45 days. This rule appeared to be followed as 69% of our sample indicated they had a permanent contract. Low levels of work experience therefore indicate that there are high levels of voluntary labour turnover.

In general, our respondents were not particularly satisfied with their jobs. In total, less than half of our respondents (48%) reported to be satisfied overall. With regard to the evaluation of separate job facets we found that extrinsic social rewards were positively scored. However few respondents appeared to be a member of a formal group. This may be partially explained by our respondents' low levels of work experience. Intrinsic rewards -with the exception of 'variation on a job'- also received a relatively high score. Extrinsic organizational rewards of wage and healthy environment were negatively scored, while job security was positively scored. This may be related to most workers receiving a permanent contract after 45 days.

Table 2 summarizes the means, standard deviations and the intercorrelation matrix of our study variables. As none of the correlations are above 0.70, the problem of multicollinearity is low (Nunnally, 1994). Cronbach's α coefficients for the scales in the questionnaire was between 0.69 and 0.84 which indicates high internal reliability for the scales used in this study (see Appendix 1 for detailed overview of the different constructs for each work aspect).

Table 1. Descriptive data for variables (n=358)

	N° of items	Mean	Std. dev.
<i>Dependent variable</i>			
Job satisfaction (1-5)	1	3.36	1.31
Intention to leave (0-1)	1	0.47	0.50
<i>Explanatory variables</i>			
Extrinsic organizational rewards			
Wage (1-5)	3	2.36	1.09
Job security (1-5)	2	3.48	1.23
Healthy environment (1-5)	3	2.95	1.13
Extrinsic social rewards			
Supervisory support (1-5)	3	3.97	0.99
Co-worker support (1-5)	3	4.07	0.97
Formal cohesion (0-1)	3	0.24	0.43
Intrinsic rewards			
Freedom at work (1-5)	1	3.64	1.39
Learning new skills (1-5)	1	3.61	1.45
Variation on the job (1-5)	1	2.94	1.58
<i>Control variables</i>			
Gender (female =1; male =0)	1	0.66	0.47
Age	1	24.1	8.31
No or primary education (0-1)	1	0.55	0.50
Secondary education (0-1)	1	0.39	0.49
Higher education or formal training (0-1)	1	0.06	0.23
Location of living (0= rural; 1= urban)	1	0.81	0.39
Work experience (months)	1	18.5	24.9
Going to school (0-1)	1	0.21	0.41

Table 2. Means, standard deviations and intercorrelation matrix of study variables

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1. Job satisfaction										
2. Intention to leave (0-1)	- 0.28***									
3. Wage satisfaction	0.43***	- 0.12*								
4. Job security	0.30***	- 0.34***	0.20***							
5. Healthy environment	0.37***	- 0.35***	0.38***	0.31***						
6. Supervisory support	0.22***	- 0.16**	0.21***	0.25***	0.23***					
7. Co-worker support	0.14**	- 0.17**	0.09	0.17**	0.12*	0.28***				
8. Formal cohesion	- 0.03	- 0.03	- 0.02	0.13*	- 0.11*	- 0.03	- 0.01			
9. Freedom at work	0.28***	- 0.10	0.32***	0.22***	0.26***	0.26***	0.15**	0.05		
10. Learning new skills	0.13*	- 0.08	0.23***	0.12*	0.07	0.08	0.11*	0.07	0.23***	
11. Variation on the job	0.05	- 0.06	0.04	- 0.12*	- 0.06	- 0.05	0.04	- 0.09	0.13*	0.12*

***, **, * indicate statistical significance at 5%, 1% and 0.1% levels, respectively

Job satisfaction and its determinants

Table 3 shows the results of the ordered probit model which estimates the relative importance of both the work environment and demographic factors on job satisfaction. Results suggest that all three extrinsic organizational rewards were statistically significant predictors of job satisfaction ($p < 0.01$) while none of the extrinsic social rewards or the intrinsic rewards were significant determinants of job satisfaction. Hence, hypothesis 1 which postulated that low levels of job satisfaction was explained by a negative evaluation of extrinsic organizational rewards is supported.

Wage appears to be the most powerful determinant of job satisfaction. As Abdulla et al. (2011) notes, remuneration can mean different things in different contexts. For some it may be a source of recognition, for others it may mean security. We argue that workers in the flower industry put so much emphasis on the wages because of its large impact on their living standards. The industry provides minimum wages that are around the poverty line of 1 dollar a day. Losing this income stream would be devastating for many of these households.

In line with these arguments, job security was found to be an important predictor of job satisfaction. Job *insecurity*, meaning that workers perceive a potential threat to continuity, is known to be an important cause of stress (Heaney, Israel, & House, 1994). For this reason, job security has been found to be one of the work facets that can most often be used to predict job satisfaction (Aletraris, 2010; Clark, 2001). If workers in the cut flower industry lose their job, it may cause additional stress as their wages are considered too low to cope with a shock in their income stream.

A last job attribute that significantly contributed to job satisfaction was a positive perception of the healthy work environment. This did not come as a surprise, as many workers raised concerns about the health hazard implications of being exposed to agrochemicals. They frequently mentioned health problems included skin irritation, headaches and respiratory problems. Focus group participants said that female workers feared not being able to get pregnant if they worked in greenhouses for too long periods and that they had seen male workers fainting while they were spraying.

With regard to the demographic characteristics our results suggest that higher educated workers tended to be less satisfied with their jobs than those who had received any education or only some primary education. These findings are in line with previous studies which have found that job satisfaction is higher among those individuals who are neither undereducated, nor overqualified for the job (Allen & De Weert, 2007; Peiró, Agut, & Grau, 2010). While most jobs provided in the cut flower industry are by nature low skilled, the industry does attract both skilled and unskilled workers. We argue that workers with higher educational levels are less satisfied with their job as these occupations are below their expectations.

The coefficients for age were also significant and suggested a U shaped relationship between age and job satisfaction. The turning point was found at the age of 26. Clark, Oswald, and Warr (1996) theorised that higher levels of job satisfaction among the younger workers may be explained by this being their first work experience and that they do not have enough information yet to compare their job with other jobs. Because of the novelty of the situation they may initially enjoy their job, but later they may discover that their expectations were too optimistic -which would explain the downward slope of the U shaped relationship. The rise in job satisfaction at an older age, the upward sloping part of the U shape, could be the result of declining aspirations (Clark et al., 1996).

Table 3. Determinants of job satisfaction – ordered probit

Extrinsic organizational rewards	
Wage (1-5)	0.376***
Job security (1-5)	0.150**
Healthy environment (1-5)	0.182**
Extrinsic social rewards	
Supervisory support (1-5)	0.076
Co-worker support (1-5)	0.088
Formal cohesion (yes=1)	- 0.054
Intrinsic rewards	
Freedom at work (1-5)	0.038
Learning new skills (1-5)	0.017
Variation on the job (1-5)	0.014
Control variables	
Urban dweller (yes=1)	0.111
Goes to school (yes=1)	0.264
Female (yes=1)	- 0.193
Age	- 0.102*
Age ²	0.002**
Secondary education (yes=1)	- 0.302*
Higher education or formal training (yes=1)	- 0.666*
Work experience (months)	0.005
Firm fixed effects	Yes
Cut off points	
1	- 0.084
2	0.401
3	1.428
4	2.224**
n	358
Pseudo R ²	14%

***, **, * indicate statistical significance at 5%, 1% and 0.1% levels, respectively

Ordered probit models were also used to test hypotheses 2 and 3. These hypotheses state that intrinsic rewards and extrinsic social rewards only influence job satisfaction if the extrinsic organizational rewards are high. In other words, only if basic needs such as wage, job security and safety at the workplace are met, will workers care about social and intrinsic rewards. To test this, overall scores for extrinsic organizational, extrinsic social and intrinsic rewards were calculated by summing up the underlying components. These overall scores range from 3 to 15 for the extrinsic organizational and intrinsic rewards and from 3 to 11 for the extrinsic social rewards. Hypotheses 2 and 3 are then tested by modelling job satisfaction in function of these overall scores and the usual set of control variables, while also including interaction terms between the overall scores. The results are presented in table 4. The first column shows the results of the ordered probit model without including interaction terms. This confirms that only extrinsic organizational rewards are strongly, positively related with job satisfaction. Workers who are relatively satisfied with their wage, the quality of the workplace and their job security tend to be satisfied with their job too. The second column includes an interaction term between extrinsic organizational rewards and intrinsic rewards. The interaction term is positive and significant, implying that intrinsic rewards are positively correlated with job satisfaction, but only if the extrinsic organizational rewards are high. This is illustrated in figure 1, which shows the probability of being very satisfied with one's job in function of intrinsic rewards for low, medium and high levels of extrinsic organizational rewards. While intrinsic rewards are not positively related to job satisfaction at low levels of extrinsic organizational rewards, there is a strong positive correlation if extrinsic organizational rewards are high. This confirms hypotheses 2. The third column includes an interaction term between extrinsic organizational and extrinsic social rewards. This interaction is insignificant and we can therefore reject hypothesis 3.

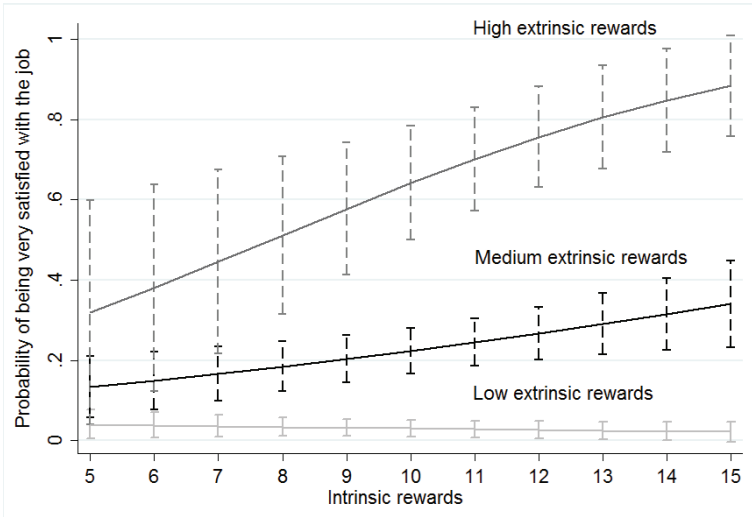


Figure 1. Job satisfaction in function of intrinsic rewards for different levels of extrinsic organizational rewards

Table 4. Job satisfaction: the moderator effect of organizational rewards – ordered probit model

Intrinsic rewards (3-15)	0.033	- 0.125	0.034
Extrinsic organizational rewards (3-15)	0.230***	0.030	0.113
Extrinsic social rewards (3-11)	0.070	0.075	- 0.042
Interaction terms with extr. org. rewards			
Intrinsic rewards		0.019*	
Extrinsic social rewards			0.014
<i>Control variables</i>			
Urban dweller (yes=1)	0.040	0.069	0.032
Goes to school (yes=1)	0.296	0.284	0.296
Female (yes=1)	- 0.195	- 0.181	- 0.198
Age	- 0.106*	- 0.105*	- 0.106*
Age ²	0.002**	0.002**	0.002**
Secondary education (yes=1)	- 0.269*	- 0.285*	- 0.266*
Higher education or formal training (yes=1)	- 0.655*	- 0.670*	- 0.664*
Work experience in months	0.004	0.004	0.004
Firm fixed effects	Yes	Yes	Yes
Cut of points			
1	- 0.035	- 1.604	- 0.957
2	0.438	- 1.126	- 0.484
3	1.453	- 0.102	0.531
4	2.243**	0.692	1.324
n	358	358	358
Pseudo R ²	0.132	0.137	0.133

***, **, * indicate statistical significance at 5%, 1% and 0.1% levels, respectively

Intention to leave and its determinants

Table 5 shows the results of the probit model estimating the importance of job satisfaction, alternative livelihood activities and demographic characteristics on workers' intention to leave. As expected, all these factors are important predictors of the intention to leave the farmⁱⁱⁱ. The model fits the data well and correctly classifies 70% of the observations. Thus, hypotheses 4 to 7 were accepted.

The large, negative correlation between job satisfaction and intention to leave is remarkable. A one point increase in job satisfaction reduces, on average, the probability of leaving the farm by 9 percent points. Nonetheless, even at high levels of job satisfaction, access to alternative livelihood strategies still play an important role in explaining an intention to leave. This is illustrated in figure 2, which shows the probability of leaving the farm, with its 95% confidence interval, as a function of job satisfaction for different groups within the sample. Rural households were always more likely to leave than urban households (figure 2, left panel). For instance, nearly 60% of the rural workers reporting the highest level of job satisfaction intended to leave the farm, while only 29% of the urban households with the same level of job satisfaction intended to do so. Additionally, the negative association between job satisfaction and intention to leave was less pronounced for rural than urban households due to the larger confidence intervals for the former group. Presumably, many rural households intended to quit their job to cultivate their land, even if they were satisfied with their job. Membership of an ikub also greatly reduced the probability of intending to leave the farm (figure 2, middle). This was to be expected as it could be argued that ikub members are more embedded in their jobs. They cannot easily quit their job as this implies breaking the trust between the members or losing one's contribution to the shared savings. It may, however, also be the case that only workers who had no intention to leave the farm committed to this informal saving device. Finally, most workers who still went to school intended to leave the farm (figure 2, right). These students were only looking for seasonal work during summer holiday to make ends meet, and most of them intended to go back to school when the academic year started again in September.

Except for age, other demographic factors were significantly correlated with an intention to leave. The result suggests that, while both men and women reported similar levels of job satisfaction, women were more likely to leave the farm than men. A possible explanation for this may be found in how gender roles are socialised. Men may be more likely to stay in a job, even when they are dissatisfied with it, because they are seen as the primary breadwinner. At the same time, women may prioritise their household activities and taking care of children or other relatives over their job satisfaction and, as such, may report higher intentions to leave their formal wage employment (Lambert et al., 2001). Our findings also show that better educated workers were more likely to quit their job. Given that educational level had a negative effect on job satisfaction (table 3), educational level had both a direct

and an indirect effect on people's intention to leave. Consequently, better educated workers reported higher intentions of quitting their job. This may be because their education permits them to find more attractive, better paying jobs, as was confirmed in the focus groups.

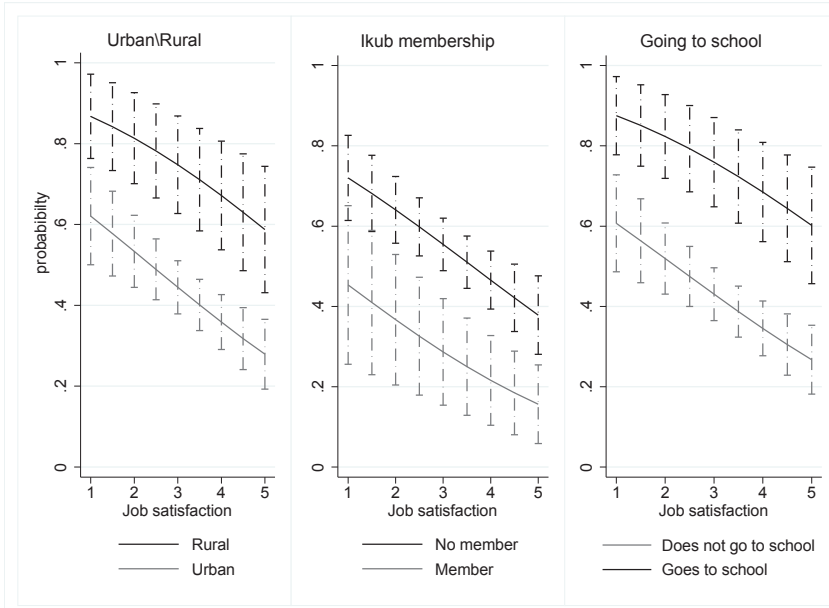


Figure 2. Intention to leave the farm

Table 5. Determinants of intention to leave –probit model

Job satisfaction	- 0.223***
Alternative livelihood activities	
Member of Ikub (<i>yes=1</i>)	- 0.700**
Urban dweller (<i>yes=1</i>)	- 0.807***
Going to school (<i>yes=1</i>)	0.880***
Control variables	
Female (<i>yes=1</i>)	0.523**
Age	0.006
Secondary education (<i>yes=1</i>)	0.279
Higher education or formal training (<i>yes=1</i>)	1.041*
Firm fixed effects	Yes
n	358
Pseudo R ²	21%

***, **, * indicate statistical significance at 5%, 1% and 0.1% levels, respectively

DISCUSSION

This paper addresses two research objectives. First it analyses levels of job satisfaction and its determinants for workers in the cut flower industry in Ethiopia. Second it investigates the link between job satisfaction and workers' intentions to leave their jobs at flower farms. Our findings showed that these workers were not particularly satisfied with their jobs, with half of the respondents reporting a high intention to leave their job in the near future.

Job satisfaction was mainly explained by extrinsic organizational rewards. These findings are in line with previous studies. Extrinsic organizational rewards are very much linked with meeting one's basic needs (Centers & Bugental, 1966; Gruenberg, 1980). It could be said that these needs are not being sufficiently met to allow other extrinsic social or intrinsic needs to matter very much.

Hence, our results suggest that human resource strategies focusing on increasing these extrinsic organizational rewards could help to obtain a more satisfied and subsequently more stable workforce. However, we realise that managers have few incentives to implement such strategies. First, the industry is relatively new in Ethiopia. Many of these start-up farms do not have a constant production pattern (yet) but target high peak production moments such as Valentine's Day or Mother's Day. In this situation voluntary labour turnover may not be seen as problematic as employment fluctuations may give farms the flexibility to grow and decline over short time spans (Smith, Daskalaki, Elger & Brown, 2004). In the Ethiopian context where workers get a permanent contract after a probation period of 45 days, it may be that voluntary labour turnover actually reduces dismissal costs.

A second and more important argument is that flower farm managers can predict labour turnover fluctuations on the basis of three demographic characteristics. Our results showed that rural workers reported higher intentions to leave than their urban colleagues. We reasoned that this was because rural workers have their own farming activities to attend to at certain periods in time. Hence, being aware of where their workers come from -rural versus urban- can help managers to predict labour turnover. Secondly, workers who attended school during the academic year reported higher intentions to leave than their colleagues who already left school as they probably aim to return to school once the summer holidays are over. Again managers can take into account that those workers who apply for a job at the end of May are most likely students looking for a holiday job and probably will voluntarily leave at the beginning of the school year. And thirdly, our results showed that workers who participated in informal savings nets known as 'ikubs' reported lower intentions to leave than those workers who were not a member. Ikubs are organised at the work unit level. So again, identifying which greenhouses or pack houses have ikubs in place and how many members they have, can help to predict labour turnover. In sum, even though we've shown that there is a large, negative correlation

between job satisfaction and intention to leave, it appears that these three livelihood strategies can help managers to foresee labour fluctuations and offset any potentially negative side effects of this.

Implications for theory and practice

This study contributes to an increased understanding of job satisfaction and intentions to leave of low skilled workers in the cut flower industry in Ethiopia. Whereas past research has focused on objective measures of job quality in attempts to evaluate working conditions at the bottom of global value chains, we introduced a subjective measure of job satisfaction into this field of study. Hence, this study provides important implications for academics, and policy makers.

For academics, our results show the importance to inject a more personal, subjective element into the study of working conditions at the bottom of value chains. Whereas past research has been successful to analyse the existing discrepancies between formal regulations and reality on the ground (Barrientos & Smith, 2007; Locke, Amengual, & Mangla, 2009; Raynolds, 2012; Riisgaard, 2011; Yu, 2008), most studies have neglected to include the voices of workers themselves into this research field. This paper has shown that workers are not simply passive victims of a capitalist system as has been argued elsewhere (Carswell & De Neve, 2013; Coe and Jordhus-Lier, 2010). Rather they are active agents who seek to improve their livelihoods by actively searching alternatives to the flower farm jobs because they are currently not satisfied with the extrinsic rewards offered in these jobs.

As for policy makers in Ethiopia, the insights of this study also provide important implications. The Ethiopian cut flower industry has received its share of applause as it has created direct jobs for over 20,000 workers (Melese & Helmsing, 2010). It is also true that there are few alternative wage employment for these, mainly, low skilled women. However in this paper we have shown that it is not sufficient to just focus on the number of jobs created but that, in order to have a large development impact, one also needs to look at the benefits for workers. What is needed is an institutional framework that facilitates the creation of a working environment which satisfies workers, since satisfied workers have indirect and positive effects on society at large. Legislation over job security after 45 days employment is already in place and this is reflected in positive responses about job security. But there is room for legislation for a minimum wage and a strengthening of a tripartite system. The latter gives workers the rights to join a labour union –which is a way to express their grievances, to negotiate collective bargaining agreements and ensure that workers' concerns are taken into account. In addition, trade unions can play an important role in disseminating information on occupational health and safety which may help to allay the existing concerns over this issue. According to one recent paper (Riisgaard & Gibbon, 2014) a revision in the Kenyan labour law, which made such

a tripartite system possible, led to positive changes in the Kenyan cut flower. In other words, Ethiopia can learn some important lessons from its neighbour which has a longer history of flower production.

Limitations and future research

Our research results have several limitations, some of which can be addressed in future research. First, some data limitations suggest that the results should be carefully interpreted. First, this study looked at intentions to leave rather than actual leaving. Second, our results are based on information gathered through oral interviews conducted by an interviewer. The rationale for this self-report data collection approach is very straightforward: we aimed to understand workers' job satisfaction and how this influenced workers' intentions to leave. At the same time however, having a single person assessing both independent and dependent variables in the same study can result in a bias (Podsakoff & Organ, 1986). Ideally we would also have objective data on flower farms HR practices in order to triangulate the data; however obtaining these objective assessments would have been extremely difficult. Moreover it would not necessarily have yielded better results (Chan, 2009; Stevens et al., 2006). Consequently, one of the caveats of this study is the possibility of self-reported bias affecting the measurement of the variables. Third, our results are limited to workers employed in the Ethiopian cut flower industry. Cross industry and cross country research is needed to further explore the differences or similarities that may exist among workers employed in labour intensive industries.

In considering other avenues for future research, it could be interesting to research how management practices can or do influence workers' levels of job satisfaction and subsequent intentions to leave these flower farms. Moreover as many labour intensive industries are highly codified industries it would be interesting to see how certification schemes and related actors (NGOs, accreditation bodies) influence workers' perceptions of their working environment.

Appendix. Scale items

<i>Scale</i>	<i>Item</i>	<i>Cronbach α</i>
<i>Extrinsic Organizational Rewards</i>		
Wage	I feel I am being paid a fair amount for the work I do	0.84
	I am satisfied with the salary I receive	
	How satisfied are you with your total wage?	
Job security	I have a secure future in my job	0.69
	How satisfied are you with your job security?	
Healthy environment	I am worried that I will have health problems caused by my job (R)	0.81
	Does the company provide a safe and healthy working environment?	
	I work in a healthy environment	
<i>Extrinsic Social Rewards</i>		
Supervisory support	My supervisor is friendly, helpful and supportive	0.77
	My supervisor praises me for a job well done	
	My supervisor treats me fairly	
Co-worker support	My co-workers are friendly, helpful and supportive	0.74
	The relationship with my co-workers is good	
Formal cohesion	There are people at work I can talk to when I need help	N/A
	Are you a member of the labour union (1= yes)	
	Are you a member of a women's committee (1= yes)	
<i>Intrinsic rewards</i>		
Variation on the job	I have a lot of variation on the job	N/A
Freedom at work	I have a lot of freedom to decide how I do my work	N/A
Learning new skills	I learn new skills and abilities in my job	N/A

Notes: Unless otherwise stated, all items were measured on a five point Likert scale. With regard to the multiple item measures, all items were first summed and then divided by the number of items. (R) indicates a reverse-coded item. Initially we grouped the three intrinsic rewards, but as Cronbach α appeared to be very low (0.36) we decided to include these three intrinsic work facets separately in the analysis.

ⁱ A first round of qualitative data collection at management level took place in September 2012 and included over 20 flower farms. On the basis of this we carefully selected five farms located in the same cluster.

ⁱⁱ While flower farm managers said that they did not hire workers under the age of 15, our sample counted 2 respondents who admitted to be younger than this. It is not clear to what extent the flower farm managers were aware of this or whether these minors presented themselves as older than they really were.

ⁱⁱⁱ We also researched whether job satisfaction moderated the relationship between alternative livelihood strategies (of rural workers, students and ikub members) and intention to leave, such that when job satisfaction is low the relationship between alternative livelihood strategies and intent to leave is high and when job satisfaction is high, there is no relationship between alternative livelihood strategies and intent to leave. However, we did not find such moderating effects in any of the three types of livelihood strategies.

ARTICLE 2

When the farm-gate becomes a revolving door: an institutional approach to functional labour turnover

Abstract. The objective of the article is to better understand managers' actions and mindset towards functional labour turnover in the cut flower industry in Ethiopia. Through a qualitative approach, we explore the way managers deal with and legitimize high levels of functional labour turnover. Our results show that they engage in practices that sustain labour turnover rather than reduce it. Three main types of practices were identified: predicting, containing and accommodating. To legitimize the constant high level of labour turnover, managers build on regulative, normative and cultural-cognitive elements coming from the institutional environment and which are out of their scope of control. As a result, managers feel caught in a deadlock, unable to change an unsatisfactory situation. This study extends the current research in functional labour turnover by adopting a subjective lens and informs the debate in human resource management research about managerial practices at the bottom of global value chains.

