

Dirty hands or smart life

Employment in Polonnaruwa's automotive sector



Master thesis
International Development Studies
Utrecht University

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Cover picture: working site of a large tinker in Polonnaruwa (photo taken by author)



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Abstract

Unemployment, especially amongst youth, is an important development issue nowadays. This phenomenon interestingly exists next to a big demand for workers on the labour market. A so-called (skills) mismatch. This research explores the potential of one specific economic sector; the automotive (that is everything that revolves around vehicles) and its potential as a source of decent employment. The research area is Polonnaruwa, Sri Lanka, a rural area with an ambitious development program in place. More specifically since a tertiary educational facility is to be built in this area, with partial focus on the automotive sector.

Towards this extent, the local automotive businesses were mapped and subsequently 31 employers and employees were interviewed. It seems that the conjuncture is doing well and will improve, working conditions appear fair, currently there is room for more workers, and (educational) entry requirements are rather low. Despite these facts, it is difficult to find good workers: a mismatch on the labour market between supply and demand. Those currently employed in the sector point to the issue that the sector fails to attract youngsters. They have several interesting theories why this is the case. Mostly it came down to the fact that it appears that youth are in pursuit of a ‘smart life’, which entails working in a suit, in an air conditioned office on a computer. Consequently, youth do not want to work with their hands, or become dirty.

These theories were put to the test by interviewing 20 local youth from farming and fishing communities. From these interviews it arose that interest towards a smart life is actual rather limited. For youth, the most important issue considering employment is money. Youths feel pressure to provide for the parental family, as they feel the pressure to earn a good income in order to be able to start/maintain their own family. The main cause for the disinterest seems to stem from the fact that when starting as a manual labourer in the automotive industry, one is unpaid for 6-12 months whilst learning the trade on the job. An investment few are able/willing to make, mostly because of financial reasons. For a similar reason, interest in following tertiary education is also limited; one has to travel or live in another city.

Because better wages can be earned abroad, the lion’s share of youth are interested in working in another country, as do some workers. This research found some interesting cases of Sri Lankan nationals that worked abroad for several years, and founded successful companies back in Polonnaruwa with the money earned abroad. In general, a center for tertiary education focusing on the automotive sector in Polonnaruwa would be very welcome since it enables local youth to follow extra education after secondary school. This will increase their chances to demand a better wage, as well as the ability to choose between several employers. A side effect will be that the state will exert more control on the educational system, partly at cost of the learning on the job system currently in place, raising the bar for whoever seeks employment in the sector.

Foreword

Just before departing to Sri Lanka in early February 2018, I had no clue whether or not I might be able to execute my research. It seemed complete madness to go and do fieldwork in Polonnaruwa, an area I only knew by looking at Google Maps. I had no contacts in the area and little knowledge of the local culture but for the casual travel guide and my own experience of spending a short holiday in the country as of 2012. Instead of feeling joy for this great adventure, I just felt utterly anxious and was not able to sleep well. Spending three weeks in Negombo and capital Colombo did not really change this situation. All Sri Lankans I spoke with seemed surprised when I told them I was going to live several months in Polonnaruwa (why would you want to go there?), and nobody seemed to have contacts in the surroundings. After encountering dead ends time after time when looking for a translator (or any relevant contacts at all), I decided to just plunge in and took the train to Polonnaruwa. Upon arrival, I started off doing my research, not caring whether or not I had people to help me out. Eventually, with a great dose of serendipity, this turned out great.

My first words of gratitude are for the respondents of this research and their willingness to partake in my research. I would like to thank Manoj Silva for being a wonderful and flexible translator, as well as the Miridiya Organization for their excellent community work in the rural communities surrounding Polonnaruwa, spreading a positive message of empowerment through educational and economic assistance, next to community building. Without Manoj' help, this research would not have been possible. Furthermore, I would like to thank Sumanasiri of the Jayaru Guesthouse for providing me a home away from home. A big thanks goes out to the Center for Poverty Analysis in Colombo for being a good sparring partner in general. I am especially grateful for their efforts to organize a session with fellow academics and professionals for the presentation of my preliminary research findings in early June, and the long debate that followed. Thanks to Camila Orjuela, I was able to get in contact with this great organization.

Another note of thanks goes out to the Dutch Embassy in Colombo for making me feel welcome in Sri Lanka. Furthermore, I would like to thank the Netherlands Enterprise Agency and the University of Utrecht for providing me with a relevant research topic. My supervisor, Annelies Zoomers, deserves a special mention for her toughness in demanding a clear research plan in the early phase of the research, as well as her inspiring view on just using common sense. This greatly helped not getting lost in the vast universe of academic theories and jargon.

Finally, and most importantly, I would like to thank my beloved ones for providing me the support in good and bad times. I thank them for providing me with the strength and courage to pursue my goals and dreams.

Bohoma istoothi,

Max Slagboom
Amsterdam, The Netherlands
August 2018

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1. Introduction

Unemployment is one of the biggest issues for policymakers nowadays. On the international development agenda, this issue is targeted by Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 8. The goal stands for decent work and economic growth and seeks to promote inclusive and sustainable economic growth as well as full and productive employment through decent work. As of 2016, the global unemployment rate stood at 5.7 percent, signaling a drop from the Great Recession high of 6.6 percent in 2009 (United Nations, Sustainable Development Platform). Yet there is a lot of progress to be made since youth unemployment remains high at 12.8%. Structural un(der)employment on a local scale can eventually lead to an economic recession of the regional economy, and become the main reasons for outmigration. One can look towards the global rural-urban exodus on a more local scale, but also towards the (recent) stream of international migrants towards the USA and Europe as examples of this phenomenon.

Interestingly, unemployment exists next to a big demand for workers on the labour market. A so-called (skills) mismatch. The gap between demand and supply is especially big with technically and vocationally educated/trained (TVET) workers. These are professionally trained workers for a specific trade or craft, that prepares the trainee directly for the profession. One could think of a barber, car mechanic, plumber, technician, tourist guide, welder, and so forth. According to the United Nations International Centre for Technical and Vocational Education and Training (UNESCO-UNEVOC) there is a global lack of TVET workers (2015).

In Sri Lanka, the ILO (2015) also signals this skills mismatch. They estimate that approximately 152.000 individuals join the labour market every year without any training in a specific trait. Youth unemployment in 2017 has risen to 21.6% (Department of Census and Statistics Sri Lanka, 2017), whereas the ILO signals a big training gap in the sectors of tourism, construction, craft workers, engineering and manufacturing. In order to tackle unemployment and mitigate migration, education is seen as one of the prime solutions. Education will provide the unemployed with the necessary skills to find (better) employment. Taking into account the fact that there is a big demand for TVET workers, on both national and international scale, providing vocational education seems the solution. That is why the Sri Lankan government put TVET central in their national development program through the 'Skills Sector Enhancement Program' (National Planning Department, 2014).

Inequalities between the countryside and urban areas of Sri Lanka have been steadily on the rise (DCS Sri Lanka, 2017), further deepened by situations of unemployment resulting in migration of rural youth towards the cities. Polonnaruwa is one of these rural regions where the local economy is rather weak, mainly focused on agriculture (especially rice). Since the incumbent president is from this locality, Polonnaruwa is currently at the center of attention in national development politics. An ambitious regional development plan, Pibidemu Polonnaruwa, has been put in place. In order to provide decent employment (and thus smoothen the urban-rural rift, next to meeting demands from the national labour market) there are well-progressed plans for the construction of a national Vocational Training Center (VTC) in Polonnaruwa. A Dutch company is involved in the construction of the said center, and will partly receive assistance of Dutch public funds through the Netherlands Enterprise Agency (RVO). This makes the project and its developmental aspects not only a matter of Sri Lankan, but also Dutch public interest, thus worthy of deeper understanding.

One of the main schools to be built for the VTC focuses on the automotive industry. Automotive in this research will encompass all vehicles that are engine driven, the industry means the collective of businesses small and big that revolve around engine driven vehicles (such as workshops, dealers, garages, etc.). The ILO finds that motor vehicle mechanics and fitters is one of the biggest groups where employment can be found, estimated at some 60.000 jobs as of 2015 (ILO, 2015). This raises the question: to what extent can the automotive business in Polonnaruwa lead to more (decent) employment in the region and what is the role of training in this?

In order to provide an answer to this question, it is important to take into account five factors, which form the central part of this research:

1. The demand side of the labour market: what is the size of the business, how is it doing and is there room for more workers?
2. Educational requirements of the sector: where do you learn the necessary skills for employment?
3. Working conditions: what are the wages in the sector? And other working conditions?
4. The supply side of the labour market: what are the attitudes of local youth towards employment in general? And specifically towards the automotive sector?
5. Migrational attitudes: what do workers and youth think about working in Polonnaruwa and Sri Lanka? Would they like to go elsewhere or stay?

The main goal of this research is to provide a relevant bottom-up perspective to the employment (im)possibilities in the automotive sector in the region of Polonnaruwa. This leads to a better understanding of the local situation, which helps to better predict the effect that improved formal automotive educational possibilities will have on employment. In its turn, the employment will affect the regional economy. Though this is rather context-specific, the research can provide evidence to further prove or counter academic theories in the larger debate on regional economic development through educational interventions. The next chapter will delve further into this discussion, and present the main questions to be answered by this research.

Afterwards, the broader regional context of Sri Lanka and Polonnaruwa will be presented in Paragraph 3, focusing on its (development) politics, economy, labour market and educational system. The methodology used will be broadly discussed in Paragraph 4, as the ethical component of this research is presented in Paragraph 5. The main data are presented in Paragraphs 6,7,8,9 & 10. These findings are summarized in the Conclusion (Paragraph 11). A critical analysis of the research is provided in the Discussion (Appendix A).

2. Theoretical framework

The eventual effects of educational interventions in rural areas are a hot topic of discussion in the last few years. Wallenborn (2014) signals this renewed interest since the 2000's boom of commodities, especially after the beginning of the Great Recession in 2008. Chea & Huijsman (2018) signal the recent trend as a consequence of problems with youth un(der)employment. In this theoretical framework, the current academic debate theories on developing economically depressed areas through investment in vocational educational opportunities will be discussed. First, it will provide a brief summary of how an economically depressed area is caught in a negative feedback loop. Afterwards, it will discuss more academic theories and provide an overview on how investing in education will lead to an improved regional economy. After setting the general theory behind such educational interventions, the conceptual framework of this research is presented.

2.1 Rural-urban migration: a depressed economy leads to poverty and migration

One of the classical academic works on rural-urban migration is written by the economic geographer Fields (1975). Though his work is written through the lens of the modernization theory, it provides valuable insights into the basics of rural-urban migration, which are still used nowadays. The main cause of rural-urban migration is the push from agriculture (low wages, poverty, and unemployment) and the pull from (relatively) high urban wages (Bosworth & Venhorst, 2018). It is mostly youth that migrates, based on expected higher incomes in urban areas (Fields, 1975). In this way, the labour force leaves the rural area, further marginalizing the economy of this area. A simplified framework of this theory would follow the red arrows as shown in Figure 1. Is this dynamic also taking place in Polonnaruwa? Or what does the migratory system look like?

2.2 TVET: the cure for rural poverty

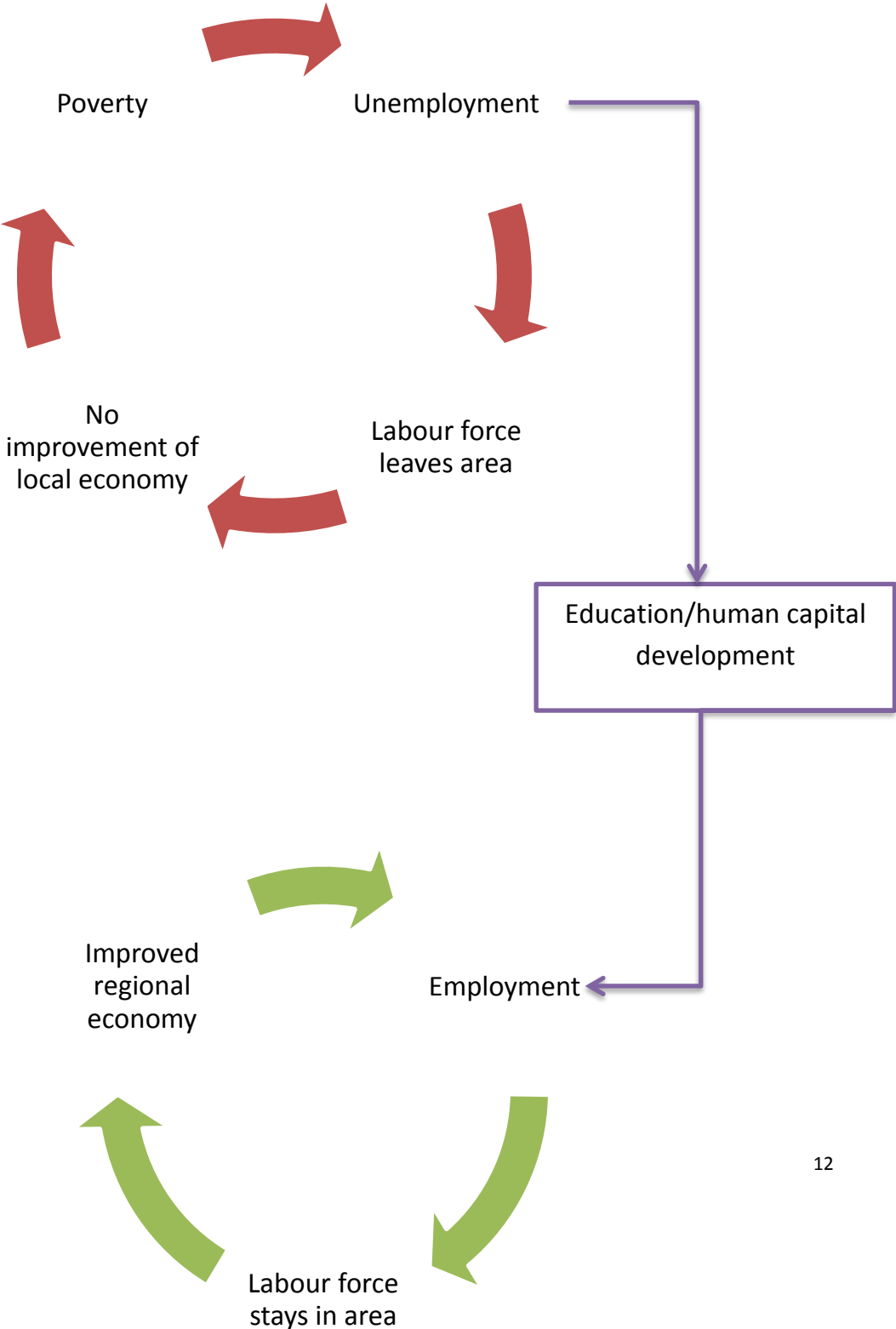
Policymakers try to break the negative gridlock as sketched by the red arrows in Figure 2.1 by investing in educational opportunities. As Flückiger and Ludwig (2018) have indicated, there is a big disparity between the urban and rural considering human capital. The intended result is that (better) employment is reached through education, since this will improve the human capital. Better employment will make the labour force stay, which in its turn improves the local economy, leading to more/better employment. In Figure 2 this positive feedback loop is shown by the circle of green arrows. This theory is supported by the UNESCO-UNEVOC, the UNESCO International Centre for Technical and Vocational Education and Training. According to this institute, TVET has the potential to be the key to prosperity for all (2015). Unlike academic education, vocational education is accessible to the largest share of the population since there are less entry requirements. Through education and training, people's general employability enhances which should lead to increased incomes and market participation. At the same time, improved access to TVET reduces exclusion from the job market. Those marginalized at first by not having the adequate skills can be schooled and find employment. Furthermore, TVET drives the economy in general since it generates innovation and higher productivity. In this way UNESCO-UNEVOC argues that TVET has the transformative power to reduce poverty and diminish inequalities/increase equity. In general, improved human capital leads to empowerment and increases one's chances to live a life they value.

There is support for this point of view from academia as well. Chun & Watanabe (2011) argue that limited income generating opportunities are the cause of rural poverty, which in its turn causes rural-urban migration. Rural populations are constrained by low skills (caused by little education) and are dependent on varying agricultural outputs. By receiving TVET in, for example, manufacturing clothes or building an extra room to rent to tourists, the population will be able to create other income-generating activities. In this way, they will improve their welfare which in turn will have a multiplier effect on the broader regional economy. Ramasamy (2016) also argues for the development of more income generating possibilities in rural settings. Increasing the so-called non-farm employment (such as said manufacturing clothes or tapping into the tourism industry) is crucial for keeping the region economically stable. In order to increase non-farm employment, skills need to be developed for which TVET is necessary. Dev (2007) backs this by stating that increasing non-farm employment will lead to

an increase in labour productivity and increased wages. In Figure 1, the negative feedback loop of the red arrows is broken when the unemployed go through education (purple box) and then reaches a positive feedback loop (green arrows). In this model, education thus is key to break a negative cycle and turn it into a positive one.

However, most literature focusses on short-term vocational training and education, which makes it interesting to see if these theories are also applicable to a large-scale educational intervention, such as the implementation of a brand new vocational training center. Up until this point, little is written on this topic. Perhaps because it seems rather straightforward; more educational opportunities will lead to improved human capital, which in its turn has all sorts of positive effects.

Figure 1: Simplified theoretical framework on the gridlock of economically depressed areas, and how to break it through education



2.3 Conceptual framework

As shown in Figure 1, TVET could be the answer to combat poverty and unemployment, but the real situation is somewhat less simple than illustrated above. In order for vocational education to be truly successful and lead to employment, it is important that TVET connects to local needs and demands on the labour market. Education in an area that nobody in the region has an interest in, nor can find employment in, makes no sense. Hence Ramasamy (2016) puts forward the idea of creating a demand-driven approach in TVET-interventions. In order for vocational education projects to have bigger success, it is important to take into account the demand of the labour market and the supply side of the labour market, since they will together shape employment. In this way, the actual demand and supply for employment in the automotive sector can be grounded, as well as the educational demands. These are captured in Figure 2, the conceptual framework.

In this research, the focus will be on the automotive sector in Polonnaruwa. Thus the labour market demand is shaped by automotive businesses in the area. From these enterprises, it is important to know the economic conjuncture (how is the business thriving? Is there money to be made?), their absorption power (how many people are employed and are they looking for more?) and if there is a skills gap (what labour/skills are needed? In what areas need training?). These three factors are crucial in shaping the labour market demand.

The supply side on the labour market is formed by those looking for (better) employment. In this research the main focus will be on youth, aged 18-30. Their supply will depend on three main factors: their attitudes towards working in the sector (do they want to work in the automotive industry? What work would want to do in general?), the required skills to work in the sector (what is the threshold considering education/experience?) and working conditions (how is the pay and other conditions?)

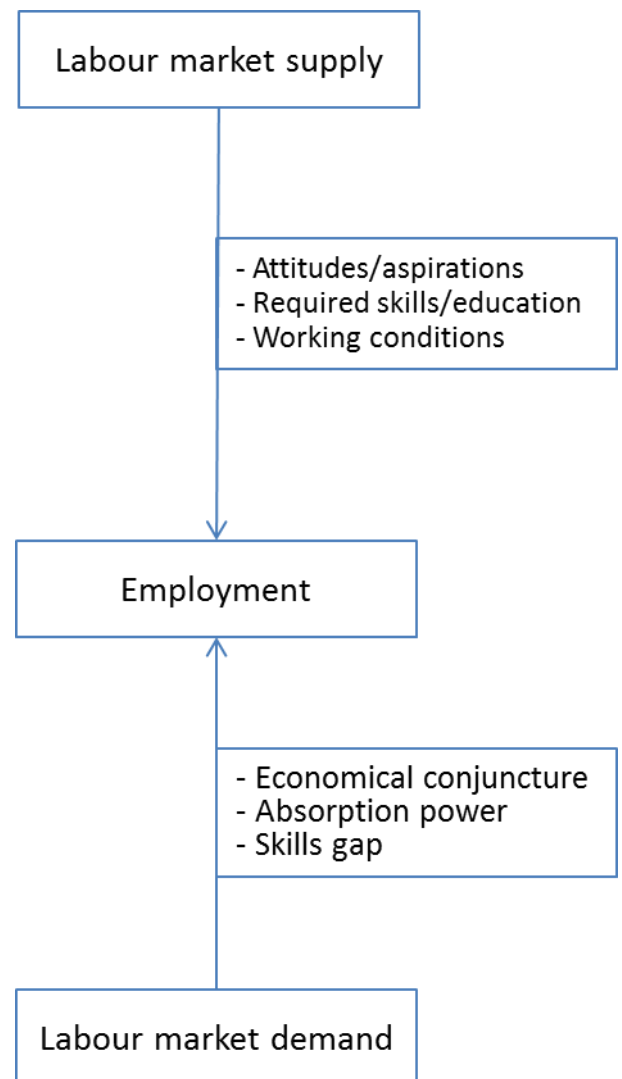
2.4 Research questions

The goal of this research is to provide an answer to the question; to what extent can the automotive business in Polonnaruwa lead to more (decent) employment in the region and what is the role of training in this? In order to do so, this question is divided into five parts. These five parts in turn form the five paragraphs of the main argument made in this thesis. The paragraphs discuss the variables as posed above in Figure 2, next to the separate topic of migration.