Based on:

Staelens, L. and Louche, C. (2016). When the farm-gate becomes a revolving door: an institutional approach to functional labour turnover. Submitted in January and currently in review process in *Human Relations*.

INTRODUCTION

Literature on labour turnover has taken two different perspectives. The first one is the dysfunctional approach where a high labour turnover is viewed as problematic (O'Connell & Kung, 2007; Shaw, 2011; Waldman, Kelly, Aurora, & Smith, 2004). From this perspective, it has been argued that turnover should be reduced whenever possible (Abbasi & Hollman, 2000; Herzberg, Mausner, & Snyderman, 1959). The second perspective is the functional approach, which argues that certain types of turnover can be beneficial for organizations as long as its benefits (e.g. poorly performing workers are replaced by better performing workers) outweigh its costs (e.g. costs related to replacement, training) (Abelson & Baysinger, 1984; Dalton, Todor & Krackhardt, 1982; Siebert & Zubanov, 2009; Williams, 2000).

Whereas the dysfunctional perspective has been extensively explored, the functional perspective remains poorly understood. Moreover, although current studies on functional labour turnover have helped to identify the reasons why organizations do not always undertake action to reduce turnover, they all have taken a rational profit-maximizing perspective. Very little has been done to consider the subjective dimensions of functional labour turnover and to understand how managers legitimize persistent high levels of labour turnover in their organizations. Yet legitimization is important as it shapes managers' mindsets and can help us to understand the practices they develop to deal with labour turnover.

Considering that functional labour turnover is mainly to be found in low-skilled, labour-intensive industries (Smith, Daskalaki, Elger, & Brown, 2004) and that high labour turnover in these industries is often associated with the exploitative nature of the work, with an absence of respect for workers and a lack of care for their well-being (Andrijasevic & Sacchetto, 2014; Choi & Peng, 2015; Hale & Wills, 2011), a purely profit-maximizing explanation claiming that the organisation enjoys high economic benefits from a high labour turnover may threaten organisational legitimacy, especially in Western countries — where there is a growing consumer awareness and concern about poor working conditions in low-wage countries (Riisgaard, 2009).

In order to better understand how managers legitimize functional turnover, we focused our empirical efforts on the cut flower industry in Ethiopia. This low-skilled, labour-intensive sector is a typical example of an industry in which labour turnover can be considered beneficial for the organisation. In our empirical analysis we focused on two objectives: 1) identify the practices developed by managers to handle labour turnover, and 2) analyse how managers legitimize high labour turnover. We adopted a qualitative research design for the data collection and data analysis. Drawing on an institutional perspective and more exactly from Scott's (1995) three pillars of institutions, we examined the way managers legitimize functional labour turnover.

This study offers three main contributions to the literature on functional labour turnover. First, our data shows that functional labour turnover does not equate with passive management, but actually requires active managerial practices to maintain and control labour turnover. Second, our analysis reveals that managers do not legitimize functional labour turnover through economic and profit-maximization claims, as argued in the literature. Instead legitimation is based on regulative, normative, and cultural-cognitive elements. Third, we have developed a model to show the importance of understanding managers' legitimation efforts, since these highly influence the types of practices that managers deem suitable. We posit that viewing labour turnover as being entirely caused by external institutional pressures hinders the development of effective retention strategies focused on improving the work environment. Our model captures this 'deadlock' that managers have put themselves in.

The remainder of the paper is structured as follows. The next section starts with a literature review on functional labour turnover, followed by an introduction to Scott's (1995) three pillars of institutional theory — regulative, normative and cultural-cognitive — which we use as an organising framework. Next the outline of the research context is presented, together with a detailed picture of our case study, and the methods used in this study. The empirical section presents managers' coping practices and analyses the way in which managers legitimize labour turnover. The last section concludes by discussing our contributions to this research field, and the implications of our study.

LITERATURE REVIEW: FUNCTIONAL LABOUR TURNOVER

Labour turnover is *'the movement of people into and out of employment within an organisation'* (Denvir & McMahon, 1992: p. 143). It can be voluntary or involuntary (Cheng & Brown, 1998). Traditionally, much research attention has been devoted to increase our understanding of the antecedents of voluntary labour turnover (Ma, Silva, Callan, & Trigo, 2015; Van der Aa, Bloemer, & Henseler, 2012); and to delineate successful retention strategies based on the assumption that voluntary labour turnover is expensive and has to be reduced at all time.

This assumption however has altered when researchers such as Dalton and Todor (1979) started categorizing labour turnover into functional and dysfunctional labour turnover. In other words, scholars started to recognize that some kinds and extent of turnover may be considered 'beneficial' or 'functional' for the organisation (Abelson et al., 1984; Dalton et al., 1982; Muchinsky & Morrow, 1980; Porter & Steers, 1973; Staw, 1980).

Turnover functionality reflects the idea that different workers represent different values for the organisation (Wallace & Gaylor, 2012). The loss of one worker does not equal the loss of another

worker. If a poor performing worker is replaced by a better performing worker, it could be considered functional (Hollenbeck & Williams, 1986).

In essence, labour turnover is considered functional when the benefits of turnover exceed the costs of turnover. Labour turnover can also be considered functional when the costs of facing labour turnover are lower than the costs of actually reducing turnover (Wallace & Gaylor, 2012). For example, a high rate of turnover among waitresses can perhaps be reduced by raising wages. However, this may not exactly be a cost effective strategy because it is far less expensive to cope with turnover than to prevent it (Dalton et al., 1982).

Costs of turnover generally include both replacement costs (selection, hiring, assigning, training of the new employees) and more 'hidden' costs related to the consequences of turnover, including a disruption of operations (Eckardt, Skaggs, & Youndt, 2014), a reduction in efficiency, and an erosion of morale and stability of the personnel who remain (Abbasi & Hollman, 2000). Often these 'hidden' costs are forgotten when calculating the real costs of turnover.

Benefits of turnover generally include the flexibility for organizations to grow and decline over short time spans (Mount, 1995), dissatisfied labourers rather exit than organize themselves (Elger & Smith, 1998), low dismissal costs (Smith et al., 2004), and there is an increase of work performance for routine jobs (Standing, 1989). Also here, it is argued that benefits of turnover are often underestimated (Dalton et al., 1982). In sum, when deciding whether to reduce turnover or not, organizations should weigh these costs and benefits.

Examples of cases where labour turnover can be considered functional for the organisation includes seasonal industries such as fruit picking where the costs of stability are enormous (Dalton et al., 1982; Standing, 1989), and labour-intensive industries dependent on low skilled, low-salary, non-unionized labourers such as fast-food catering and hotels, and manufacturing companies (Andrijasevic & Sacchetto, 2014; O'Connell & Kung, 2007; Smith et al., 2004).

This research focuses on the phenomenon of functional labour turnover in the cut flower industry, interpreted through the perceptions of managers within the sector. Whereas above mentioned studies have increased our understanding of the costs and benefits involved with turnover, it remains partial in that managers views and experiences have been largely neglected, despite the critical role of managers in creating and shaping the work environment and labour dynamics. The article shows that cost-benefit explanations based on the logics of profit-maximization are not mentioned by flower farm managers to legitimize functional turnover. Instead, managers seek social acceptance for not reducing turnover by arguing that they are conforming with the existing institutional environment.

THEORETICAL LENS: AN INSTITUTIONAL PERSPECTIVE

Institutional theory offers a useful lens to study functional turnover because it helps to understand that pure profit-maximizing claims do not suffice for organizations to be successful (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983). Institutional theory is based on the notion that organizations need 'legitimacy' because this enhances stability, fosters continuity and improves the chances of acquiring various resources needed for its survival and growth (Suchman, 1995; Zimmerman & Zeitz, 2002). Without legitimacy, organizations are vulnerable to claims that they are negligent, irrational and even unnecessary (Meyer & Rowan, 1977).

Suchman (1995: p. 574) defines legitimacy as '*a generalized perception or assumption that the actions of an entity are desirable, proper, or appropriate within some socially constructed system of norms, values, beliefs, and definitions.*' This socially constructed system refers to the rules and norms of the environment in which the organisation operates and in which it needs to demonstrate consistency. The institutional environment is heterogeneous and consists of multiple, often conflicting pressures. These societal and institutional pressures can be classified into international, national, regional and local (Zimmerman & Zeitz, 2002); they are made up of a multitude of expectations from stakeholders, both primary (e.g. owners, workers, buyers, suppliers, consumers) and secondary (e.g. NGOs or activists, local communities, or governments) (Scherer, Palazzo, & Seidl, 2013). Hence, acquiring and maintaining legitimacy in the eyes of society is a challenging task (Suchman, 1995).

One possible strategy for winning social acceptance is to conform to the existing institutional environment (Suchman, 1995). An organisation that conforms does not question or challenge the social and institutional structure. Rather, it acquires legitimacy by complying with existing rules and norms. Scott (1995) proposed a distinction between three pillars of legitimacy: regulative, normative and cultural-cognitive.

The regulative pillar refers to '*explicit regulatory processes of rule-setting, monitoring, and sanctioning activities*' (Scott, 1995: p. 59). Legitimacy is derived from obeying the rules, applying the standards and fulfilling expectations that stem from governmental legislation or industrial agreements. Enforcement of these rules and standards can be formalised through police and courts, or informalized through more diffuse channels, such as shaming or shunning (Scott, 1995). However, legitimacy goes beyond merely avoiding sanctions. It involves a widespread sense that the organisation is operating according to the letter and spirit of the law and that the organisation is a 'good citizen' (Zimmerman et al., 2002).

The normative pillar encapsulates existing norms (*what* is preferred and considered desirable) and values (*how* things should be done) (Scott, 1995). Normative institutions prescribe what the appropriate or expected behaviour is in a given situation. They are less visible than the regulative pillar

because compliance does not spring from coercive rules and sanctions, but rather from social obligations, that is to say: 'the way things *should* be done' (Wicks, 2001). Legitimacy arises from obeying and endorsing the moral norms and values prevalent within a particular context. Hence, the normative conception stresses '*a deeper, moral basis for assessing legitimacy*' (Scott, 1995: p. 61).

The cultural-cognitive pillar refers to the way in which individuals interpret and perceive their environment (Scott, 1995). Cognitive elements are 'constitutive' meaning that they facilitate '*the creation of social categories that are consequently applied to thought and action in order to provide social order*' (Wicks, 2001: p. 665). These subjective elements are common frames of reference and beliefs whereby certain practices are taken for granted and remain unquestioned (Price, Bailey, McDonald, & Pini, 2011; Scott, 1995). Legitimacy emanates from adopting these common frames of reference (Scott, 1995).

Using Scott's (1995) three pillars of institutions as the organising framework for our study, we investigated the way in which managers make sense of, and legitimize high labour turnover. As such our study explains more nuanced and less visible aspects of functional labour turnover than cost-benefit approaches have done so in previous studies.

CONTEXT: LABOUR TURNOVER IN THE ETHIOPIAN CUT FLOWER INDUSTRY

The Ethiopian cut flower industry makes an interesting case to study since it captures the typical features of labour-intensive industries, where high labour turnover may be seen as a functional characteristic of the organisation. Costs related to recruitment and training of the workforce are considered low. Jobs are mainly allocated to low-skilled women (around 80% of the workforce), of which there is an ample supply in a developing country context marked by high unemployment figures (Mano, Yamano, Suzuki & Matsumoto, 2011). Moreover, these jobs merely consist of routine tasks such as weeding, picking and packaging flowers — for which little training is needed (Barrientos, Dolan, & Tallontire, 2003). At the same time, the organisation benefits from high labour turnover. Flower farms need a flexible labour force willing to work long hours during the production season but which are then 'disposable' during off seasons (Riisgaard, 2009). If workers voluntarily quit, flower farms face low dismissal costs (Smith et al., 2004). Moreover, farms can keep their wages low and do not have to worry about any effective workplace unionization because dissatisfied workers prefer to exit than to organise themselves (Elger et al., 1998).

Some authors have highlighted the high levels of labour turnover in Ethiopian flower farms. In their study on the industry's market formation process, Gebreeyesus and Sonobe (2012) made reference to high levels of labour turnover in several Ethiopian cut flower farms. A study undertaken by Mano et al.

(2011) showed that on average a flower farm worker was in her early twenties, had already worked in 1.2 farms and had about six months of working experience in the industry at the moment of hiring, despite the relatively young nature of the industry. From these findings, Mano et al. (2011) concluded that high labour turnover was a persistent phenomenon in the industry. In a study by Staelens, Louche & D'Haese (2014) on job satisfaction among Ethiopian flower farm workers, it was found that more than 67% of the workers had less than one year of work experience at a flower farm; 46% of these reported a strong intention to leave their job in the near future. So although there are to date no official records of labour turnover in Ethiopian flower farms, labour turnover has become a regular part of flower farms employment relations.

Ethiopia currently hosts 81 flower farms (Mano et al., 2011; Melese & Helmsing, 2010). Around 1,500 ha in Ethiopia are allocated to flower production and this labour-intensive industry provides direct jobs for 20,000 to 25,000 low-skilled workers (Mano et al., 2011; Melese et al., 2010). There are eight flower farm clusters situated close to the capital Addis Ababa, in the vicinity of the airport. In this article, we will focus on one specific cluster located in the region of Debre Zeyit. This cluster is situated close to the city centre and its labour pool consists of a good mix between urban workers living in the city of Debre Zeyit and rural workers residing near the flower farms. This cluster is particularly interesting because at the time of the study, light manufacturing companies (including garments, footwear and plastics) were starting operations in the city centre, causing additional competition for labour with the neighbouring flower farms.

METHODS

For the purpose of this study, we used a qualitative research design. This is particularly suitable for gathering rich information on phenomena which previously have been ignored in the research literature (Eisenhardt & Graebner, 2007). We conducted two rounds of data collection. The first round helped us to identify high labour turnover and to refine our research questions: 1) what kind of practices do managers employ to handle labour turnover?; 2) how do they legitimize persistent high levels of turnover? Round two served to dig deeper into the issue and to gain a better understanding of its various aspects. In the next paragraphs, we will discuss the way the data were collected and the way they were analysed.

Data collection

The first round of data collection took place in September-October 2012. One of the authors conducted open-ended interviews, primarily with general managers of flower farms across Ethiopia. These interviews aimed to broaden our understanding of the challenges faced by the relatively new cut

flower industry and the opportunities it generates. The interviews lasted between one and two hours, and were conducted in English — or Dutch if the general manager was Dutch speaking. To corroborate the information retrieved at management level, open interviews were also conducted with key stakeholders at sector level, including representatives of the Ethiopian Horticulture Producer Exporters Association (EHPEA), the Ethiopian Horticulture Development Agency (EHDA) and the Confederation of Ethiopian Labour Unions (CETU). These interviews lasted between one hour and one hour and a half. All interviews were recorded and transcribed. In addition, the researcher took extensive notes during and after each interview. These notes helped to improve and adjust the interview guidelines at every step. Thus the data collection followed a highly iterative approach designed to capture emerging themes in fieldwork (Strauss & Corbin, 1990).

At the end of the first round of data collection, the responses were coded using NVivo 10, and discussed by both researchers to give further guidance to the research project. High levels of labour turnover emerged from this analysis. We decided to further investigate this intriguing phenomenon and to analyse how flower farms responded to it. We refined our research area by focusing on one single cluster of flower farms. This allowed us to investigate the responses to high labour turnover by different farms situated in the same setting, and subjected to the same institutional pressures (Gibson & Birkinshaw, 2004), and to minimize extraneous variability (Eisenhardt, 1989). Choosing to focus on one single cluster also enabled us to investigate labour turnover meticulously and to collect data from multiple data sources: workers, managers, and the labour and social affairs department, who viewed the phenomenon of labour turnover from diverse perspectives (Eisenhardt & Graebner, 2007). The second round of data collection took place in June-July 2013 and included a combination of data collection methods (in-depth interviews, surveys, focus group discussion).

In-depth interviews. We conducted in-depth interviews with the general managers of 8 horticultural farms in the region (7 producing flowers, 1 producing vegetables), 6 of which had already been interviewed during the first round of data collection. The purpose was to increase our understandings of managers' perceptions of high labour turnover and the type of practices they engaged in to deal with the phenomenon. Each interview took approximately one to one hour and a half, and was recorded and transcribed. We asked managers to describe labour turnover dynamics as they experienced it by drawing on the timeline.

At cluster level we also conducted one in-depth interview with two representatives of the Labour and Social Affairs department of the region of Debre Zeyit. This interview had a duration of one hour and was recorded and transcribed. The information retrieved from these external informants provided us the specific understanding of the context within which the flower farms were operating.

Surveys. We collected survey data (n = 375) at workers level on five flower farms, stratified according to gender and job functions. The questionnaire included both open-ended and closed questions on socio-demographics, working conditions, work experience, overall job satisfaction and job rewards. Analysis of the survey data confirmed managers' assumptions that they could predict workers' quitting behaviour based on workers' characteristics. In addition the survey data allowed us to reflect on managers' responses, and validated our findings about managers legitimizing persistent turnover and their coping practices.

Focus group discussions. We also organized six focus group discussions: one focus group discussion per farm and one focus group discussion combining workers from all five flower farms. Focus groups only targeted female workers and included from 4 to 14 participants. Each focus group took approximately two hours and was organized on the workers' day off. Each focus group was held in an informal setting; it included a researcher and a local moderator, who fluently spoke both Amharic and Oromo. There was a discussion guide, which was not intended to be strictly followed but to aid the researcher and moderator during the discussions.

Participants were asked about their experiences with high labour turnover, the causes of this according to them, and how this related with their personal situations. We made use of comparisons between farms and other job opportunities in the area in order to unravel the working conditions that really mattered and to gain more insights into workers' perceptions. Each focus group was recorded and transcribed, and the accompanying researcher took extensive notes during the discussion. This worker perspective on labour turnover helped us to improve the quality of our research since it allowed us to triangulate our findings (Yin, 1994).

Table 1 provides an overview of the data collection tools and of the way the data was used in the analysis. As depicted in the table, the 30 interviews at management level form the core of the analysis. Data collected at the level of workers, cluster and sector helped to triangulate and corroborate our findings.

Table 1. Data sources and use

	Source	Type of data	Use in the analysis
1 st round of data collection September-October 2012 Cut flower industry Ethiopia	Sector level	<i>Preliminary interviews (3)</i> with representatives of the Ethiopian Horticulture Producer Exporters Association (EHPEA), Ethiopian Horticulture Development Agency (EHDA) and Confederation of Ethiopian Labour Unions (CETU)	Familiarise ourselves with context of cut flower industry
	Management level	<i>Preliminary interviews (22)</i> with general managers of 21 flower farms (12 in Ethiopian ownership, 9 in foreign ownership)	Identify management practices and how they legitimize these practices
2 nd round of data collection June-July 2013 Cut flower cluster Debre Zeyit	Management level	<i>Focused interviews (8)</i> with general managers of 7 flower farms and 1 vegetable farm (5 in Ethiopian ownership, 3 in foreign ownership)	
	Worker level	<i>Focus group discussions (6)</i> were organised for each targeted farm (4 to 14 female participants) and 1 focus group discussion brought together workers from all five farms (9 female participants) <i>Surveys (375)</i> of workers from five targeted farms in Debre Zeyit. Stratified random sampling procedures were used to ensure an adequate representation of, on average, 75 workers who had different job functions within the farm	
	Cluster level	<i>Focused interview (1)</i> with 2 representatives of labour and social affairs department, Debre Zeyit	

Data analysis*Phase I: Identifying management practices*

During the first phase of formal analysis, we followed an inductive approach (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). The first author started reading the raw data collected at management level and coded all practices related to labour turnover which emerged from the interviews using NVivo 10 software. Both authors then discussed the extensive list of practices and together they reflected on each separate practice, asking the following questions: 'Does this practice reduce turnover? And if not, what is it then that this practice achieves?'

From this analysis three types of codes emerged: (i) practices that served to predict the labour turnover pattern; (ii) practices aiming to contain current levels of turnover; (iii) practices aiming to accommodate to high labour turnover. We did not find any practices that actually served the purpose of reducing labour turnover; nor did we find differences between the practices used by local and foreign investors.

We then turned to the data collected at workers level to augment and validate our findings (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Silverman, 2006). By way of an example, this triangulation of data supported our findings that managers could predict labour turnover on the basis of workers' characteristics. In addition, whereas we previously doubted whether small surprise gifts could lower labour turnover, the focus group discussions confirmed our intuition to classify this type of practice under the category 'containing labour turnover'; because focus group participants sneered at the idea that they would become loyal workers in return for a small surprise gift such as a bottle of milk. The first column in Figure 1 displays the set of practices — used by managers in relation to labour turnover — that we identified. Moving across the figure, the second column presents the analytical concepts that we aggregated by clustering the different types of practices. A more detailed table, including representative quotes of each type of practice, can be found in the appendix.

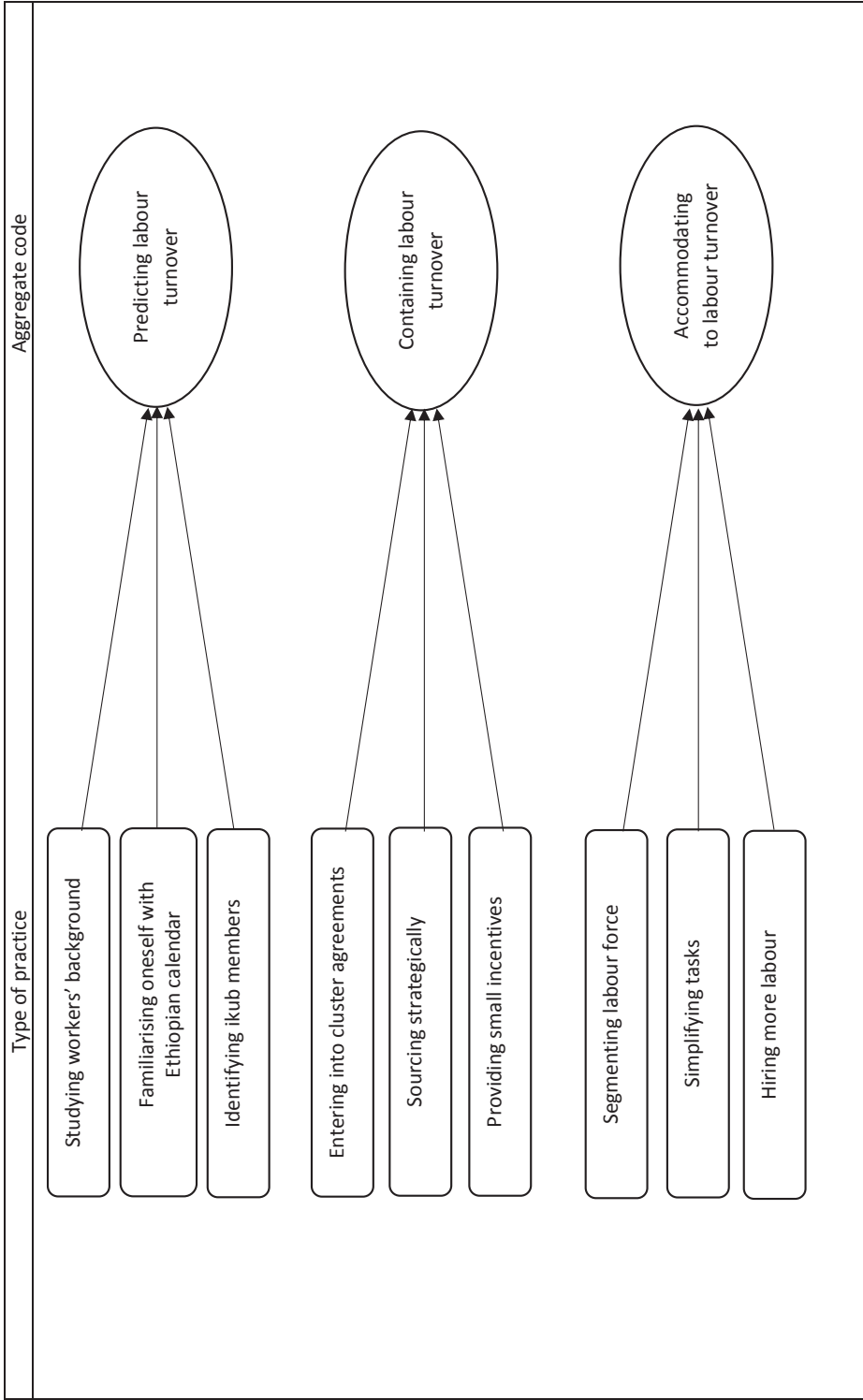


Figure 1. Data structure

Phase II: Understanding managerial practices

During the second phase of data analysis, we followed a deductive approach. The focus of this analysis was to understand how managers made sense of persistently high labour turnover. We used Scott's (1995) three pillars of institutions (regulative, normative and cultural-cognitive) as organizing framework. During this phase we followed a highly iterative approach, moving back and forth between theory, data and literature in order to work out how these pillars fitted in our context (Strauss and Corbin, 1990). The emerging results were discussed regularly by both authors. At the end of the analysis we also shared our findings with several peer researchers to test our insights. We also presented our findings in informal settings attended by Ethiopian colleagues who were familiar with the context. A more detailed table, including representative quotes of the arguments that managers employed to justify high labour turnover, can be found in the appendix.

FINDINGS

This section is organized around two research questions. The first part presents the practices used by managers to cope with labour turnover; these have been classified in three main types. The second part analyses the way in which managers make sense of high labour turnover and how they legitimize the set of practices they have developed.

Management practices

On the surface, general managers described high labour turnover as a time-consuming and challenging phenomenon. They sometimes had to deal with labour shortages, which forced them to find immediate solutions. All managers argued that they were trying to reduce labour turnover but without much success.

However our data suggests a different picture. An analysis of the practices developed by managers to handle high labour turnover reveals that, instead of reducing labour turnover, these practices actually helped to sustain a high level of labour turnover. We categorised the practices into three main types: (i) predicting the pattern of labour turnover; (ii) containing current levels of labour turnover and (iii) accommodating to high labour turnover. Each type is discussed in the sections below.

(i) Predicting labour turnover

The first set of practices consisted in predicting labour turnover. To this end, managers developed ways to identify patterns of labour turnover. They had a very good understanding of those patterns, which they easily could draw on the timeline that we used during the interviews. The different timelines collected showed very similar patterns. This knowledge was built up by observing three main elements: the worker's background, the Ethiopian calendar and informal social ties established on the shop floor. Those three elements helped managers to predict an individual worker's quitting behaviour and, more generally, the labour turnover pattern.

The notion of 'worker's background' refers to two parameters: whether the worker is from a rural or urban area; and whether it is a school-aged person. In most cases, workers from rural areas have their own farming activities and therefore have to quit during the farming season to take care of their plots of land. In Ethiopia, more than 80% of the people are subsistence farmers. They mainly grow teff, a staple crop and the main food item in Ethiopia. Managers said that they saw rural men leave the farm at the beginning of the rainy season to plough and sow their land, followed by the rural women in September, who are in charge of weeding. Both rural men and women are involved in harvesting, so because of this, managers only saw their rural workers return to the farms at the end of January — when the harvesting season had ended.

Urban workers also had a good reason to quit: alternative job opportunities, which were becoming increasingly available in the city centre. When flower farms started their activities, the city of Debre Zeyit and its surroundings was considered underdeveloped and there were few job alternatives. However, over the years the floriculture sector bloomed and other horticultural farms, together with light manufacturing industries, located themselves nearby the city centre. This increased competition among farms and between other sectors created many job alternatives for the unskilled female labour force. In addition to job alternatives in the region, foreign brokers also came to the city offering local women the opportunity to work in Arab countries as maids. Managers pointed out that in general Ethiopian workers lack means of transportation. Hence, they knew that workers living in the rural surroundings of the city were often excluded from these alternative job opportunities. So the increased competition was said to largely induce high levels of turnover among the urban workers living close to the city centre where these alternative jobs popped up.

The second parameter concerns workers who are school-aged and most probably want to return to school. Although managers expressed great reluctance to hire students, since few of them showed long-term commitment to work in the flower farms, students apparently hid the fact that they were attending school. However, as with rural farming activities, students looking for a job on flower farms followed a recognisable pattern. In other words, managers did take into account that when young workers aged between 16 and 18 years came to look for a job at the end of May (when school had just closed), they probably would leave the farm in September when the academic year resumed. With this information in hand, managers could predict the labour turnover flow to a large extent. Figure 2 summarises the year-round labour turnover dynamics in flower farms operating in the region of Debre Zeyit.

The second element needed to predict labour turnover is knowledge and understanding of the Ethiopian calendar. Managers named two critical moments (Figure 2). The first one is in September: during this month, demand for cut flowers in the northern hemisphere starts increasing as it marks the end of the summer period in these countries. At the same time the rainy season in Ethiopia ends, resulting in a more favourable climate. This is a crucial period for flower farms; they restart production and take intensive care of their flowers, which may have been affected by diseases during the rainy period. But at the same time, September marks the end of the year for Ethiopians. Students return to school, women go to the fields to weed them and all celebrate New Year on 11th September. Hence, flower farms are faced with an important number of workers leaving the farm at the same time.

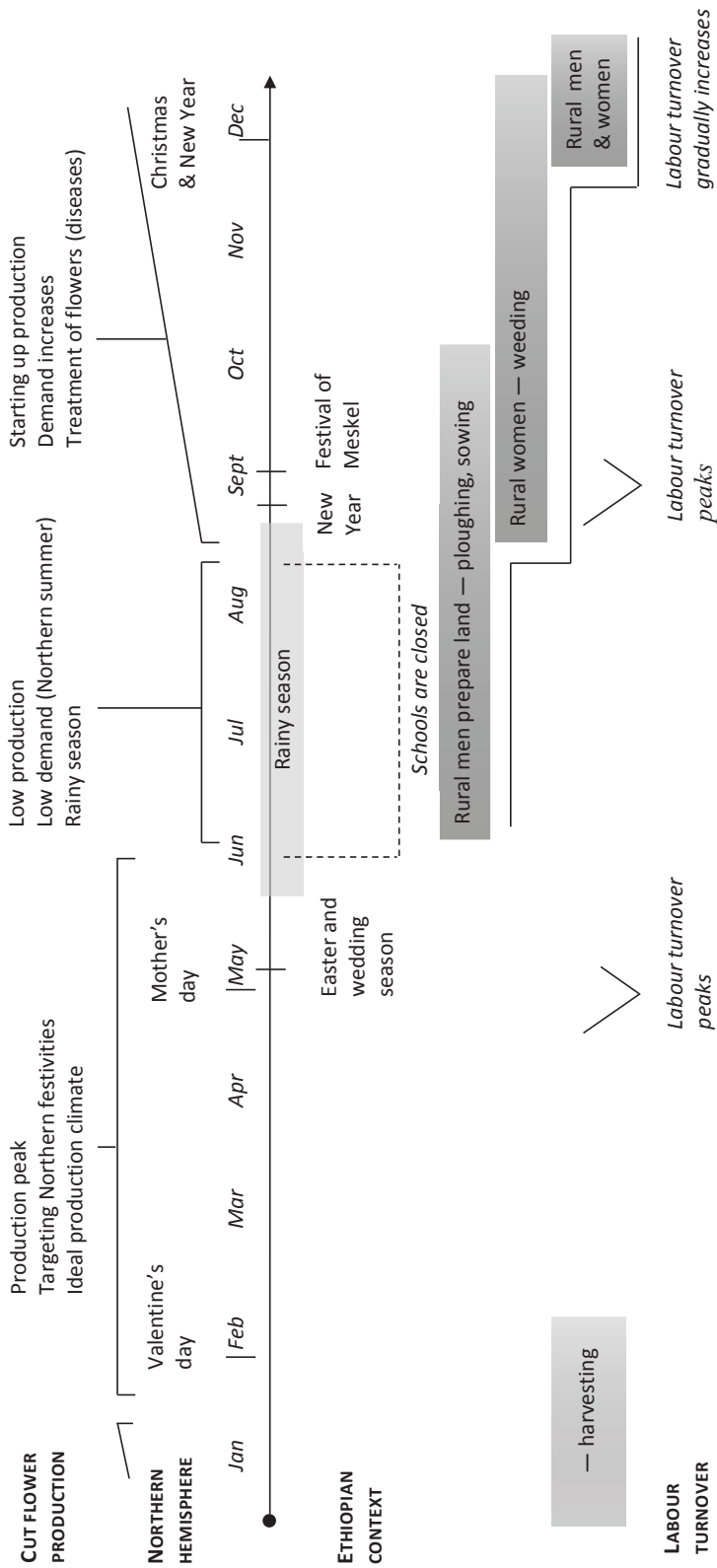


Figure 2. Labour turnover pattern

The second critical period is towards the end of April or beginning of May, when flowers are in peak production. Demand for flowers in the northern hemisphere is high due to Mother's day and the climate is perfect. Night temperatures are very high and the air is dry, right before the rainy season begins. Flower farms are fully operational; they need workers willing to work 7/7 and do overtime to meet their targets. This period, however, coincides with Ethiopian festivities. It is a common wedding time for Christians and many Ethiopians celebrate the fasting season and Easter. As a result, most workers wish to go home to visit family and relatives, and flower farms are faced with a shortage of workers.

While managers tried to predict a labourer's intention to leave on the basis of personal characteristics (such as their geographical or educational backgrounds), a third factor influencing a worker's intentions was mentioned: being a member of 'ikub' (sometimes spelled differently as iqub or iqqub). An 'ikub' is a horizontally, informally organized savings scheme among workers of one work unit (e.g. a single greenhouse). It involves a small monthly contribution, which is given at the end of the month to one member by means of a rotation scheme (e.g. the often mentioned ROSCA schemes) (Anderson and Baland, 2002). Being a member of an ikub involves a long-term commitment: to be eligible as a member, one needs to contribute as many months as there are members. Although this informal system is not visible to non-members, managers referred to this savings net as an important predictor of turnover.

Whereas the two other elements described above were markers of a stronger intention of workers to leave, this element meant just the opposite: it was a marker of a strong intention to stay. Indeed, the ikub increased loyalty of the workers towards other ikub members by creating a bond between them. As a result they were less inclined to leave. Hence, managers put some effort into identifying those work units where an ikub had been set up, since labour turnover in those work units were said to be drastically lower.

(ii) Containing labour turnover

The second set of practices consisted in containing labour turnover to keep a turnover rate that was manageable. Interestingly high labour turnover as such was not the problem, however unpredictable labour turnover was. To avoid additional unpredictable labour turnover, managers of the flower farms developed a number of strategies. The first strategy was to enter into agreements with neighbouring farms not to compete with each other. This oral, informal collusion at cluster level included paying comparable wages and increasing wage rates on the same day. In addition, managers promised not to hire workers coming from neighbouring flower farms. They also agreed to source workers from different areas than neighbouring farms. Though promises were not always kept, managers said that

these measures did help to discourage worker mobility and inhibited competition within the sector. In this way, cluster agreements ensured that turnover did not become uncontrollable.

A second strategy was to source geographically. Most workers lacked any means of transport to get to the flower farms and because land rights are difficult to obtain in Ethiopia, people are reluctant to move. Therefore farms need to provide bus services to transport their workers. Managers seemed to make use of workers' lack of mobility by targeting different villages to source their workers than competitors. This practice makes it virtually impossible for workers to compare working conditions and to choose which farm to work for. Hence, by sourcing from different areas it seemed that managers again managed to contain labour turnover caused by internal cluster competition.

The third strategy consisted in providing small incentives to the workers during peak production and at critical moments. Working overtime in the pack house or being shifted from one work unit to another to cover remaining work is not an exception at peak times, and alternative job opportunities may then become more attractive; moreover, seeing colleagues leave the farm may strengthen this feeling. Managers indicated that during these moments it was important to keep the remaining workforce and that they did so by providing small incentives, for example giving one litre of milk or one kilogramme of bananas at the end of the day. These small presents were said to have a short-term, lowering effect on labour turnover.

However managers recognised that containing labour turnover caused by alternative job opportunities remained a difficult task, especially because it did not follow a clear seasonal pattern — in contrast with rural activities or school activities. Managers said that they could do very little to reduce competition for labour with other sectors.

(iii) Accommodating to high labour turnover

The first two sets of practices emerging from our data have to do with predicting labour turnover patterns and making high labour turnover containable so that it is manageable. A third set consists in practices enabling accommodation to the situation of high labour turnover. 'Accommodation' means that management seeks ways to adapt to the highly fluctuating workforce. In our study, accommodating practices included the segmentation of the workforce, task simplification and hiring more workers than needed.

On flower farms there are two main types of jobs. Either one works in the greenhouse or in the pack house. Greenhouse workers are responsible for weeding, cleaning and harvesting the flowers. Workers assigned to the pack house sort flowers in terms of quality and size, and package them accordingly, before they are placed in cold rooms. Both jobs are done by low-educated female workers; however managers highlighted the fact that work in the pack house requires some more training, because it is

there that a difference in terms of quality control is being made. In addition, work in the greenhouse can be rearranged while this is not the case for work in the pack house. For these two reasons (more training needed in the pack house together with fewer opportunities for task simplification), managers sent rural women who were likely to leave in September to the greenhouse, while more stable workers, i.e. urban women, were assigned to the pack house. This segmentation of the workforce is a way of accommodating to high labour turnover as it lessens its negative impacts.

Another practice developed to overcome periods of labour shortage is task simplification and task rearrangements in the greenhouse. Workers are asked to postpone less critical tasks, such as weeding, or to harvest only twice instead of three times that day. They might also be asked to cover for absent co-workers. A last practice that we identified consisted in hiring more workers than were actually needed during quiet production periods. This was a way for managers to cover potentially large drop-outs and to make sure that they would not have to train new workers during peak production.

Summary of management practices.

Our analysis reveals that managers of flower farms in Ethiopia have developed many practices to handle high labour turnover. They have found ways to predict labour turnover patterns and to identify the most stable workers. They negotiate with competing farms and enter into unofficial non-poaching and wage agreements. They have adjusted their hiring practices in cooperation with competing farms and provide small 'surprise' incentives to retain their current work force. They segment their workforce, have simplified and reduced tasks and even hire more workers than strictly necessary. All these practices serve the purpose of reducing the uncertainty emanating from a highly fluctuating labour force and accommodating to prevailing situation. None, however, can be considered to be long-term, sustainable strategies to reduce labour turnover.

In sum, this first part of our analysis leads us to conclude that high labour turnover has become an integral part of the flower farms. It is a phenomenon that has increasingly stabilised and is repeated over the years. Our analysis of managers' practices shows clearly that managers do not have any intention to reduce labour turnover or to shape a more stable workforce. Instead all current practices are meant to offset any negative effects that high labour turnover might have on the organisation's performance. This first part of our analysis also makes clear that high functional labour turnover cannot be associated with automatically with passive management. On the contrary, maintaining or sustaining functional high labour turnover requires the development of many strategies to ensure a certain degree of control. It is not because managers do not aim to reduce turnover that they simply ignore or tolerate it.

Managers' legitimization of labour turnover through an institutional lens

In most contexts, a high and persistent labour turnover is perceived negatively (Andrijasevic & Sacchetto, 2014). In particular, in a developing country such as Ethiopia, marked by high unemployment figures, it looks suspicious when many workers leave a formal job voluntarily. How do managers who seek justification vis-à-vis Western consumers legitimize persistent high levels of labour turnover?

In this context, we wished to better understand how flower farm managers in Ethiopia make sense of the issue of high labour turnover. Using an institutional perspective, we explored how managers rely on institutional systems to construct and interpret high labour turnover. We will argue that managers make sense of it by developing coherent accounts based on institutional systems that provide them with a justification for the practices they have developed. Building on Scott's (1995) institutional pillars, our analysis reveals that managers mobilise regulative, normative and cultural-cognitive arguments to justify high labour turnover.

(i) Regulative pillar

Regulative elements are probably the most visible, explicit forms of institutions (Wicks, 2001). They constrain and regularise behaviour through the enforcement of rules and laws. Legitimacy arises from compliance with the requirements of the regulatory system (Scott, 1995). In the context of the cut flower industry, managers blamed Ethiopian policies and labour regulations for causing high labour turnover. At the same time, they indicated that they felt constrained by governmental legislations when trying to take up more effective measures to high overcome labour turnover.

Policies and regulations as causing factor. Managers blamed the government for contributing directly to high labour turnover. Governmental policies and regulations were criticised for promoting alternative livelihood strategies and encouraging education, thereby stimulating rather than stabilising labour turnover. For instance, most farms are located in clusters near Addis Ababa, since they are export-oriented. However, the government has also allocated land to other industries such as the garment industry, in these clusters. This centralisation has resulted in strong competition for labour among different industrial sectors. The agricultural sector, to which the cut flower industry belongs, finds it difficult to compete with the light manufacturing sectors in terms of wages. Managers also blamed the current government for encouraging the migration of low-skilled women to Arab countries to work as household maids — flower farms require exactly these same workers. Managers did however understand that government was promoting the education of their low-skilled labour force, seeing it as an indication of Ethiopia's ongoing development. Nevertheless they pointed out that higher school attendance negatively affected their labour supply.

While Ethiopian development policies were said to have an influence on labour dynamics at a macro level, Ethiopian labour law was said to induce greater labour turnover at farm level. For instance, labour law prescribes that a worker working on a flower farm for 45 consecutive days must receive a permanent contract. Although at first sight this measure would seem to protect a worker's rights, it has had a pervasive effect in the sense that workers saw their wages decline once they had become a permanent employee. Managers explained that this was because permanent workers had to pay taxes and pensions contributions, whereas a daily or seasonal workers did not. As a result, this created dissatisfaction among the workers, often resulting in their departure. Although managers acknowledged the problem, none of them spoke about making up for the difference by increasing wages. Their arguments were about complying with the rules. In other words, legitimacy of this practice arose from the taken-for-granted character of the labour law.

Regulations as constraining factor. Regulations were presented as constraining factors: they were too lenient, favouring the workers, protecting their rights too much and leaving managers with no means to overcome labour turnover. Managers said that they had no means to “discipline” the workers. This sense of powerlessness over workers was touched upon by many managers through anecdotal examples. For instance, a worker is said to be within the parameters of the law if he/she is absent for less than ten days a month. Managers stated that giving workers permission to be absent for one third of a working month was unimaginable in any other context and that Ethiopian workers abused this rule regularly by not showing up for work without notifying their supervisors. Managers said that they tried to discipline their workforce by giving warnings but ultimately these warnings were ineffective, since labour law does not allow any wage deduction or other form of penalization for less than ten absence days a month. In other words, managers emphasised that they did not have any means to take action. They perceived the regulative environment as a constraint and though it limited their scope for action to reduce labour turnover. This prevented them from doing anything about their unpredictable, slippery labour force.

(ii) *Normative pillar*

Normative elements refer to those “normative rules that introduce a prescriptive, evaluative and obligatory dimension into social life” (Scott, 1995: p. 64). Central to this pillar are norms and values prescribing how one is expected to behave. Legitimacy arises from doing things the way ‘it should be done’. Normative practices are socially constructed and give rise to social roles (Wicks, 2001). In the context of the flower farms, managers explained high labour turnover as a consequence of existing gender roles and social obligations.

Gender roles. The cultural-cognitive frames in which women are viewed as soft, caring and patient, while men are seen as strong and tough, underpin socially-accepted work and non-work roles. In Ethiopia gender roles are clearly defined (Aguilar, Carranza, Goldstein, Kilic & Oseni, 2015; Kumar & Quisumbing, 2015). Men plough and sow the land at the end of June, and women join them in September to weed. Teff harvesting in December and January is a joint effort. Men are seen as the breadwinner of the family while women are responsible for a multitude of tasks within the household. They are expected to go to the market, cook, clean and take care of their children, as well as of elderly or sick household members (Lemlem, Bishop-Sambrook, Puskur & Tesema, 2010). These gender roles continue at the workplace, where there is a clear job division (Barrientos et al., 2003). Women are hired to take care of the flowers while men are only hired for hard work (such as construction of greenhouses, working in cold rooms) or hazardous work (such as spraying). As explained by Barrientos et al. (2003), higher positions such as supervision or management are most often taken up by a man rather than by a woman. Referring to these traditional gender roles, managers considered labour turnover as typically female phenomenon. A full-time job on a flower farm is 48 hours spread over six days in a week. Managers acknowledged that the combination of work and non-work responsibilities for many female workers might be challenging. Thus absenteeism would rise on market days, or women would be absent for a number of days without notifying their supervisors in advance. Pointing towards these traditional gender roles, managers argued that high labour turnover was an external phenomenon, caused by Ethiopian norms and values. Legitimacy here came from acting in line with these institutionalised norms and values. In other words, coping with high labour turnover rather than trying to reduce labour turnover had become the appropriate action, since reducing labour turnover would imply that one challenged these taken-for-granted, institutionalised gender roles.

Social obligations. Ethiopians are said to be very close to each other and to attach great importance to ceremonies. One manager illustrated this powerfully: it was normal that whenever one worker was sick, two or three people would be absent to take care of this person. Funerals or weddings would attract many people, resulting in high absenteeism on those days; the same was true for other important holidays and festivities. Easter for example is one of the most celebrated times of the year

especially among Christians in Ethiopia, because for them it falls together with the wedding season. Most workers wish to go home to visit family and friends, which some managers perceived as a real problem since the Ethiopian Easter coincides with the peak production season. Unsurprisingly, managers are very reluctant to give holidays during this period, so many workers just quit their jobs. As with gender roles, managers pointed to the social obligations of their Ethiopian workers as a driving force of high labour turnover. As such they emphasised that high labour turnover was the product of external elements about which they could do nothing; all they could do was to find a way to cope with it.

(iii) *Cultural-cognitive pillar*

Finally, cultural-cognitive elements of institutions are those 'shared conceptions that constitute the nature of social reality and create the frames through which meaning is made' (Scott, 1995, p. 67). Underlying this type of institution is the notion that individuals' response to reality are based on their subjective interpretations of the environment. These cultural-cognitive elements are most of the time taken for granted, because they are composed of shared frames and beliefs. In the context of the cut flower industry, managers would draw on cultural-cognitive elements to make sense of their organisation's structure, to explain the underlying logic of high labour turnover and justify their actions.

Feminine qualities. Worldwide the cut flower industry is dominated by female, unskilled workers. According to the managers interviewed, these workers make up around 80% of the total workforce on each farm worldwide. There was a shared understanding among managers that women were more suited for the jobs on flower farms than men, due to their feminine qualities, which were described as: careful, patient and sensitive. It was mentioned that routine work on flower farms was easier for women; they were said to be more responsible and less likely to complain. Few managers had ever questioned this workforce composition, let alone thought of changing it — even though they considered high labour turnover much more common among their female than among their male workers. By emphasising these feminine qualities, managers explained why the majority of their workforce were women and why they were not going to change this workforce structure, even if this meant that the organisation was constantly going to face high labour turnover figures.

Image of the flower farm worker. Working on flower farms "doesn't require intellectual or something. Just labour horse is needed" (interview1000b). So what workers typically have in common, other than being female, is that they are low educated. Managers associated this lack of formal education with being irresponsible and incapable of long-term thinking. Thus they explained why their workers would voluntarily quit their permanent job at the farm for an alternative job opportunity in the city, for

example in the construction sector, on a short-term basis. This image that managers had of their workers made them also conclude that workers were susceptible to all sorts of information, making them constantly move from one job to another even though, according to the managers we interviewed, there was no rational motive to do so. In addition, with flower farms being new in the country, most workers would have their first work experience in this sector. Managers associated this lack of work experience with a lack of a decent work ethic. Managers illustrated this by pointing out that workers often stayed home “*for fun*” (interview 10.000), or when they “*simply have received a bit of money*” (interview 100.000a). These cultural-cognitive frames, presenting workers as irresponsible and irrational, were used by managers to blame their workers for high labour turnover. In addition, these frames also affected managers’ practices since managers had to “*discipline*” them and “*teach*” them proper work ethics.

Rural vs urban identity. Another characteristic which managers would draw upon to make sense of their work context was the worker’s geographical origin. Flower farms hire both workers living in rural surroundings and those coming from the nearest towns. Managers described rural employees as hard-working people who had agricultural experience because they also cultivated their own land. Workers with an urban background, on the other hand, were categorized as fast, smart and focused. Because of the exposure to city life however, they were also labelled as pickier than rural workers. Drawing on these cognitive frames, managers would justify their workforce segmentation. Rural workers were more likely to be placed in greenhouses, where they were responsible for agricultural tasks such as weeding and harvesting flowers. Urban workers, on the other hand, would be put to work in the pack house, where they would have to select flowers according to quality criteria and package them for shipping. According to our interviewees, in general urban women preferred working in the pack house because this type of job takes place in the shade, and is cleaner than working in the hot, muddy greenhouses. In this way, managers legitimized the segmentation of their workforce. The fact that greenhouse tasks were less affected by high labour turnover than tasks in the pack houses, and that rural workers employed in greenhouses were more likely to leave the farm than urban workers employed in the pack houses, was viewed as a coincidence. Managers sought to legitimize their workforce segmentation by pointing out that this was the logical thing to do following these cultural-cognitive frames.

Summary of management's legitimization practices of turnover

Building on *regulative* elements, managers made sense of high labour turnover by picturing it as a consequence of a macro regulative environment facilitating alternative work opportunities. Presenting high labour turnover as a result of institutional factors made it superfluous for managers to question their own organisational environment. When they did, they tiptoed around practices that might be damaging for workers by emphasising that they simply followed the rules. In this way managers covered their own responsibilities with a veil of legitimacy arising from compliance with Ethiopian labour law.

The *normative* elements helped managers to legitimize their fluctuating labour force. Voluntarily leaving a permanent job was attributed to women's social and cultural obligations. Following this logic it becomes clear that in the mindset of managers labour turnover remained largely out of their scope since they could not alter existing socio-cultural expectations towards women in the Ethiopian society. This left them with few alternatives to deal with labour turnover issues other than the ones they already applied

Finally, the image of workers as unskilled, irresponsible and lacking a decent work ethic constitutes a cultural-cognitive construction affecting managers' practices. They saw it as their responsibility to discipline workers, to teach them how to behave in a formal work setting — focusing much more on 'sticks' than on 'carrots'. Therefore managers pictured high labour turnover as a phenomenon entirely situated on the workers' side rather than as a problem arising from organisational practices. In addition, managers would draw upon their cultural-cognitive frames regarding female, urban and rural workers to legitimize their work structure and practices.