2.4.1 What does the local automotive business look like?

Paragraph 6 will provide a general overview of the automotive business in Polonnaruwa. Towards this end, the businesses of this sector in the region were mapped. After this mapping phase, 20 companies were visited and 31 interviews conducted with both employers (19) and employees (12). The main goal is to provide the general and economic context of the automotive sector in Polonnaruwa, providing information on the economic conjuncture.

Figure 2.2: Conceptual framework



Besides this, it will also look into the absorption power of the industry and provide a typology of two types of automotive businesses: official brand stores, and regular ones.

2.4.2 What are educational needs in the automotive sector?

The second part of the research, Paragraph 7, focusses on the educational needs to work in the automotive sector. First, it provides an overview of the educational levels of those currently working in the sector. Next, it looks into the required skills in order to work as a manual labourer in the industry and discusses two different pathways into the industry; with and without prior education. Afterwards, it discusses the attitudes in general towards certificates of current workers. Are they useful? Why? Finally, this paragraph will look into demands for education from this sector. Again, the base for this part are the 31 interviews conducted with current workers.

2.4.3 What are the working conditions and attitudes towards employment in automotive sector?

Paragraph 8 focuses on the working conditions in the automotive sector. What are the wages? What do workers mention as upsides and downsides? Furthermore, it will discuss the sectors failure to attract youth. What do current workers see as the main causes for this?

2.4.4 What are attitudes of local youth towards employment?

From Paragraph 6 it arose that the automotive sector can absorb a lot of workers, Paragraph 7 showed that the threshold for starting work in the sector is rather low. Nevertheless, Paragraph 8 argues that the sector still fails to attract youth, though working conditions seem all right. Hence Paragraph 9 will look into the attitudes and aspirations of local youth towards employment in general, and the automotive sector in specific. For this, 20 interviews were conducted with young males aged 18-30 in the rural communities surrounding Polonnaruwa.

2.4.5 What are attitudes towards migration of current workers?

As sketched in Figure 1, employment will lead to the labour force staying in the area, thus improving the local economy. However, if the labour force does not have the intention to stay in the area, the effect will be short-lived according to traditional theories. Thus it is key to take into account the attitudes towards migration as well in this research: for this end, a small *migration track* will be made for every respondent. Paragraph 10 will provide these migration tracks, as well as the general attitudes towards migration of current workers.

Operationalization

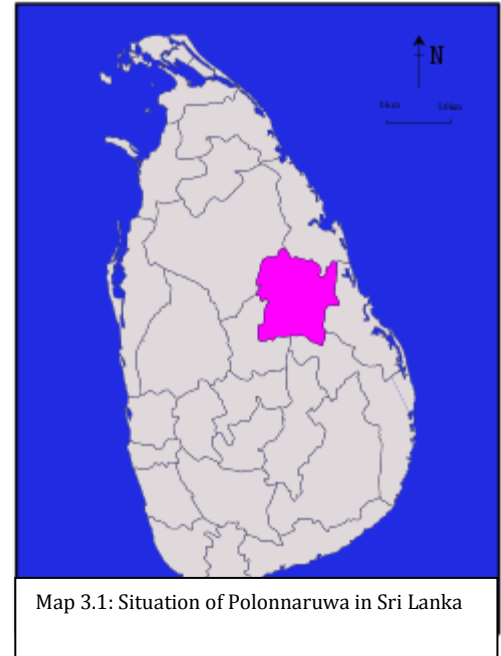
In order to answer the questions posed above, certain variables need to be operationalized. For the operationalization of the variables of the Conceptual Framework, see Appendix 3, 4 & 5 for used definitions & questionnaires.

3. Regional theoretical framework

This section of the research provides valuable background information into Sri Lanka and Polonnaruwa. Focus will be on geography, (development) politics, economics, education, suicide and ethnic tension. The national and local context on this topics is sketched, in order to better understand the setting in which the research took place.

3.1 Geographical location

Sri Lanka is a drop-shaped island, situated in the Indian Ocean to the Southeast of the Indian peninsula. Consisting out of 65.160 km², the country is a bit smaller than the Netherlands and Belgium combined. The area is divided into nine provinces, that consist out of twenty-five districts. The main area of interest in this research is the district of Polonnaruwa (marked purple on Image 1). Together with the district of Anuradhapura, it forms the North Central Province. The main nucleus of this district is Polonnaruwa-town, situated in the division of Thamankaduwa. The division of Thamankaduwa has got a population of approximately 82.000 inhabitants, mainly based around the town of Polonnaruwa. The exact numbers on the amount of inhabitants in the town-area lack. Estimates range between 12.000 and 40.000 inhabitants. The district of Polonnaruwa is located in the so-called Dry Zone of the island, which receives little precipitation after the rain period from October to January, making the region dependent on irrigation systems for agriculture.



Map 3.1: Situation of Polonnaruwa in Sri Lanka

3.2 Politics

Sri Lanka is currently run by a coalition of the socialist Sri Lanka Freedom Party (SLFP) of president Maithripala Sirisena and the conservative United National Party (UNP) of prime minister Ranil Wickremesinghe. In the 2015 election, the alliance surprisingly won elections against the incumbent president Mahindra Rajapaksa. The allied victory ended Rajapaksa's reign which started in 2005. During his legislation Sri Lanka ended its three-decade lasting civil war, the economy boomed (see 3.4 on Economy for exact numbers), and major investments in the country's infrastructure were made, such as the Southern Expressway which connects the capital Colombo with Galle in the South. The Rajapaksa legislation did not go undisputed though, facing major allegations of corruption, discrimination against minorities (favouring Buddhist religion and Sinhalese culture), censorship, dictatorial tendencies and some say even genocide. The major economic growth following the ending of the civil war was not divided equally, leading to a rising level of inequality. Little doubt exists that a large amount of money ended up in the pockets of the president and his clientele (Sri Lanka Brief, 2018). Adequate numbers on the wealthiest individuals of Sri Lanka are largely missing, but according to Forbes (2017), Rajapaksa is by far the wealthiest Sri Lankan individual with a net worth estimated on 18 billion USD, which would mean that his personal wealth accounts for more money than the entire Sri Lankan GDP as of 2002 (see 3.4). The reliability of this specific source is questionable, but little doubt exists that Rajapaksa and his friends greatly profited from his legislation.

In the 2015 elections, the alliance of the SLFP and UNP mainly won due to their promise of bringing good governance ('Yahapalana'). They would bring an end to corruption and persecute those alleged of this, ensure transparent politics, limit presidential power again and ensure that all Sri Lankans would profit instead of a select few. Though presidential power is now more limited than under the Rajapaksa-administration, the government is not really succeeding on the other points. Most of the corrupt officials still go unchallenged. It has to be noted that as of May 2018, a special court is created for graft during the Rajapaksa-era, but the first convictions are still to be made (Sri Lanka Brief, 2018).

Besides not (yet) bringing to justice the corrupt of the former administration, the current government is involved in a corruption scandal of its own. In the so-called Central Bonds Scam, the Central Bank of Sri Lanka lost a considerable amount of money in the buying and re-selling of bonds. Billions of rupees of public money disappeared into private firms (News First, 2017), which supposedly link back to politicians.¹ Besides this, most Sri Lankans feel that the national development is halting. The current government appeals to Colombo's rising middle-class, such as the plan to have free public wi-fi throughout the whole country. But their policies fail to address the reality of the rural poor, who of course have other priorities than free public wi-fi. As journalist Kusal Perera put it "Is democracy something to eat?" (Daily Mirror, 2018). A good summarizing quote on the difference between both administrations was found in the words of a tuk-tuk-driver in Negombo. As he put it bluntly "Rajapaksa invested half of the money [in development], and put the other half in his own pocket. That is at least the half. But with this government [Sirisena administration], nothing happens".

The local government elections in February 2018, a good poll for the popularity of the government, reflected this. Sirisena's party was decimated by the new party of Rajapaksa, and coalition partner UNP lost considerable ground.² The only district where Sirisena's party won, was Polonnaruwa. Not surprising when taking into account that the president was raised in this district, and put in place a large development plan for the region. However, the country is facing difficulties in paying for the prestigious developmental projects put in place by the Rajapaksa administration, which lead to a high level of indebtedness and curious white elephants.

3.2.1 International development partners: theater of a 'Great Game'?

The Rajapaksa administration (2005-2015) affiliated closely with China for developmental projects. China in its turn likes to incorporate Sri Lanka in their 'One Belt, One Road' plan, since the island forms a strategic point in the Indian Ocean, making it a major hub in the East-West trade routes. To this extent, a 1 billion USD container port was built in Rajapaksa's hometown Hambantota (up until that moment a backwater) as well as an international airport. Since Hambantota is not, and has not been, a hub in the international sea trade, nor aerial transport, both stand largely unused. Without making any revenues, it proved difficult to pay the investors back. As a consequence, in 2017 a share of 85% in the Hambantota mega-port project was sold to China for 99 years, making it (according to some) a de facto Chinese Hong Kong in Sri Lanka (The Diplomat, 2017).

This news was negatively received by India (the regions hegemonic power) and Japan, both fearing that China will use the port as a military base in the Indian Ocean. In order to secure their access to the East-West sea lanes, both countries get more involved in Sri Lankan development politics. Both are investing in the already existing port of Colombo, as well as the development of the port Trincomalee, to counter Hambantota. To this extent a Memorandum of Understanding was signed between India and Sri Lanka for Trincomalee's development, as well as Japanese investment in the port of Colombo (The Economic Times, 2017; The Diplomat, 2018).

3.3 Pibidemu Polonnaruwa: awakening Polonnaruwa

The 'Great Game' between China on the one hand and India and Japan on the other as the country's most important development partners, can also be seen on a more local level in Sri Lanka. Under the patronage of president Maithripala Sirisena, the district development project 'Pibidemu Polonnaruwa' (Awakening of Polonnaruwa) started. It is part of the five year development project 'Siya Vasaka Dura Dakia Pas Vaskada Diga Heruma', five year plan of hundred year vision. Development projects in the sectors of roads, electricity, agriculture, education, health and environment will be implemented. The idea is to 'uplift the living standards of the rural populace' through 'small and medium scale projects' since these 'are more suitable for our country than giant investments' (News First, 2016). Polonnaruwa deserves special attention since it has been an isolated district, not equally profiting from the economic growth the country witnessed the last decade (Sunday Times,

¹ See Appendix 6 for a table of values of Sri Lankan Rupees vis-a-vis Euros.
Rough conversion rate: 1 EUR = 185 SLR.

² For island-wide results, direct to: <http://www.adaderana.lk/local-authorities-election-2018/> for the results, as well as a nice visualization.

2018). By 2018-2019 most projects should be finished, making Polonnaruwa a fully developed district (Lanka News, 2018).

This includes:

- A. Road renovation of rural and main roads. For example: renovating rural roads for transport of agricultural produce, and broadening of the main roads connecting Polonnaruwa, Kaduruwela and New Town from two to four lanes (Independent Television Network News, 2018; Daily Mirror, 2016)
- B. Addressing shortcomings of the local schools, such as the renovation and construction of new buildings for existing schools, and the construction a brand new tri-lingual school in cooperation with India with room for 1.200 students (see Image 2 below) (Presidential Secretariat, 2017; Colombo Page, 2018).
- C. Renovation of rural hospitals (such as the Polonnaruwa General Hospital) but also the construction of a kidney hospital (see Image 3 below) with Chinese assistance (Sunday Times, 2018).
- D. Construction of new buildings such as housing projects for the poor and a new District Secretariat. (President's Media Division, 2017; Sunday Times, 2018).
- E. Water management, especially renovating ancient tanks which are crucial for irrigation in the Dry Zone (Colombo Page, 2018), but also drinking water projects.
- F. Direct material support for the population, for example through handing out equipment for self-employment, water filters and weeding machines (Daily News, 2017).

The programme did not go unchallenged. Is the government, supposed to bring good governance, guilty of the exact same favoritism for which it criticized the Rajapaksa-legislation (Perera, 2016)?

Image 2: the planned Indian trilingual school in Polonnaruwa (photo by author)



Image 3: the planned Chinese nephrological hospital in Polonnaruwa (photo by author)



Image 4: the commemoration stone of an existing Japanese bridge over the Mahaweli river close to Polonnaruwa (photo by author)



3.4 Economy

In the last 15 years, the Sri Lankan GDP has quintupled from 16 billion USD in 2002 towards 81 billion USD in 2016. In the last nine years (2009-2017), the economy has grown at an average of 6.2% per year (World Bank Data). Sri Lanka has got an average GNI of 3.780 USD per capita (World Bank, 2017), ranking 109th worldwide in between countries such as Algeria, Georgia and Indonesia. The Western Province is the province that accounts for most of the GNP. This is where the capital Colombo and most of the country's industry is located. The country's GINI-coefficient rates 38.6 as of 2012 (World Bank Data), signaling a rise from 36.4 in 2009. Sri Lanka ranks 78th considering the income inequality coefficient, close to countries such as Iran, Laos and Burundi. One of the biggest challenges the country faces nowadays, is the switch from a 'public investment, non-tradable sector-driven growth model to a more private investment, tradeable sector-led model' (World Bank, 2017). That is to say a switch from government spending towards the private sector as the economic motor.

Considering exports in 2016, garments accounted for 46% of the total export value, followed by 13% of tea, 4% coconut products, 2% precious stones. The other 35% of exports are composed of export products of minor shares. Paradoxically, Sri Lanka witnessed a period of sustained economic growth during its civil war. In the 1980's and 1990's, the garment export industry was build up from scratch, ending the national dependence on the export of tea (Venugopal, 2011). Rice is the staple food of Sri Lanka, cultivated as wetland crop in rice paddies.

In North Central Province, which consists out of the districts of Polonnaruwa and Anuradhapura, most are still employed in agriculture, as pointed out in Graph 3.4 (see next page). Especially in the cultivation of rice, and the region is considered as Sri Lanka's rice-basket. The dependency on agriculture is against the trend of the national economy which relies more on the services and industry. As a result, the share of the gross national product of North Central Province lacks behind its share of inhabitants and size (see Table 3.I). Thus it forms a region which needs to be economically developed: how to take more advantage of its size and inhabitants?

Table 1 General statistics on inhabitants, size and economy (Source: Department of Census and Statistics Sri Lanka, 2017)

Administrative region	Inhabitants	%	Size m ²	%	Gross product	%
Sri Lanka	20.277.000	100.0	65.610	100.0	84.023	100.0
North Central Province	1.260.000	5.9	10.472	16.3	4.033	4.8
Polonnaruwa	406.000	2.0	3.293	5.0	-	-

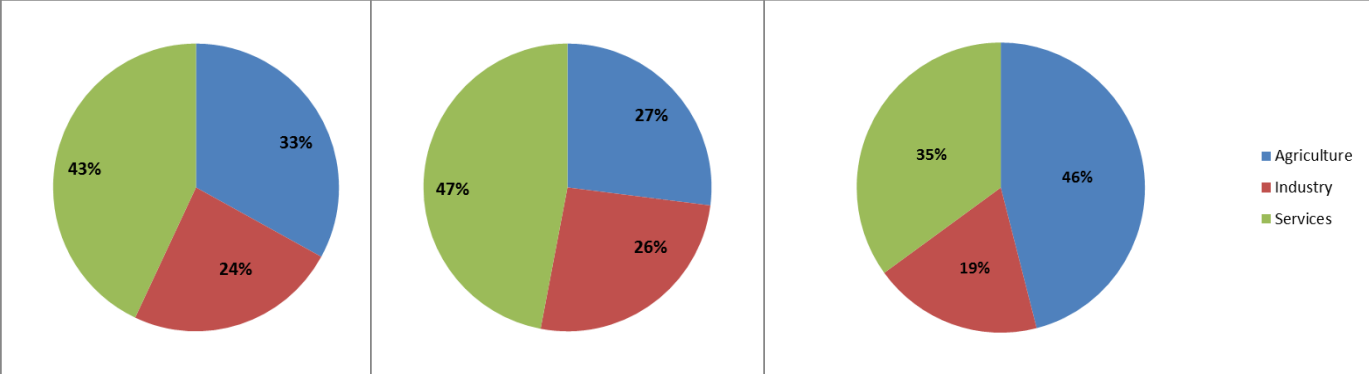
3.4.1 Division of labour throughout sectors

In the period 2011-2016, a minor shift in the employed population took place on a national level. As the World Bank (2017) signals, the economy transitions from a predominantly rural-based one, towards an urbanized economy oriented around manufacturing and services. The number of people employed in services increased from 43.0% to 46.5%, industry saw a minor rise from 24.0% to 26.4% and agriculture fell from 33.1% to 27.1% (see Graph 1). On a national level, the service industry is the most important employing sector. In North Central Province, agriculture remains the most important employer however. Here 45.7% of the population finds employment in this economic sector, 35.1% in the services and 19.2% in industry. This makes North Central

Province the second most reliant province on agriculture, with the second lowest percentage employed in the services and industrial sector.³ The region is thus lagging behind national trends.

Graph 1: Sector employment on a national level & North Central Province as of 2016 (Source: Department of Census and Statistics Sri Lanka (2017) Economic Statistics of Sri Lanka 2017)

From left to right: Sri Lanka total 2011, Sri Lanka total 2016, North Central division 2016.



3.4.2. Unemployment

When looking at the national statistics for employment, in 2011-2016 the unemployment rate stayed between 4 -5% (Department of Statistics Sri Lanka, 2017). In Polonnaruwa, the unemployment rate was 2.5% as of 2016, though the Department of Census and Statistics mentions that these numbers are to be treated with caution.⁴ Unemployment at the national level is highest in the age group 15-24, and steadily declines over the groups 25-29, 30-39 and eventually reaches an average of below 1% in the age group of Over 40, which is an interesting trend. However, it seems that this is the result of the usage of these rather arbitrary age group divisions. Youth unemployment has been steadily on the rise, since the unemployment rate in the age group of 15-24 grew from 17.2% in 2011 to 21.6% in 2016. When divided towards male unemployment in this age group grew from 12.8% towards 17.1%, whereas female unemployment in this group grew from 25.0% to 29.2%, which means that almost 1 in 3 Sri Lankan women of this age are not employed.

Another interesting finding of the unemployment statistics is that less than 1% of those that did not, or only finished the Sri Lankan primary education (which lasts 5 years) are unemployed (Department of Statistics Sri Lanka, 2017). That percentage rises to between 3-4% for those that finished secondary junior education or fell out after finishing primary school, towards 6% for those that finished senior secondary education. Those that finished the collegiate (the highest level of secondary education) have an unemployment rate of 8-10%. At first glance, this suggests that the longer one is educated, the less probable it gets that this person will be employed. This is explained by the fact that probably most of the Sri Lankan youth that does not continue education, do so because they are obliged to work since their family’s income is not sufficient to maintain their children enrolled in school. Furthermore, the unemployment statistics start from age 15 and up, which means that those in the final years of senior secondary education are unemployed, as well as those in the collegiate, since they are still enrolled in school. Hence the risen unemployment rate in the age group 15-24 could indicate that those belonging in this age group are longer enrolled in secondary education.

³ After Uva, where the agricultural sector employs 54.3% of the population, 33.8% works in the services and 11.9% in industry.

⁴ The coefficient of variation values are high, which signals inconsistency in the sample group, thus not properly reflecting the investigated population.