DISCUSSION

In this article, we proposed an institutional perspective to broaden our understandings of functional labour turnover. We investigated two main questions: the practices developed by managers to cope with high labour turnover, and the justifications underlying their practices and used to make sense of it. Our analysis has enabled us to better understand how institutional systems participated in shaping managers' mindsets with regards to high labour turnover. In this mindset, which plays an important role, labour turnover is the outcome of external institutional forces that are outside the managers' scope of action. As a result, managers feel deprived of the means to reduce labour turnover. Figure 3 presents the manager's mindset model; it illustrates how managers can accept and justify high labour turnover, and to formulate practices helping them to cope with it rather than reduce it.

Our study shows that managers did not envisage that the work environment might be a potential cause of turnover. Instead they considered high labour turnover to be entirely caused by external pressures. This is surprisingly different from what is generally accepted within the academic literature, where high levels of turnover are considered to be caused by job dissatisfaction and where retention strategies, to be effective, need to focus on improving working conditions so as to improve job satisfaction (Mobley, 1977; Mueller & Price, 1990).

In fact we argue that flower farm managers have re-defined the causes of labour turnover because of the conflicting expectations that their stakeholders have towards them. On the one hand, powerful Western buyers and retailers employ practices — such as cost-cutting and just-in-time ordering — that compel flower farms to promote labour flexibility (Barrientos & Smith, 2007; Riisgaard, 2009). Because of this, workers need to be both available and disposable, and high labour turnover becomes beneficial. On the other hand, growing consumer awareness and NGO campaigns demanding better working conditions at the bottom of global value chains have resulted in the proliferation of private social standards. Implicitly these standards condemn labour flexibility as they strive for a better protection of workers' rights, permanent contracts and better working conditions (Riisgaard, 2011).

For these stakeholders large dropouts of workers cannot be associated with low job satisfaction resulting from poor working conditions. Hence, flower farms encounter a vexing predicament: if these farms were to adhere closely to Western societal norms and expectations, they would be unlikely to maximize their profits and take full advantage of having relocated to a low-wage country. Conversely, if these farms openly violate Western societal expectations, they are likely to lose their Western consumers. Consequently, to protect themselves from being questioned, managers have constructed a mindset that supports the notion that high labour turnover is not their fault. The process of re-making sense of turnover as a phenomenon entirely out of their scope is arguably not a deliberate one, nor an intentional strategy to avoid claims of negligence. It is more likely that managers unconsciously try to align conflicting Western pressures from both the consumers and the buyers sides.

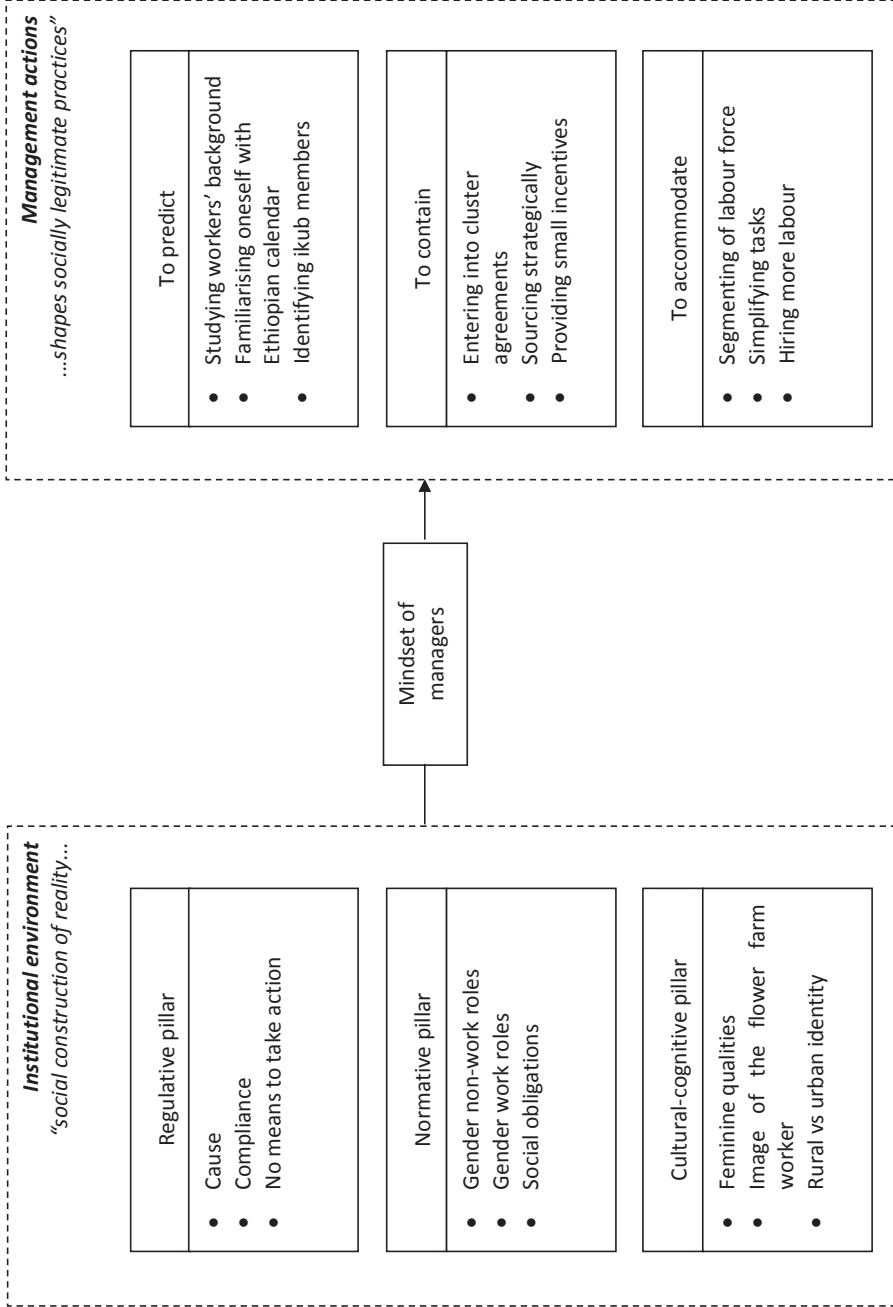


Figure 3. Manager's mindset with regard to persistently high turnover and coping practices

Contributions to the research field

This study extends the work on functional labour turnover in several ways. First, we have shown that managers can develop numerous practices to cope with persistently high levels of turnover. While prior research has focused on delineating successful retention strategies designed to reduce dysfunctional turnover (McEvoy & Cascio, 1985; Rainlall, 2004; Taplin, Winterton & Winterton, 2003), few studies have focused on identifying the types of practices followed by managers in contexts where labour turnover is considered functional. By exploring the practices developed by managers to cope with rapid turnover, we addressed this research gap and showed that functional turnover also requires active strategies. Nevertheless our analysis of coping practices is only a first tentative step towards improving our understanding of the type of practices followed by managers to cope with functional turnover.

Second, by drawing on institutional theory we are introducing a different perspective on functional turnover, that is a more subjective view. Our findings show that managers seek legitimacy both for high turnover and their own coping practices. Whereas prior studies concluded that some types and some extent of turnover could be considered beneficial for an organisation as long as the benefits of turnover outweighed its costs (Abelson et al., 1984; Dalton et al., 1982; Siebert et al., 2009; Williams, 2000), our study argues that this economic argument does not suffice for managers to accept high turnover levels. In order to acquire and maintain legitimacy in the eyes of their stakeholders and society at large, they need to construct a mindset that supports the notion that labour turnover is entirely out of their scope. This mindset draws on the three pillars of institutions. Hence, this study is extending the previous theory on functional turnover by using a more subjective lens, which broadens our understanding of functional turnover beyond the purely rational economic argument.

Third, we are contributing to the turnover literature by placing the mindset of the managers at the centre of our analysis. We have widened previous studies, which had researched functional turnover mainly from an organisation's perspective, by including the managers' perspective. By drawing attention to the manager and his legitimacy-seeking behaviour, we are able to explain the logics behind current coping practices. Furthermore, our findings show how these institutional arguments used by managers to legitimize turnover have put them in a deadlock, whereby current coping practices remain the only appropriate and proper tools at their disposal. As a result, this study highlights the complexity and ambiguity of functional labour turnover dynamics, and the need to understand not only organisational objectives but also managers' perceptions within the larger institutional context in which they operate. Our findings imply that functional labour turnover cannot be fully understood without emphasizing the interplay between the institutional environment and managers' actions.

Implications and future research directions

Our study provides insights that carry important implications for both practitioners and academics. For academics, the fact that managers seek legitimacy and social acceptance for functional labour turnover illustrates the need for more contextual research that will serve to improve our understanding of the complexities of this phenomenon. While we acknowledge that our analysis has been based on a single industry in a specific country context, and that legitimization practices of managers are specific to the empirical setting of the study, it can be envisaged that similar patterns may occur in other situations bringing together functional turnover and stakeholders (e.g. consumers, NGOs) who are concerned about poor working conditions. In this regard, further research should be conducted in other low-skilled, labour-intensive industries and other institutional country contexts, in order to verify and expand upon the managers' legitimation and coping practices presented here.

As for practitioners, and more specifically certification bodies, our results show that it is important to understand the institutional logics that managers draw upon to legitimize turnover — because this has far-reaching consequences for the organisational structure and managerial practices. As much as high turnover can be considered to be functional for an organisation, it may also persist because of the various institutional logics that drive managers into deadlock.

Our findings suggest that managers do not see themselves as purely pursuing a profit-maximizing corporate agenda. Certification bodies with an interest in improving working conditions need to treat these managers as allies in their endeavour to achieve better working conditions. Otherwise several criteria of certification schemes will only exist on paper or will miss their goals. By way of example, certification schemes prescribe that workers should have the right to freedom of association and collective bargaining. They also prescribe that workers need to receive a permanent contract after a probation period (Riisgaard, 2011). In a context with high labour turnover, however, labour unions lack bargaining power because dissatisfied workers choose to exit the firm rather than to formulate their grievances (Elger et al., 1998) and permanent contracts are basically not valued very much by workers who wish to leave (Smith et al., 2004).

These examples illustrate the necessity for certification bodies to understand the local dynamics at play and how managers' construction of these local realities influence their practices. For these reasons we join the call of Locke, Amengual and Mangla (2009) who proposed a more commitment-oriented approach to improving labour standards based on a process of root-cause analysis, joint problem solving and information sharing rather than a compliance-focused approach whereby auditors simply tick off the boxes on their checklists.

Appendix. Management Strategies

Representative quotes	Type of practice	Aggregate code
<p>We study their background everything. When we put them in the greenhouse, the ladies come from where? (10.000)</p> <p>They get the privilege of permanent worker. So we don't really consider them as a daily labourer, but.. the majority we categorize it whenever they are working in the greenhouses, we call them the daily labourer because they are... They are also turning a lot. They are changing a lot, all the time. (10b)</p>	<p>Studying workers' background</p>	<p>Predicting labour turnover</p>
<p>We want to have permanent workers, starting from September until August. We want to have constant workers. But, sometimes, because of the harvesting season, especially starting from September up to November, the main harvesting season for the farmers, so they want to harvest their field instead of working with us. (100a)</p>		
<p>For example in April or something, this is the common wedding time for the Ethiopians, this is major. Because there is a holiday of Easter, and after Easter there is fasting and after fasting, especially the majority of workers are Christians, the marriage is here and there are holidays and the people they are gone to visit their family or something. So at this time we will also have shortage of workers. This is the major [period of labour turnover]. (1000b)</p>	<p>Familiarising oneself with Ethiopian calendar</p>	
<p>Although it's seasonal, right. During the rainy season there are less weddings and during fasting there are no weddings. But there are specific periods in which everybody needs to get married, right. Then everyone and everything is turned upside down. (2a)</p>		
<p>September is one, then April and May is another. This is when we have absenteeism. You know, the absence becomes more in those months [...]. This is new year in September in Ethiopia. Then, May and April, Easter holiday. That is when we have turnover. (1000b)</p>		
<p>This association will keep more workers to stay. Not to run away from here [...] She will not move. Because she knows these people. They were here while she was ill, while she was giving birth. Such issues... when she had a problem with her husband. They will talk to her, explain to her how to manage it. Divorce and that.. such issues. These things will keep these workers more to stay in the farm, not to move. (1b)</p>	<p>Identifying ikub members</p>	
<p>[Ikub] is not really visible. For me, it is visible, but for most of the people will not even make it visible. (1b)</p> <p>The association might be work-to-work, horizontal association, not vertical like managers and things. But that is the biggest and strongest bond. I know a lot of people who work here and they will not leave, although they are offered double of amount. (1b)</p>		

<p><i>In general, we do have a common understanding between the farms that if we want to raise, we need to raise equally so that we don't compete with each other. (1000.000b)</i></p>	<p>Entering into cluster agreements</p>	<p>Containing labour turnover</p>
<p><i>We have an oral agreement that we don't buy staff from each other. Most of the time you don't do so. Imagine someone has worked for three years at the neighbouring farm and suddenly she stops working there. Often something is wrong. Maybe she got fired or bullied. (2a)</i></p>		
<p><i>They won't tell you [where they have worked before]. Because we have like a kind of agreement. Especially in this area it is really difficult to.. if you are employing only from the neighbouring farm, which is nearby, it is going to spoil our relationship. (1a)</i></p>		
<p><i>All the farms, if they are going to the same place there will be competition. [...] They are going to different places and they are taking labourers from this area. (1000b)</i></p>	<p>Sourcing strategically</p>	
<p><i>It is a funny thing because you wouldn't have thought that we would have to travel so far. It was not envisaged by the investors when it started. They thought that all the labour would just be locally available, so it is quite surprising that we have to do as much transporting of people as we do. (20)</i></p>		
<p><i>So we are always competing with them to take labourers and then we are getting by now from the southern part of Ethiopia rather than getting from the town. You know, since the town people have got the advantage of getting work in the industries, they are always moving in that direction. Yeah, so... (100b)</i></p>		
<p><i>Once on due we will have a surprise gift. Maybe one litre of milk or bananas, one kilogramme of bananas, for each worker and such. Or something. You will motivate them. Give incentives. In these [labour shortage] areas. Because they are doing almost the remaining work. (1b)</i></p>	<p>Providing small incentives</p>	
<p><i>So what we are doing by now is just trying to give or to have bonus system for each worker. Whenever they are just here in the farm, we'll give them something, like money or something. So, because of that, the turnover has a little bit improved but we still have turnover problem because of you know, maybe the other farms may told you, there are so many industries in that town. (100b)</i></p>		
<p><i>We are just giving bonus for the hard workers. If they are hard workers, if they are punctual, if they are just good workers, we give them bonus. At the end of the month, we will give bonus. And if the labourers are working without any absence, we will give additional bonus for that. That is what we are doing (1000b).</i></p>		

<p>Ladies coming from town prefer to work in the pack house. Because the pack house is a little bit, especially in the summer season, no muddy, no... and some of them in the winter, they dislike the heat in the greenhouse and they prefer the pack house and just accordingly we are arranging them, accordingly. (10.000)</p> <p>Most of the school will close by this typical season. Euh, though we don't employ, because they will be really seasonal. Sometimes we will use that, we will employ them. At least they will give you... school will start on September, on July there will be this movement. Still almost September, end of September they will work for you. We employ them only for grading whole. Punching. (1b)</p> <p>Mainly the pack house girls they are coming from Debre Zeyit City and the girls that are coming from the rural areas, from around the farms, if they don't have anything to do on their farm, the ones that are coming... if it is not harvesting season or sowing season, we use the farmers. So the greenhouse women are... most of them are from the rural areas. (10b)</p>	<p>Segmenting labour force</p>	<p>Accommodating to labour turnover</p>
<p>We try to do our best to focus only on harvesting instead of doing the other jobs. So we pick only flowers and then we will also help, especially in the area where we have most production, we shift ladies from another greenhouse to finish their job. So in such a way we will try our best to finish the job. But it is difficult for us. You know, we don't take out rejected stems sometimes, we will not apply any practice like bending on time. So it will affect our productivity. (100b)</p> <p>They [remaining labourers] cover their place and they leave the secondary and tertiary jobs and they focus only on the primary and they support the greenhouse at that moment. (10.000)</p> <p>[During moments of labour shortage] we set priorities in work. Let's say we don't weed or something. (100.000b)</p>	<p>Simplifying tasks</p>	
<p>There are times that we could do with less people, but actually the amount of people is based on the maximum needs. Because if it is really busy, and you still need to go find them and train them... (50)</p> <p>We want to have extra workers, because of the turnover you know. This is the major area which has the most turnover of labour. Because of the industries that are found in the country, in the city. You know, we are always competing for labour. So we want to have always extra workers in the field. So that is why we have 320. But, when we see the total demand of the workers, it is about 280 or 290. (100a)</p> <p>Because when you are desperate, you... on these seasons we cannot train people. You don't want to train anyone when you have your high season, you know, like I said, because the risk is much higher. We cannot afford to lose quality, not afford to make demands and to avoid those things we want to hire someone who understands the process. (10b)</p>	<p>Hiring more labour</p>	

Appendix. Managers' legitimization of high labour turnover through an institutional lens

Representative quotes	
Regulative pillar	<p>Policies and regulations as causal factor</p> <p>Now you really need to go look for them. Because there are so many new garment factories and soda factories and other greenhouses and... well it is hard to find workers. So it is a little bit the problem of the government, I think. Because they try to centralize horticulture and industry, but that doesn't really match with the labour supply now does it. (5)</p> <p>The main reason why we lose workers is because they migrate to the Middle East to work as a household slave and the government doesn't do anything about it! On the contrary, they are behind it. Every month there are so many thousands of them going to Saudi Arabia and so on, and the government even has made deals with these countries: so many per month we'll deliver. It is just a business, modern slavery (2a).</p> <p>When we started here there was hardly any school. Nowadays even if they are 16, 17, 18, 19, 20... people start reading, start learning school and go to school. Back then there were not a lot of schools to learn. Nowadays the government is pushing the father or the mother or the parent to send its kids to school. But not before, it was not happening. So we start with developing the country. When there is a development of the country, it does become more of a tendency among workers [to leave the farm] (1b).</p>
Regulations as constraining factor	<p>And they will be absent for four days. Five days means they will be fired. Without notifying, after five days they will be fired, it is according to the law of the government. On the fourth? They will come and they will work for one week or something and then they will be gone again... (1b)</p> <p>In Ethiopia, we have a serious problem with absenteeism and fraudulent sick leave. Which is very, very difficult to control unless a deduction is made from the wage, if absenteeism or sick leave goes outside the acceptable parameters. And so one of the reasons it is so difficult to control is that the current labour legislation allows a person to be absent up to 10 days a month. So just to allow to be able to be absent 10 days a month! That is quite different to European conditions. So if we are allowing our staff to be absent one third of their working time, roughly, how do we anticipate and predict what the staff component is going to be on any one day? (20)</p> <p>Well, we have been trying various things. We've been trying to be strict in terms of a disciplinary process; in a process in warnings. But even those warnings are ineffective, because we don't have the means to take action. When the person has ten warnings on his file, we still don't have the means to take action because he is within the parameters of the law; the law says he may take up 10 days in a month. So very difficult to manage (20)</p>

Normative pillar	Gender roles	<p>Women will be more absent than men because they are taking responsibility in the family. If a child maybe is sick, more she will be responsible and to do different things, she will be more responsible in the family cases. That is why it is more for women to be absent. (1000b)</p> <p>I don't know... there are so many things. They have their own life. Sometimes their life requires them to remain at home. They have to do something, I don't know... when they are not coming here. And some, women are also, some of them, have children who are being sick, they have to look after them. And a lot of reasons. (100b)</p> <p>Like males, absenteeism will be almost zero. I understand women they have of course something to do at their home. Men they are breadwinner, they bread-win only on one location. Where? Our farm. But, females of course, the money they make, or the money that he gives to his wife, the wife will be responsible to buy, to go to the market. Euhm.. to order the products and to bring it to the house. Of course you also have to treat the children. Typically it is for women, female. (1b)</p>
	Social obligations	<p>People don't show up for work especially with their holidays, because they are religious, they have different holidays. And the other reason is personal problems, because especially here in Ethiopia people are intimate, very intimate with each other. If somebody is out or sick or something, maybe two or three people will be absent. Because they are intimate and also the funeral ceremony, just for the ceremony 200 or 300 people are sitting there, so... but yeah okay. (1000b)</p> <p>They marry in seasons. In the rainy season there are less weddings and also during fasting there are no weddings. There are certain periods in which everybody needs to get married.. so then everything is turned upside down. (2a)</p> <p>For example in April or something, this is the common wedding time for the Ethiopians, this is major. Because there is a holiday of Easter, and after Easter there is fasting and after fasting, especially the majority of workers are Christians, the marriage is here and there are holidays and the people they are gone to visit their family or something. So at this time we will also have shortage of workers. This is the major [period of labour turnover]. (1000b)</p>

Cultural- cognitive pillar	Feminine qualities	<p>Women work better in the greenhouses, you don't have to make them do harsh work all right, but in the greenhouses and pack houses, it's all women. They are more trustworthy, and well... Men they easily go drinking or they don't show up or... but women they are more responsible than men in this type of countries. (10.000)</p> <p>Women are used to work with babies right and so they can work better with plants.... Men are way too rough. We used to have a male picker, and now he became a very good supervisor but that hasn't repeated itself ever since. (2a)</p> <p>The work, we are dealing with flowers, the harvesting, this work is much easier for ladies, for the women. And I think it's not like a labour intensive job. Like male, they prefer to do like harder work, like digging, like construction, like... if you see the observation of the woman is much better than the male workers. Like cut stage, proper cut stage, you can't expect that from the male worker, like the female worker gives like perfect cut stages. (1000.000a).</p>
	Image of the flower farm worker	<p>Some of them are absent because of awareness. They don't have a lot of skills. When somebody comes here offering a better price, they go. And at the end of the month, they come back. Just because of awareness, a lack of knowledge. (10.000).</p> <p>On Monday you won't find many workers because they partied too much in the weekend and on Friday you find many workers because they still have the weekend in front of them. (2a)</p> <p>Then they have a little bit of money and they stay home again, because the work ethic is not the same as in Europe of course... (100.000a).</p> <p>You know, they are susceptible to all sorts of information. You know, they move here and there, and then after having seen the other places, they come here and you know, and start again (100b).</p> <p>A permanent contract, they have never heard of it. So this week they come to work, the next week they just see... (5)</p> <p>It is their attitude. You need to imagine, this country has been a communist country. So in a communist country people aren't expected to work, they are expected to be obedient [...] So people here have never learned how to think. A Kenyan, if you give him a job, once he is finished, he'll start something else. Here they will never do that. If he's finished, he just sits down and waits until you come along to say what he needs to do next.... The mentality is just different. (5)</p>

Rural vs urban
identity

Because, especially when the people are coming from the village, they are the farmers, they are working hard. They are hard working. But when they are coming from Debre Zeyit or something, it is obvious you know, because they are not doing any other agricultural practice or something in their life, so they are new and to build up their capacity, it takes time. (1000)

They are very difficult to manage. They are quite tricky, these people they are coming from town. Town people are always the difficult ones to manage because of the exposure. Town is of course a little bit more developed. The exposure, the evolution, the choice... they become more picky. (1b)

Most of them, ladies coming from the town, prefer to work in the pack house. Because the pack house is a little bit, especially in the summer season, no muddy, no... and some of them are in the winter, they dislike the heat in the greenhouse and they prefer the pack house. And just accordingly we are arranging them, accordingly. (10.000)

ARTICLE 3

Identifying the impediments to workplace unionism in Agricultural Value Chains: an integrated framework

Abstract. This article studies the impediments to workplace unionism in the cut flower industry in Ethiopia. To identify these impediments, we combined a vertical (governance and structure of Global Value Chains) lens and a horizontal (socio-economic context) lens. Such an integrated approach helped us to find several impediments which are rooted in socio-cultural norms and values, and at the same time are the outcomes of commercial dynamics inherent to vertical integration. We argue that there is no quick fix for improving trade union rights at the bottom of agricultural value chains. We conclude by discussing ways in which some of these impediments can be overcome.

INTRODUCTION

Freedom of association and the right to collective bargaining are considered intrinsic principles of social justice (Anner, 2012; Barrientos & Smith, 2007; Elliott & Freeman, 2003). They aim to give workers a voice to formulate their grievances and enables them to negotiate specified conditions of employment, such as minimum wages, working hours and health and safety issues (Barrientos & Smith, 2007; Egels-Zandén & Merk, 2014; Frenkel, 2001; Riisgaard, 2011). These are fundamental worker rights which help workers to protect their own rights and which allow them to decide which issues to pursue and which battles to fight with their employers (Elliott & Freeman, 2003; Van Buren & Greenwood, 2008). Hence, when it comes to making sustained improvements on the work floor, workers' voice and representation are considered vital (Egels-Zandén & Merk, 2014; Greenwood, 2002; Ip, 2008).

However, workers in the production levels in most agricultural value chains are seldom organised (Carswell & De Neve, 2013). Since the 1980s, globalization and trade liberalization has led to the relocation of labour-intensive production to low wage countries where there is limited experience with trade union participation. Scholars have identified several challenges to collective bargaining in these developing, export-oriented countries, ranging from fragmentation of unions, lack funding and experience, weak leadership, inter-union rivalry and corruption (Egels-Zandén & Merk, 2014; Lund-Thomsen, 2013).

There is a growing research interest in understanding how workers employed at the bottom of global value chains (GVC) try to improve their terms of participation in these value chains. Several studies have applied a vertical (GVC) lens in studying the potential for collective organisation, focusing their research mainly on the presence of private social standards (PSS) regulating the chain and the impact these PSS have on workers' trade union rights (Barrientos & Smith, 2007; Egels-Zandén & Merk, 2014; Riisgaard, 2009; Wang, 2005). Other studies have applied a horizontal (socio-economic context) lens to study how labour can or cannot change their terms and conditions of employment. Recognizing that most workers are unorganized, the focus of these studies applying a horizontal lens has mainly been to investigate how unorganized labour tries to improve their working life (Carswell & De Neve, 2013; Lund-Thomsen, 2013). Few studies however have integrated both lenses to develop a clear understanding of the interaction of GVCs and local socio-economic forces in determining the consequences for the organisation of labour.

The objective of this article is to identify the impediments to workplace unionism at the bottom of global value chains. More specifically, this paper seeks to answer the research question: What are the impediments to workplace unionism in the cut flower industry in Ethiopia? To answer this research

question, this article develops an integrated framework and explores the interplay between vertical GVC forces and horizontal local forces. In bringing these two lenses together, we put forward several building blocks for a more integrated analytical framework of workplace unionism. First, we expand the vertical GVC approach, which tends to focus on the presence of PSS in GVCs (Lund-Thomsen & Coe, 2013; Riisgaard & Hammer, 2011), in order to take account of other, often conflicting, vertical forces which also affect workplace unionism, such as demand fluctuations, just-in-time orders and downward pressures on prices.

Second, we broaden the research scope by also including non-certified farms in the study on trade union rights. Past studies applying a vertical GVC approach rarely compared unionization efforts between certified and non-certified farms (Barrientos & Smith, 2007; Egels-Zandén & Lindholm, 2015). Implicitly it seems as if these studies assumed that in the absence of PSS, there was simply a lower chance of having workplace unionism. This article shows that this assumption is flawed and that we need to pursue research agendas that seek to open up this blind spot in literature.

Third, we integrate the vertical GVC analysis with an understanding of the horizontal, local socio-economic forces. We argue that the interplay between vertical and horizontal forces varies over time and across place, and can result in quite distinct outcomes in terms of workplace unionism. Hence, an integrated approach is needed to understand why workplace unionism remains at the fringes and to help those who wish to make collective organization of workers possible.

The article is structured as follows. First, the vertical (GVC) and horizontal (local socio-economic context) forces that according to literature are important facilitators or constrainers to workplace unionism are identified. Second, an introduction is given to our fieldwork site and the methodology used for this study. We then present the integrated framework and apply this framework to study the impediments to workplace unionism in a cluster of flower farms in Ethiopia. The discussion highlights the main findings and raises some suggestions on how to tackle some of the impediments to unionism in the Ethiopian cut flower farms. Finally, the conclusion discusses our contributions and makes some suggestions for further research.

TOWARDS AN INTEGRATED FRAMEWORK

To build our integrated framework, we first need to identify the vertical and horizontal forces which may facilitate or hamper workplace unionism. These forces set the contours of the framework. Based on an extensive literature review, we identified four vertical forces (including demand fluctuations, just-in-time orders, downward pressures on prices, private social standards) and five horizontal forces (including livelihood strategies, spatial location of workers, gendered economies, regulatory

framework and union tradition). In this section we discuss all these forces separately hereafter and show how each single force may affect workplace unionism.

Vertical lens

A vertical Global Value Chain approach explores how global industries are organised and structured (Gereffi, 1994). It helps to identify the different actors involved in a given industry and the role and power they have in controlling the production (Kritzinger, Barrientos, & Rossouw, 2004). The GVC lens has been widely adopted to study the consequences of value chain structuring for working conditions at the point of production (Barrientos, Dolan, & Tallontire, 2003; Nadvi, 2008; Riisgaard & Hammer, 2011).

Applying a vertical lens to agricultural value chains helps us to understand how producers face several, sometimes contradictory forces when entering competitive global markets which have important implications for working conditions and labour strategies (Kritzinger et al., 2004). Most agricultural value chains are buyer-driven, which means that the power lies with the buyers, which are large retailers, branded marketers, international processors and international traders (Riisgaard & Hammer, 2011). They dictate the terms and conditions in which the chains operate, despite the fact that they do not have any production capabilities (Gereffi & Fernandez-Stark, 2011).

As a result of their considerable buying power, retailers dominate much of the trade by determining the specifications of supply and the high technical, environmental and social standards which producers need to meet. At the same time however, retailers allow the market to set the prices and offer little guarantees of purchase (Barrientos & Kritzinger, 2004). As such, producers face several, sometimes contradictory forces (Kritzinger et al., 2004; Riisgaard & Hammer, 2011). The four forces identified that may affect unionism arising from the vertical integration are: seasonal demand and demand fluctuations, just-in-time-orders, downward pressures on prices and the presence or absence of private social standards.

First, the *seasonal demand of the produce and demand fluctuations* may potentially affect workplace unionism. Industries such as fruit, vegetables and flowers are all characterised by high levels of insecure and seasonal employment (Barrientos, 2008; Tallontire, Dolan, Smith, & Barrientos, 2005). This brings with it several challenges for labour to organize themselves. To begin with, workers employed on an insecure basis may not be interested in collective action because they only have a short-term vision towards work. Many of them may also be scared to join a union because workers on short-term contracts are easily ended by management (Egels-Zandén & Merk, 2014; Tjandraningsih & Nugroho, 2008). At the same time a highly fluctuating workforce makes it extremely difficult to keep up with union recruitment, organisation and activity (Wills, 2005).

Second, the fact that buyers try to overcome demand instability by seeking greater organizational *flexibility* and to place *just-in-time orders* may affect unionism (Kritzinger et al., 2004). By doing so, they have managed to pass on the costs of risk and uncertainty to producers. To be able to meet these ever-changing requirements of the buyers however, producers are in need of a flexible workforce that is willing to work long hours and overtime to provide high quality products within specified delivery times (Riisgaard, 2009). This means however that workers, who are predominantly women in these type of sectors, face a 'double burden' (Kidder & Raworth, 2004): it is quite challenging to combine reproductive work with productive work which requires 48 hours and excessive overtime. Hence, workers often have little spare time to take part in organising campaigns (Wills, 2005).

Third, workplace unionization may be affected by the *downward pressures on prices* which many producers are facing due to high levels of competition and price volatility (Barrientos & Kritzinger, 2004). This is at the expense of workers who are paid extremely low wages for their work. These low wage levels may hamper workplace unionism. Smith et al. (2004) found that workers were reluctant to pay membership fees because they preferred to use their money for today's concerns rather than to invest in uncertain long-term changes. In response to this, unions lowered membership fees which resulted in limited resources obstructing union's recruitment, training and collective actions. As was argued by Smith et al. (2004) this created a vicious circle, whereby the workers most in need of union representation (i.e. low wages and insecure workers) were the least likely to be recruited.

Fourth, to meet consumer concerns, large supermarkets demand agricultural producers to adhere to strict *private social standards (PSS)*, which labour can exploit into their advantage (Riisgaard, 2011). These standards demand farms to promote and respect core ILO Conventions, including the right to collective bargaining and freedom of association (87, 98 and 135 respectively) (Barrientos & Smith, 2007). Hence, labour could be more effectively organized in certified farms than in farms that do not adhere to PSS. However, the impact of these PSS on workplace unionism needs to be nuanced. Several studies have found that the impact of PSS on workplace unionism remains rather limited. One stream of researchers have argued that current monitoring mechanisms are unable to detect violations of trade union rights (Anner, 2012; Brown, 2013; Vegt, 2005; Wang, 2005). Another stream of researchers have reasoned that the actors in the value chain, including both buyers and suppliers, have limited incentives to actually promote and respect trade union rights (Barrientos & Smith, 2007; Jiang, 2009; Sum & Ngai, 2005). A final stream of researchers have detected limitations in the content of these codes, showing that by allowing parallel means of organising, and by lacking effective grievance mechanisms, PSS may even undermine trade union rights (Brown & O'rourke, 2007; Egels-Zandén & Merk, 2014; Yu, 2009). Past studies therefore imply that though PSS in theory provide workers room for collective organising through their criteria, this is in practice not necessarily guaranteed.

Horizontal lens

In this article we complement the ‘vertical’ analyses of value chains with a ‘horizontal’ approach to account for the local socio-economic context in which labour-intensive industries operate (Carswell & De Neve, 2013). Such a horizontal approach explores the role of local factors in facilitating or constraining workers’ ability to improve their overall working lives and livelihoods (Lund-Thomsen, 2013). Though we recognise that organised and collective forms of resistance are only one of the abilities to act by labour, we believe that collective forms of labour agency are the most promising to improve the working lives of labour (Coe & Jordhus-Lier, 2011).

We highlight five horizontal forces that may facilitate or hinder workplace unionism at the bottom of agricultural value chains in developing countries. These forces are livelihood strategies, spatial location of workers, gendered economies, regulatory framework and union tradition (Carswell & De Neve, 2013; Lund-Thomsen, 2013).

Livelihood strategies refer to the portfolio of activities and social support systems on which households can build their livelihoods (Ellis, 1998). The number and combination of strategies workers have to their disposition, can facilitate or constrain workplace unionism. In many developing country settings, individuals engage in multiple income generating activities. For instance, agricultural activities are combined with petty trade and/or formal wage work as to cope with potential income shocks and to improve one’s standard of living (Barrett, Reardon, & Webb, 2001; Ellis, 1998). Workers who have several livelihood options may find it easier to opt in and out of wage work. On the other hand workers whose income is entirely dependent on one income source, and who have few alternatives to turn to, may find it much harder to leave a formal job. Industries that employ workers of whom the vast majority can decide to opt in and out of work because they can engage in other livelihood activities, are much more difficult to organize than industries where there is a stable workforce of workers whose sole income is dependent on this wage work (Wills, 2005). Whether individuals have the opportunity or not to engage in several income generating activities is dependent on local factors such as location, access to assets (e.g. land), barriers to entry and seasonality (Ellis, 1998).

Second, the *spatial location of workers* in terms of the distance between worker’s home and workplace; and/or between co-workers may facilitate or hinder workplace unionism (Lund-Thomsen, 2013). Labour markets for low-paid jobs often attract a broad range of workers, including workers living in urban settings, workers residing in rural surroundings of the factories and migrant workers who left the countryside to take their chances in new factories (Carswell & De Neve, 2013). This segmented nature of the labour market (including rural, urban, migrant workers) can introduce problems with communication and a differentiated identity, which makes it particularly challenging for

unions to organize workers collectively (Wills, 2005). Moreover the distance to and from the workplace, when combined with a lack of mobility, may hamper the possibility to participate in union activities such as attending union meetings held outside the workplace or helping to organise campaigns.

A third factor which may facilitate or hinder workers to collectively organize themselves on the work floor, are *gendered economies*. The notion of gender is used to describe how male and female roles are socially constructed (Annandale & Clark, 1996). Gender studies aim to understand how these constructed gender roles influence both the productive and reproductive economy (Barrientos et al., 2003). With regards to the productive economy, it appears that men in developing countries have access to better paid and more stable jobs compared to women, who often need to engage in more temporary, low paid and informal jobs (Barrientos et al., 2003; Lund-Thomsen, 2013). This gender division even becomes more clear in the reproductive economy, where women are often the sole responsible for unpaid domestic work and child care related activities (Barrientos et al., 2003). At the bottom of agricultural value chains, the majority of the workforce are women who are hired in low-skilled, routine jobs such as picking and packing, and processing activities because they are perceived as more productive, responsible and skilled to perform delicate tasks (Kidder & Raworth, 2004). Men on the other hand are hired for hazardous work or supervisory jobs which are more permanent of nature and pay better (Barrientos et al., 2003; Korovkin & Sanmiguel-Valderrama, 2007). Existing gender roles also affect union participation and more general workplace unionism. Historically, trade unions have been organizing working men, while women appeared to be left out of these organisations (Wills, 2005). Time is often an issue; women face a double work burden, in the sense that they combine both productive and reproductive activities, and therefore often have little spare time to take part in organising campaigns (Kidder & Raworth, 2004; Wills, 2005). Hence, in sectors which are dominated by female workers, which is the case for most low-technology, labour-intensive industries where we see a 'feminization' of the workforce (Barrientos et al., 2003), it may be particularly difficult for unions to enter the workplace.

Four, the *regulatory framework* within the country may facilitate or hinder workers' organisation to develop and function. For instance, some countries (China for example) have policies which legally constrain union activities. In these countries, workers voices are effectively curdled and workplace unionism has little chances of surviving (Egels-Zandén & Merk, 2014). Governments may however also indirectly affect workers' ability to collectively act, for example through their favourable investment laws and incentives. By way of illustration, the absence of minimum wages or ill designed labour laws (e.g. making strike actions illegal, not protecting union representatives on the work floor from easily being fired) may hamper workers' collective strategies .

A final factor affecting workplace unionism is *union tradition* in the host country. The question whether workers can defend their interests in export industries is to a large extent dependent on the network they can draw upon. Within an organisation, shop stewards play a crucial role in recruiting, organising and mobilizing the workforce. However without support from the outside, success remains limited (Blyton & Jenkins, 2013). In settings with little tradition of trade unionism and where workers have little experience in joining, organising or leading union organisations, it may be extremely hard to bargain better working conditions. In many export-oriented countries, unions are often highly fragmented, lack funding and are sometimes even corrupt (Egels-Zandén & Merk, 2014). In such contexts individual workers may find themselves isolated. On the other hand, where unions have strong historical roots, there is scope for collective organisations. Workers employed in factories which are clustered even have an extra advantage. By clusters we mean *those 'geographical spaces, or regions, where farms in similar and cognate activities are located within well-defined spatial boundaries wherein proximity promotes a range of economic benefits'* (Lund-Thomsen & Nadvi, 2010, p. 204). These local clusters especially offer high potential for local joint action because union representatives from different farms can work together to exchange information and threaten with widely supported boycotts and community-based actions (Lund-Thomsen & Nadvi, 2010; Riisgaard & Hammer, 2011; Wills, 2005).

The four vertical forces and five horizontal forces we identified in this section, set the contours of our framework. The vertical forces will be mapped on a vertical Y-axis. These forces are related to the governance and structure of the Global Value Chain. These forces are context-independent. The horizontal forces will be placed on a horizontal X-axis. These forces are related to the local socio-economic context and are consequently very much context-dependent. By integrating both levels of analysis in this study, we show the importance of both sets of forces in creating several impediments to collective labour organisation in the cut flower industry in Ethiopia.

FIELDWORK SITE AND METHODS

In the previous section, we outlined the contours of the integrated framework that seeks to identify the impediments to workplace unionism at the point of production in agricultural value chains. In this section, we introduce our fieldwork site and methodology used for this study.

We aim to apply the integrated framework to empirically study the impediments to workplace unionism in the Ethiopian cut flower industry. This industry makes an exemplary case for studying the obstacles to workers' union rights at the bottom of agricultural value chains for several reasons. To begin with, due to the existence of two value chain strands for flowers -the auction and the direct strand-, the industry comprises both adopters and non-adopters of PSS, which allows a close comparison between different value chain governance structures.

The auction strand is the most popular mechanism through which flowers from East Africa are sold (Riisgaard & Hammer, 2011). Auctions are basically distribution centres. They collect large quantities of flowers which are then sold to buyers all over the world. This means that suppliers and buyers maintain loose ties. These market-based transactions are less transparent and suppliers are easily replaceable by other suppliers. Here PSS are not a requirement to sell flowers through the auction (Hale & Opondo, 2005; Riisgaard & Hammer, 2011).

The direct strand mainly involves European retailers who directly source from flower farms hereby circumventing the auction (Riisgaard, 2011). This strand is more strictly co-ordinated and buyer-driven than the auction. Large retailers have the power to demand growers to implement strict social standards as a response to consumer concerns. These standards facilitate coordination between buyer and supplier by providing credible information on the nature of the flowers and the conditions under which they have been grown (Henson & Humphrey, 2010; Ponte & Gibbon, 2005; Riisgaard, 2011). Hence, growers with a desire to sell directly are obliged to comply with external certification of standards (Hale & Opondo, 2005; Riisgaard & Hammer, 2011).

In addition, the demand for flowers is seasonal. European consumers tend to buy cut flowers with Valentine's day and Mother's day whereas they buy less flowers during the summer period (June-July-August) (Hale & Opondo, 2005). Because of these uneven demand patterns, workers are often hired on an insecure basis and are required to work very long hours during months of peak demand (Barrientos & Kritzinger, 2004). In Ethiopia, workers can easily work up to 60 hours a week during peak production moments (48 hours a week topped with 12 hours overtime). To end, the world market for cut flowers has grown consistently since the early 1980s as more countries have started producing cut flowers. However the demand has not grown at the same pace. This has resulted in high competition and downward pressures on prices (Riisgaard & Hammer, 2011). Because of this, extremely low wages

dominate the industry. In Ethiopia wages are around one dollar per day. In summary, the vertical forces we identified in previous section are all present in this sector.

In Ethiopia, the cut flower industry is a relatively young, but rapidly growing sector. The first flower farms started their operations in Ethiopia early 2000s. Early 2008 it was estimated that there were already 64 farms operational (Mano, Yamano, Suzuki, & Matsumoto, 2011; Melese & Helmsing, 2010). This success can be attributed to the Ethiopian government which has managed to create an attractive investment climate and the cheap labour supply partially due to the absence of minimum wages (Mano et al., 2011). Ethiopian flower farm workers earn up to three times less than the neighbouring Kenyan flower farm workers (Riisgaard & Gibbon, 2014). As with most labor intensive industries the majority of these workers (around 70%) employed in the cut flower industry are women who live either in the rural surroundings of the farms or neighbouring towns.

Trade unionism in Ethiopia has only a short history, even by African standards (Praeg, 2006). Founded in 1977, the Confederation of Ethiopian Trade Unions (CETU) still faces many obstacles typical for trade unions operational in developing and transition economies, including a lack of funding, bargaining experience and a government that keeps a close watch (Praeg, 2006). As such, our setting provides a horizontal context in which we could expect to find more visible impediments to workplace unionism than would be the case in other contexts.

Our study focuses on one cluster of flower farms from a total of eight flower farm clusters in Ethiopia. Within this cluster, we purposefully selected five (out of ten) flower farms. The farms provided us variation on two criteria: adopters/ non-adopters of PSS; and, workplace unionism/ no workplace unionism. Table 1 provides a detailed overview of the five cases.

Table 1. Description of cases.

	Start of operation	Number of workers	Targeted market	Internationally recognized private social standards?	Since when recognized?	Workplace unionism?
<i>Farm A</i>	2005	400 – 450	Auction and direct deals	MPS-ABC MPS- SQ FFP ETI	2007 2010 2011 2013	Yes
<i>Farm B</i>	2005	390 – 455	Auction and direct deals	MPS-ABC MPS- SQ	2009 2010	Yes
<i>Farm C</i>	2005	300 – 340	Auction and recently started to target direct market	MPS-ABC MPS- SQ	2010 2013	Yes/No
<i>Farm D</i>	2006	260 – 330	Auction	No		Yes
<i>Farm E</i>	2008	220 – 250	Auction	No		No

A key advantage of our study is that all farms were situated closely to one another in a single setting. This makes them exposed to the same institutional forces (Gibson & Birkinshaw, 2004) and minimizes extraneous variability (Eisenhardt, 1989). In addition they were similar in terms of ownership as all five farms are local Ethiopian investments. The farms differed mainly in terms of the market they target and consequently whether they have adopted PSS or not. Another advantage is that we found a great variability in terms of levels of unionization within these similar farms which allowed a rich investigation of the impediments to workplace unionism. Table 2 gives an overview of the trade unions per farm with their main characteristics.

As can be derived from table 2, the union in farm D (non-certified farm) had the highest membership rate (60.5% of the survey participants with at least 6 months of work experience were a member). At the same time, this union seemed very positively perceived by workers. Workers from farm D explained that the union was there to help in case there were problems between management and workers and that they were there to protect workers' rights.

In the older certified farms A and B, 44.7% and 30% of the workers with at least 6 months of work experience were unionized. Both unions however suffered from a negative image. In both farms workers talked negatively about the union because of bad experiences in the past. Several workers stated that the union representatives had stolen membership fees to enrich themselves and that the union was incapable of making any changes, that they were simply there to please management.

Farm C was a recently certified farm and according to the workers on this farm, the union was probably established around the time of certification. Around one out of three workers with at least six months' work experience indicated during the survey that they were a member. Interestingly however, we did not manage to retrieve any further information about the trade union. Nobody we spoke to could point us to a representative and during the focus group discussion there was consensus that there was no trade union on the farm.

Finally, farm E had not implemented any PSS, nor did it have a union on the workplace. Consequently we were not able to collect much information on workplace unionism throughout the data collection phase. During a focus group discussion which we organized on this farm, the moderator asked why workers did not raise any of the issues they had with management. One participant answered:

"It's because everybody thinks it is wasting breath, they're not going to change it" (focus group participant, non-certified farm E)

Given the lack of data on this farm, we cannot use this case in our analysis on impediments to workplace unionism. We do however mention farm E at this point in our paper, to illustrate that it is

not evident to have a trade union in the farm. In non-certified farms it is possible that there is no collective organisation of workers as is shown by Farm E.

Table 2. Overview trade unions per farm

	Membership		Workers' perceptions	Union origins	Union position	Union leaders
	<i><6 months employed</i>	<i>≥6 months' employed</i>				
<i>Farm A*</i>	0%	44.7%	Negative	Top-down	Between manager and workers	Not willing, not able to mobilize
<i>Farm B*</i>	3.2%	30%	Negative	Top-down	Manager is the cause of injustice	Willing but not able to mobilize
<i>Farm C*</i>	2.5%	35%	Negative	Top-down	Arm of management	-
<i>Farm D</i>	5.7%	60.5%	Positive	Bottom-up	Manager is the cause of injustice	Willing and able to mobilize
<i>Farm E</i>	0%	0%	-	-	-	-

* indicates that a farm was certified with at least one private social standard (PSS)

Data Sources

Data was collected in June and July 2013. We collected survey data at workers level. Random sampling procedures were used to ensure an adequate representation of on average 75 workers per farm performing different job functions within each farm. A total of 375 responses were received. After accounting for missing data, we obtained a final sample of 358 cases (237 women, 121 men). Please note an overrepresentation of men in the sample to allow for statistical comparison. The survey included questions on socio-demographics, working conditions and workers well-being. In addition there was a specific section covering (a) workers awareness of union presence on the farm, (b) union membership and (c) personal motivation for (not) being a member, which was captured with an open question.

In addition we held six focus group discussions: one focus group per farm and one focus group combining workers from all five farms. A focus group discussion included 4 up to 14 female participants and had a duration of approximately two hours. Each focus group discussion was held in an informal setting and took place on the workers day off. The focus group discussions were moderated by an Ethiopian female Master's student, fluent in Amharic and Oromo, and assisted by one of the authors of the article. The Ethiopian moderator received training in how to conduct focus groups and at the end of each focus group, both moderators discussed the quality of the discussions and how to potentially improve the next focus group discussion. The purpose of the focus group discussions was to get a broader picture of workers' perceptions of their working life and to grasp workers' perceptions

of their capability of changing or influencing their work context. Each focus group was recorded and transcribed and the accompanying researcher took extensive notes during the discussion.

On those farms with established trade unions, we interviewed one trade union representative per farm. These semi-structured interviews took place off farm, in an informal setting. Each interview lasted for about one hour and included both a researcher and a local moderator who fluently spoke Amharic. Purpose of these interviews was to gain insights on the origins of the union, the challenges they faced and the experiences they had with workers, management and external stakeholders (e.g. auditors, Confederation of Ethiopian Unions (CETU) etc.).

At management level, we conducted in-depth interviews with the general managers of each farm. The interview took approximately one hour up to one hour and a half. Though these interviews differed in scope (they were mainly meant to get a deeper understanding of the labour market dynamics in the cluster), workplace unionism was mentioned sideways. For the purpose of this study, management perception on unionism has been fruitful to triangulate and corroborate our research results collected from other data sources.

To end, at cluster level, we conducted an in-depth interview with two representatives of the labour and social affairs department of the region. This interview had a duration of one hour and was especially relevant in that sense that it provided a clearer picture of labour issues and trade union rights across sectors within one region. All interviews were recorded and transcribed.

Data analysis

In line with analytical strategies suggested by multiple case study scholars, we used both within-case and cross-case analysis (Eisenhardt, 1989; Stake, 2013; Yin, 1994). The analysis of the data started with open coding of all collected information from the available sources and this provided us a first structure.

To start, as a way to get familiarized with the data, we listed all reasons given by survey participants explaining why they were not a member and did not engage in union activities. Once we had compiled a complete list of reasons, we clustered the different answers given by workers into nine categories of reasons (unaware of union, uninterested in union, no common identity, isolation of workers, exclusive membership, no time, too expensive, no trust, no bargaining power).

Then, we listed all challenges mentioned by union representatives during the in-depth interviews we conducted with them. From this analysis it became clear that the union representatives had a very clear understanding of why workers did not join the union. Union representatives mentioned several of these reasons given by workers for not being a member, as important challenges to tackle in the

future (e.g. being more inclusive towards rural workers, lowering membership fees, gaining workers trust). In addition, we identified one challenge ('a lack of external support') which was raised during the in-depth interviews by union representatives as an important issue, but which was not captured by the open question (why are you not a member of the union?) of the workers' survey.