3.4.3 Poverty

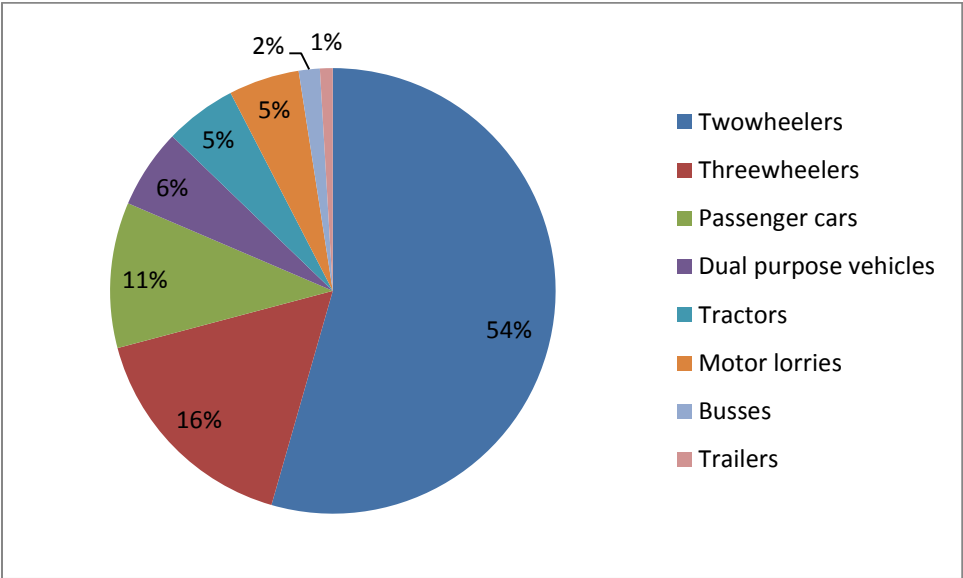
When looking at poverty according to national standards, 4.1% of the population of Sri Lanka lived below the poverty line. North Central Province is below the national average with 3.3%. The provinces with most poverty are Northern, Eastern, Uva and Sabaragamuwa, which ranges between 6-8% of the population and least in Western Province with 1.7%. When looking at absolute numbers, it is estimated that North Central Province is the province with the least poor persons with an amount of 42.000. In the district of Polonnaruwa, it is estimated that 1.7% of the households are poor. Vulnerable groups in this region are mostly farmers and fishermen.

It remains questionable how reliable these statistics are. The numbers of the Department of Census and Statistics Sri Lanka (2017) heavily contrast those of Kottegoda (et. al. 2009) who signal that between 24.1 and 22.1 % of the population lived below the poverty line in 2004-2005. Besides this, the national poverty line was set at (according to the province) 4.000-5.000 SLR per month per person. Respondents of this research found that for a decent living for one person, one would monthly need 17.500 - 30.000 SLR.⁵

3.4.4 Automotive sector

As Graph 1 points out, the economy of North Central Province still largely depends on agriculture, lagging behind in the national transition from a rural-based economy towards an urbanized one oriented around manufacturing and services. The automotive sector can be one of the main sectors for the switch to take place since the vehicle population is rising sharply in recent years. In 2016 the national vehicle population topped 6.8 million, a 40% increase from 4.8 million vehicles in 2012 (Ministry of Transport & Civil Aviation, 2018). Out of this 6.8 million vehicles, more than half (54%) were twowheelers, 16% threewheelers and 11% passenger cars (Ceylon Chamber of Commerce, 2017). The Sri Lankan automotive sector is thus predominantly shaped by the two-wheeler market (see Graph 2 for a visualization). The growth in personal vehicles was bigger than that of other use vehicles, such as buses, tractors and lorries. As of 2018 on a monthly basis approximately 30.000 new motorcycles are being registered in Sri Lanka, 5.000 passenger cars and 1.500 threewheelers (Daily Mirror, 2018).

Graph 2: Vehicle type by share national vehicle population Sri Lanka 2016 (Source: Ministry of Transport & Civil Aviation)



⁵ For presentation of this data, direct to Figure 3. For conversion of SLR to EUR, direct to Appendix 6.

3.4.4.1 Automotive brands

Statistics on the market shares of automotive companies are lacking. In general, most vehicles are imported from neighboring India, since Sri Lanka has a weak national industry considering vehicle production. The country has two relevant automotive companies, which are Micro Cars (which assembles passenger cars with imported parts) and GRI Tires. Important Indian brands are TVS & Bajaj for two-wheelers and three-wheelers, CEAT for tires, Maruti Suzuki & Mahindra for passenger cars, and TATA & Ashok Leyland for heavier vehicles. Besides the Indian brands, Japanese vehicles make up a large share of the vehicle population with brands such as Yamaha and Honda for two-wheelers, and Toyota and Nissan considering passenger cars. The pre-owned market is especially big with Japanese brands, since they have a long life-span. As a result, there are a lot of reconditioned Japanese vehicles in the Sri Lankan vehicle population. Other important automotive brands in the Sri Lankan market are Korean KIA and Hyundai, French Renault and Malaysian Perodua for passenger cars, as well as Italian Piaggio for three-wheelers (Carmudi, 2016). Exact statistics on the market shares of these brands lack however.

3.4.4.2 Employment opportunities automotive sector

Since Sri Lanka has rather high import rates, a lively trade in pre-owned vehicles is in place. The same can be said considering workshops since they are a better alternative to turn when a vehicle is not functioning properly instead of buying a new vehicle. This makes the automotive business more labour intensive. As a result around 60,000 persons were employed as a vehicle mechanic in Sri Lanka as of 2012 (ILO, 2015). An estimated 2000-2500 mechanics are needed in the automotive sector on a yearly basis for the years 2014-2018. Further employment can be found in the manufacturing of car parts, paint shops, petrol stations, etc. Besides this growth in vehicles and demand for technically skilled workers in the industry, the automotive industry is of importance to rural areas, since it forms its prime connection with the rest of the country. Through motorized vehicles, the agricultural produce is brought to bigger markets. In the district of Polonnaruwa, it is thus expected that there is a lively sector in place, with a lot of growth potential.

3.5 Sri Lanka's National Education System

In order to better position the needs and demands considering education, it is key to have basic knowledge of Sri Lanka's national education system. State education is theoretically free in Sri Lanka. The system is divided into five different parts, summarized in Table 2 (see next page). Primary school enrollment starts at the age of 5, and at the age of 10 one starts to attend junior secondary school until becoming 14 years old of age. This is the compulsory level of schooling. From age 14 until 16, senior secondary school is attended. At the end of the last year, the General Certificate of Education Ordinary Level (GCE O-level) examination takes place. The state recommends this as the minimum level of schooling. Passing the test allows entry into the final stage of secondary education, the Collegiate, which lasts roughly from age 16 until 19. In the final year, the GCE A-level examination takes place. The best scoring 10% of students are allowed enrollment into state universities. For those that do not belong to this best 10%, alternatives to tertiary education are found in vocational education and private education.

Table 2: Sri Lanka's National Education System (Source: UNESCO Institute for Statistics)

Phase	Name	Grade	Ages	Extra
1	Primary	1-5	5-10	
2	Junior secondary	6-9	10-14	Schooling is compulsory up until this level
3	Senior secondary	10-11	14-16	The advised minimum level of schooling by the Ministry of Education. At the end of Grade 11, the General Certificate of Education Ordinary Level (GCE O-level) Examination takes place. Passing allows entry to the Collegiate
4	Collegiate	12-13	16-19	Highest level of secondary schooling. In the final year, the General Certificate of Education Advanced Level (GCE A-level) examination takes place. Students belonging to the best 10% are allowed to enter university
5A	University	-	19+	Notoriously competitive, only accessible for 10% of all GCE A-graduates
5B	Vocational	-	16+	Alternative to the state universities. Vocational education focusses on direct training for a certain trade
5C	Private		16+	Offering both vocational and academic courses. Popular option for those that have more money to invest in education

3.5.1 University education

Sri Lanka's academic system is rather centralized. All big universities are run by the state, though smaller private universities exist. The academic sector faces the major challenge to broaden access to higher education opportunities (Knight, 2013). At this moment, access is limited to the 30.000 best ranking students of the 330.000 students that every year finish the GCE A-level (the last year of high school). As a result, education possibilities for most are limited after secondary education since only 1/10 can go to state universities. Consequently, most of the Sri Lankan workforce enter the labour market with no extra education after secondary education (ILO, 2015).

Gunawardena (2017), himself a professor, notes that in order for Sri Lanka to convert itself into a knowledge economy, a solid academic system is needed. In 1997 the Presidential Task Force noted five points to improve, such as the expansion of facilities lagging behind the increase in enrolments, the debilitating effect of the withdrawal of English as the medium of instruction and the lack of an academically stimulating environment (Gunawardena, 2017). The World Bank noted in 2009 that the higher education sector will need to be dramatically strengthened in order to lead to the development of Sri Lanka as a Middle Income Country (Gunawardena, 2017). From the general review, one can signal that the best scoring universities are situated in the Western & Southern Provinces of the country, whereas the worst scoring are situated in the country's East Side. This matches the economic disparities between these regions as well, with the North & East seriously and increasingly lagging behind on the Western & Southern Provinces.

3.5.2 Vocational Training

In order to provide more education when entering the labour market (besides secondary education), there is a broad state provision of TVET opportunities (Allais, 2017). The main supplier is the Vocational Training Authority (VTA) of Sri Lanka. The VTA offers 253 distinct courses for national certificates, ranging in duration from 3 months up to 18 months, with the largest share of the courses offered lasting 6 or 9 months. The entry

qualifications range between finishing grade 9 (that is junior secondary) to passing (some) subjects of the GCE O-level test. A few courses require having passed the GCE A-level test satisfactory. See Table 2 above on National Education System for references.

Hence those eligible for entry in Sri Lanka's National Vocational Training are at least 14 years old and have finished junior secondary. Almost all of the courses are taught in Sinhala, except for two in Tamil and ten in English. This relative 'absence' of English courses in the curriculum relates to the earlier point made by Gunawardena (2017) on higher education, as does the absence in Tamil. However, in the case of education, it might be more practical to have the courses in Sinhala since this is spoken by the largest share of the population. The Vocational Training Authority notes on their website, that since entering the State Universities is that competitive, they recommend most of the Sri Lankans to follow a Vocational Training.⁶ After successfully following a course at the Vocational Training Authority, the student receives a National Vocational Qualification certificate.

3.6 Suicide

As of 2017, Sri Lanka had the highest national suicide rates worldwide. Suicide was high amongst the male population (World Health Organization, 2015) and as Abeyasinghe (et. al. 2008) show, especially amongst rural males. Amongst females, rates were highest among younger age groups. One of the main methods to commit suicide is through self-poisoning with pesticides, followed by poisoning by alcohol consumption. Interestingly, De Silva (et. al. 2009) note that alcohol consumption in rural areas is lower than in urban areas. Though these studies delve deeper into technicalities on how to prevent suicides, they interestingly do not delve further into the causes for suicides.

An older study of Kearny & Miller (1985) does look a bit deeper into the causes of suicide. Focusing on suicides between 1950 and 1974 (when the amount tripled), they noted that suicide was especially high amongst young unemployed male adults (aged 15-29). The shift in career aspirations and growth in educational opportunities, combined with the high unemployment rates may be the leading cause. Besides this, these decades were also a period of high internal migration, in which inhabitants of the densely populated Southwestern part moved towards the renewed irrigated 'Dry Zone', which encompasses the northern and eastern parts of the island. The combination of these somber landscapes in combination with isolation from one's social network (and wife) in the natal village, could be a plausible cause as well for the upward spiral of suicides. Polonnaruwa, receiving a lot of migrants in this period, sported the third highest rate, after the Northern provinces of Jaffna & Vavuniya. They conclude that in general the high suicide rates were caused by societal change, or what they call the 'dislocation of the stable and certain agrarian village society'. In this way, they link their own theory to that of another famous suicide researcher, Emile Durkheim.

3.7 Ethnic tension

The 26-year civil war in Sri Lanka that ended in 2009 was mainly fought along ethnic lines. Nowadays the country is still segregated, with neighborhoods and schools belonging mainly to one ethnic group (Gunasekara, 2018). Orjuela (et. al, 2016) argue that it was not inter-ethnic local relations that sparked the war, but the relations between the state and minority groups. Nowadays, most practices of corruption are interpreted as manifestations of ethnic discrimination. Polonnaruwa district and surrounding areas were known as 'border areas' during the war; ethnically mixed and under government control, but with a close presence of the LTTE (Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam) (Orjuela et. al., 2016). The population experienced a lot of violence and insecurity in this region. LTTE fighters would attack villages, killing the Sinhala population, after which the Tamil villagers would flee, in fear of retaliation. This led to ethnic segregation in the district. Table 3 reflects the segregation: in present statistics on ethnic composition, Tamils are underrepresented compared to national levels. The 1.2% of Tamils in Polonnaruwa district mainly live on the other side of the Mahaweli river (see Appendix 1).

⁶ <http://www.vtasl.gov.lk>, as of December 2017.

In recent years, a surge in the Moor (Muslim) population can be seen. This is partly due to natural growth, next to their ability to openly express their identity. In Polonnaruwa, the lion's share of the Moor population lives in the urban nucleus of Kaduruwela and town of Gallella, sporting eight mosques and a Muslim Central College. It is commonly understood that they should not live near the nucleus of Polonnaruwa, which is populated by Sinhalese. Though on the national level the discourse of harmony prevails, the nation still faces ethnic tension and grief (Orjuela et. al 2016). After the ending of the civil war, there is especially tension between Sinhalese and Moors. Since the Moors have higher birth rates and are prominent businessmen, they are scapegoated in Sri Lanka by representing them as a threat to Sinhala-Buddhist economic and demographic dominance (Wettimuny, 2018). The exact same threats as were perceived by the Tamil population in the '80s which eventually sparked into the Sri Lankan Civil War (Gunasekara, 2018).

In 2014 the tension erupted in anti-Muslim riots in Southern Sri Lanka, resulting in several deaths and destruction. More recently in March 2018 (when the researcher was in Sri Lanka) anti-Muslim riots erupted in Ampara and Kandy District. After the death of a Sinhalese truck driver by the hands of Muslim youths, riots broke out in Kandyian suburbs, while the alleged finding of sterilization pills in the food of a Muslim restaurant led to riots in Ampara (The Diplomat, 2018). In the 2018 riots, Sinhalese mobs attacked and raided Muslim neighborhoods, businesses and places of worship. The event gained international news coverage when the state of emergency was declared, as well as the implementation of a curfew and a 72-hour blockade of WhatsApp and Facebook on a national scale. Eventually, two were left dead, and dozens of houses, shops and vehicles raided and destroyed.

Table 3: General statistics on ethnic composition

Source: Department of Census and Statistics Sri Lanka (2017). Economic Statistics of Sri Lanka 2017.

Administrative region	% Sinhalese	% Tamil	% Moor	% Other
Sri Lanka	74.9	15.4	9.2	0.5
North Central Province	90.7	1.2	8.0	0.1
Polonnaruwa	90.6	2.1	7.2	0.1

4. Research design and methodology

With the above as the context in which the research was executed, the researcher tried to adapt the research design and methodology accordingly. This paragraph describes the process of data-gathering, which happened in three phases. Phase 1 consisted mainly out of the demarcation of the research area, creating a register of all local automotive shops and making an adequate sample. This was followed up by Phase 2, in which the sampled stores were visited and subsequently shop owners and workers were interviewed. From these interviews, several interesting themes arose to discuss with local youth, which was done through interviewing in Phase 3. This paragraph concludes with some finale remarks on limitations and risks, as well as the presentation and positionality of the researcher.

4.1 Phase 1: demarcating, mapping, and making the sample

Upon arrival in the research area, Phase 1 as planned in the research proposal started. Phase 1 meant mapping local businesses in the automotive industry through observation. The goal of this research in general, is to provide a relevant bottom-up perspective towards employment in the automotive sector in Polonnaruwa. In order to do so, a general register of all the companies in the area is needed for two reasons. Firstly it gives information on the size of the sector (amount of shops), as well as the products/vehicle types focused on, next to the type of shops around town. Secondly, when this information is gathered systematically, a general register can be made from which a sample can be derived (necessary for Phase 2; interviewing). Since information on all businesses around town is not (publicly) accessible, the register has to be made independently. The best way to do so is through observation. This compromised the first part of the data collection.

4.1.1 Demarcating the research area

Observation started after the researcher arrived at the town of Polonnaruwa. In the first week, the surroundings were scouted and the research area was demarcated. Speaking of the city of Polonnaruwa is confusing, even for its own population. The train station of Polonnaruwa is located in the urban nucleus of Kaduruwela, whereas Polonnaruwa itself is located around the junction of the highway A11 with road B259. Going down the B259 towards the South, the urbanized area is called New Town. Effectively these three urban centers together form urban Polonnaruwa. Hence in this research, the urban Polonnaruwa comprises these three urban areas (encircled in red in Appendix 1). Nearby villages (Jayanthipura, Lakshauyana, Ungalawehera and Palugasdamana) are also included in the research area since they are located within the direct service area of urban Polonnaruwa (in yellow in Appendix 1). Together with urban Polonnaruwa, they form the research area.

4.1.2 Mapping of businesses

Most businesses in Sri Lanka are located on main roads, with the backstreets having a more residential function. This is especially true for automotive enterprises since it is important to be easily reached by vehicles and also be easily visible. Hence the mapping of automotive businesses was done along the main roads of the research area by bicycle, and partly on foot (see covered roads in Appendix 2). In total, about 65 kilometers of road were scanned for automotive enterprises, ranging from dealers to oil marts and workshops to tire stores.

This method has its limitations, however. The first and foremost is that only businesses that can be seen at first sight were mapped. Enterprises that are more 'hidden' in alleyways and backstreets can be missed, as well as those not visible on the outside. Secondly, stores that are temporarily closed (for a lunch break, or one of the abundant Sri Lankan holidays) can be missed as well. Thirdly, it sometimes resulted difficult to recognize the main business of shops, such as telling a scrapyard from a secondhand-workshop. In order to minimize the effect of these limitations, side streets have also been scanned in Polonnaruwa and Kaduruwela (the only nuclei with significant commercial activities in sidestreets). Furthermore, the researcher passed multiple times by most streets, reducing the possibility of missing out on a shop due to it being closed for a short period. Thus the

number of shops and types of business found in this research should be close to the actual figures and is as comprehensive a list as was possible with the means available.

Nevertheless, in a later phase of the research, when the sample was already made, the researcher observed that there were 6 more businesses lacking in the general register. This includes 2 shops that opened up after the date of observation (the last week of February 2018). Since the interviewing (Phase 2) was already underway, these shops were not taken into account in this research. Besides this, it also became clear in the interviewing phase that what seemed to be four different shops, apparently functioned as one big multifunctional shop and one shop that appeared to be a tinker, was actually a welding company not focused on vehicles.

4.1.3 Observed variables

Relevant businesses of the automotive sector were mapped by noting down the following characteristics of Table 4, which surged after scouting.

Table 4: variables to be observed

Variable	<i>Defined by/subcategories</i>
A. Name business	Name on sign outside store. When not evident or in Sinhalese, codename given by researcher
B. Location business	Position on major route (A11, B488, B529, B552, B579, Gallambarawa Road)
C. Vehicle type focused on	Agricultural, busses, cars, pick-ups, threewheelers, trucks, twowheelers, vans, or undefined
D. Shop type	Dealer, lease, rental, selling point, service center, tires, workshop, or other
E. Shop size	Small, medium, big, extra big

Observation was mainly done by bicycle, and partly on foot. At first the variables were written down in a notebook. In a later phase it provided more easy to do make notes on the phone. This attracts less attention, and the researcher would not necessarily have to stop peddling while writing, making the process more time efficient. Eventually all the data put together in an Excel file, forming the executive summary of the automotive business in Polonnaruwa (see Appendix 3 for the anonymized version without shop names and location). A further explanation on the used variables and definition of the categories is also given in aforementioned appendix.

4.1.4. Making the sample

The total amount of shops involved in the vehicle sector were 141. Not all businesses could be visited due to time constraints. Hence 20 shops seemed a fair amount, since this would mean that 1 out of every 7 shops were to be visited. Appendix 3 served as a register for the making of a sample of 20 businesses. This sample was largely made randomly and aselect, in order to get a representative sample of the local automotive sector. The primary target of the research are workshops in which reparations and maintenance to engine driven vehicles take place since the ILO (2015) signaled this as one of the prime types of employment to absorb the workforce. Observation however led to the conclusion that besides workshops, selling points formed a major share of the total shops as well. In order to provide a representative sample the register was ordered on shop type. From this list 14 businesses were selected from the register after a random number generator provided the number of 3. Subsequently shop numbers 13, 23, etc. were selected. These 14 businesses are displayed in the first part of Table 5.