Finally, we coded the information retrieved from the focus groups, in-depth interviews with managers and in-depth interviews with representatives of the labour and social affairs department. From this analysis no new reasons for not joining the union or challenges related the trade union emerged. Rather this data confirmed that the trade unions were facing in total ten major obstacles to guarantee workers' representation and collective bargaining.

A second step was then to understand the root causes of these ten impediments. To improve our understanding of what potentially could explain these impediments, we conducted a cross-case analysis: we identified the similarities and differences in terms of experiencing these obstacles across the studied farms. We began by writing individual case summaries based on the multiple sources of data available. For each farm we summarized when and how the union originated, how many members the union had and how workers perceived this union. We also attempted to understand how the union positioned itself, and described who the main leaders were and whether they were willing and able to mobilize the workers. From the cross-case analysis it became clear that the unions on the different farms had in common that they were all in the early stages of mobilization in the sense that none of them had succeeded to agree upon a collective bargaining agreement with management. At the same time however it became clear that the union of the non-certified farm D had more potential than the other unions given their higher membership rate and the positive perceptions of workers towards this union. When trying to explain these differences between the union of farm D and the other unions of farms A, B and C, we realised that the union of farm D was facing less obstacles. Three out of the ten impediments we identified, were not considered impediments in this farm: workers in farm D did not think it was too expensive to become a member, they also trusted the union and believed they had the bargaining power to change things on the ground.

When trying to explain these differences between unions, we turned to the literature and applied a vertical GVC lens to interpret our data. Applying this lens, helped us to understand that the differences between the unions could be largely attributed to the presence of private social standards in the certified farms. At the same time, this lens assisted us in understanding the root causes of other obstacles mentioned by workers and union representatives. For example, because of the seasonal demand of flowers, workers are often hired on a short term basis and so few workers were aware of, or interested in joining the union.

Next, we realized that overcoming these vertical forces would not necessarily result in functioning workplace unionism because these obstacles are also rooted in socio-economic realities. Hence, we applied a horizontal lens to understand the forces in the socio-economic context that were also causing these impediments. Finally we combined the vertical and horizontal lens and created an integrated matrix of combined forces hampering unionism.

RESULTS

The integrated framework which we developed to identify the impediments to workplace unionism is presented in figure 1. The vertical forces are presented on the vertical Y-axis, while the horizontal forces are displayed on the horizontal X-axis. All these forces combined, create a unique setting in which the flower farms operate and set the contours in which the work environment in the flower farms is shaped. This setting results in several impediments to workplace unionism. In total we identified ten obstacles faced by unions in the Ethiopian flower farms. These impediments are listed in figure 1, each of them resulting from both a vertical and a horizontal force.

Our analysis showed that the unions in the different flower farms did not all face the same impediments. Unions in certified farms had to deal with a meddling manager who had an incentive to have a union on paper to be able to meet PSS criteria. Because of this, the unions in the certified farms had more difficulties than the union in the non-certified farm in terms of gaining workers trust, raising their bargaining power and changing workers' perceptions about being too expensive to join. In figure 1, the * indicates that an impediment was found in the certified farms (A, B and C) but not in the non-certified farm where there was a union present (farm D). In the following subsections we explain more detailed the ten impediments we identified.

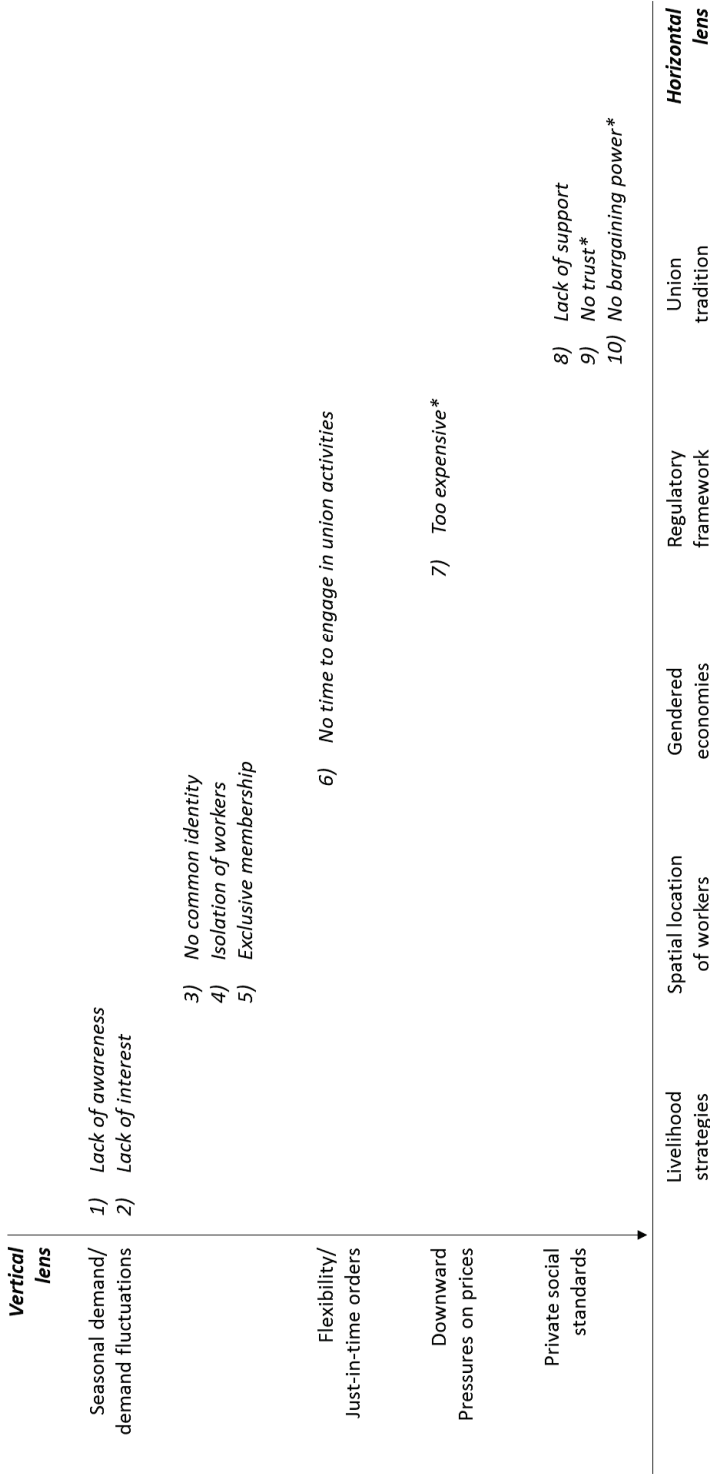


Figure 1. Ten impediments to workplace unionism in the cut flower industry in Ethiopia

* indicates that the impediment was found in the certified farms (A, B and C) but not in the non-certified farm where there was a union present (farm D)

Lack of awareness and a lack of interest

The workforce in the flower farm cluster we researched was highly unstable, with high levels of labour turnover. On the one hand, this is because of the seasonal nature of the flower demand: there is a peak demand with Valentine's day and Mother's day, while there is almost no demand during the summer period (June-July-August) in consumer countries (Riisgaard, 2011). Because of this uneven consumption pattern, many workers are employed on a short-term basis, and are given a seasonal or temporary contract (Barrientos et al., 2003).

On the other hand, many flower farm workers also left their job voluntarily (Staelens & Louche, 2015). A job in the flower farms was mentioned by workers as a last resort. Wages were considered too low to make ends meet and rumours went around that female workers employed in the greenhouses had difficulties getting pregnant due to being exposed to pesticides. Because of this, many workers aspired a better job. Hence, all flower farms located in the flower farm cluster faced high levels of absenteeism and labour turnover. Workers were said to be constantly on the move in search for better job opportunities. From the 358 workers we surveyed, 67% of them had less than one year of work experience in the respective farm. Reasons given for these short work experiences was that they juggled between different livelihood and income generating activities, including short term assignments such as road construction, farming activities or long term jobs in metal, plastic and garment industries. Some female workers also left the country to work in the Middle East as a maid.

Ironically however, these individual 'exit' strategies which are meant to improve the daily impoverished reality of the individual worker, at the same time hampered workers' possibility to collectively improve the working conditions on the flower farms. That is, because of these multiple and diverse livelihood strategies individual workers pursued, the workforce became highly fluctuating, making it extremely hard for workers to engage in collective action, using their 'voice' (Hirschman, 1970).

Recently employed workers we surveyed were often unaware of the existence of a trade union on the farm and those who did, showed little interest of joining the trade union because they were not planning of staying long in this job. Moreover, even among those who were unionized, there were high levels of labour turnover. To illustrate, a union representative of farm B mentioned that of all those representatives elected last year, more than half already had left the farm. In sum, as was also found by Carswell and De Neve (2013), workers' focus on individual interests and individualised tactics is precisely what curbed their ability to engage in collective action on the farm.

No common identity, isolation of workers and exclusive membership

In all five farms managers used workforce segmentation to deal with the fluctuating nature of the workforce. Managers appointed rural women, who were likely to leave their job to work on their own agricultural lands, to the greenhouses, while more urban women, in se more stable workers, were assigned the work in the pack houses. The reason behind this was that work in the pack houses requires some training, whereas work in the greenhouses could be rearranged in case there was a sudden fall out of workers. The segmented nature of the workforce based on the spatial location of workers however had negative repercussions on workplace unionism and this in several ways.

To begin with, the difference in work units also meant that there was a difference in working conditions. Urban workers employed in the pack houses did overtime and as such earned a higher wage, they worked in the shade and were not directly exposed to chemicals. Rural workers on the other hand were said to have more freedom to do their work as there was less supervision in the greenhouses, but due to the heat and the exposure to pesticides, the work was perceived as harder and as there was no scope for overtime, remuneration was lower. These differences in working conditions made it hard to foster a sense of collective identity – a key ingredient for effective bargaining (Kelly, 1998; Wills, 2005).

In addition, rural and urban workers did not have any contact. Outside the farm they did not spoke to one another. Rural workers walked to the flower farms while urban workers were bussed in. Inside the farm, there was hardly any time to talk to other workers of other work units as the only (lunch) break there was, lasted no longer than one half hour and took place in separate shifts, and in different places on the farm. This lack of communication between workers made it extremely hard to promote a common identity or to stand up for common concerns.

Management benefitted from the unawareness of workers about the experiences of other workers in other work units. For example, during a focus group discussion, one worker from farm C narrated that on one occasion there was unrest in the greenhouse she was working because the workers had not received their full wage and as a consequence all of them had stopped working. When the manager arrived he just said that he only received these complaints in that particular greenhouse and that if they did not like to work there any longer, they were free to go. She could not say whether other workers employed in other units had faced similar problems. She only knew that this was the only time they had stopped working.

To end, our survey data revealed that hardly no rural workers were unionized. When we asked them why they were not a member, they answered that they had not been invited to be part of the union or that because they were from the rural area, they did not have to spent time with the union. In sum,

trade unions faced major challenges in creating a common identity, getting individual workers out of their isolation and being inclusive to all workers. According to the union representative from farm A, creating a common identity was one of her main tasks:

Interviewer: "What are your main tasks as a representative?"

Union representative, certified farm A: "The workers don't give a lot of attention to have meetings or to discuss, because most of them are not educated and come from rural areas. So we are trying to teach them a lot of things"

Time constraints

Globalisation and a relocation of low-skilled, labour-intensive industries towards low-wage countries have drawn women into wage employment. Female workers are over-represented (65-85% of the workforce) in garment, fruit, and cut flower industries (Kidder & Raworth, 2004). Often these jobs are precarious of nature, providing limited benefits. The reason why women are so dominant in these sectors is because of the gender stereotypical images employers have: women are often seen as more skilled to do delicate, repetitive and tedious work. They have nimble fingers, are more productive and less likely complain (Barrientos et al., 2003; Kidder & Raworth, 2004).

Trade union organisations however are historically male bastions. Women's representation remains disproportionately low—even in those unions where the majority of union members are women (Smith et al., 2004; Wills, 2005). Throughout the focus group discussions, women argued that they did not have time to engage in union activities. On average, a work week is 48 hours, spread over six consecutive days of eight hours and one day off. Women combined this work in the productive sphere with work in the domestic or reproductive sphere. On their day off, women went to the market and prepared food, did laundry and took care of children. Being actively involved in a trade union, for example as representative, was described as time consuming, and demanding, while the benefits for taking all these responsibilities were considered low. So due to the dual role of women in Ethiopia, there was little spare time for actively engaging in union activities and meetings. During the interviews with union representatives it became clear that more men than women were representatives even though the majority of the workforce were women.

Too expensive

Monthly wages in the flower farms ranged between 550 and 600 birr/ month (23 to 25 euro/ month). The majority of the survey respondents (84%) considered this wage too low to cover their basic needs. From this monthly wage, 1% was asked as membership fee for the union. In the certified farms, some workers stated they were not a member because they thought it was too expensive to become a

member of the union, especially given that they thought that the returns from it were very low to nothing. In the non-certified farm however, not one worker complained about the membership fee.

The main difference between certified and the non-certified farm was that in case of the non-certified farm, the membership fees were automatically deducted from workers' wages. According to the representative of farm D, the membership fees were deposited in one bank account. All three auditors, working in different departments of the farm, had access to this account as to guarantee that none of the representatives could make abuse of this money:

"The money is automatically taken from the wage. The auditor will take it and put it in the bank. We have a bank account on the name of three auditors. To make sure that one person would not abuse it" (union representative, non-certified farm D)

In all three certified farms however, union representatives had to collect themselves the membership fees at the end of each month from each individual member. This appeared to be very difficult. Members argued every month, asking what the union had already accomplished or simply said they did not have enough money to pay the fee:

"To have this much members was very difficult for us, because they think that the money they pay for the membership will go to our pocket. There is also a problem in collecting the money. The rule says this must be on the payroll, but it is not. And we have to ask for the money every month. Sometimes they can say that they're not going to pay. So you can't force them" (union representative, certified farm B)

To attract new members the union in one of the certified farms (farm B) was planning on lowering the membership fee to less than 1% of the income (3 birr instead of 5 birr) hoping they could retain the remaining members.

Lack of external support, trust and bargaining power

All unions in the four farms were facing a lack of external guidance and support. Though union representatives understood that the national federation had limited power to actually make changes on the ground because none of the farms had already agreed upon a collective bargaining agreement (CBA), they felt they were left too much to their own devices. As the representative from farm B expressed:

“Even last time, the president of the confederation came, but I don't know if they don't have time to follow up... They didn't change anything. Sometimes we don't pay to the confederation monthly, and they didn't even ask why we didn't pay” (union representative, certified farm B)

At the same time, meetings were rarely held at cluster or industry level with representatives of other farms, which made it difficult for representatives to know what was going on in neighbouring farms. All unions operated isolated from each other.

With regards to external support, union representatives explained that the government visited the flower farms once a year, but that this was mainly a formality and did not have any impact:

“They [the government] don't care about the air pollution and soil pollution after the investor leaves. They should consider this too, and they also have to follow up on the wages, about how much they're paying the workers. [...] They [the government] have communication with the farm, so they'll come just for the formality. They don't check that much. So coming once a year, means letting people to suffer more, the whole year. It would be better if they would come more often” (union representative, non-certified farm D)

We expected to find differences between certified and non-certified farms with regards to external support. Unions in certified farms have the advantage over unions in non-certified farms that they have better established links with campaigners in consumer markets. These campaigners can pressure buyers to demand improvements in working conditions at the level of production (Riisgaard & Hammer, 2011). Yet, the representatives from certified farms did not believe that PSS could help them improve their bargaining rights. On the contrary, whereas auditors may see these union representatives as preferred local partners as they are key informants, representatives had a very different understanding of the role and influence these auditors had on daily operations; or the support they could get from these auditors. Representatives in farms with certification schemes mentioned they avoided telling the truth to the auditors of these schemes because of three reasons. Firstly, because they felt the changes these auditors would bring, would only last for one day. These changes would not be durable improvements. Secondly, because they felt auditors mainly considered the safety of workers and the environmental impact of pesticides rather than being concerned about

the grievances workers had on the ground. Thirdly, because they thought that if auditors would know the truth, they would want to shut down the farm. In other words, union representatives believed that a bad audit would harm the workers more rather than it would help them.

“I told them [the auditors] this is a waste of time [...] They will call us and ask ‘what is the problem, what do you want us to do? Do you need another member of the committee?’ They might choose a committee on that day. And this is a drama, because it is only for one day. [...] And also, we don't tell them about this, because we don't want to get fired. Sometimes if they don't ask these questions, we won't say anything. When they give the certificate, they mainly consider the safety of the workers. But if they would truly know what 's going on in the flower farms, they might shut down the farm [...] I don't want them to shut it down because there are a lot of workers who have nowhere to go” (union representative, certified farm B)

While union representatives of certified farms did not trust auditors from the PSS, the workers on these certified farms did not trust the union representatives. In the older certified farms (A and B) several attempts were made to establish a trade union. Each time, it was the manager who had asked the workers to take the initiative to organize themselves. According to the interviewed representatives on these farms, it was known that management had a stake in having a union on the workplace. Indeed, the PSS which all three farms have adopted, expect that management respects the core ILO conventions, including promoting freedom of association and collective bargaining:

“But around here, [the trade union] it is not functioning because we are under a lot of pressure. They [management] want the union only for certification. They don't care about the rights of the workers. But they're hurting their own citizens” (union representative, certified farm B)

Such top-down initiative however was not supported by the workers and each time the union failed or fell asleep. In both certified farms A and B, previous representatives had not achieved anything. They were being accused of having stolen membership fees and just being an extension of manager's power. During the in-depth interview with the representative from farm A, we got the impression that the line between workers and managers in farm A was indeed thin:

“We are in the middle. We are not on the side of the managers or the workers” (union representative, certified farm A)

In the other, older certified farm (farm B) however, the union representative was frustrated about the inability to change the unions' reputation which had been damaged by previous representatives. Though at the time of data collection there were new representatives elected, it was difficult to gain workers trust.

In the non-certified farm D, the union did not face any problems with regards to workers' trust. In this farm, representatives were there from the start and had been at the forefront of a conflict between management and workers, making them experienced and trusted by workers. They had never breached this trust and had built in control mechanisms to make abuse of membership fees impossible.

A final impediment we identified was a lack of bargaining power. Union representatives of the different farms mentioned that one of the major challenges they currently were facing was to reach a collective bargaining agreement with management. In the non-certified farm D, the union was negotiating a CBA. In the certified farms it appeared that the negotiations had not started yet.

In the certified farms, management had undermined the ability of representatives to blame some problems to these managers as it were the managers themselves who encouraged workers to organize and who facilitated the election process. By being so publicly in favour of having a union on the work floor, management succeeded to frame the overall impression that they supported the trade union. However, according to the representative of farm B, in reality they strong-armed representatives by threatening to punish them at the moment of wage evaluations. In other words, union representatives failed to differentiate themselves from management and did not manage to convince workers of the importance of having a CBA agreed upon. In the certified farms, survey respondents answered that the trade union did not make a difference, that they simply were an empty box and that they did not have any power to change something on the ground. This conception was surprisingly shared by the representative of farm A:

"I don't think it has that much difference. Even if they have a trade union or not, they have their work and are getting paid" (union representative, certified farm A)

In the certified farm B however, the representative emphasized that the union would be able to make a difference when they would have a CBA agreed upon, but that until then they could not do much:

"Because you must have a 'collective work agreement' to say this is a problem or to say this is your fault to the management or to the workers. But still we don't have the agreement. The worker might be fired if he did something, for example if he fights, and then they 'll come to us. Just because we don't have the agreement, all we can do is begging the management. If we would have an agreement, we could say: 'according to this rule..' and if they don't do anything, we can go to the higher trade union. So all we can do is begging to them" (union representative, certified farm B)

In the non-certified farm, management and the union were negotiating the terms and conditions of the collective bargaining agreement. Workers knew about this process and believed in the importance

of having a CBA. Nevertheless, it was a lengthy and difficult process because management did not agree with some of the conditions the union was suggesting:

“We and the management have the copy of the agreement in two papers, and we check every point one by one. And we agreed on some of it, and we didn't agree on others... [For example] if one worker is sick, they 'll use their own transportation with a horse cart. And we consider to buy an ambulance and to establish a clinic in the company, and so on. Plus about the wage increment, they only increase one birr a year. And we're trying to make it a percentage” (union representative, non-certified farm D)

DISCUSSION

Applying both a vertical and horizontal lens to study impediments to unionism, we identified several obstacles for trade unions to organise workers on the work floor in the cut flower industry in Ethiopia. We recognize that these forces do not operate in isolation. Rather they come together and reinforce each other. For example, the very low wages offered by cut flower farms explaining why workers thought union membership was too expensive, at the same time explained why workers were seeking alternative livelihood strategies and had a short-term vision towards their job, thereby not being interested about collective action. Another example of how forces interact is the flexibilization of the workforce which goes in hand with a feminization of the workforce. It is often women who are hired for seasonal, insecure jobs and who due to their dual role often do not engage in trade union activities.

However, several forces also conflict with one another. For example, at the vertical level buyers pressure producers to meet high quality standards at competitive prices, within specified delivery times. At the same time, these buyers ask those same producers to meet stringent social standards which demand good working conditions. Another example of two forces which conflict with one another are the spatial location of workers and their livelihood strategies. Rural workers did not qualify for jobs in the city because of their constrained mobility, and urban workers could not engage in own agricultural activities due to a lack of access to land.

The way these forces interact, reinforce, or compete and conflict with one another at one point in time is context specific and may facilitate or constrain workers' room for manoeuvre. This study undertook a first effort to identify the vertical and horizontal forces which create a unique setting in which the flower farms operate and consequently determine the impediments to workplace unionism. We believe it is useful to distinguish these different forces because it helps us to identify the different obstacles workers are facing when trying to unionize.

Differences between farms

Though all farms were located close to one another, and therefore exposed to the same horizontal forces, we did find some differences between farms. These differences could be largely attributed to one vertical force, that is the presence of private social standards (PSS). The role of PSS in relation to trade union rights is peculiar. On the one hand, it seems that PSS give workers easier access to trade unions through their standard criteria. All certified farms had a union on the work floor, whereas this was not the case in one of the non-certified farms (Farm E). On the other hand however, given our context of low union tradition, managers in the certified farms had the incentive to facilitate unionization, which did more harm than good: it made workers in certified farms distrust the union and not seeing the use of it. Workers simply saw it as an empty box.

The differences between unions in the certified farms and the non-certified farm may be best explained drawing on Kelly's (1998) mobilization theory. Kelly (1998) identified four crucial stages in the mobilization process: (1) the development of a collective sense of injustice, (2) the identification of the employer as the cause of this injustice, (3) the recognition that collective action could rectify this injustice, and (4) leaders willing and able to mobilize. All four stages were considered vital ingredients for collective mobilization.

Farm D, the non-certified farm, is a perfect illustration of Kelly's (1998) mobilization theory. All four stages took place in this farm and resulted in a union that could count on a high membership rate and that was positively perceived by most workers. In farm D, it was a sense of injustice that was at the basis of the union (cf. stage 1):

"They don't get paid a good wage and they don't have a good cafeteria. These are the reasons. And sometimes they would get fired without a reason, or they would reduce their wage without a reason. Because of these reasons, instead of fighting alone, they thought it was better to organize" (union representative, non-certified farm D)

Management in farm D was clearly seen as the cause of workers' grievances (cf. stage 2). According to the representative we interviewed, a first attempt to unionize was so forcefully suppressed by management that it had the adverse effect of creating more workers' support than before. The union in this farm was also ambitious. They were in the middle of negotiating a CBA and already had future plans of things they wanted to change through collective actions (cf. stage 3): they wanted four months of maternity leave instead of the current three months; they wanted to buy an ambulance or establish a clinic on the company so that sick workers did not longer have to use their own transportation with horse cart, they were going to bargain wage increments; they were making plans to collect money and to purchase basic products such as sugar and oil from the government which they could then sell at a cheaper price and so forth. Finally, union representatives in farm D were there from the start of the union and had been at the forefront of the conflict between management and workers, making them experienced and trusted by workers. They had never breached this trust and had built in control mechanisms to make abuse of membership fees impossible (cf. stage 4).

In the certified farms however, management's meddling obstructed all four stages of the mobilization theory. Because of this, the labour unions established in the certified farms were smaller in number and did not enjoy as much workers' support as the labour union established in the non-certified farm. At the basis, there was no sense of injustice (cf. stage 1). Instead, unions were established top-down because management had asked the workers to take the initiative to organize themselves. Moreover, management undermined the ability of representatives to blame some problems to these managers

(cf. stage 2) as it were the managers themselves who encouraged workers to organize and who facilitated the election process. Few workers in these farms believed that collective action could rectify injustice (cf. stage 3). Especially in farms A and B where there had been more than one attempt to unionize, workers were convinced that that the union was not going to be a motor of change or that they actually could make some changes on the ground:

“I am not a member. There was a union before, but it just took our money” (answer to open survey question, worker from farm A)

“In the past, labour unions didn’t work. So this one will stop also” (answer to open survey question, worker from farm B)

“It is not active. They are not struggling for workers’ rights. One friend was a member and he got his wage reduced. He went to the labour union and then management fired him” (answer to open survey question, worker from farm C)

Finally, the union representatives were less willing or capable of mobilizing (cf. stage 4). In farm A the representative positioned herself between workers and management instead of profiling herself as a leader or activist. In farm B the representative was frustrated because she was not capable of making any changes on the ground nor capable of changing the image workers had of the representatives as being the ‘puppets’ of management:

“Even I am not happy to continue as a chair person, I am considering to resign. Because sometimes when I read the rights of the workers and when I compare it to the facts on the farm, it is completely different” (union representative, farm B)

In sum, the union in the non-certified farm showed the most potential, given that all four stages of the mobilization theory had successfully taken place in this farm. The unions in the certified farms faced more impediments than the union in farm D because management’s meddling had obstructed these four stages. Nevertheless all unions were facing several impediments other than the ones caused by PSS and were at the moment of data collection not successful in defending workers’ rights.