By randomly selecting the shops, some categories of shops were underrepresented. In order to compensate for this, the other 6 businesses were randomly selected within certain categories. The second part of Table 5

provides more information on the specific categories from which these other 6 businesses were selected. For example, shop 15 was selected due to the lack of medium & big sized shops considering the vehicle focus trucks, shop 20 due to the lack of small & medium tire stores, etc.

Table 5. Sample from register

Randomly selected total list⁷				
<i>Nr.</i>	<i>Vehicle focus</i>	<i>Shop type</i>	<i>Shop size</i>	
1.	Twowheelers	Dealer	Medium	
2.	Agricultural	Dealer	Big	
3.	Twowheelers	Dealer + selling point	Medium	
4.	Undefined	Selling point	Medium	
5.	Trucks	Selling point	Small	
6.	Undefined	Selling point	Small	
7.	Cars	Service point	Medium	
8.	Undefined	Tires + workshop	Big	
9.	Twowheelers	Workshop	Medium	
10.	Twowheelers	Workshop	Small	
11.	Threewheelers	Workshop	Extra big	
12.	Twowheelers	Workshop	Small	
13.	Cars	Workshop	Small	
14.	Twowheelers	Workshop	Small	
Randomly selected within specific categories				<i>Specific category</i>
15.	Trucks + busses	Workshop	Medium	Vehicle focus: trucks Shop size: medium & big
16.	Threewheelers	Workshop	Small	Vehicle focus: threewheelers Shop size: small & medium
17.	Undefined	Selling point	Medium	Shop type: selling point Shop size: medium
18.	Cars + vans	Workshop	Medium	Shop type: workshop Shop size: medium & big
19.	Twowheelers	Dealer	Medium	Vehicle focus: twowheelers Shop size: medium & big
20.	Undefined	Tires + workshop	Medium	Shop type: tires Shop size: small & medium

4.1.5 Preliminary visits to the sampled businesses

Afterwards, those businesses selected in the sample were visited for an initial chat. This served for the establishment of rapport with those to be interviewed, next to identifying where a translator is needed. In some cases, the researcher was received openly, but sometimes the lack of fluency in Sinhala complicated communication. The researcher thought this had a negative impact on the establishment of trust, and thus decided to switch to visiting all businesses straight away with a translator, and go to Phase 2.

⁷ See Appendix 3 for explanation of used definitions, as well as the complete (anonymized) register from which the sample was selected.

4.1.6 Translator

Finding a decent translator proved to be one of the more difficult parts of this research. Though Sri Lanka has experienced English colonial rule for around 200 years, the ILO (2015) estimates that about a fifth of the working population is proficient in English. This percentage is lower in rural areas. At first, the researcher turned towards academia for finding a translator. Towards this end, the researcher had intensive contact with several lecturers of the University of Colombo, the Dutch Embassy in Colombo and a Colombo-based NGO, without results. The main explanation for this failure is that A. finding translators in the academic field is generally difficult in Sri Lanka when working independently B. the (decent, though not that attractive) money the researcher could offer and C. the distance of Polonnaruwa towards Colombo and other major urban centers.

Thus the decision was made to look for a translator locally. Eventually, a suitable person was found through the researcher's own personal network in the area. The choice was made to cooperate with a 35-year old male from Polonnaruwa district, working part-time at a small local NGO. This selection was made on the two most important traits: the translator's ability to speak fluent English and Sinhala, as well as the trustworthiness of the translator. Besides this, the translator also proved to be social, communicative and was able to establish rapport quickly with all respondents. After a primary chat, the translator was prepared for the research, for which he received a brief summary of the research, as well as the questionnaire. First the research summary was discussed, afterwards the questionnaire (see Appendix 4 for the full version) to make sure that the translator fully understood the questions. Clear agreements were made on the research method, duration and payment. Though the translator had no prior experience in translating, the cooperation was very fruitful.

Having a local translator greatly helped with gaining the trust of those to be interviewed. All companies selected in the sample were willing to participate in the research. The risk of a local translator is that it could 'pollute' the data on sensitive topics, especially when the translator is acquainted with the respondents. Luckily no respondent was closely related to the translator.

4.2 Phase 2: interviewing employers and employees automotive sector

In observational Phase 1, a sample of 20 automotive business was made. In Phase 2, the shop owners and workers of automotive businesses were interviewed. For this research, the method of interviewing has been chosen over surveying, since this allows for a deeper understanding of multiple factors. For example, one's attitude towards having or not having an official certificate is better captured in an interview, than in a survey. However, this research is not focused on discourse analysis. In order to better structure the interviews, but especially to enable quantifications of answers, all questions as posed in Appendix 4 were answered. This phase was the most important one of the research since the data gathered in this phase provides an answer to the bigger part the variables in the conceptual framework as sketched in Figure 2.

4.2.1 Interviewing employers

To this extent, 20 businesses were visited, accompanied with a translator. The number of 20 arose to cover a decent amount of the 140 business in the region (that is 1 in 7), without information becoming repetitive. During the last interviews, the researcher noted that there indeed was little new information in addition to what arose from previous interviews. The focus while interviewing employers vs. employees was more on the economic conjuncture and absorption power (see Appendix 4).

Together with the translator, all sampled shops were visited during a total of 7 interview days. Upon arrival, the shop owner was sought out, informed on the research by the translator, and asked when it would be possible to have said interview. Mostly this was possible on the spot (especially at one-man enterprises), sometimes (especially in workshops and bigger companies) a later time was arranged. When the owner of a sampled business proved absent, return visits were planned and made. If the shop owner proved to be not closely involved

with the everyday running of the shop (for example several shop owners resided in other provinces, ran several businesses and were not present on weekly basis, if ever present at all), managers were interviewed. Hence in total 17 employers (14 owners and 3 managers) were interviewed in the end. The function of the employers varied between one that was only involved in sales and bookkeeping (in 3 cases) and that of an all-round (or only) employee which also involved manual labour (14 out of 17 cases).

In order to make the respondents feel more comfortable, interviews were held on their place of choice, which was (except for two cases) the own shop. As a consequence, sometimes other people were at the scene of interviewing as well. Such as an employee, a customer, or somebody passing by. Since most questions asked are not that confidential, the researcher did not ask for these people to leave. This was mostly because the respondents did not seem to mind the others around, or even seemed to like it. In hindsight, it might have been better to send other people away during the interview, since the presence of others might have influenced the answers given.

4.2.2 Selecting and interviewing the employees

In order to respect the company's hierarchy, firstly the owner (or another representative) was interviewed as described in 4.2.1. When the manager provided to be absent in said cases, the highest ranking employees were interviewed, which happened on 3 occasions. After all 20 shops had been visited and the owner (or representative) was interviewed, a sample could be made out of those companies that have more than one employee, since question nr. 16 (How many employees has the enterprise got? as in Appendix 4) provides this data. These companies are shown in Table 6 (see next page).

In this research the number of employees to be interviewed was initially put on 10, to see if the saturation point was reached. From a random number generator the following numbers appeared after giving the range 1-14: 2, 4, 6, 6, 7, 8, 10, 12, 13, 14.⁸ After data collection, the researcher double checked if more interviews would be desirable. Hence an extra number was drawn, which put the total numbers of interviewed employees on 14 (when put together with the 3 highest-ranking employees). After conducting the interview, the research concluded that the final interviews did not add much, and the point of saturation was indeed reached.

Those selected are marked with an asterisk in Table 6. Lacking the employee registers of the companies, the shop owner/manager would appoint an employee for the interview. These were mostly senior employees. In order to balance this out, the researcher requested on several occasions for the most junior employee. Eventually, the researcher spoke with a senior mechanic, junior mechanic, senior service mechanic, service helper, mechanical manager, sales representative, AC-mechanic, painter, tinker, executive officer and two tire changers. The focus while interviewing employees vs. employers was more on the working conditions, aspirations and attitudes towards migration (see Appendix 4).

⁸ For the sake of readability these numbers have been put in chronological order. The 11th number drawn was 2.

Table 6: Companies selected for interviewing employees

Randomly selected total list ⁹						
<i>Nr.</i> ¹⁰	<i>Nr.</i> ¹¹	<i>Vehicle focus</i>	<i>Shop type</i>	<i>Shop size</i>	<i>Employees</i>	
1.	1.	Twowheelers	Dealer	Medium	2	
2.**	2.	Agricultural	Dealer	Big	13	
3.	6.	Undefined	Selling point	Small	2	
4.*	7.	Cars	Service point	Medium	9	
5.	8.	Undefined	Tires + workshop	Big	5	
6.**	9.	Twowheelers	Workshop	Medium	8	
7.*	11.	Threewheelers	Workshop	Extra big	15	
8.*	12.	Twowheelers	Workshop	Small	4	
9.	13.	Cars	Workshop	Small	3	
Randomly selected within specific categories						<i>Specific category</i>
10.*	15.	Trucks + busses	Workshop	Medium	8	Vehicle focus: trucks Shop size: medium & big
11.	17.	Undefined	Selling point	Medium	3	Shop type: selling point Shop size: medium
12.*	18.	Cars + vans	Workshop	Medium	8	Shop type: workshop Shop size: medium & big
13.*	19.	Twowheelers	Dealer	Medium	10	Vehicle focus: twowheelers Shop size: medium & big
14.*	20.	Undefined	Tires + workshop	Medium	4	Shop type: tires Shop size: small & medium

4.2.3 Processing the data

The interviews generally lasted between 40 minutes and 100 minutes, during which notes were taken by the researcher. These notes form the collected data and basis of chapters 6, 7, 8, 9 & 10. At the end of each interview day, these notes were written out for the richer information in separate text documents. Quotes were written down as literally as possible. These text documents were afterwards put into a spreadsheet for one general overview of all answers on the same questions. This enables quantification of the answers since it allows for statements like: “X out of 30 respondents’ find that ‘Y’ (from the spreadsheet), for which they mention causes A & B (from the text documents containing the rich information)”.

This allows for an impression of the variables as mentioned in Figure 2 and how they shape the supply and demand for employment in the vehicle business in Polonnaruwa.

4.3 Phase 3: interviewing youth

After processing all the data from Phase 2, it became clear that more employees are needed in the automotive sector, especially considering manual labour. Furthermore, the workers signaled that the sector somehow fails to attract youth, for which they gave several reasons. It was thus interesting to also speak with the supply side of the labour market, and discuss these topics with youth. Hence in Phase 3 youth in the area of Polonnaruwa were interviewed. Young men were chosen since it became apparent in Phase 2 that (almost) exclusively men work in

⁹ See Appendix 3 for explanation of used definitions, as well as the complete (anonimized) register from which the sample was selected.

¹⁰ New number for Table 6

¹¹ As in originally Table 5

the sector. More specifically young men from fishing and farming communities around Polonnaruwa. For this end, the villages of Kalahagala, Bendiwewa and Ungalawahera were chosen (see Appendix 1 for location).

For three reasons this specific group was chosen. Firstly because they are one of the most vulnerable groups in society. Making a decent income as a fisherman is difficult, and can be heavily volatile (depending on the day's catch). Considering agriculture in Polonnaruwa, harvests have been meagre in the last years. A second reason is that there will be a surplus of labour from these villages. The carrying capacity of the number of fishermen that can gain a reasonable income from the lake is being met. If there's theoretically speaking 100 kg of fish to be caught a day, 4 fishermen can each have 25 kilograms, but if the sons of these fishermen (say 6 in total) will do the same employment, each of the now 10 fishermen will only have 10 kilograms. The same example goes for the cultivation of land. Thus there will a surplus of labour, and new generations will need to be accommodated elsewhere on the labour market. A third reason which especially goes for fishermen is that they are of a low social status. This is because they are employed in killing animals, which goes against the beliefs of the Buddhist majority in the country (who afterwards do not seem to have issues eating the fish). As a result, their communities are relatively isolated from the rest of society, and thus have more difficulties to find help from authorities and institutions.

Next to putting the hypotheses around working as a manual labourer in the automotive sector to the test, this part of the research will help to achieve a deeper understanding of general aspirations in working life of local youth. What work do they want to do? Where? How much money do they wish to earn? And how much is needed for a decent living? What are their views on tertiary education? Besides these major questions, general background information such as followed education and parental employment will be asked.

4.3.1 Making the sample

To create a good view on the supply side of the labour market, 20 male respondents in the age of 18-30 were interviewed. The choice was made for male respondents since out of the 31 workers interviewed, 30 were male. One respondent remarked that lately it is not uncommon to see girls following technical education. But in general, the automotive sector remains a male business. For these interviews, the researcher cooperated with the NGO Meridiya Organization. This is a small NGO (3 full-time employees) that has been active in Polonnaruwa's fishing and farming communities for several decades. Their prime focus is youth empowerment through education (for which they organize weekly meetings, special training days on themes such as leadership, sponsor educational expenses, etc.) income diversification (providing microcredits, or vocational training) and community building (organizing communal events, helping the elderly, building/repairing houses, etc.).

Cooperating with said NGO had the advantage that it enabled access to the more isolated fishing communities, as well as that the respondents had more trust since they already knew the NGO. A disadvantage was that the researcher was dependent on the NGO for the selection of respondents. The communities were visited on five different days in the late afternoon and evening. This time was chosen Upon arrival in the villages, the translator would ask around to see which young men were present and available for an interview. Afterwards, these youths were interviewed in community center houses.

4.4 Limitations and risks research

4.4.1 Limitation: language barrier & translator

The biggest issue that the researcher encountered was the language barrier. In the research area, Sinhala was the most common spoken language. The researcher studied hard to learn the basics, which helped with establishing rapport. However, it was evident from the start that a translator was necessary in order to do good research. The translator that was found in the research was the best possible option, but also limited in his abilities. Some terms are difficult to translate from English to Sinhala (and vice versa) since they do not literally translate, as the

languages are rather far apart from each other. For this matter, it was necessary to pose questions as simple as possible, through which it also lost the ability for more nuanced, complex answers.

4.4.2 Risk: illegality research

At first, the researcher was rather nervous about doing fieldwork in Sri Lanka. It proved impossible to get the necessary legal documents in order to do research. The Sri Lankan embassy in The Hague made it very clear that interviewing anyone without possessing an official permit, is prohibited. Their policies seem to be more focused on preventing foreign intermingling in ethnic struggles or other subversive activities. Research into employment in the automotive sector in Polonnaruwa has got little to do with this of course. Nevertheless, it was expected that dealing with authorities Polonnaruwa could prove troublesome. It is a small town, where foreigners normally do not stay longer than one, or two nights. Since the VTC-project is in an advanced stage, officials might be suspicious of foreigners nosing around and asking questions. Luckily no problems were encountered. But the feeling of 'illegality' stuck throughout the fieldwork, and did not feel like the right base for decent research.

4.5 Presentation and positionality

4.5.1 Presentation

The researcher first established rapport with the local population in order to feel at ease and get used to speaking with Sri Lankans. It seemed in the researcher's best interest to refrain from interviewing until a later stage in the research when the right targets had been identified. As expected, this was roughly one month after arrival. The Dutch company in charge of the eventual construction and implementation of the center made it clear that they preferred that the researcher refrained from speaking with any authorities since it might cause confusion in the process. Hence when interviewing, the planned VTC was never mentioned directly. The researcher presented himself as a graduating master student, who is interested in the local automotive business, especially on the themes of employment. Most of the times, the translator would provide the interviewees with this introduction. When this was not the case, the researcher was often mistaken for a lost tourist.

4.5.2 Positionality

In general, the researcher kept in mind that the local population was probably not used to treating with strangers on the level of an interview. Polonnaruwa has a major historical heritage site, which attracts foreign tourists, thus the mere sight of an outsider was not new for most of the respondents. Nevertheless, in the field it was noted that it was difficult to find common ground with the local population because of the different cultural backgrounds. The researcher is from a Western background, highly valuing equality, education and empowerment of those less well off. This clashed with Sri Lankan ideas about (acceptance of) differences between social classes, the relative inaccessibility of good quality education, as well as the general functioning of the Sri Lankan state. Another serious point of awareness is that nation-building plays a crucial role in Sri Lanka. It has only been seventy years since the country became a sovereign state. Discourses of universities and government officials are filled with notions in the tendency of 'we Sri Lankans need to move forward and develop, but not through the Western way'. This reflects a certain dependencia-style of thinking. It also signals that foreigners are to be treated with caution as they cannot be trusted completely.

Besides these points, the researcher considers himself largely unreligious, whereas (Buddhist) faith plays a pivotal role in Polonnaruwa's daily life. One of the consequences of the influence of Buddhism in daily life is that the harmony is to be maintained at all times. This has several upsides, such as being gentle towards others and speaking softly in public, but also downsides, such as that people do not really speak their minds, especially when it comes to negative points. Taking this into account, the researcher was cautious at all times to not insult people, make them (very) uncomfortable or be rude. For this matter it was also important to always wear representable clothes (long trousers and shirts with sleeves at any temperature) while interviewing.

5. Ethical review

Considering the access to participants / participant recruitment, the researcher found it very important to select these participants in a random way. If the randomly selected respondents did not want to be part of the research, even after the establishment of rapport, this decision was respected at all times. This was only the case in two shops, where the shop owners were not prepared to have an interview.

All that were to be interviewed, were given a brief explanation in Sinhala by the translator and asked for their explicit permission to use the interview for this research, upon which all agreed. Besides this, it was also very important to 'protect' the participants from eventual negative effects of participation. Thus the results will not be shared with any party, unless in a highly anonymized way (removing age, gender, date, address, etc.) so that no respondent is to be traceable for third parties. In this research, none of the respondents will be mentioned by name. Only age and profession are mentioned to secure anonymity. The same goes for the shops that were visited; none are mentioned by name. All respondents and shops received code numbers in this research, which correspond with actual names in the general registers.

Results and (some) data are shared in anonymous fashion with the university and fellow students for peer reviewing, and afterwards with broader academia. Parties that helped the researcher execute the actual research will receive general findings and data of the research in similar fashion. Parties such as the RVO and the CEPA in Colombo will/did receive (some) of the research findings. Data/information/findings that will be/were shared with these parties, are/were looked at critically.

Furthermore, there are different powers at play in this research, with different interests.

1. The Sri Lankan government who pushes their agenda for development
2. Dutch business who want to tap into Dutch development funds
3. The RVO who wants to produce good and relevant projects with Dutch development funds
4. Respondents, each with their own respective agenda

It is a fine balancing line between these major powers. The researcher spoke with the Dutch enterprise involved in the construction of the planned VTC. The company worried about the researcher contacting local governments (since this might cause confusion in the implementation of the project) which was not done, though they might have been interesting informants for the research. This partly influenced the eventual decision for a complete bottom-up approach. The researcher was too cautious not to step (too much) on anyone's toes in the process. Hence no government officials were contacted in the field, and information on the planned VTC was handled discretely.

The most dubious point of discussion considering ethics in this research remains the question of the visa. During a visit to the Sri Lankan embassy in the Hague, the researcher was advised not to take a 90-day tourist visa since the travel purpose was not just holidays and it is prohibited to interview other persons on a tourist visa. The current research is thus not in line with Sri Lankan national regulations, which the researcher regrets. On the other hand, there is no clear legislation on what to do with independent master students since the only available visa-categories are those of exchange student, volunteer, professional or tourist. Having a tourist visa seemed to be the least evil. Especially since the former three involved a lengthy bureaucratic process (including the collection of a serious amount of documents, involving recommendation letters of Sri Lankan Ministries) and are meant for 12 month-periods. The government officials at the Department of Immigration and Emigration in Colombo luckily did not really seem to care about travel purposes, as long as the due amount for prolonging the tourist visa was paid.