Tackling impediments

In studying impediments to workplace unionism, we attempt to advance our understandings of why labour remains unorganised at the bottom of global value chains and to help those who wish to empower workers at the bottom of GVCs. A logical question following our analysis is then whether and how these impediments can be overcome.

Our analysis shows that several impediments are rooted in socio-cultural norms and values, or are the outcomes of commercial dynamics inherent to vertical integration. It is probably impossible to take these forces away, however some may be addressed albeit to a limited extent. We cannot offer a straightforward answer on how to deal with all these impediments nor do we believe that there are single solutions of silver bullets, including on how to make the impact of PSS on trade union rights more effective. As several authors have shown before (Barrientos & Smith, 2007; Egels-Zandén & Merk, 2014; Wang, 2005), there are many obstacles at different levels in the value chain which need to be addressed simultaneously before PSS can positively affect process rights. This study provides some insights into the type of improvements which can be made –both at the vertical level and at the horizontal level.

At the vertical level, our findings suggest that a cautious and soft approach by PSS in relation to freedom of association and collective bargaining may be the rightful way. Standards cannot push management too hard when it comes to the implementation of these process criteria, simply because such approach gives management the incentive to push in their turn their employees to establish a union. As our findings illustrate, such top-down initiatives result in ineffective workplace unionism marked by limited bargaining power and limited workers trust. So though previous studies have criticized PSS for not correcting or remediating violations in trade union rights (e.g. Anner, 2012), our findings suggest that PSS may not be capable of overcoming these violations.

This does not mean that PSS have no role to play in relation to trade union rights. Quite the contrary, auditors could play an important role in empowering and supporting union representatives. For this it is necessary that auditors and representatives find in each other allies and build trust between both partners. This study already signalled some aspects that may be addressed in future relations between both parties. One is that auditors need to make time to explain more carefully what their role is, and to align expectations. In addition, they need to see shop stewards as active agents and treat them as partners in their auditing process. Only then will representatives fulfil their watchdog function. Moreover, there is a need to move away from a tick-of-the-box approach to an approach that allows room for representatives to signal actual workers concerns, regardless of standard criteria. Finally, our study signals the importance of being aware of the impediments. Freedom of Association (FoA) violations or unions that do not function, are rarely detected (Egels-Zandén & Lindholm, 2015). Being aware of the existence of certain forces can help to signal potential violations or malfunctioning unions. We would recommend auditors to ask enough probing questions to increasing one's understanding of the levels of (voluntary) labour turnover, the composition of union members, how the collection of union fees is done, who the representatives are and how the relationship is with

management as we believe that the identification of the impediments is the first step towards tackling these impediments and making workplace unionism possible.

With regards to the horizontal level, our results suggest that there may be room to strengthen unionization at cluster level. Currently workers and representatives from different farms do not talk to each other. However much can be learned from sharing experiences and comparing working conditions and union efforts. Several representatives we interviewed felt isolated and in lack of support. They also expressed the need for external support. When exchanging experiences, representatives in non-certified farms may use their gained knowledge of better outcome standards (e.g. work clothing, sanitary measures, paid leave) in certified farms as leverage in their negotiations with their employers. The other way around, representatives of certified farms may also learn from union experiences in the non-certified farm. Directing our attention to the Confederation of Ethiopian Trade Unions (CETU) we would therefore suggest the creation of such platform where union representatives can meet.

In addition, trade unions should make efforts to become more appealing to female workers. Women have different concerns than men on the work floor. By way of illustrations, women in the flower farms are more often hired on an insecure basis than men, (unannounced) overtime is more difficult for women because they are also responsible for the work in the reproductive sphere, pregnant women may be discriminated, and female workers are more often the victim of sexual harassment by their male supervisors (Barrientos et al., 2003; Smith et al., 2004). Because of this, it is essential that women's voices are represented in the trade union. This could be achieved by having predetermined seats for men and women in union representation, in combination with capacity building programmes (Smith et al., 2004). These capacity-building programmes should focus on giving women more confidence in their own capacities and on changing the self-image Ethiopian women had of themselves, which are rooted in prevailing socio-cultural norms. By way of illustration, more than half of the female respondents in our survey were convinced that men were better supervisors or managers than women.

A final entry point to overcome one of the impediments which in our opinion deserves to be explored, is to consider 'ikub' members as potential union representatives. An 'ikub' is an informal savings net (Baker, 1992). Some workers sign up for this and make a monthly financial contribution to this savings net (Begashaw, 1978). An ikub binds workers together but also ties them to the farm. Hence, workers who have become a member of ikub, cannot easily leave the farm. As such, ikub members may be ideal shop stewards as they are more likely to stay on the farm long-term than workers who are only planning on staying short-term.

CONCLUSION

To date, labour organisation remains at the fringes at the bottom of global value chains. While researchers who study this phenomenon tend to focus on different levels of analysis - GVC and local, respectively - there is a need for more integrated frameworks that explore how the interaction and competition between vertical and horizontal forces curdle workers' voices, such as the one outlined in this paper.

This study extends the work on workplace unionism in agricultural value chains in several ways. First, we have shown that there are several impediments to workplace unionism. While prior research has focused on studying and explaining the limited impact of PSS on trade union rights, this study tackles a much broader research question and attempted to explain why workplace unionism in general (in both in certified and non-certified farms) remains limited. We consider the identification of these impediments a first and indispensable step towards the improvement of workers' representation and collective bargaining.

Second, we developed a new way of identifying the impediments to workplace unionism by developing an integrated framework of both horizontal and vertical forces. The interplay between these forces varies over time and place and can result in quite distinct outcomes in terms of workplace unionism. Though past studies have researched each lens separately, we argue that any initiative to tackle the impediments to workplace unionism must pay attention to the interaction between the two levels of analysis. Short term employment for example is caused by vertical and horizontal forces. On the one hand the seasonal nature of flowers make flower farms in need of hiring seasonal labour (vertical pressure). On the other hand it appears that individual workers seek better job opportunities and that flower farms face high levels of voluntary labour turnover (horizontal pressure). When one aims to tackle the impediments coming forth from these forces ('lack of awareness' and 'lack of interest' of workers), one needs to make sure that workers are employed on a long term basis. It would however not suffice to change the production patterns from one that targets peak moments to one that seeks a steady supply of flowers. Next to tackling this vertical pressure, one would have to tackle the horizontal pressure of workers seeking alternative livelihood strategies by offering better working conditions and consequently raising job satisfaction. Hence, this article argued that the interplay of vertical and horizontal forces are essential to come up with solutions for these impediments and made a first essential step in identifying these forces.

Third, we broadened the research scope by including non-certified farms in studying workplace unionism. Past studies rarely compared unionization efforts between certified and non-certified farms. This article showed the necessity of comparing these farms given that our results suggested that unions

operating in certified farms face different and more impediments than the union in the non-certified farm. It is through comparisons that one can truly explain the limited impact of PSS on trade union rights.

In considering avenues for future research, we would suggest two areas. First, future research needs to study how PSS impact trade union rights in contexts with a long union tradition. The question whether managers in these contexts also interfere and facilitate unionization on their farms seems relevant. This area would further increase our understandings of the conditions in which PSS perhaps could positively impact trade union rights. A second avenue for future research is to continue the task of conceptual clarification of the impediments to workplace unionism. This article advanced our understandings by identifying the horizontal and vertical forces which mattered for workplace unionism. The question however remains how and when these forces interact or conflict, reinforce or neutralize one another. This is a particular area that clearly deserves further analysis and research. Future studies should make more explicit which combinations of impediments really make collective organizing impossible. We also need to pursue studies focusing on understanding whether and how certain impediments can be overcome.

CONCLUSION

INTRODUCTION

This thesis aimed at exploring the potential of workers to improve their working conditions through two strategies: 'exit' and 'voice'. Underlying this objective was the recognition that the voluntary quitting behaviour of individual flower farm workers had to be interpreted as a form of unorganized labour agency. Drawing on a mixed-method approach combining qualitative and quantitative research, I sought to answer three research questions:

1. Why do workers voluntarily 'exit' their job?
2. How do managers make sense of high levels of labour turnover? What kind of strategies do they develop to deal with labour turnover?
3. Why do workers not use their 'voice' to formulate their grievances and improve their conditions of employment?

SYNTHESIS AND FINDINGS

Each question was addressed in a specific article. **Article 1** aimed at understanding why workers in the flower farms in Ethiopia voluntarily 'exited' their job. It was argued that workers voluntarily left their job out of dissatisfaction with the extrinsic rewards (wage, job security and health work environment) offered by the flower farms. These extrinsic rewards are related to satisfying one's basic needs (Centers & Bugental, 1966; Gruenberg, 1980). In addition to low levels of job satisfaction, it was found that having access to alternative livelihood strategies was also key in determining workers' quitting behaviour: rural workers and students reported higher intentions to leave their job, while ikub-members reported lower intentions to leave their jobs.

Article 2 analysed how managers made sense of high levels of labour turnover and the type of practices they developed to deal with turnover. This chapter revealed that managers considered labour turnover not to be caused by job dissatisfaction but rather to be the outcome of external institutional forces. By re-defining the causes of labour turnover as such, managers could accept and justify high levels of turnover. The practices they formulated in relation to turnover were then also meant to help them to *cope with* turnover rather than to reduce turnover. Hence, the findings in this chapter suggest that the exit option did not lead to improvements to the work environment in favour of labour. I argue that in this context, the exit option failed to a large extent due to labour abundance. As workers were easily replaced by new ones, the exit option lost its capacity to create change and did not have its usual attention-focusing effect.

Article 3 focused on an alternative strategy for workers, that is the voice option. If the 'exit' option did not result in positive changes in favour of labour, the question arises why workers didn't exploit other options. Workers could for instance have used their 'voice', meaning that they could have articulated their grievances and actively have tried to re-work their situation. In general, an individual worker who uses his or her voice, may be labelled as disloyal by management, miss out on promotions or even be fired (Elger & Smith, 1998; Freeman, 1976). Especially in the context of labour abundance, I argue that collective organized 'voice' strategies are therefore workers most promising option. Hence, this chapter considered the labour union as the most viable actor to represent this 'voice' option. The analysis in this chapter identified ten impediments to workplace unionism. Applying both a vertical (Global Value Chain) and horizontal (socio-economic context) lens helped us revealing impediments which are rooted in socio-cultural norms and values, and at the same time are the outcomes of commercial dynamics inherent to vertical integration. This chapter concluded that there was no quick fix for improving union rights in the cut flower industry in Ethiopia, but did make some suggestions on how to strengthen this voice option.

WHERE TO GO FROM HERE?

The findings of this thesis suggest that the potential of the Ethiopian flower farm workers to improve their own working conditions through exit and voice is rather limited: the exit option, which many flower farm workers exercised, did not have the expected impact on the managers who ignored the signals and managed to accommodate to high labour turnover. The voice option did not work either, because of several reasons including the fact that the most aroused and therefore potentially the most vocal workers, were the first to quit their jobs at the flower farms. Hence, the ability of labour in the cut flower industry in Ethiopia to improve labour rights on a large scale was overridden by the ability of capital to determine social structures. Under these circumstances, flower farm workers need support to be able to improve their working life and overall livelihoods status. In this section I identify several relevant actors who could provide potentially this support and I make some suggestions towards these actors on how to fulfil this role.

The **Ethiopian Government** can play an important role in reducing the need for 'exit' strategies. As discussed in Article 1 it is advisable to introduce minimum wages. Moreover legislation needs to be strengthened and better monitored to protect workers against potential health hazards, which was a major concern among workers. There is a growing body of research documenting a high prevalence of respiratory and dermal symptoms among Ethiopian flower farm workers (Hanssen, Nigatu, Zeleke, Moen, & Bråtveit, 2015). In addition to reducing the need for exit strategies, policy makers should enhance the room for effective voice strategies. Effective social dialogue is necessary for the realization of decent work in the sector and for guaranteeing that workers concerns are taken into account. However to date, collective bargaining coverage is generally at 2 or 3 per cent or less of total employment (Hayter & Stoevska, 2011). Hence, social dialogue structures and processes at the farm, sector and national level to resolve labour issues need to be put in place.

The **Confederation of Ethiopian Trade Unions** could play an important role in creating platforms at cluster levels where union representatives from different farms can meet and maybe even come up with common action plans. As discussed in Article 3, the union representatives I interviewed, all expressed the need for external support. Many of them felt isolated. The creation of such platform could overcome this and could be an important way of exchanging experiences: representatives in non-certified farms may use their gained knowledge of better outcome standards (e.g. work clothing, sanitary measures) in certified farms as leverage in their negotiations with their employers. The other way around, representatives of certified farms may also learn from union experiences in the non-certified farm. Moreover, the labour union needs to become more appealing to female workers. After all, women are the majority of the workforce in flower farms and they may have different concerns than male workers. Article 3 discussed some examples of how the union can become more inclusive

towards women, including setting predetermined seats for men and women in union representation, and starting up capacity building programmes to give women more confidence in their own capacities.

Consumers need to become aware of the poor working conditions in flower farms and need to be willing to pay better prices for flowers. This thesis has shown that the Ethiopian flower farms provide working conditions that currently do not meet workers' basic needs. Workers complained about poor wages, poor job security and an unhealthy environment. While this thesis recognizes that consumers' purchasing behaviour alone will not make the necessary changes, it does make the argument that an increased willingness of consumers to buy certified flowers can give an important push in the right direction towards a much needed change in governance structure of the cut flower value chain. The introduction of more consumer labels for flowers could help raising consumer awareness and changing consumers' purchasing behaviour.

Buyers, including large retailers, branded marketers, international processors and international traders, need to engage in more collaborative partnerships with producers. It does not suffice to simply demand adherence to private social standards. By this I mean that it is necessary for buyers to give more secure orders to a select number of producers, to pay better prices for the flowers and develop and share a better planning so as to avoid last minute orders (Lim & Phillips, 2008). Finally, it would entail that buyers engage and invest in long-term capacity building with local factory managers (Lund-Thomsen & Coe, 2013). How utopian this may sound in our current system, driven by fierce competition and downward price pressures, I argue that these changes are essential. Without changing the governance structure of the cut flower value chain, from an buyers-driven market model to a collaborative partnership (Lim & Phillips, 2008), it will never be possible to give workers a decent wage and decent work. It is time for buyers to recognize their responsibility for the poor working conditions in the flower farms. Buyers and producers together need to seriously commit themselves to improve working conditions. A rhetoric based on 'my-business-is-my-business' and 'your-business-is-your-business' is simply outdated.

Private social standards (PSS) could strengthen their impact by moving away from the current compliance-based paradigm towards the adoption of a more cooperative paradigm to improve working conditions in global value chains. In short, this would entail three major changes: first, it requires the adoption of more work-centred methods in drafting PSS. Second, it includes the replacement of the snapshot, tick-box approach of auditing by a more participatory, social auditing. Third, it requires the refinement of the criteria to get certification. Simply complying with standard criteria should no longer suffice to get certification. These suggestions deserve some further explanation. Given the importance of PSS in setting labour criteria in the cut flower farms, and their

objective of guaranteeing decent working conditions, the next section elaborates on, and discusses these suggestions more in-depth.

A PROPOSED PATH FOR PRIVATE SOCIAL STANDARDS

When drawing the context for this study it was mentioned that the three certified farms had better working conditions in place than the non-certified farms in terms of job security, healthy work environment, paid leave and work clothing. However, this is the only time where we actually found differences between certified and non-certified farms. Indeed, when studying workers' job satisfaction and quitting behaviour, the analysis did not show any differences between workers employed in certified and non-certified farms. In all five farms, we found very similar levels of job dissatisfaction and intentions to leave (cf. Article 1). At the same time we did not find any differences in how managers from certified and non-certified farms dealt with and legitimized high levels of labour turnover (cf. Article 2). Finally, we argued that labour unions in all farms faced several impediments to become effective, and where we did identify differences between certified and non-certified farms, we showed that unions in certified farms surprisingly faced more impediments than unions in non-certified farms (cf. Article 3). So though there may have been differences in working conditions between farms, the perceptions of workers towards their work environment and the way managers treated their workers seemed very similar across all five farms.

With regards to workers' perceptions it is also worthwhile to mention that workers seemed unaware of the existence of private social standards. Workers did not know whether a farm was certified or not, and they were largely unaware of the differences in working conditions between farms. On the contrary, most workers believed that the flower farms were more or less the same, given that all flower farms paid similar wages, and had similar work hours. All farms provided bus services to their urban workers, picking them up and dropping them off at the same bus stops. From the outside, this created the impression that all farms were the same. Because of this general impression, workers did not compare farms. When we asked them why they had chosen to work on their respective farm, we received answers unrelated to the work environment. Workers explained that they worked on the farm that was closest to their home, where they had a relative or friend working, or where they were first hired. Some said they worked on the farm which paid the highest wages –but wages were to a large extent kept similar between farms because of the wage agreements and only differed for short periods of time when a new farm entered the cluster, which paid a little bit more as to attract trained workers from older established farms.

From these observations, it follows that certification schemes have a very limited impact. Though they make some improvements in working conditions, they seem to fail in creating actual changes on the

ground. The employer-employee relationship remains largely unaffected, given the similarities we found in both certified and non-certified farms. In what follows, I want to argue that this failure to create change is to be attributed to the compliance perspective through which private social standards are implemented and which involves a box-ticking approach.

PSS aim to move farms towards ethical behaviour, and certify those farms which have committed themselves to ethical practices. Following the definition of Jones (1991) an ethical practice is a practice 'that is both legal *and* morally acceptable to a larger community, while an unethical practice is a practice that is illegal *or* morally unacceptable to the larger community' (Jones, 1991, cited in Fassin, 2005, p.274). To move farms towards ethical behaviour, and to be able to verify this behaviour, PSS have come up with a checklist of criteria. These criteria are considered guidelines to point farm behaviour in what PSS perceive as ethical practices. Examples include no discrimination or child labour practiced on the work floor, or respect of freedom of association and the right to collective bargaining. Farms that comply with these standards, meaning that they can tick the boxes of all these criteria, successfully pass PSS's audits and receive certification.

I want to raise two problems with regards to this compliance based approach. First, I like to argue here that ethical behaviour cannot be fully promoted nor can it be fully captured by a 'to do' list of standard criteria. Ethical behaviour is a much more complex phenomenon and PSS fail to a certain extent to grasp this complexity (Lund-Thomsen & Lindgreen, 2014). Second, I want to argue that the snapshot character of PSS audits fails to convey farm conditions in their full complexity and therefore audits need to be reinvented.

With regards to the first argument I recognize that a fixed list of tasks can offer some ethical guidelines to day-to-day activities. However, in the end there will be situations in which managers are confronted with difficult situations and ethical dilemmas which they themselves need to solve and for which there are no fixed criteria mentioned in the PSS. It is in these situations that the tensions between compliance and pragmatism become pronounced (Fassin, 2005). For example, in the cut flower industry in Ethiopia, both certified and non-certified farms were facing high levels of labour turnover. PSS do not prescribe practices on how to deal with this. One practice which all managers, regardless of PSS certification, developed in relation to labour turnover was to hire more workers than theoretically was needed. By hiring more people, managers could easily cope with sudden drop outs of workers. Such an approach implied that managers did not have to stimulate workers to perform well. Because there were more people than required for the job, there was no need to train workers to become efficient in their job. Underlying this practice is the belief that workers inevitably will leave. One could argue that managers approached workers as a disposable good, having an expiration date. From a moral point of view, a human resource (HR) practice focusing on retaining workers making

them more satisfied and more productive would be considered more ethical than the current practice of 'wasting' workers which was applied. Hence, certification cannot guarantee that managers will adopt ethical practices in those situations for which there are no prescribed rules.

The reason why PSS cannot guarantee ethical behaviour in all situations is because PSS do not require managers to adopt and internalize an independent ethical commitment towards creating a sound work environment. The 'to do' list of standard criteria does not involve any ethical or moral commitment from the organisations and managers. It simply allows the managers to 'execute' a fixed list of social criteria without questioning the why and the what. From this it follows that PSS have de-personalized ethical behaviour and reduced ethics to a fixed list of tasks. As a result, managers seek to adopt PSS in a ceremonial manner, hereby decoupling compliance activities from their daily core activities. Ethics then becomes a matter of executing, ticking boxes, and exploiting the margins the system offers in executing these standard criteria (Lund-Thomsen & Lindgreen, 2014; Pérezts & Picard, 2015). In this dominant tick-boxing paradigm, ethical behaviour has been successfully reduced to a list of 'major and minor musts', 'recommendations' while allowing for some 'minor non-conformities' (Pérezts & Picard, 2015). Referring to the cut flower farms in this thesis, our findings suggested that indeed the certified farms were in compliance with the minimum requirements of PSS. However, they did not go *beyond* compliance, meaning that they did not really *engage* in creating a sound environment.

A second reason why PSS cannot guarantee ethical behaviour is because of the snapshot character of PSS audits which is unable to convey farm conditions in their full complexity. Previous impact assessment studies have already shown that private social standards improve tangible working conditions (also referred to as 'outcome standards'), such as wage, work hours and occupational health and safety, but fail to a large extent to improve less tangible issues (or 'process rights'), such as freedom of association and the right to collective bargaining (Anner, 2012; Barrientos & Smith, 2007; Wang, 2005). The reason why they fail to improve these intangible rights is because audits fail to detect violations of these rights. The findings in this PhD research support this argument.

The critical in-depth analysis of workplace unionism in Article 3 revealed that labour unions in both certified and non-certified farms faced several impediments. It was even argued that in the certified farms, unions faced more impediments than the union in the non-certified farm. Managers in the certified farms interfered with the union and facilitated the union elections. This interference created many obstacles for the unions, including gaining workers' trust, raising their bargaining power and changing workers' perceptions about being too expensive to join. These impediments to effective labour representation however go unnoticed when one exclusively studies the closed ended questions in the survey data. When asked 'is there a labour union on the farm? Yes/No', many workers in the certified farms answered that there was a union, while workers in one of the non-certified farms

answered that there was no union. Hence, the close ended questions of the survey were misleading in the sense that they suggested that trade union rights were respected in all certified farms, but not in all non-certified farms.

The auditing approach adopted by PSS has the same limitations as our closed ended questions of the survey data. It fails to detect Freedom of association (FoA) violations (Wang, 2005). For example, Egels-Zandén and Lindholm (2015) argued that in less than five percent of the factories they examined, FoA violations were identified. They considered this very much problematic given that the stakeholders they interviewed, expected extensive violations of this type.

The reasons why audits fail to detect FoA violations is because they are brief and focus on farm records such as timecards or who is on the payroll (Pérezts & Picard, 2015). Some audits do include interviews with individual workers, but these interviews usually take place within the farms, sometimes even in the presence of managers (Locke & Romis, 2007). During one of the focus group discussions of this study, workers explained that officials had visited the farm and had asked questions to workers during a tour of the farm. But because the 'tour guide' was the manager, workers didn't dare to say anything. Workers narrated that once there had been a worker who had raised his voice to the officials, but afterwards he was so publicly embarrassed by management that he shortly after resigned himself.

As a result of these limitations, the quality of information retrieved from audits is often mixed or incomplete (Locke, Qin, & Brause, 2007). Especially process rights such as 'workers empowerment' or 'trade union participation' which are not tangible and quantifiable, often remain a 'blind spot' for social auditing (Wang, 2005). In sum, a tick-box approach conducted during short fly in-fly out visits, combined with a lack of workers' input, cannot convey farm conditions in their full complexity – let alone provide guidance on how to overcome labour related problems or improve working conditions (Locke & Romis, 2007; Pérezts & Picard, 2015).

From a compliance-based paradigm towards a cooperation paradigm

To rectify the shortcomings of current private social standards, I suggest PSS to move away from the traditional compliance-based paradigm towards the adoption of a more cooperative paradigm to improve working conditions in global value chains (Locke et al., 2009; Locke, 2013). This cooperation paradigm is built around three pillars: (i) it takes a worker-centred approach to designing PSS criteria; (ii) it adopts a more participatory approach to auditing and (iii) it aspires a commitment approach to compliance. I discuss these three pillars in the following subsections.

(i) *Towards a worker-centred approach to designing PSS*

I advocate for more worker-centred methods to designing PSS. As such, it is possible to increase workers' awareness about their rights and the role that private social standards can play in improving their work context. Moreover such an approach enables the inclusion of workers' voices when formulating and designing private social standards.

With regards to the inclusion of workers voices, I would argue that workers' issues can only be effectively addressed when workers are part of the process of designing private social standards and when standard criteria are rooted in reality. There is a growing body of research that shows that workers are leaving PSS-compliant firms because the working conditions in these firms are not in line with their aspirations (De Neve, 2009; Lund-Thomsen & Coe, 2013). The main point here is that to be effective, private social standards need to start considering their 'beneficiaries', that is the workers, as active agents rather than as passive victims. The main question is how to do so considering that insecure and vulnerable workers often have low confidence and literacy levels, making their voices easily excluded in social auditing schemes.