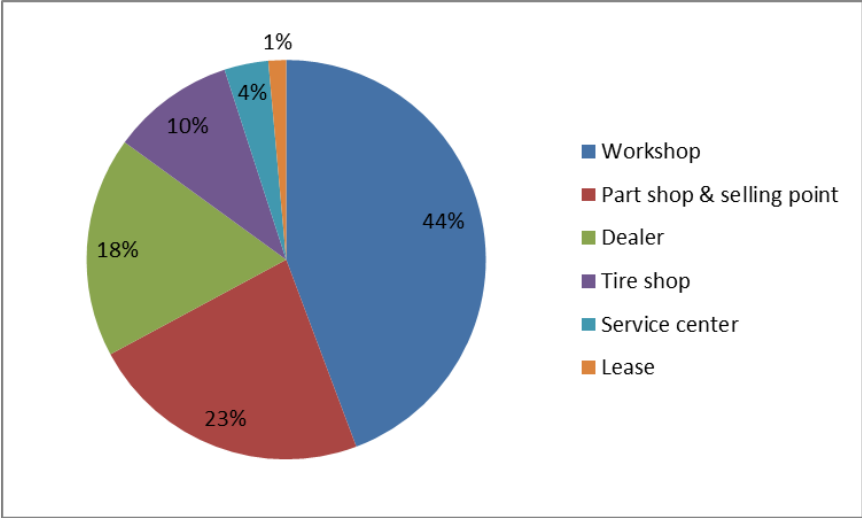
6. Automotive sector Polonnaruwa

This chapter starts off with a descriptive paragraph to provide data on the vehicle business in the locality of Polonnaruwa town considering shop types, vehicle focus and shop sizes. After presenting the general data, an answer will be given to the question how the sector is thriving, as well as the absorption power of the sector. Considering the general data part, observation is the prime data source. In the second part, the used data used is mostly from interviews, in order to provide a bottom-up approach to the matter. When appropriate this data is supplemented with official statistics.

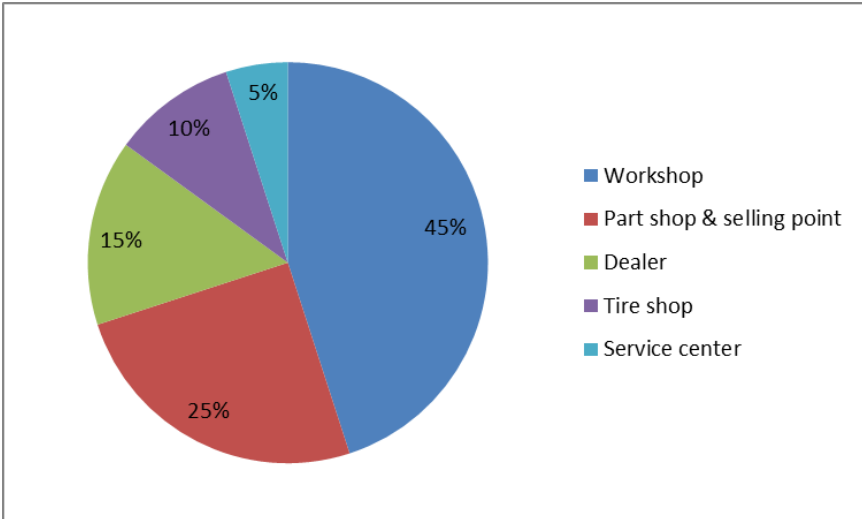
6.1. General numbers: shop type

Following field observation, around 140 businesses involved with engine driven vehicles in Polonnaruwa were observed and 20 were visited. The main shop types were by order of total shops; workshops (62), part shops & selling points (32), dealers (25), tire shops (14), service centers (5) and lease companies (2). See Graph 3 for a visualization and Appendix 3 for used definitions. The shops visited by the researcher were by order of total shops; workshops (9), part shops & selling points (5), dealer (3), tire shops (2), and a service center (1), which is visualized in Graph 4. Eventually during the interviewing phase it appeared that sometimes borders between these shop types are not that strict, hence a single company could sell vehicles, spare parts, and have a workshop on the side in which repairs and service take place. When this was the case, the employer or employee interviewed were specifically asked for the activities for which the shop was selected (without losing out on important general information). When comparing Graphs 6.A & 6.B, they fairly resemble one another.

Graph 3: Observed shops in vehicle business Polonnaruwa February 2018 (n=141)



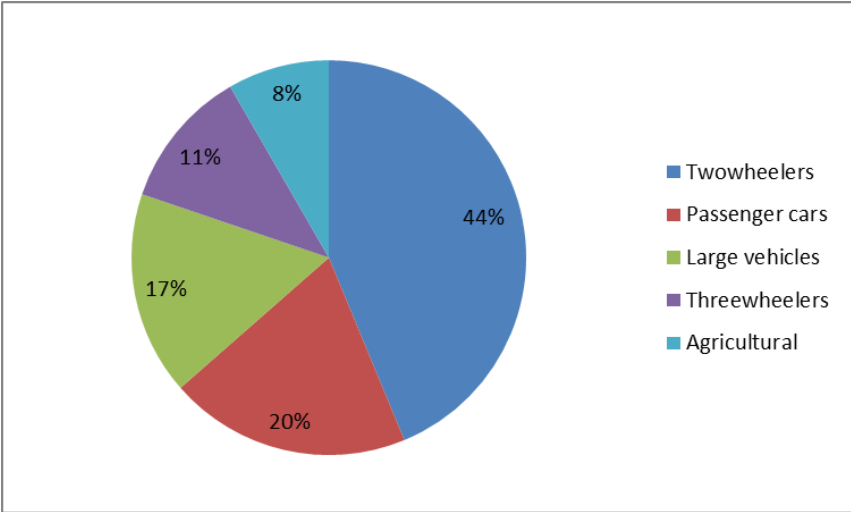
Graph 4: Visited shops in vehicle business Polonnaruwa March 2018 (n=20)



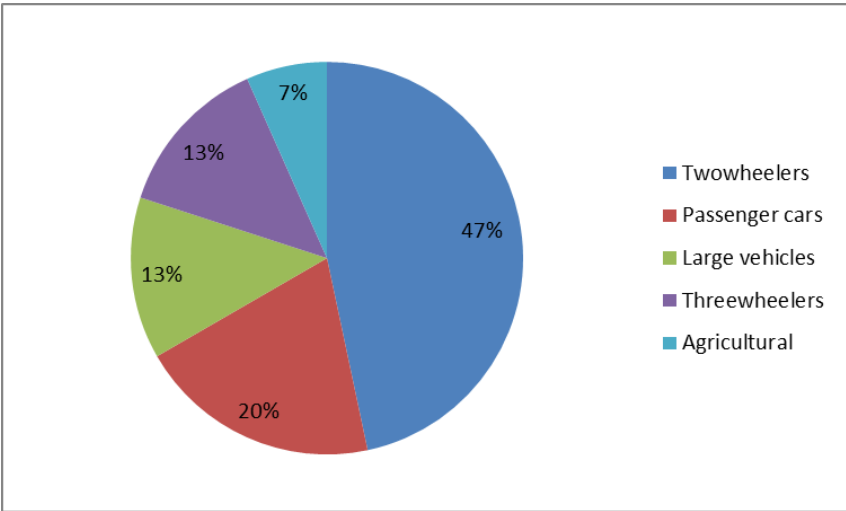
6.2 General numbers: vehicle type

As shown in Graph 2 the national vehicle population of Sri Lanka is mostly made up out of twowheelers, followed by threewheelers and passenger cars. This is also reflected in the vehicle focus of shops in Polonnaruwa. Out of the 140 businesses, 96 had a specific vehicle focus (see Appendix 3 for used definitions). Most shops specialized in twowheelers (42), passenger cars (19), large vehicles¹² (16), threewheelers (11), agricultural vehicles (8), see Graph 5 for a visualization. When compared to the national vehicle population, there is a bigger share of agricultural vehicles, large vehicles and passenger cars in Polonnaruwa. This difference can be mainly explained by the fact that agriculture makes up an important part of the local economy (demonstrated in Graph 1) for which agricultural vehicles, as well as large vehicles such as lorries are important. Out of the 20 shops visited, 15 had a specific vehicle type focus; twowheelers (7), passenger cars (3), large vehicles (2), threewheelers (2) & agricultural (1). As shown in Graph 6, the visited shops fairly reflect the observed shops.

Graph 5: Vehicle focus observed shops Polonnaruwa February 2018 (n=141)



Graph 6: Vehicle focus visited shops Polonnaruwa March 2018 (n=20)



¹² All vehicles exceeding the size of a passenger car, such as vans, busses, lorries, etc. except agricultural vehicles.

6.3 General numbers: shops & size

An interesting characteristic of the shops observed is that most appeared to be rather small, with a relative absence of larger companies in the area. In the final register, 70 shops were labeled as small, 55 medium and 16 big or extra big. This was eventually reflected in the number of employees in the shops that were visited. A lot of shops are one-man enterprises (7), and half of the businesses do not employ more than 3 employees (see Table 7). There is a relative absence of bigger companies, thus the highest amount of employees in all shops visited was 15. From the interviews, it arose that most of the current employees in the automotive sector, would like to have an own business. Answering the question “Where do you want to be in 5/10 years?”, 7 respondents indicated that they wanted an own business.

The main reason for starting an own shop is payment. For example, at one workshop the daily turnover would be around 10.000-15.000 rupees, whereas the salary for a senior employee would amount only 1.000 rupees per day.¹³ At another workshop, the turnover was estimated at 11.000 on a daily basis, and salary would amount to 1.200 per day for a senior worker. As a senior workshop owner noted: “I train them, and afterwards they start their own shop when they want to make more money.” Another workshop owner claimed to have trained about 20 individuals which afterwards started their own shop, another one a number of more than 10. Besides this, a second reason is the fact that being an own boss goes hand in hand with more freedom, which is mentioned several times by employers as one of the reasons why they like their work. A third more implicit reason is the social status. As Chea & Huijsmans (2018) noted, having an own business is key in becoming someone. In Sri Lankan society, having an own business is important in for example finding a suitable party to marry, given the fact that most wedding ads would mention having own businesses.

Table 7: frequency amount of employees amongst visited shops

Size	<i>Small</i>	<i>Medium</i>	<i>Big</i>	Total
Observed	70	55	16	141
Amount of employees	1-3	4-9	10 or more	-
Visited	10	7	3	20
Average employees per shop	1.5	6.7	12.7	-
Estimated amount of employees	105	369	203	677

In order to be able to have a rough estimate of the amount of people that are working in the automotive industry in Polonnaruwa, the average employees of small, medium and big shops visited by the researcher could be multiplied by the number of observed shops. This would lead to a total amount of 677. Given the fact that (as mentioned in 4.1) around half a dozen of shops were missing in the final register, the estimated amount of persons working in the automotive business in Polonnaruwa town would be closer to 700.

6.3.1 Types of workshops: regular & official

One thing that struck is the wide variety of shops that exist. Some businesses have got an office, air conditioning, a help that serves tea and English speaking staff, others look like sheds that for the occasion have been decorated as a workshop. In general this seems to be the difference between a shop from which one owns the ground, versus temporarily rented spaces. Some shops are single-spaced one-man workshops (see Image 5), others have got separate sections for the workshop, maintenance, sales, spare parts, administration and management. These differences have also got to do with size however. The most important difference in the types of workshops is that between regular workshops, and official brand workshops.

The main difference between regular workshops and official brand workshops is that regular workshops handle any brand, and official brand workshops confine themselves to one brand (on special occasions several). So a

¹³ See Appendix 6 for a table of values of Sri Lankan Rupees vis-a-vis Euros.

regular workshop could handle motorcycles from the brands of Bajaj, TVS, Honda and Yamaha, whereas an official brand workshop would just work with one of the brands. Besides this, official brand shops have to abide strict company rules, whereas regular workshops are more flexible. This considers standards on safety, quality, prices, shop itinerary, as well as educational requirements. Official businesses require certificates of relevant tertiary education, whereas in regular workshops this is not necessarily the case. As a result, regular workshops are more dependent on the own personal network for employees, which are mostly relatives and relations, whereas the staff in official stores are largely independent of these kinds of networks. A difference in price also surges from this ‘professionalization’, as brand stores in general are (a lot) more expensive than regular workshops. A final difference between official and regular workshops, is that the management is clearly separated from the work floor in an official store. In regular workshops, these differences are a lot more blurred.

Respondents found that in the last years, official brand stores are overtaking regular stores. According to several respondents, this is caused by the fact that when one buys for example a new Bajaj motorcycle, maintenance and repairs can only be done by official Bajaj-workshops. If the motorcycle owner decides to go to another workshop, the warranty on the vehicle is void. Furthermore, official brand stores have easier access to capital to invest in their stores, due to their linkage to the big vehicle brands.

Table 8: Difference between official and regular workshops summarized

	Official	Regular
<i>Brands</i>	One/several	Various
<i>Standards</i>	Abide strict company rules	Flexible
<i>Required education</i>	Relevant education required	No educational requirements
<i>Staff</i>	More independent of personal network	Dependent on personal network
<i>Price</i>	More expensive	Cheaper
<i>Management</i>	Separated from work floor	No clear separation management and work floor

Image 5: Example of a regular single-spaced one-man workshop (photo by author)



6.4 Economical conjuncture

In order for the automotive sector to be a source of decent employment, it is important that the sector is thriving. If business is not going well and is declining, it is unlikely that employment is to be found in the sector. Which persons could have a better insight into this dynamic, but for persons working in the sector? Hence all respondents were asked about their opinions about how business is going. Eventually they were asked to rate this with good, okay or not good. Afterwards, they were asked for a comparison of this year last year (better, same or worse) and finally whether they expect growth or decline for the business in general (growth, same, decline).¹⁴ The answers are quantified in Table 9, and subsequently visualized in Graph 7.

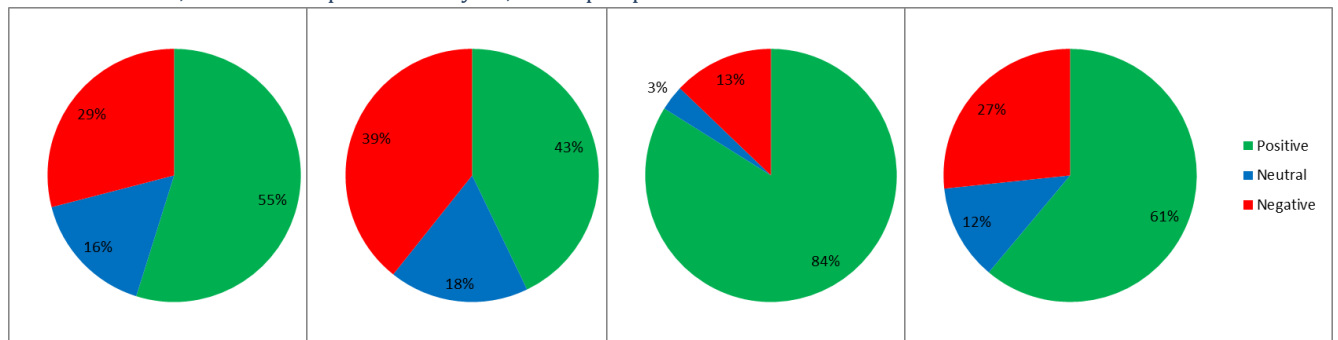
Table 9: Frequencies of positive, neutral, negative an total answers considering economical conjuncture

	<i>Positive</i>	<i>Neutral</i>	<i>Negative</i>	<i>Total</i>
<i>Current business</i>	17	5	9	31
<i>Compared to last year¹⁵</i>	12	5	11	28
<i>Future prospect</i>	26	1	4	31
<i>Total</i>	55	11	24	90

¹⁴ Questions 7,8 and 9 as posed in Appendix 4.

¹⁵ In three cases the respondent was working less than one year in the business, thus this question was omitted on three occasions.

Graph 7: Shares of positive and negative answers towards economical conjuncture. From left to right the answers to: current business, business compared to last year, future prospect and the total



Overall, positive answers prevail. One of the main reasons that working in the automotive sector provides means good business, is the sharp rise of vehicles in Sri Lanka. As mentioned in 3.4.4., the amount of (registered) vehicles in Sri Lanka almost doubled in 5 years' time and is still rising fast. One of the respondents, who formerly worked as a carpenter and mason, explained that he decided to become a motorcycle mechanic because "now almost every Sri Lankan family owns a vehicle", which leads to a steady flow of customers versus the project-dependency work of construction. Subsequently, the rise in vehicle possession leads to a lot of more work for all those involved at dealers, workshops, spare parts shops, oil marts, tire shops, etc.

Besides the general rise in vehicle possession, the Sri Lankan government also aims to ensure a better quality of vehicles in use. In 2008, the Rajapaksa administration introduced a law in which all vehicles are obliged to be tested on their emission levels. On a yearly base, one has to pass by a vehicle emission testing center to do said test, after which (when passing the test) the owner will receive a certificate. It is obligatory for all vehicle owners to be able to present this document, together with a driver's license, insurance, and vehicle registration at all times. As a result of this measure, most vehicle owners will pass by workshops for a (full) service, which leads to more business for workshops and service stations. The emission checking system further ensures the sector of a steady flow of customers.

In spite of all these positive developments, not all respondents are positive about the sector. How come? The main reasons for 'bad business' were laid on three causes by the respondents: harvest dependency, government regulations and lack of institutional support.

6.4.1 Harvest dependency

Half of the respondents mentioned that their business is largely dependent on the harvest. One respondent commented that "All shops within a 60-kilometer radius of Polonnaruwa are dependent on the harvest". This stresses once more the importance of agriculture for the economy of the area. Rice harvests (the main cultivation of the area) take place twice a year; the main harvest at the end of March/beginning of April (maha), the second harvest around September (yala). In these periods, the area of Polonnaruwa sees a sharp rise in consumption, since farmers have a lot more to spend, which still make up a large share of the population (as indicated in Graph 1). Hence the general economic conjuncture of the area is heavily dependent on these two peaks during the year. The economy runs dry especially in the last weeks before harvesting. It was at this point that most were interviewed, which influenced their answers.

Besides the seasonal harvest dependency, the local economy makes is also vulnerable for periods of bad harvests. The direct area around Polonnaruwa is mostly dependent on irrigation water, prevenient from the large reservoir of the Parakrama. 2016 and 2017 were especially bad agricultural years, since the area faced severe droughts, resulting in a shortage of irrigation water. Subsequent floodings followed to destroy what was left of the harvest. This is seen as the main cause of the low economic conjuncture, and also the reason why a big amount of the respondents that indicated that business was worse than last year. As one of the respondents put it "For 2.5 years there has been no harvest in Gallella [locality nearby Polonnaruwa Town]. People have got no

money”. After one crop failure, the farmers first still got some money to spend (as was the case in 2017) but by the next year (2018) these reserves have probably run out, resulting in only the most basics of spending. This is symbolized by the following quote of a car AC-mechanic commenting on why business is low: “Now when it’s hot people will just roll the [car] windows down, instead of getting their AC repaired”.

For 2018 most respondents were positive about the harvest, since these extremities did not take place in the last campaign, and some improvements were made to the irrigation system. This positive view is partly shared by the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), who expects the 2018 maha harvest to be better than last year but still below the annual average (2018).

Working in the automotive sector provides more stability than working on a farm. Several respondents have worked before in agriculture or still have some paddy fields. One of the respondents decided to switch to another job because every night he had to get up and check if the neighboring farmers did not block their irrigation system in order to snatch away precious water, which happened on several occasions. Three other respondents own paddy fields but decided to work on the side in the automotive sector since it provides a steady income. Whilst not mentioning the term explicitly, working in the vehicle business makes them more resilient since it diversifies their incomes and better protects them against volatile market prices and weather conditions.

6.4.2 Government regulations

Most of the dealers point towards the government as a reason for the drop in vehicle sales and give the example of purchasing a threewheeler. Buying one in India, and shipping it to Sri Lanka, costs roughly 350.000 rupees. In Sri Lanka, the vehicles are sold at 750.000.¹⁶ Hence the 400.000 surpluses are all spent on taxes. Although the dealers like to forget their share of profit in the eventual price, taxes along the line have risen a lot, starting from 2015. For the import of a vehicle, one has to pay 15% VAT, Import Tax, Harbour Tax as well as taxes for the National Development Fund and Road Safety Fund. Sales are also down considering motorcycles and passenger cars for similar reasons. An employee of one of the biggest local dealer commented that three years ago (before the elections) they sold 400 motorcycles each month, last year’s average was 200 a month, and this month (February 2018) only 90 have been sold. The low number of the sales in February is partly explained by being the final month before harvesting starts, but these numbers in general signal that sales indeed have stagnated.

When asked why the government would raise taxes this sharply, especially considering threewelers, one dealer commented that “they [the government] don’t like threewelers, since they cause a lot of accidents”. Another respondent argued that the government is just looking for tax incomes. The general idea behind this seems that national policies now intend to improve the quality of vehicles and roads, instead of just vehicle possession. Especially since traffic jams are infamous in the biggest cities of Colombo and Kandy, and pollution is rising in the urban areas. So vehicles have to be tested on their emissions, and possession becomes more expensive. Unfortunately, the rural population still not in possession of a vehicle face the negative consequences of these delimiting policies aimed at improving the traffic situation in urban areas. As do threewelers, which do not seem to fit in the picture of safe roads and high-quality vehicles.

Besides the specific taxes on the import of vehicles, a third of the respondents mention the high and ever-rising living costs. As a 24-year old motorcycle salesman mockingly remarked: “Even this glass of water has tax on it”. Several respondents (respectively gaining wages of 24.000, 28.000, 33.000 and 55.000 monthly SLR)¹⁷ said their salary was not enough to cover their expenses and were therefore looking for employment in another sector. When asked why, they mentioned the rising living costs.

Whereas some blame inflation and others blame the general economy, all respondents point towards the government as the prime responsible for the perceived economic hardship. When the respondents were asked to be more specific, they remained in vague connotations of corruption and poor management. If we look closer to

¹⁶ For conversion of these amounts to Euros, direct to Appendix 6.

¹⁷ For conversion of these amounts to Euros, direct to Appendix 6.

the general statistics on the Sri Lankan economy, which have been positive for the last years, one would expect a more positive view from the respondents. These numbers however do not show the level of indebtedness of the country. The current administration is facing more and more difficulties financing their prestigious developmental projects, for which it seeks more and more tax to pay back their debt. The people blame the current administration, the current administration the previous one, the previous one denies. And one is left wondering why people estimate the wealth of former president Rajapaksa at 14 billion USD.

6.4.3. Lack of institutional support

Another reason for the fact that sales are down, is that the down payment for a newly bought vehicle has risen from 15% towards 30%. If one wants to buy a new motorcycle, which costs around 250.000 rupees, 75.000 has to be paid right away, versus 37.500 a few years ago. The rest of the amount is to be paid in monthly quota through an intermediary party. Though dealers are rather unhappy with this measure, it seems that the higher down payment was implemented to prevent people from indebting too much. It also assures the selling party that the buyer is good for its credit. As one of the respondents mentioned, when the monthly quota is not met, the vehicle will be taken away, no matter the amount of money already being paid. Another respondent points towards such financing schemes as the main reason for suicide amongst farmers in the region. In order to increase his/her income, the farmer buys a tractor through a financing scheme, a bad harvest follows, the quota cannot be met, the tractor necessary for the harvest taken away. As a result, the farmer is left without his money nor vehicle, with no perspective on an improvement of the situation.

If one takes into account the fact that on most loans a 2% loan is to be paid on monthly basis (24% a year), the business is rather lucrative for financing companies. As a result, the main road of urban Polonnaruwa is dotted with financing companies. Nevertheless, their interest rates are not reasonable for most respondents. Besides this, it is necessary for larger loans to have two persons who guarantee the loan. If the debtor eventually cannot pay the loan, the guarantees are legally obliged to do so. 7 respondents mention the lack of institutional support considering cheap(er) loans considering investment in their business. These respondents have the ambition to open up a new shop, improve their machinery, or improve their existent shop, but have no one to turn to. As a result, some respondents asked the researcher for advice on looking for said investments (that are to be paid back).

Interestingly, the owner of a large motorcycle and tractor company asked the researcher for a contact with a Dutch financing company to become the intermediary financing party, signaling dissatisfaction with the current payment system in place. Another respondent formerly worked as a furniture maker. He decided to switch to the automotive business after too many people bought furniture, but eventually never paid the full amount due. A third respondent, who worked at an electronics company, spoke about a similar problem. Sales targets had to be met, but those who bought the electronics would eventually stop paying or disappear. In the end, the shop manager had to pay the amount due from his own pocket. When asked about legal possibilities, going to court, inform the police, etc. the respondent answered that there are no adequate systems in place for these types of cases. This signals the unhappiness of both debtors and creditors with the current way of financing (vehicles) in Polonnaruwa; a system is lacking in which both buyers and sellers are protected.

6.5 Absorption power

The ILO mentioned the automotive industry as one of the key places to absorb the new workforce. Has it got this potential in Polonnaruwa as well? As mentioned in 6.4, the automotive sector is doing quite well, besides its dependency on harvests, recent tax augmentations and the lack of institutional support. It has the advantage of providing a more resilient income when compared to agriculture since a steady flow of customers is assured through increased vehicle possession and obligatory emission tests. Does this result in more demand for workers?

All respondents were asked if the enterprise they are working in were looking for more employees (see Appendix 4). 7 shops indicated that they are currently in search of more employees and 3 shops said to look for employees in the near future (within the year). 8 shops indicated that they were not looking for employees, though two of them are hiring flexible workers on a regular basis and two others responded to always have their eyes open for good, experienced workers. At the other 2 shops, employees had contradicting views (one said yes, the other said no). This means that at this moment more than half of the companies are looking for employees now or in the nearby future. The 7 shops that are looking for employees at the very moment indicated that in total 15 extra workers were needed. Especially manual labour is wanted in the areas of tinkers and (service) mechanics. 3 respondents indicated that sometimes they are that busy, that they have to send customers to other shops since they do not have sufficient labourers to deal with them.

On the other hand, most shops and dealers (which focus more on sales) indicated that they were not looking for extra employees. In general this line of work is less labour intensive, which means that fewer employees per shop are needed. The fact that the existing shops do not directly look for employees, does not necessarily mean that there is no work to be found in this branch. During the two months in the field, the researcher witnessed the opening of two new shops. Furthermore, two of the respondents (one dealer, one parts shop) opened their shop less than a year ago. Most shops that focus on sales are affiliated with a bigger company from a bigger city (such as Colombo, Kandy or Kurunegala). Most of the respondents indicated that they approached these bigger companies and offered to be their local agents. In one case, the respondent was approached by the company with the offer to become their agent. This indicates that if one can find a niche, there are good possibilities for opening up an own shop in the automotive sales.

If we extrapolate the 15 extra workers that are being looked for by 20 companies, this could mean that the 140 companies of the area put together are looking for 105 employees. Of course, this comparison is a (very) rough estimate. More employees at one shop would mean that they could cater for more costumers, which would mean less for other shops in the area. But given the fact that over two-thirds of the respondents expect growth in the coming year, it could be that this number is not that far off.

6.6 Relation current business with VTC

So what can we conclude out of this general impression of the local industry in relation to the planned VTC? First of all, it indicates that the local automotive industry is a relevant and viable economic sector, since the density of shops seems rather high (141 on a population anywhere between 15.000 and 40.000 inhabitants) and current workers are positive on the economic conjuncture. Besides this, it has potential of absorbing workforce since the companies are looking for workers. This means that those who will receive education at the VTC can probably find work in the sector close to their educational institution. In this fashion, it seems that the planned VTC does comply with Ramasamy's (2016) theory that vocational education should be demand driven. Of course not all students can directly find work in the close vicinity, but prospects seem promising in general, especially for the first graduates. Besides providing the local business with needed workers, closer cooperation with the VTC and the local business have great potential of mutual benefits. For example, by sharing knowledge. The current professionals can give classes, provide internships and case studies, as well as both can reflect and exchange on the latest (technical) ins & outs of the business, etc. Already smaller local VTCs provide the worksites with interns, a connection that can be further exploited. In this way, the VTC and the local business can profit from each other, strengthening the local economy. However, there few little big companies present in the region, which means that the VTC will probably be of more use as a knowledge partner to the local business than vice versa. Besides this, the contacts between the sector and VTC will largely depend on personal contacts because of the absence of broader institutional communication channels, such as a branch-organisation.

7. Educational needs of the automotive sector

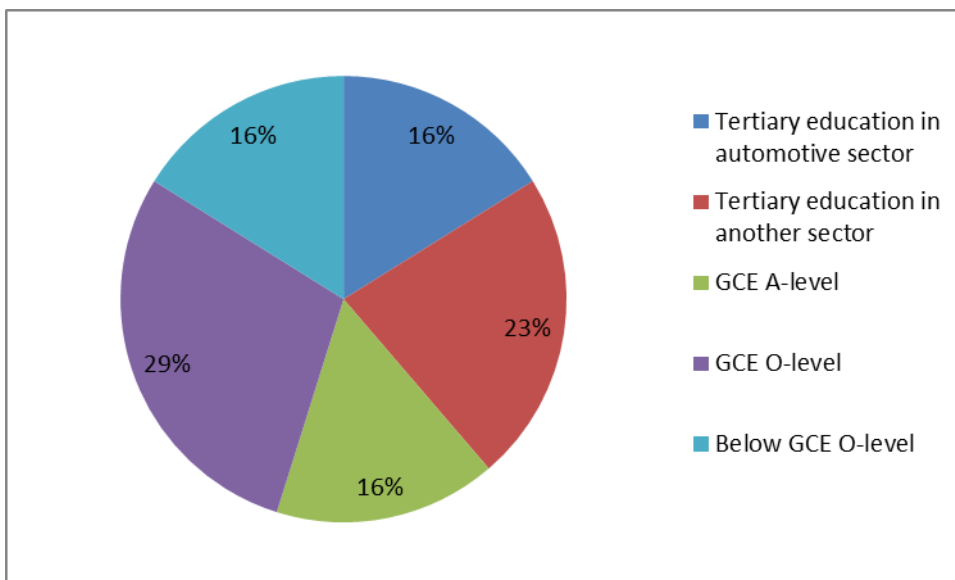
Given the fact that over half of the visited enterprises are looking for employees, one is left with the question: what do these employees need? Is vocational training necessary to land a job? This chapter looks further into the required skills and education for work in the automotive sector. First, it will discuss the level of schooling that those currently working in the sector have, and what the areas are in which more education is needed. Next, it will delve into what the entry requirements are to work at a vehicle focused shop, more specifically those involving manual labour. Afterwards, the importance of having an official certificate will be discussed, and finally two separate paths of acquiring the necessary skills for manual labour will be sketched.

7.1 Current level of education workers automotive sector

As mentioned in 3.5, few Sri Lankans find their way into tertiary education after finishing secondary education. Only 1 in 10 can enter university after finishing the last grade of secondary education, and most start working directly after. Is this also the case with those working in the automotive industry in Polonnaruwa? What education did the current workforce receive?

All respondents were asked for their highest received education, as well as education prior to this. 12 respondents finished some sort of tertiary education, out of which 5 did a course related to the automotive sector. Another 5 respondents finished GCE A-level¹⁸, as did 9 with GCE O-level, and another 5 respondents did not finish the GCE O-level. The highest received education of the respondents is that of a 3 year lasting tertiary course of motor mechanic, the lowest received education is that of finishing Grade 2. See Graph 8 for a visualization. What strikes is that more than half of the respondents did not receive any further education after finishing secondary education. Furthermore out of the 24 respondents (leaving the other 7 that only focus on sales) that are directly involved with manual labour, only 5 respondents followed a relevant tertiary course. This means that 19 out of 24 respondents that work in manual labour learned their skills elsewhere.

Graph 8: Received education of workers automotive businesses visited



As one might expect, those that did not follow a tertiary course learned their skills through working. As Chea & Huijsmans (2011) point out, ‘learning on the job’ is one of the prime ways of acquiring working skills. Almost all respondents started working directly after their secondary education. In most cases, they would begin working in a shop of a family member or friend who would teach them the trait. After mastering the necessary skills, they

¹⁸ See 3.5 for further reference into the Sri Lankan education system.

moved to another store (for a better salary, because of marrying and moving to another place) or started their own business. Paragraph 7.2 will further describe the difference in trajectories between this ‘informal’ route of acquiring skills and the route of tertiary education.

7.2 Required skills & education to work in the vehicle sector

As described in Paragraph 7.1, there is no real entry requirement considering education in order to work (manually) in the automotive sector. This thus raises the question; what does a person need to work in the sector? This question was asked to all respondents that confirmed that they were looking for employees, or theoretically to those that mentioned that they were not. The answers ranged between no qualifications, towards good experience and possession of a degree in a relevant course. But in general the most important aspect when looking for workers in the automotive sector is experience.

7.2.1 Entry requirements: put to the test

During the research two official brand workshops were visited. At these places, it was indicated that it is necessary to have a relevant degree, for example as a motor technician, in order to get a job. But at all the other workshops, certificates are not an entry requirement. Experience is all that matters when one wants to land a job at a regular workshop. In general, at both official brand and regular workshops, one’s knowledge of the matter is not determined through certificates, but through a test. The interviews are short; the only demanded trait is trustworthiness. Hence potential workers are asked about their families and lives, but not about qualities, motivation, etc. Afterward interviewing, the potential employee is put to the test, according to the ‘position’ one is applying for. Generally, the positions can be divided in the range of starter, junior, medior and senior. By doing such a test, the work-seeker is being examined practically if their skills match their claims. When taking a motorcycle technician as an example, a starter can be asked to remove a carburetor, a junior to clean it, a medior to replace it and a senior to repair it.

7.2.2 Starter

Starters are those that have very little to no relevant working experience so far. Even without a relevant course (as service mechanic, motor mechanic, tinker, painter, etc.) it is still possible to start working in the automotive sector. An apprenticeship can be arranged at a smaller workshop, for which one generally uses the personal network. Most of the time the ‘master’ is an acquaintance or family friend of the worker (which was mentioned on 6 occasions). Besides this kinship ties are also very important: mentioned examples are a brother in law (3), uncle (3), father and a more distant relative. In general starters are not paid during their training period, or receive some compensation in the form of food, oil, or other goods. In a few cases, starters are given some money on an irregular basis. In general, the training period before one becomes functional as a manual labourer lasts between 6 to 12 months, according to the skills and talent of the starter.

Those that did receive official training on the other hand, are able to choose between a larger amount of companies to start working. This can be at official brand workshops, and are generally accepted faster in regular workshops as well. In this way they are less reliant on their personal network for finding employment. Interestingly, in order to start an apprenticeship at the two the biggest workshops of this research, the apprentice has to pay the company. This is because these apprenticeships go through the formal channel of the National Apprentice and Industrial Training Authority (NAITA). Afterwards, the apprentice is awarded a National Vocational Qualification certificate.

7.2.3 Junior

After the starting phase, one reaches the position of junior. In this position the worker is receiving regular payment, but is still ‘learning on the job’. As several senior mechanics and bosses noted, those that have

followed a technical course reach this phase earlier than those without prior relevant education. An apprenticeship without having prior education lasts between 6 to 12 months, according to the talent of the worker. Those with prior education start earning money regularly after a few months, or after officially finishing their apprenticeship (which normally lasts around 6 months). The time it takes before making regular money is considered one of the key points why it is difficult to find manual workers in the automotive sector. As a senior workshop owner commented: “It was easy to find workers. Youth now wants immediate income, but the training period here lasts between 6 to 12 months.”

7.2.4 Medior & Senior

Following the junior phase, is that of medior. This means that the labourer can work largely autonomously, and rarely has to seek help from more senior workers. It is at this phase that the labourers start to earn noteworthy money (see Table 11 for the numbers) and is able to switch to another company since they acquired most necessary skills. Normally it takes about 1-2 years to reach this position. Afterwards comes the senior phase, in which the worker can truly work autonomously, and has reached the end of the learning curve. Eventually those with and without prior education reach this level. Having the adequate experience, senior workers can think about opening up their own shop or switch to another employer for a better salary. The main difference remains that when applying for work at a bigger, official company, the lack of a certificate might result troublesome. On the other hand, when the official brand stores were asked the question “If a really good and experienced worker walked in, would you not hire him?” they answered that they probably will hire the person. Thus the main difference in working as a manual labourer in the automotive sector with or without prior education, is in the starting and junior phase. Table 10 briefly summarizes the main differences.

Table 10 Summary of pathways into becoming a senior manual labourer in the automotive sector

	<i>Selecting a company</i>	<i>Starting</i>	<i>Junior</i>	<i>Medior</i>	<i>Senior</i>
<i>With official training</i>	Can choose between the companies where to work.	Training phase at company lasts relatively short. Possibly have to pay for training period.	Swiftly passes towards position of junior within several months. Can demand larger amount of money faster.	Takes about a year or two years to earn a decent wage. Room for demanding higher wages.	Able to demand higher wages and switch companies easily
<i>Without official training</i>	Options of work are limited to own personal network.	Training phase at company lasts between 6 to 12 months. Unpaid for labour, but does not have to pay, Possible compensation in in goods.	In this position slowly starts to earn money as knowhow improves.	Takes two to three years before earning a decent wage. Growth possibilities are limited.	Able to demand higher wages and switch companies easily, except for official stores

7.3 Attitudes towards certificates

Eventually both the worker with and without official training will reach the point of being a senior mechanic, and will earn the same wage.¹⁹ Given the fact that following a training can be costly (when done at a private institute) and is time-consuming (1-3 years), one could argue that following a course might actually be counter-productive. If one 18-year old would follow a two year course to become an engine mechanic, he might start to earn a decent wage at age 21. Another 18-year old who does not follow education might reach this point already at 20. So why bother with official education and certificates at all, instead of just learning on the job? Respondents in general agreed that having or not having a certificate does not have any implications on the quality of the work done. Working experience is the key factor in this. As a senior mechanic put it “My certificate is satisfied customers”. Nevertheless, having a certificate of an official course was deemed important by most respondents. Mainly in three areas: when having an own business, officializing skills, and the ability to work elsewhere.

7.3.1 Having an own business

Several respondents noted that having a certificate is important when running an own business. For example to attract clientele when starting up: “When they come into the shop, and see the degree on the wall, they [the customers] have more trust.” Thus a degree can help to bridge the initial phase of winning the trust of a customer to bring their vehicle to the shop. If the customer returns depends on the quality of work done, which is not dependent on having a degree or not, but on working experience.

Besides this, respondents noted that in order to be able to work with a bigger company, having a degree is crucial. For example in becoming the official shop for a certain brand. By being the official point of reference, workshops can ask more money for their services. Next to this, it brings the advantage of having more customers. Bigger brands will give free services to the customers, which are to be done at the official workshop (after which the brand will pay the workshop). Furthermore, brands will declare the vehicle warranty void when the owner brings it to an unofficial workshop.

Another advantage of being officially affiliated with a specific brand, is that knowledge on the vehicles is maintained up to date through company training days. On a yearly basis, all employees of affiliated branches receive training on the newest technologies, and ins & outs during a 1-3 day programme. Except for the bigger corporations, possessing an official degree is also paramount when cooperating with government institutions. For example in order to be eligible to land contracts from institutions such as the City Transport Board.

7.3.2 Officializing skills

Several respondents that were asked about their opinions on certificates indicated that they would like to have a certificate to ‘officialize’ their skills. Some of the employees have worked more than 20 years in their line of work and would like to have a certificate that confirms their experience. This will not improve the quality of their work but has got more to do with social status. This is best captured by the following quote of a 35-year old tinker “When somebody asks you about it [work experience], it is nice to be able to show something”. Most of the manual workers wear pride in their job, and having an official degree would be a cherry on the pie for them.

7.3.3 Ability to work elsewhere

As already briefly mentioned in 7.2, having an official certificate enables the worker to have more choice when selecting a place to work. This goes for Sri Lanka as the grading system in place makes the degrees valid on a

¹⁹ Interestingly, this research did not find a direct link between followed education and wages on senior level. Senior mechanics seem to get paid the same amount, with or without certificate, since experience is all that matters.

national level, but also internationally, since the current curriculum is in line with the international standards. A junior service mechanic mentioned that he would like to stop working after one or two years, to be able to follow a course in vehicle wiring. With this degree, he hopes to eventually land a job in Korea. Chapter 9 will delve deeper into such migration ambitions.

7.4 Educational demands

All respondents were asked in what areas they would like to receive more education. The goal was to identify areas in which more training is needed, as well as which actions could not be undertaken by workers (for example a complicated reparation). Towards this end the respondents were asked: “What are (common) actions that you cannot undertake?” In almost all cases this question was answered with: “None.” On working level all respondents felt like they did not need to receive more training in their line of work, except for some that wanted to switch in their niche (for example, from engine mechanic to vehicle wiring).