Auret and Barrientos (2004) suggest several worker-centred, participatory tools that may be of assistance here in developing harmonised codes that are locally relevant. These tools aim to ensure that minimum labour standards are met and that employment practices reach all groups of workers, even the most vulnerable ones (e.g. temporary workers, female workers). These participatory tools are used in focus group discussions and are meant to encourage workers to participate, share information and think creatively about their work environment. Tools may include, but are not limited to: mapping of the work surroundings, role-playing of sensitive core issues, and ranking of work-related issues. Using such approach allows to really identify those issues that workers are concerned about. Underlying this approach is the idea that workers are no passive victims, but that they should be actively engaged in the process of improving their work environment.

In addition, workers need to be trained in knowing and understanding their basic rights and responsibilities (Lund-Thomsen & Lindgreen, 2014). For example, though certified farms 'objectively' scored better in terms of health and safety measures than non-certified farms, workers from both certified and non-certified farms subjectively scored the work environment as unhealthy and unsafe. There were many rumours going around of male sprayers who had fainted or female workers who could not get pregnant. From the focus group discussions it became clear that a lack of information aggravated these rumours. Workers were often unaware of safety instructions or re-entry intervals. Some workers stated that flowers had to be harvested while 'wet' from pesticides, while others said this was not allowed under any circumstances. When we asked for reasons behind such practice,

workers often did not know why they were doing what they were doing. Hence, workers need to be better trained to understand the underlying logics of certain practices. Rather than just telling them what to do, they also need to be learned why they do it in a certain way. If workers are trained to know their basic rights and responsibilities, these workers can pressure managers to receive decent working conditions. Such bottom-up pressures can then be complementary with the top-down pressures coming from private social standards (Auret & Barrientos, 2004; Lund-Thomsen & Lindgreen, 2014).

(ii) *Towards a participatory approach to auditing*

In light of the limitations of the box-ticking approach adopted by current auditing schemes, several actors have initiated a new range of measures to transform current auditing schemes, some of which seem very promising in theory but still need to be tested in reality (Lund-Thomsen & Lindgreen, 2014). A major limitation that needs to be tackled is the snapshot character of most audits. Because of time and money constraints, most audits are undertaken in one, two or three days. Consequently these audits are rather superficial and unable to detect certain violations (Locke & Romis, 2007). To overcome this limitation, it has been suggested that auditing schemes need to invest in a close cooperation with local resources, such as NGOs and trade unions (Lund-Thomsen & Lindgreen, 2014). These local actors could provide independent and year-round monitoring of the workplace. Because they are place-based, they can also be creative in reaching out to workers. For example, by giving workers their contact details, workers could contact them throughout the year to bring more easily violations to the attention of auditors. A benefit of participatory social auditing is that it could also encourage workers in articulating their grievances in ways that might also help them to collectively organize (Auret & Barrientos, 2004; Lund-Thomsen & Lindgreen, 2014).

Such a participatory approach is based on using local auditors who are able to speak the native languages of workers, who are aware of the cultural background of these workers and are familiar with the local issues and ways in which workers can be exploited (Auret & Barrientos, 2004). Hence, local auditors have the advantage that they more easily can approach workers and gain their trust. A participatory approach in which third-party auditing is strengthened with cooperation by local actors can then also be more effective: information can be triangulated and more sensitive and invisible aspects such as freedom of association, sexual harassment and discrimination are more likely to be detected. It also focuses more on the processes behind compliance, rather than simply ticking off boxes.

Nevertheless there are some challenges related to such approach. Most importantly, it may be difficult to find place-based actors who are up for the job. For example, in the Ethiopian context local civil society organizations often lack the funding, expertise and capabilities to be the 'eyes and ears' on the

ground. The challenge is then also to identify credible local stakeholders who engage in local communities and have the financial resources.

(iii) Towards a commitment approach to compliance

To get flower farms operating in an ethical manner, I propose an alteration in the governance structure of the cut flower value chain, from an buyers-driven market model to a collaborative partnership (Lim & Phillips, 2008). The buyer-driven model puts flower producers under intense price pressures and a constant fear of losing business to cheaper competitors. While such model may be economically benefiting the buyer, and consequently also the consumer, this competitive model drives flower farms towards lower wages and poor labour standards (Barrientos & Kritzing, 2004; Tokatli, Wrigley, & Kizilgün, 2008). In such market driven model, flower farms comply with standards solely to secure orders. The conflicting pressures from large retailers (e.g. high quality products at lowest prices) encourages flower farms to adhere to the minimum set requirements only in a ceremonial manner. It makes that flower farms do not really engage creating a sound work environment, rather they stay on a superficial level of compliance and consider decent working practices to be of secondary importance (Lim & Phillips, 2008).

A collaborative partnership between buyers and producers would mean that the buyer gives a select number of producers secure orders, that they pay better prices for the flowers and develop and share a better planning so as to avoid last minute orders (Lim & Phillips, 2008). Finally, it would entail that buyers engage and invest in long-term capacity building with local factory managers (Lund-Thomsen & Coe, 2013). Such a change in governance structure would imply a deeper, more secure relationship between buyer and flower producer. In time, such model could change flower farms approach towards decent working conditions. Whereas in the buyer-driven model, ethical behaviour was approached from a business logic to secure orders, ethical behaviour would in the new model be approached as an end in itself. In other words, it would be possible that ethical values and practices become internalized (Lim & Phillips, 2008).

Through a collaborative partnership, buyers can put more emphasis on working conditions and at the same time invest in capacity building for local managers (Lund-Thomsen & Lindgreen, 2014). During human resource management (HRM) trainings, local managers would then learn to see their workers as important assets rather than seeing them as a costly input factor. They would be taught that high levels of labour turnover brings with it unnecessary costs related to the replacement of the worker. These costs are often less visible, but should not be underestimated. Recruiting, hiring, training and medical examining of new workers all present unnecessary costs to the organisation. Consequently, managers could be advised on how to develop effective retention strategies and how they could create

a more satisfied, more stable and consequently more productive work force (Abbasi & Hollman, 2000; Eckardt, Skaggs, & Youndt, 2014; Jiang, Baker, & Frazier, 2009).

When pursuing compliance with private social standards is motivated solely by economic concerns, we can only expect minimum compliance (Lim & Phillips, 2008). However, when managers are trained in HRM practices and are given secure and stable relationship, it is possible that an commitment to ethical practices becomes internalized. This does not only lead to superior compliance, but eventually may even lead to the development of an independent ethical commitment to working conditions from managers side (Lim & Phillips, 2008).

THEORETICAL CONTRIBUTIONS

Previous studies on working conditions at the bottom of GVCs have largely neglected the role and potential of workers to make changes in these working conditions. Only recently, scholars have started to explore the agency of labour employed in GVCs. This thesis aimed to contribute to this emerging field by studying the potential of individual, unorganized 'exit strategies' and collective, organized 'voice strategies' of flower farm workers. This research makes a number of significant contributions.

First, this thesis moved away from a rather simplistic and narrow interpretation of labour as a homogenous, undifferentiated input factor. Instead this research applied a more refined conceptualization of labour, recognizing the diversity among flower farm workers –in terms of gender, age, educational level, location of living and aspirations. It was argued that an understanding of the diversity of flower farm workers was key to understand the factors facilitating and constraining their individual agency. In Article 1 it was shown that different workers experienced different levels of job satisfaction (e.g. higher educated workers were less satisfied with their jobs than low educated workers) and had access to different alternative livelihood options (e.g. rural workers could engage in own farming activities whereas urban workers had easier access to alternative jobs in the city). In Article 2 it was shown how managers took into account the diversity of their workforce when developing coping mechanisms to deal with labour turnover (e.g. rural workers were put in the greenhouses to work; urban workers were hired to work in the pack houses). Finally, Article 3 revealed how voice strategies could be more or less available for workers in flower farms depending on who they were and the assets they had to their disposition (e.g. urban workers were more often member of the union than rural workers).

Second, this thesis sought to contribute to a critical understanding of the working conditions employed in the cut flower industry through the inclusion of workers' perceptions of their working life and their responses to it. Herein lies the unique contribution of this thesis: I focused on a translation and

interpretation of workers' agency. These subaltern responses, arguably small and often invisible acts of resistance, often go unnoticed. As this thesis has shown these 'exit' responses, and the lack of 'voice' responses, are nevertheless essential ingredients when aiming to understand working conditions. I argued that the current compliance-based paradigm of PSS does not really reveal farm behaviour. The inclusion of workers' perceptions and responses to the work environment give a fuller picture.

Third, this thesis contributed to the emerging field of research on labour agency by showing how unorganized agency can also be effectively constrained. Probably because of the relative novelty of this stream of research, there has been a tendency of previous studies to emphasize isolated success stories of labour agency (e.g. Rogaly, 2009; Carswell & De Neve, 2013). This thesis contributes to a more nuanced understanding of labour agency by providing evidence of a not so successful story. In Article 2 it was shown that the exit strategies of workers were not so much of a concern to managers who easily could find new workers to fill in vacancies and therefore lost their attention-focusing effect. In Article 3 it became clear that the voice option was curdled partially due to a high prevalence of exit strategies.

FURTHER RESEARCH AVENUES

The results put forth above lead to new routes of research, beyond the initial research questions, but still aligned with the objective of developing a nuanced, critical understanding of labour agency and its potential to change the status quo in favour of labour. I identify three avenues for further research.

A first avenue is research on the impact of economic upgrading (i.e. the process by which firms move from low-value to relatively high-value activities) on labour agency. This study has shown how the exit strategies of Ethiopian flower farm workers went to a large extent unnoticed by managers. The cut flower industry in Ethiopia is still a relatively young sector, but rapidly growing. High levels of labour turnover may be a typical infant problem. Ethiopian farms currently target peak production moments (e.g. Valentine's day and Mother's day) and because of this they need the flexibility to grow and decline over quite compressed periods of time. Hence, high levels of voluntary labour turnover could be considered beneficial for the farms, providing them this flexibility. In neighbouring country Kenya, the cut flower industry stabilized in 2005 and is nowadays based upon a system of continuous mass production of largely standardized products (Riisgaard & Gibbon, 2014). They do not longer target peak moments but aim for a steady supply of high quality flowers. Moreover, Kenyan flower farms have adopted more modern technology and are growing a larger variety of flowers. Because of these features, flower farms in Kenya require a stable and trained workforce. Previous studies have shown that economic upgrading does not necessarily lead to social upgrading (i.e. improvements in rights and entitlements of workers) (Barrientos, Gereffi, & Rossi, 2010). Consideration of labour agency within

these studies is however limited. Therefore a first potential avenue would be to research if and how labour agency gains from economic upgrading. It would be interesting to test the hypothesis that flower farm workers in Kenya have more power to improve their working conditions because of their long-term retention and accumulated skills than the Ethiopian workers in this study had. More generally, it would be interesting to understand how different trajectories of economic upgrading affect labour agency in different sectors.

A second avenue of research could be to engage in more disaggregated concepts of agency. In this study I distinguished two forms of agency. Flower farm workers could engage in individualised 'exit' strategies or they could engage in more collective forms of agency, by means of 'voice' strategies. However I recognize that labour has more abilities to act than just these two forms. Katz (2004) for instance distinguishes three levels of labour agency: resilience (i.e. coping with daily lives), reworking (i.e. efforts of workers to materially improve their lives by focusing on reforming the current system) and resistance (i.e. actively challenging the current systems through the development of alternative systems of production). I believe this to be a promising typology and that it is necessary to further advance our understandings of the type of agencies there are. The focus needs to be directed to workers as research participants and to broaden our understanding of the low-key and often invisible ways workers make viable lives. Interpreting, mapping and categorizing practices more creatively can advance this emerging field on labour agency in identifying those forms of agency worth considering.

A third avenue for further research is to examine pathways to better established links between workers and other actors concerned about decent work and workers' well-being. As highlighted in this study, the cut flower industry is a highly codified sector. There are several actors involved aiming at regulating the work environment. Traditionally private social standards (PSS) have been designed by western actors, providing top-down pressures to producers. This study has highlighted the importance of taking the local context and workers' perceptions and aspirations into account when formulating, implementing and auditing PSS. I already provided some suggestions to practitioners on how to involve workers more into the process of getting improved working conditions. Labour research in global value chains need to investigate the effects of these suggested changes and think of other ways to bridge the gap between workers and other actors.

CONCLUSION

The significance of this thesis resides in the critical approach it adopted to contribute to the body of knowledge on working conditions at the bottom of GVCs. I showed how workers were not particularly satisfied with the working conditions in Ethiopian flower farms and consequently sought to exit these flower farm jobs. We saw that managers however did not pick up these warning signals and that the working conditions did not improve in favour of labour. One of the lessons we learned from this thesis is that compliance with regulations cannot be limited to a tick-box approach. Though the cut flower industry is a highly codified sector, this does not necessarily result in ethically behaving farms.

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SUMMARY

Globalization and global competition has led to a relocation of low technology, labour intensive industries towards countries where labour is cheaper. Past research has focused on the working conditions of workers employed in these industries. What is missing in this field of research is any inclusion of workers' own perceptions about their working conditions; how workers themselves evaluate and seek to improve the quality of their working life. This thesis addresses this research gap. More specifically, it examines the potential of flower farm workers in Ethiopia to improve their own working conditions through two strategies: 'exit' and 'voice'

By 'exit' I mean the voluntary quitting behaviour of flower farm workers. During my first round of data collection in 2012, several managers complained about high levels of labour turnover. In this research I study the potential of the 'exit' strategy to improve working conditions. This because an unpredictable, slippery workforce makes workers somewhat difficult to control. Managers who want to have a stable and productive workforce would have to come up with retention strategies which focus on improving the work context. By 'voice' I mean the articulation of one's grievances. Instead of leaving the farm, workers could also have chosen to stay and communicate their discontent through collectively organized strategies, which in turn could have led to improvements in the work environment.

The thesis is structured around three articles. In the first article I seek to understand why Ethiopian flower farm workers massively quit or 'exited' their formal wage work in the flower farms. Drawing on the workers' survey data we've collected in June-July 2013, I study workers' levels of job satisfaction and intentions-to-leave. The results show that there were three job characteristics contributing to workers' job satisfaction: wage, job security and a healthy environment. Dissatisfied workers reported higher intentions to leave their job in the flower farms. Hence, this article concluded with the powerful message that flower farms aiming at securing a stable work force needed to focus on improving these three job attributes.

In the second article I research how flower farm managers made sense of the high levels of workers 'exiting' their farm and the type of strategies they developed to deal with this labour turnover. The findings suggest that managers did not seek to reduce labour turnover, instead they engaged in practices that sustained labour turnover. This is because labour turnover was considered functional: the costs of facing labour turnover were lower than the costs of actually reducing. In the second part of this article I then explain how managers legitimized having high levels of labour turnover on their work floor. I show that managers have constructed a mind-set that supported the notion that labour turnover was entirely caused by external institutional elements and had nothing to do with the work environment.

Finally, in the third article I examine why workers did not use their 'voice' to formulate their grievances and to improve their conditions of employment. Given that the exit option which many flower farm workers exercised, did not result in positive changes in favour of labour, the question arose why workers did not exploit other options, such as the 'voice' option. In essence, the trade union represents the 'voice' option for workers to articulate their grievances. In this article, I build a two-levels framework to identify the impediments to workplace unionism in the cut flower industry in Ethiopia. This framework recognises the need to study both 'vertical' (structure and governance of global value chains) and 'horizontal' (the socio-economic context) barriers to collective organizing at the work floor.

To conclude, this thesis suggests that the potential of the Ethiopian flower farm workers to improve their own working conditions through exit and voice is rather limited: the exit option, which many flower farm workers exercised, did not have the expected impact on the managers who ignored the signals and managed to accommodate to high labour turnover. The voice option did not work either, because of several reasons including the fact that the most aroused and therefore potentially the most vocal workers, were the first to quit their jobs at the flower farms. Hence, the ability of labour in the cut flower industry in Ethiopia to improve labour rights on a large scale was overridden by the ability of capital to determine social structures. Under these circumstances, flower farm workers need support to be able to improve their working life and overall livelihoods status. In the conclusion I identify several relevant actors who could provide potentially this support and I make some suggestions towards these actors on how to fulfil this role.

SAMENVATTING

Globalisering en internationale competitie hebben ertoe geleid dat laag technologische en arbeidsintensieve sectoren hun toevlucht zochten tot landen met goedkope arbeidskrachten. Hoewel voorgaand onderzoek zich reeds heeft toegelegd op het bestuderen en evalueren van arbeidsomstandigheden binnen deze sectoren, was er tot nog toe geen aandacht voor het standpunt van de werknemer zelf: hoe zij hun omstandigheden percipiëren en evalueren en hoe zij zelf proberen de kwaliteit ervan te verbeteren. Dit doctoraat probeert op bovenstaande vragen een antwoord te formuleren. Het objectief van dit doctoraat is te onderzoeken of sierteeltarbeiders in Ethiopië de mogelijkheid hebben om hun eigen werkomstandigheden te verbeteren door middel van twee strategieën: 'exit' en 'voice'.

'Exit' staat synoniem voor het vrijwillig ontslagnemen van werknemers. Tijdens mijn eerste dataverzameling in 2012, klaagden verschillende managers over het grote arbeidersverloop binnen hun bedrijf. Dit fenomeen zette me ertoe aan te onderzoeken of deze 'exit' strategie al dan niet leidt tot betere arbeidsomstandigheden. Managers zijn immers niet gebaat bij een snel veranderend werkbestand dat zorgt voor weinig controle. De hypothese is dat managers die een stabiel en productief personeelsbestand beogen, strategieën zullen bedacht hebben om werkomstandigheden te verhogen en aldus arbeiders aan zich te binden. Tegenovergesteld aan 'exit' in deze context, verwijst de 'voice' strategie naar het communiceren van klachten waarbij werknemers collectief hun misnoegen uiten ten opzicht van directie en management, in plaats van het bedrijf te verlaten.

Het doctoraat bestaat uit drie artikels. In het eerste artikel onderzoek ik waarom Ethiopische sierteeltarbeiders vrijwillig ontslag nemen. Gebruikmakend van survey data die werden verzameld in juni-juli 2013, bestudeer ik de werktevredenheid en intentie-om-weg-te-gaan bij werknemers. De resultaten tonen aan dat drie job karakteristieken bijdragen tot werktevredenheid: loon, job zekerheid en een gezonde werkomgeving; en dat ontevreden werknemers een grotere intentie rapporteren om hun job te verlaten. Vandaar dat dit artikel eindigt met de krachtige boodschap dat sierteeltbedrijven die een stabiel personeelsbestand wensen, zich moeten concentreren op het verbeteren van de drie bovengenoemde eigenschappen.

In een tweede artikel richt ik me op de managers van sierteeltbedrijven. Meer bepaald hoe zij het grote arbeidsverloop verklaren en welke strategieën zij bedacht hebben om ermee om te gaan. De resultaten tonen aan dat managers niet proberen het arbeidsverloop te verminderen, in tegendeel, ze houden het bewust in stand net omdat een groot arbeidsverloop gezien wordt als iets functioneel: kosten die gepaard gaan met een groot verloop zijn immers lager dan de kosten om dit verloop te reduceren. In het tweede deel van dit artikel probeer ik te verklaren hoe managers dit grote arbeidsverloop trachten te legitimeren. Hierbij toon ik aan dat managers geloven dat het grote personeelsverloop te wijten is aan externe institutionele factoren en dat de werkomgeving hierin helemaal geen rol speelt.

Tenslotte buig ik me in een derde en laatste artikel over de vraag waarom werknemers niet gebruik maken van hun 'voice' strategie om hun werktevredenheid te uiten en aldus hun situatie proberen te verbeteren. Deze vraag komt voornamelijk voort uit de observatie dat ondanks dat velen de 'exit' optie hanteerden, er geen positieve veranderingen plaatsvonden. Deze 'voice' optie vindt zijn gedaante in de vakbond. In dit artikel bouw ik een kader bestaande uit twee niveaus om de belemmeringen te identificeren waarmee vakbonden in Ethiopische sierteeltbedrijven worden geconfronteerd. Dit kader erkent de noodzaak om zowel 'verticale' (de structuur en het bestuur van de globale waardeketen) als 'horizontale' (de socio-economische context) belemmeringen van collectieve organisaties te bestuderen.

Deze thesis concludeert dat de mogelijkheid van Ethiopische sierteeltwerknemers om hun arbeidsomstandigheden te verbeteren aan de hand van 'exit' en 'voice' beperkt is. De 'exit' optie, die door vele arbeiders werd gekozen, had niet de verwachte impact omdat managers de signalen negeerden en erin slaagden hun voordeel te halen uit het grote arbeidsverloop. De 'voice' strategie werkte ook niet, omwille van verschillende redenen, onder andere omdat de meest geïrriteerde en mondige werknemers vaak de eersten waren om de 'exit' optie te kiezen. Met andere woorden, het vermogen van managers om sociale structuren te bepalen verhindert Ethiopische sierteeltarbeiders hun arbeidsomstandigheden eigenhandig te verhogen. Externe steun is dus nodig om werkomgeving en algemene levensstatus van deze werknemers te verbeteren. In de conclusie identificeer ik verschillende relevante externe actoren die dergelijke ondersteuning zouden kunnen bieden en formuleer ik een aantal suggesties over de wijze waarop zij die rol zouden kunnen vervullen.

CURRICULUM VITAE

ACADEMIC DEGREES

2008-2010	Master Human Nutrition and Rural Development Option: Rural Economics and Management	Ghent University
2007-2008	Master in EU-Studies	Ghent University
2004-2007	Bachelor Political Sciences Option: International Politics	Ghent University

PEER REVIEWED PUBLICATIONS

1. Staelens, L. and Louche, C. (2016). When the farm-gate becomes a revolving door: an institutional approach to functional labour turnover. Submitted in January and currently in review process in *Human Relations*.
2. Staelens, L., Desiere, S., Louche, C. and D'Haese, M. (2016). Predicting job satisfaction and workers' intentions to leave at the bottom of the high value agricultural chain: evidence from the Ethiopian cut flower industry. *The International Journal of Human Resource Management*. (Accepted)
3. Desiere, S., Staelens, L., D'Haese, M. (2016). When the data sources writes the conclusion: evaluation agricultural policies. *Journal of Development Studies*, 1-16.
4. De Cock, N., D'Haese, M., Vink, N., Van Rooyen, C. J., Staelens, L., Schönfeldt, H. C., and D'Haese, L. (2013). Food security in rural areas of Limpopo province, South Africa. *Food Security*, 5(2), 269-282.
5. D'Haese, M., Vink, N., Nkuzimana, T., Van Damme, E., Van Rooyen, J., De Winter, A.-M., Staelens, L., and D'Haese, L. (2013). Improving food security in the rural areas of KwaZulu-Natal province, South Africa: too little, too slow. *Development Southern Africa* 30(4-5), 468–490.

TEACHING ASSIGNMENTS

1. Assist and support of following MSc courses: Rural Project Management; Development Economics; Rural Development and Agriculture; Agricultural Economics of Developing Countries; Scientific Reading, Writing and Presentation Skills.
2. Supervision of Master Dissertations pursued by MSc students in the field of Rural Economics and Management.

CONFERENCES AND WORKSHOPS

1. When the farm gate becomes a revolving door: an institutional approach to functional labour turnover. Accepted to OMT Discussion Paper session at the 2016 Academy of Management Academy of Management (AOM). August 2016, Anaheim, United States.
2. Workplace unionism in the Ethiopian cut flower industry. December 2015, GAPSYM 9, Ghent, Belgium.
3. Understanding job satisfaction in a labour-intensive industry: empirical evidence from the Ethiopian cut flower industry. August 2014, 14th EAAE Congress, Ljubljana, Slovenia.
4. A rosy future for Ethiopian labourers? Analysing the drivers of sustained improvement in working conditions. June 2014, Doctoral Summer School and CSR Research Seminar at Audencia, Nantes, France.
5. Understanding job satisfaction in a labour-intensive industry: empirical evidence from the Ethiopian cut flower industry. April 2014, BAAE PhD Workshop, Brussels, Belgium.
6. A rosy future for Ethiopian labourers: analysing the drivers of sustained improvements in working conditions. May 2013, 5th EAAE PhD Workshop, Leuven, Belgium.
7. Selling the iron, lion, zion: institutions promoting land grab in Ethiopia. June 2012, IAMO Forum, Halle, Germany.
8. Analysis of MNE-CSOs-Host Government relationships & their impact on development. May 2012, European School of New Institutional Economics (ESNIE) Workshop, Cargèse, Corsica.

FIELD WORK EXPERIENCE

1. Research project on the potential of (peri-)urban dairy chain for sustainable intensification of smallholder dairy farming in the Tigray zone of northern Ethiopia. Mekelle, Ethiopia, January-February 2016.
2. Research project on labour turnover, working conditions and workers' wellbeing in the cut flower industry. Debre Zeyit, Ethiopia, June-July 2013.
3. Exploratory field study on challenges and opportunities in the cut flower industry in Ethiopia. Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, September-October 2012.
4. Food security research project in Limpopo Province. Limpopo, South Africa, July-August 2011.
5. Changing livelihoods in Cajamarca, Peru: impact study of the Yanacocha mine using the livelihood framework. Cajamarca, Peru, February-April 2010.