The other question asked to identify educational demands from the work field was: “In what area would you like to receive more training?” At first, and especially with elder experienced respondents, the answer was mostly that they were not looking for training in any area. They already know enough. On top of that, there is no time for training. After putting the question more theoretically (“If you could, in what area would you like to receive more training?”), it appeared that most of the respondents would actually like to receive extra education. A wide variety of answers arose. Whereas at first it appeared that none of the respondents would like to have more training in their line of work, eventually 9 of them indicated that they wanted to improve their skills. 2 respondents want to finish their degree in respectively vehicle mechanic and accounting, 7 would like to receive training in the newest vehicle technologies (such as electronic fuel injection) and in handling new machinery (such as a patching machine for tire changers). Other respondents (4) would like to broaden their skills towards other vehicles by following a course in vehicle wiring, car scanning software or in big vehicle/hybrid car maintenance. Another 3 respondents wanted to have courses in respectively business development, English and a leadership/motivation/positive thinking course for the employees. Besides these direct wants from the respondents, four respondents working as tinkers and painters commented that there does not exist a course for their line of work on a national level. Interestingly, as of March 2018 the VTA does offer courses for these jobs.²⁰

7.5 Relation current educational situation with VTC

As this paragraph demonstrated, tertiary education is not necessary to land a job in Polonnaruwa’s automotive sector. But it can greatly help, since it extends the scope of the job seeker of potential companies to work. Furthermore, it enhances the opportunity of starting a (successful) own business, or cooperate with bigger brands or the government. The VTC will probably lead to the marginalization of the ‘informal’ route of becoming a mechanic on the longer run, since the skills acquirement will be transferred from the ‘learning on the job’ system towards official state education. If one were to do a similar research ten years after the construction of the VTC, Graph 8 will probably have a significantly larger share of dark blue. It has the benefit that the sector will get more professionalized, tightening the state’s grip on tertiary education, and loosening that of the current workers. A downside towards this fact is that the entry levels for working in the sector will probably rise in the near future, and only those that can make the investment to follow tertiary education will be able to work in the sector.

²⁰ As checked on the official website of the VTA: www.vtasl.gov.lk

8. Working conditions & attitudes towards employment in Polonnaruwa's automotive sector

Paragraph 6 shows that the vehicle business is doing well (though there is space for improvement) and there are possibilities for the absorption of more workers. As described in paragraph 7, one does not necessarily need a degree or an official certificate to work in the automotive sector, which makes entering the business rather open. Why would one like to have employment in this sector? Or not seek to work in this business? This paragraph discusses the working conditions in the automotive sector through the opinions of those working in the branch. Firstly the wages are put forward, afterwards the up and downsides mentioned by the respondents. Finally, this paragraph will argue that it is difficult to find new employees for the sector, especially since it fails to attract younger generations.

8.1 Wages

All respondents were asked for the average monthly wage one would make when functional, experienced and as a senior worker. These amounts are presented in Table 11. The given numbers are the range between the lowest and highest mentioned amount. What strikes in this data, is that lines of work with a smaller learning curve such as service mechanic and tire changer have high starting incomes, but also a lower wage as a senior. The amounts of money paid as a vehicle mechanic vary greatly. In general this is the difference between the smallest workshop, and working at an official brand workshop. Interestingly, in some 'regular workshops', the wages were higher than in official brand workshops. Another fun fact is that the Polonnaruwa's most famous vehicle mechanic is estimated to make around 100.000 SLR on a monthly basis. Tinkers are currently very wanted employees in Polonnaruwa, which explains the high senior wage.

At the moment of doing research, the living costs for a basic, but decent life were estimated at 17.500-30.000 for one person per month by the youth respondents.²¹ This number is rather far off from the national indicator of the official poverty line. As of March 2018 (Department of Census and Statistics Sri Lanka, 2018), the minimum monthly expenditure was put on 4.500 per month per person for Polonnaruwa.

This depends of course on other factors such as the spending pattern, and the need to maintain a family, as well as the family size. For an 18-year old worker without a family, living at the parental house, 30.000 rupees on a monthly basis could be a lot of money. However, when making the same amount of money, and having to maintain a family and pay rent, the amount seems too little. As discussed in 6.4.2 living costs are rising. Several senior employees (especially service mechanics and tire changers, which earn between 25.000 and 35.000 SLR on a monthly basis) said that the amount of money they were making was a reasonable income, but lately it is not enough to live a decent life any longer. Yet other senior vehicle mechanics also thought that 55.000 a month seemed too little.

The researcher also tried to establish numbers on what shop owners would approximately earn. Most shop owners were hesitant to speak freely about numbers, and would use general terms, such as "Good" or "Some periods more, some periods less" but never in concrete numbers. Several respondents, when asked for a general indication, said that they were not comfortable in giving a number as they considered this a private matter, and/or feared extra taxation by the government. As mentioned in 6.3, daily turnover in a small and medium sized workshop amounted between 10.000 – 15.000 on a good day. The monthly rent would amount between 10.000 - 20.000 rupees a month (according to shop location and size), the water and electricity bill would amount for another 10.000 rupees approximately. If a workshop were to employ a senior mechanic, with wages as in Table 11, the amount paid on salaries is approximately 55.000. Thus, as a workshop owner, one needs 7 good days a month to cover basic expenses.

²¹ In order to have a further reference for the mentioned wages, see Figure 3, as well as Appendix 6 for a table of values of Sri Lankan Rupees vis-a-vis Euros considering living costs and wages.

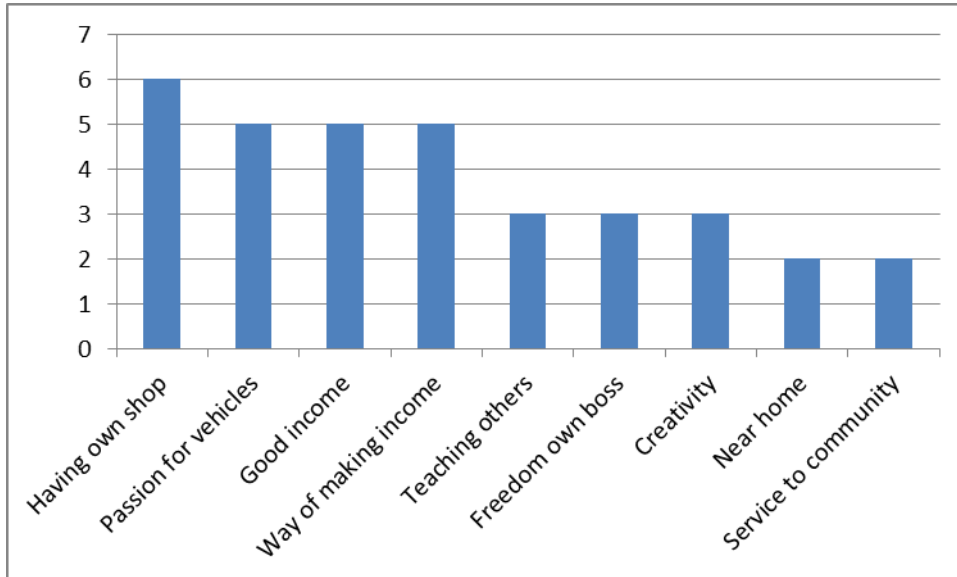
Table 11: Wages as a junior, medior and senior worker on monthly basis in Sri Lankan rupees (SLR)²²

	<i>Vehicle mechanic²³</i>	<i>Service mechanic²⁴</i>	<i>Painter²⁵</i>	<i>Tire changer²⁶</i>	<i>Tinker²⁷</i>
<i>Junior wage</i>	10.000-40.000	10.000-22.500	22.000-28.000	25.000	25.000
<i>Medior wage</i>	20.000-55.000	17.000-27.000	25.000-55.000	25.000-30.000	25.000-55.000
<i>Senior wage</i>	28.000-70.000	24.000-33.000	55.000 +	30.000-35.000	50.000 - 70.000

8.2 Upsides

Besides their respective wages, respondents were asked if they liked their job. 27 out of the 31 respondents responded positively to this question, 2 neutral and 2 negatively. Subsequently, the respondents were asked what parts of their work they appreciated. The 31 respondents mentioned in total 34 things they liked about their work, which can be broken down in 9 categories, as demonstrated in Graph 9. The most recurring answer was that respondents liked having an own shop (6), and the pride the owners take in having one and see it grow. The second most recurring answers (5) were a passion for vehicles, making a good income and way of making income. The passion for vehicles is best captured by the quotes of two respondents. One said “this is my hobby and my job”, the other one indicated that “As a child, I have always been fascinated by vehicles”. Other respondents had a simpler explanation for why they liked their job: they like it, because it is their job. This was sentiment was best captured by the quote “This is my way of making a living, it is the only thing I have learned how to do”. Less mentioned answers (3) were that respondents liked their jobs because they can teach others the trait, whereas the same amount mentioned they liked the freedom of being an own boss (which correlates with having an own shop) and being able to engage creatively with their work. The proximity of the home to one’s place of work was mentioned 2 times, just as the ability to be of service to the community.

Graph 9: Frequencies of responses to the question: “What things do you like about your job?”



²² For conversion of these amounts to Euros, direct to Appendix 6.

²³ Numbers based on six different observations.

²⁴ Numbers based on three different observations. Including tips.

²⁵ Number based on one observation.

²⁶ Number based on two different observations. Including tips.

²⁷ Number based on two different observations.

8.3 Downsides

Besides the upsides of work, respondents were also asked what things they did not like about their work. Most of the time, the simple answer that followed was “Nothing”. This fits the cultural norm that evades direct negative answers. Also it might be that employees were frightened that their boss might find out one way or another. Though the researcher tried to have as little people present as possible, there were always people eavesdropping at the interview. However, aspects that workers did not appreciate considering their employment could sometimes be deducted. For example, at question 20 some mentioned that they wished to receive more money for their job, but they knew the boss could/would not pay this.²⁸ Eventually 19 aspects were mentioned by the 31 respondents for improvement. The biggest group remained the group that did not see any downsides in their work (10), also when asked a second time in another fashion, and did not mention any negative points during the rest of the interview. The most mentioned points of improvement were the lack of job security (4), stress (4), as well as safety issues (3). Money (4) will not be discussed since this point has been discussed in 8.1.

8.3.1 Lack of job security

The lack of security was one of the most recurring downsides of working in the automotive sector. When working in this sector, there are no pension plans, funds to help when the worker gets ill, or security when business is going bad. An elderly tinker (aged 56) remarked, when asked about his future plans, that he plans to continue working for as long as his eyes last, because “in this line of work, there is no other option”. The painter that was interviewed also mentioned that he could work as long as his eyes lasted, which he estimated to last about 10 to 20 more years (at the age of 42). The future after that would remain uncertain, but he hoped by then to be able to open up his own shop. The two tire changers interviewed stated that their function demanded a good physical condition. At their age, respectively 28 and 32, they expected to be able to work for another 10 more years. In order to be able to demand better wages, as well as a pension plan when one cannot work anymore, they argued it would be wise to have a sector-wide syndicate. Though this might be hard to achieve, it might not be impossible, since it is increasingly difficult to find people to do this kind of work. As one of the tire changers stated: “In 15 years’ time, there are no more people to be found who are willing to do this job.” Throughout the line, also considering (service) mechanics, tinkers and painters, a similar tendency can be noted, which will be further discussed in 8.4. When indeed there are no more workers to be found, the current situation can be changed by providing better working conditions. Such as a higher minimum wage, and (something of) a retirement plan.

8.3.2 Stress

Another recurring theme was that of stress. This was mentioned by two salesmen of the bigger brands, who were having difficulties to meet the targets set by the company. One workshop owner mentioned stress as well, indicating that it was difficult to cater to all his clients, whilst making decent hours. Another workshop manager also mentioned that he had difficulties with keeping up with customer demands. He said that because of all the work at hands, he was working six days a week from 07:00 until 19:00. And this still was not enough. The same goes for a manager of a threewheeler workshop, who indicated that he was working 12 hours a day. In the last three cases, the stress results from something positive: business is going good, and there are a lot of clients. In the case of the salesmen, it is caused by targets pushed on them from higher up in the company, for which they might eventually lose their job.

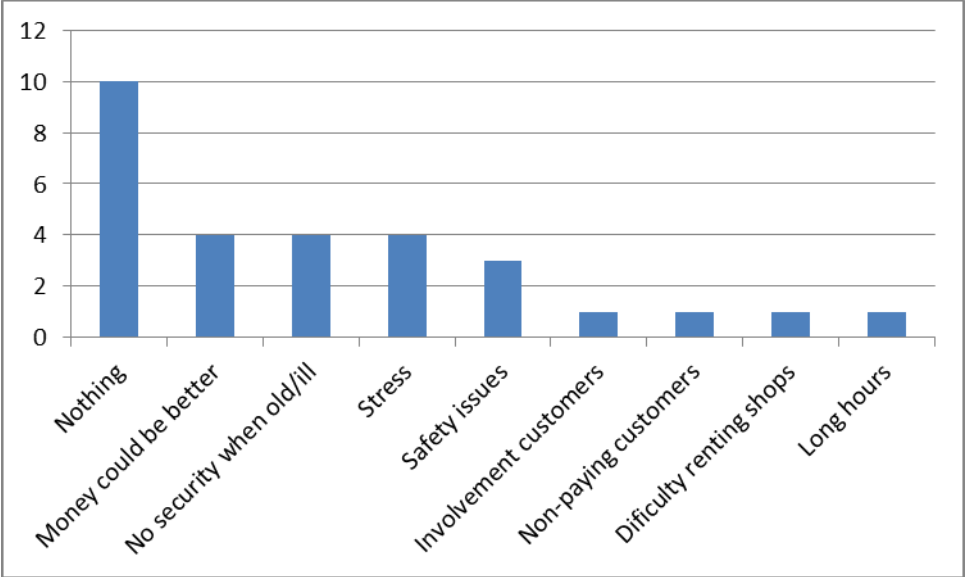
8.3.3 Safety issues

Besides the lack of job security and sometimes stressful situations at work, manual labourers in the automotive sector are prone to all sorts of safety issues. For the mechanics, this involves working with all types of machinery, and accidents are not uncommon. One respondent recalled his brother getting burned by battery acid

²⁸ See Appendix 4 for full questionnaire

for example. Though most respondents agree that the work can be dangerous, this also depends on how deftly one can handle machinery. For tinkers and painters, the danger is less visible. They have to work with all sorts of chemicals for painting and paint removal, which produces harmful dust particles. At the places visited dust masks were available, nevertheless workers preferred to work without. Considering working with dangerous machinery, as well as chemicals, tinkering appears to be the most dangerous type of employment within the automotive sector. This partly explains the higher wages for this work.

Graph 10: Frequencies of downsides/points of improvement mentioned by respondents



8.4 Difficulties to attract workforce

Partly due to the aforementioned working conditions, it was signaled that it is difficult to find people to work in the sector, especially considering manual labour. All respondents were asked whether it was easy or difficult to find persons to do work in their line of business. This question was posed instead of question 13 in the original questionnaire (see Appendix 4). At first the question was not posed to those who indicated that their company was not looking for employees, afterwards this question was posed to them as well. Out of the 27 respondents that answered this question, 22 responded that it was difficult. Subsequently, the question was posed why it was difficult. The response over the whole line was threefold. Firstly, it is difficult to find experienced workers. This connects to the picture painted by the ILO (2015). Secondly, it was found difficult to maintain workers. Thirdly, the respondents felt that young people do not want to work in the automotive sector

8.4.1 Maintaining workers

Those that have good working experience, know that they are much desired, so they demand good money for their service. Too much for most of the owners of smaller and medium workshops. Hence the smaller and medium workshops focus more on attracting young workers with less experience. Furthermore, as one of the tinkers mentioned, manual labourers can be rowdy. In his experience, it was difficult to find trustworthy people. Workers would show up some days, and be absent on others. Next to this, a lot of them would drink, gamble and fight. The owner of a smaller workshop said that at the moment of interviewing he was the only person working in the shop. In the prior two months, three junior mechanics left the workshop for a government job. Another junior mechanic interviewed hoped to land a government job sometime soon. The candidate he helped with ‘canvassing’ (campaigning) in the 2018 Local Government elections had won, for which he expected to be rewarded with a part-time job as a security guard at a national park. This movement towards seeking employment in the public sector is exactly contrary to the direction advised by the World Bank (2017) to improve the economy. They argue that the Sri Lankan economy should be less dependent on the public sector, and develop the private sector more.

8.4.2 Attracting youth: clean suit, smart life

The first mentioned point (the difficulty to find sufficiently skilled workers) is partly caused by the fact that young people do not want to do manual labour in the automotive sector. 16 (thus more than half of the) respondents maintained that the sector fails to attract youth. When asking an elderly workshop owner why, he smiled, showed his oil-covered hands and clothes and said: “Youth want a clean suit, and smart life. They do not want to work hard and get dirty”. Smart life in this context means working at an office (preferably behind a computer), wearing a suit and work in an air conditioned office. Conditions that are absent in the workshops, in which work is hard, dirty, warm and possibly harmful. The most preferred options for youth are, according to the respondents, big companies for the prestige and money, next to the government for the job security, ease of the job, good working conditions and pension scheme.

At first sight, it seemed that the pursuit of a smart life has mostly to do with earning more money. But, as shown in Table 11, one can make a decent living working as a (senior) vehicle mechanic or tinker.²⁹ Implicitly it is not necessarily the money that triggers the pursuit of a smart life, but social prestige. At least, that is how a large share of the current workers would have it. According to a garage owner, “Youth would prefer going to work in a suit and earn less, than get dirty and earn more.”

8.5 Relation current working conditions to VTC

So how do these working conditions and attitudes towards employment in the automotive sector relate to the planned VTC? Firstly, it seems that those who follow a course at a VTC are more likely to end up in a job with a longer learning curve, which are also the jobs with higher wages. This does not mean that all the tire changers can become engine mechanics, but those following tertiary education can demand higher wages since they will attain the skills to do more. Besides this, it legitimizes the person that receives the education to start an own shop, which appears to earn significantly more compared to working for an employer. Starting capital (as mentioned in 6.4.3) will remain an issue. The most important part however is that it seems youngsters lack interest to work in the sector. In order to validate the hypotheses posed by the current workers in the automotive industry, youth were interviewed on their stances towards abovementioned topics, which will be discussed in the next paragraph.

9. Local youth & employment

After speaking with the current workforce of the automobile sector in Polonnaruwa, several interesting themes arose. The most important one is that apparently the sector fails to attract young people. In order to better understand why, 20 young people (aged 18-30) were interviewed in impoverished communities around Polonnaruwa (see Appendix 6 for complete questionnaire). First, this paragraph will discuss the profile of the respondents, afterwards the ‘meaning’ of employment for young people in the Sri Lankan context. Next, this paragraph will look into wages and living costs in Polonnaruwa. Finally, several hypotheses which arose from interviewing employees and employers of the local vehicle sector are presented, and confirmed or rejected.

9.1 Respondent profile

As mentioned, the respondents sought out to voice the youth of Polonnaruwa, were males in the age range 18-30, prevenient from rural communities surrounding urban Polonnaruwa. The average age of the respondents was 22, which signals more younger respondents. Of the 20 respondents, 12 were working, and 8 were either jobless or in school. 9 of them finished or will finish the highest level of secondary education (A-level), whereas 11 did not pass basic secondary education (O-level). 5 had their own family, and 15 remained at their parental family. Considering the employment of their parents, all fathers were employed in manual labour, especially as fisherman, farmer or construction worker. When looking at maternal employment, all mothers were working as housewives, except for 3 cases, hence not full-time employed in income-generating activities. Mostly they would

²⁹ For further reference on the amount necessary to make a living, direct to Figure 3.

help the male income generation, for example by repairing nets for the fishermen or drying the fish, or being in charge of milking cows.

9.2 Meaning of employment

As indicated in 3.5, the biggest part of the Sri Lankan workforce enters the labour market after having finished secondary education (at O/A-level). The notion of consciously picking out a certain line of employment one is interested in, and follow a course in this direction, is less applicable to the Sri Lankan situation. The implicit message that arose from interviewing young people is that it does not matter to them what work they do, where they will do this and under what circumstances, as long as they make a good amount of money. Work is mostly not something you like, or a form of self-expression, it is a means of survival.

Local youth are under pressure from the parental family, for whose maintenance they feel/are responsible. As a result, a lot of youth do not choose to follow more education, or even finish A-level, but start working right away. A logical choice for short-term gains, but eventually reduces possibilities for structural improvement of the situation, since this mostly means doing a low-earning job. This line of thought also explains why respondents in Graph 9 declared: “I like my work, because it is my work.” Besides this responsibility for maintaining one’s parental family, money is also a key factor in finding a partner. Without intentions of marriage, possibilities for youth to find a companion of the other sex are very limited in Sri Lankan society, where social status is of the utmost importance, see 9.3. Thus one needs to be a good potential groom to find a partner. In order to become one, the ability to provide for a family is key, and in order to provide for a family, good employment and especially money are the most important factors.

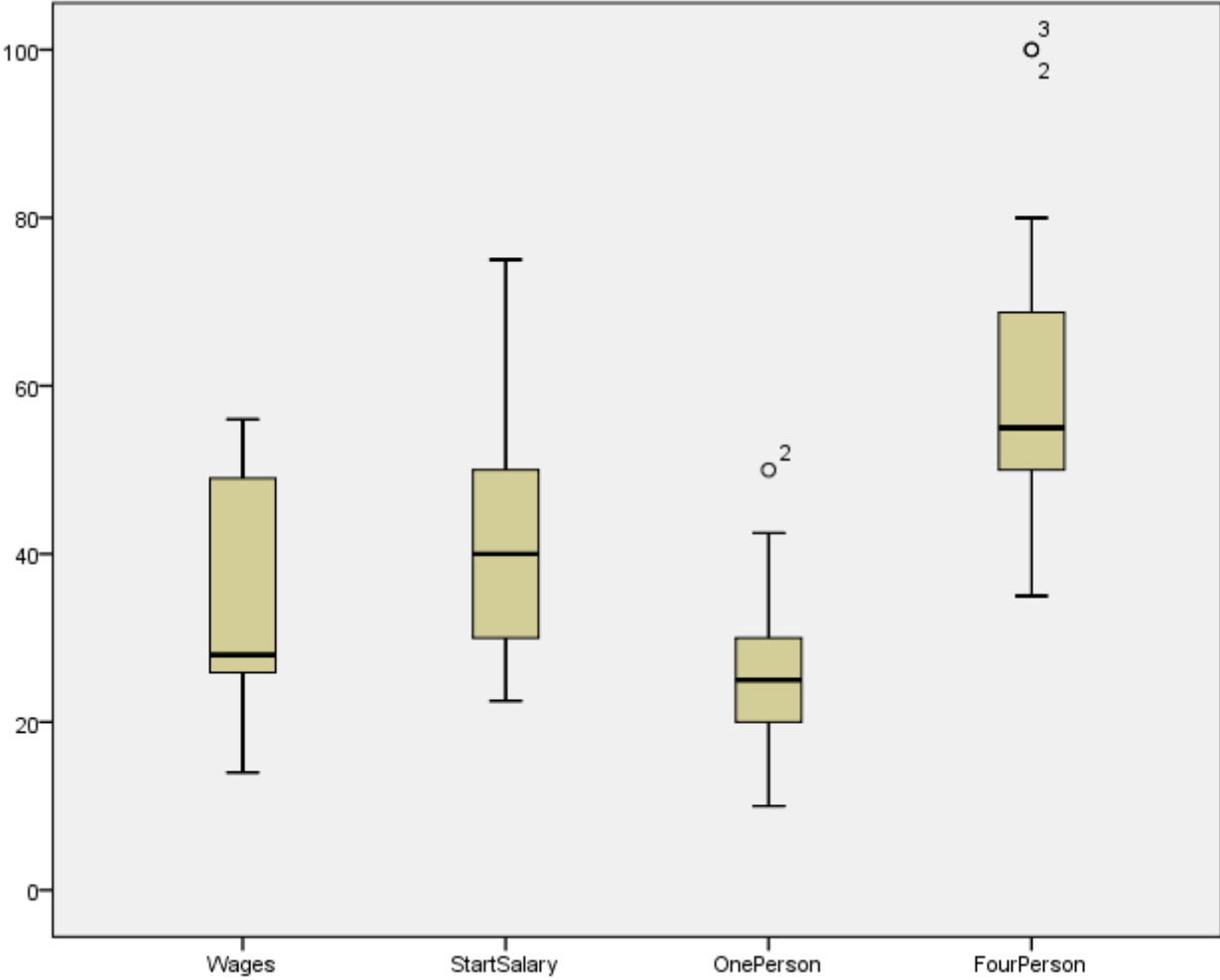
This is even more the case for men in the more rural parts of Polonnaruwa. Traditional gender roles are still in place here. Out of the 20 respondents, 3 have a mother that is engaged in full-time employment, the other 17 are housewives. 2 out of the 3 mothers that were engaged in full-time employment were separated. All in all this signals that men are the key income generators. Housewives are also employed in income generating activities, but not in a full-time fashion. Mostly they help with supportive tasks, such as the repairing of nets with fishermen, or the milking of cows with farmers. Though this situation is changing in the last years, women are largely not self-sufficient considering income generation in Polonnaruwa. Young men are thus expected to not only provide for themselves, but for a whole family. As 9.2 argues, it is hard to live up to this expectancy with a Sri Lankan wage, for which young men are attracted towards working abroad (see 10.4 on youth & migration).

9.3 Expected wages and live maintenance costs

All respondents were asked how much money would be the minimum wage to start working (those that were already employed were asked for how much money they would like to switch employment), next to what the maintenance costs will be for one person, as well as four persons. These statistics are presented all together in the boxplots of Figure 3. The first boxplot represents observed wages in the automotive sector, the second bar preferred starting wages, the third boxplot the maintenance costs for one person, the fourth for four persons.

When we compare the second bar (preferred starting wage) to the first bar (observed wages), the bars do largely coincide. However, the averages of both bars do not. The average of a wage in the automotive sector hovers around 30.000 SLR a month, starting wage at 40.000. As shown in Table 11, the actual starting wages are anywhere between 10.000 and 30.000 monthly SLR. Hence Figure 3 and Table 11 together present a gap between wages offered and minimum wages asked in Polonnaruwa’s automotive sector. Interestingly, the wages of the automotive sector are sufficient for the maintenance of one person (represented by the third bar, with an average around 22.500 SLR). The expected starting wage is higher however. This is partly explained by the fact that respondents of course would like to earn as much money as possible when starting. But it also supports the argument made in 9.2 that employment is not only meant for the maintenance of just one person, but serves for the maintenance of more persons.

Figure 3: observed monthly wages in the automotive sector (n=23), preferred start salary respondents (n=19), maintenance cost for 1 person household (n=19) and maintenance costs for a 4 person household (n=19). Amounts in SLR x 1.000



9.4 Hypotheses

From the interviews with current workers in Polonnaruwa’s automotive business, several hypotheses arose why the sector failed to attract youth. This ranged between simple things, such as that youth want to earn more money than the business has to offer, towards remarks of decadent behavior, like youth do not want to work without air conditioning, or want to go to work only in a suit. These statements were converted into hypotheses, and subsequently put to the test while interviewing youth. The answers to the hypotheses could be answered with a yes, or a no (on rare occasions a neutral was allowed). As a consequence, a Z-test for proportions can be used to determine if the general stance towards the hypothesis is neutral. For this confidence intervals of 99%, as well as 95% were calculated. All hypotheses that were either accepted or rejected are presented in Table 12 on the next page. See Appendix 5 for the complete questionnaire.

In this case, if a hypothesis is confirmed, or rejected, this does not mean that they are necessarily true. It means that the stance of all respondents put together is not neutral, and inclines towards a more positive stance (if the hypothesis is confirmed) or a more negative stance (if the hypothesis is rejected). Since the sample was not selected randomly, nor aselect, the conclusions are only applicable to the youth interviewed. Nevertheless, some hypotheses were statistically accepted or rejected with a 99% confidence interval. This makes these conclusions rather plausible to be applicable to a bigger group. One could think of all young men living in impoverished communities in Polonnaruwa, young men in rural parts of Sri Lanka, or even youth in general in Sri Lanka.

Table 12: Hypotheses considering employment youth (N=20)

Nr.	Hypothesis	1/2 questions	% agree	99% CI ³⁰	95% CI ³¹
1	Money is the most important aspect of employment	2	96	Confirmed	Confirmed
2	It is important to have a job with job security	2	95	Confirmed	Confirmed
3	Social status is the most important aspect of employment	2	90	Confirmed	Confirmed
4	Tertiary education is necessary for finding a good job	2	89	Confirmed	Confirmed
5	It is important to have a job with a pension scheme	2	73	Confirmed	Confirmed
6	Starting to earn right away at employment is important	2	73	Confirmed	Confirmed
7	It is important to work with air conditioning	2	25	Rejected	Rejected
8	It is important to have a clean job	2	14	Rejected	Rejected
9	If I can, I want to work abroad	1	90	Confirmed	Confirmed
10	I want to stay in Sri Lanka for work	1	90	Confirmed	Confirmed
11	I want to work with my hands	1	78	Neutral	Confirmed
12	I want to stay in Polonnaruwa for work	1	75	Neutral	Confirmed
13	It is important to work on a computer	1	28	Neutral	Rejected
14	It is important to work in a suit	1	24	Neutral	Rejected
15	The size of the company I work is not important	1	23	Neutral	Rejected
16	I care how I look when going to work	1	15	Rejected	Rejected

9.4.1 Money & education

As Hypothesis 1 of Table 12 indicates, money was overwhelmingly seen as the most important aspect of employment (96% of the respondents gave positive answers towards this hypothesis). As a 21-year old respondent put it: “Money is the only thing that is important, the rest does not matter”. It appears that to a large share of this group is not really interested in what kind of work they do, where they do it, or under what circumstances, as long as the pay is good. As indicated in 9.3, this is partly explained by the fact that young males are under pressure for attaining a good income in order to maintain their parental and/or own family.

As a result, most respondents found it also important to start earning right away when employed (Hypothesis 6). This clashes with the culture of the automotive sector since unpaid apprenticeships in the first 6-12 months are usual. An investment that not all people are willing/able to make. A 23-year old military engineer said that he would have liked to work as a mechanic in a garage, “but I needed money fast, so I choose for this work [of military engineer]. If I could switch now I would do so, since you can make more money [working in a garage]. But my contract at the army will last for another 17 years.”

Having a family, or being of a certain age, prevents most of the youth from following extra education. The same goes for official tertiary courses. As Hypothesis 4 (73%) indicates, tertiary education was found important by the

³⁰ 99% confidence interval, $p=0,5$, $n=20$, $Z=2,58$. Averages at 80% or higher are confirmed, averages at 20% or lower are rejected with 1 question. At 2 questions ($n=40$), averages of 71% or higher are confirmed, averages at 29% or lower are rejected.

³¹ 95% confidence interval, $p=0,5$, $n=20$, $Z=1,96$. Averages at 72% or higher are confirmed, averages at 28% or lower are rejected with 1 question. At 2 questions ($n=40$), averages of 66% or higher are confirmed, averages at 34% or lower are rejected.

larger share of the respondents. Yet only one of the twenty respondents possessed a tertiary education certificate. A jobless 21-year old respondent said that “I have had enough education, I am 21-years old now, I need to work”. When asked why, the young man remained silent and blushed. Others present at the interview said that the reason was that he had a girlfriend to which he wanted to propose. Another 23-year old respondent said that “I have got a family now, so I have got no time [to waste on/] for education, I need to work and earn money”.

When posed with the dilemma of following extra education, or starting work, it seems most young males interviewed picked the latter. It looks like most of them cannot make the investment of losing a year’s salary (or more) because of the inability to work whilst studying. They are either under pressure by their parental family to start working directly after secondary education (three respondents stated that they started working at 16 years old because of family economic issues), feel the pressure to work in order to be able to propose to their girlfriends, or because they already have their own family and need to maintain them.

9.4.2 Migration

As a consequence, most youth (90%) indicated that they would like to go abroad for work if they could (Hypothesis 9). When asked why, all (except for one IT-student that mentioned higher living standards) responded: because of the better money. So how would they succeed in finding work in another country? It appeared that most respondents did not really have a thought-out plan. They would wait for “a chance” to go abroad. Though the desire to work outside of Sri Lanka is there, it seems that most are not active in their pursuit of reaching this goal. To the question: “What kind of work would you like to do abroad?”, most responded in a fashion of “whatever job I can do”. This again indicates that working abroad is purely fixed on attaining a higher income than what Sri Lanka has to offer.

Paradoxically, the same proportion (90%) of respondents that wanted to go abroad for work indicated that they would prefer to remain in Sri Lanka for work as well (Hypothesis 10). The respondents, when posed why, would respond that if they could find a decent income in Sri Lanka, they would not move. Hence their plan was to go abroad for a couple of years, save money, and then return to Sri Lanka again. Several respondents already working in the automotive sector have done a similar thing. First they worked for several years in the Gulf States or East Asia, upon return they saved enough money to start their own shop. In fact, the owners of three of the five biggest companies visited have all spent several years abroad. This is the perfect example of how migration can actually be a catalyst for local development, and thus challenges the theory of Fields (1975).

9.4.3 Job security & pension scheme

Table 12 also gives valuable insights into what labour standards youth were looking for. Job security (Hypothesis nr. 2) was (95%) overwhelmingly found an important aspect of employment. A 19-year old mason indicated that he would be very interested to work as a vehicle-wiring technician, since this would provide him with a steadier income than the project-based income of working in construction: “Companies pay you per day. Sometimes you have work for six weeks in a row, and then nothing for four weeks.” A similar argument was made by a 28-year old junior mechanic. He indicated that he switched to this job from being a carpenter, since “as a carpenter, I depend on projects. Most of my classmates went to Colombo since there is a lot of work. Because of family reasons I stayed in Polonnaruwa, and here are less projects. As a mechanic [in Polonnaruwa] you have a more steady income, since almost all household in Sri Lanka now have got a vehicle.”

Besides job security, having a job with a pension scheme (Hypothesis 5) was also found important by the respondents (73%). This was especially the case with younger respondents. Respondents already employed in the private sector found the pension scheme less important. As a 24-year old generator operator indicated “I have only [completed] O-level. I will not find a government job with that. So I will not get a job with a good pension

scheme, [since the] private sector has got no pension schemes. So the ETF³² is fine.” The same argument was made by a 22-year old fisherman: “Of course pension schemes are important, but this is not available in the private sector.”

Government jobs are attractive exactly because of these two labour conditions; the pension scheme and job security. It is interesting to see that most younger respondents aspire a government job, but that afterwards (when already working) most seem to accept the fact that they will probably not find a job in this sector. Especially since having good connections is paramount in getting a government job. As a 21-year old respondent said that “In Sri Lanka this [finding a government job] is dependent on political connections. Without having a political friend, there is no hope of a good job here [in the government sector]”, and another 23-year old electrician said that “Not all can have the high-end jobs” when referring to working for the government. Yet a 19-year old jobless respondent still had good hopes since “[my family] has a friend [in the government] that can help with finding a job” and another 18-year old still in school expected it to be “easy to find a job in the government”, also without having a connection.

9.4.4 Smart life & social status

So what about the smart life? Do young respondents really find it important to work with a computer, go to work in a suit and work with an AC? As Hypotheses 7, 13 & 14 in Table 12 indicate, these aspects were not found important. As long as the money is good, they were prepared to work under whatever conditions in whatever clothes. So do youth not want to work with their hands anymore, and they do they care if they get dirty while working? Again respondents replied as shown by Hypotheses 11 & 8, that this is not the case. Most respondents (78%) would actually like to work with their hands, and only 14% found it important to have a clean job. So it seems like the reproaches from current workers in the automotive sector do not really apply to the youth of Polonnaruwa.

Nevertheless 90% of the respondents found social status a crucial aspect of employment (Hypothesis 3). This connects to the theory of Chea & Huijsmans (2018) that work is about more than just generating an income, it is also about becoming someone. It contradicts the view that youth are prepared to do anything for good money. There was not a clear conclusion on the fact whether or not working manually in the automotive sector was seen as respectable, or not. An 18-year old respondent still in school mentioned that it “is a respectable job, for which good knowledge is needed, as well as a good brain”, whereas a 29-year old jobless respondent said that he was prepared to do “any kind of work, except cleaning toilets and working in a garage”. Perhaps this dual sentiment was best captured by the 24-year old generator operator, who said that working as a car mechanic “is not really a respectful employment because it is dirty work.” Besides this, workers are prone to “drink and lie. They make a lot of money, but waste it instead of saving. But people need their service anyways, so they are useful.”

The main conclusions that can be drawn from these hypotheses, is that for the respondents money seemed by far the most important aspect of employment, up until the level that respondents are unwilling/unable to invest in future education. As a result, most respondents are drawn towards seeking employment abroad, since in general more money can be made there, though their intention is to return to Sri Lanka after a couple of years. Finding a job with job security and a pension scheme are found very important as well. Income as a mechanic is viewed as a good stable income. Working at the government is much desired by the younger respondents, whereas older respondents are more pessimistic/realistic about their chances of actually landing such a job. The pursuit of a ‘smart life’ of youth does seem to have limited attention, though social status is found crucial by most respondents. Hence, it seems that the best way to attract more young people to work in the automotive sector is to bridge the gap between expected and actual wages as presented in 9.3.

³² The ETF (Equity Tracker Fund) is a fund that is obliged to when formally employed. Employers pay 8% of the monthly wage of the worker to this fund, the worker pays about 4%. After retiring this fund is returned to the worker, with interest.

9.5 Relation youth attitudes to VTC

Youth attention towards working in the automotive sector is not as limited as the current workers would have it. Though the conditions are not as good when compared to working for the government, the automotive sector is seen by some youth respondents as a good source of employment, with good job security and reasonable income. Others see it as dirty work, for people of bad morale. The most important aspect for youth however seems to be the money. It is the current starting wages and the (unpaid) first 6-12 months that repulse most potential young workers. An investment that not many can make, for the same reason they cannot afford the investment to follow tertiary education: they need to start working to provide for their parental family, or their own.

The largest share of the respondents (89%) agreed that following tertiary education is crucial in finding a good job, yet only one of the respondents had received tertiary education, and only one will start in the following year. Besides the financial aspect, it seems that the lack of current youth following tertiary education has also got to do with the current supply in the region. The supply is currently limited; only minor-level courses can be taken at the local Technical College. So youth will have to travel/live in other cities such as Kurunegala, Colombo or Kandy to receive tertiary education. Besides missing the income for not working, even more money has to be spent to cover these expenses. Having a VTC in Polonnaruwa will significantly lower this barrier, making it possible for youngsters to live at home (thus not spending extra money on travel and living costs) and follow a tertiary education course.

10. Attitudes towards migration

In order for the automotive sector to lead to regional economic development in Polonnaruwa, it is important that the workers stay in the area to develop their economic activities. If current workers are only working here in order to be able to land a job in a bigger city, or abroad, the automotive sector will have a limited effect on regional (economic) development, and the negative cycle as presented in Figure 1 will continue. However, the as already briefly mentioned in 9.4.2, this outmigration may have positive effects on the long-term. This chapter first provides general numbers on Sri Lankan (international) migration, with special attention towards the Sri Lankan diaspora. Afterwards, it will look into the migration tracks of the respondents, as well as their desired destinations in the future.

10.1 General numbers

A big number of Sri Lankan nationals live abroad. Out of a population of 21 million, approximately 3 million reside in a foreign country (that makes 1 in 8). It is estimated that 1.8 million Sri Lankans are expatriate workers, for which the Gulf States are the prime destination. Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Kuwait and Qatar host a total of 1,3 million Sri Lankan nationals. Other important destinations are India, France, Canada, the United Kingdom and Australia. Migration towards these countries has a more permanent nature. A big part of this group consists of Tamil refugees who fled the country during the Sri Lankan civil war. As a result, expatriate workers are the country's biggest source of foreign exchange earnings, accounting for 47.3% in 2010 (Sunday Times, 2010).

10.2 Expatriate workers

Most of Sri Lankan expatriate workers perform manual labour abroad. This goes especially for the Gulf States, where the main sectors of employment are household work (primarily for female workers), construction, and other sorts of low-skilled work. In Korea and Japan, employment is mainly found within factories. Special government programs exist to select and send Sri Lankan workers to the factories abroad, where they gain a monthly salary of approximately 300.000 SLR, literally ten times as much as they would get paid as for example a government security guard. This partly explains why, as will be argued later on in this paragraph, these countries are a desired destination to go and work.

For those that work abroad, working conditions can be rather harsh. In 2010, 460 expatriate workers died abroad. The Sri Lankan foreign ministry states that most deaths are caused by issues related to weather conditions and food. However, 30% of the deaths are due to unnatural causes, such as accidents, suicides and murders (Sunday Times, 2010). This number might be higher however, since a 2008 (Edirisinghe, et. al., 2008) autopsy review showed that only 51% of the autopsies revealed a cause of death. After reviewing the bodies in Sri Lanka, this number rose to 69%, and 40% of all causes of death were trauma related. Especially household workers face a lot of violence and abuse by their patrons. In early 2018, a new controversy reached the national news when it became known that recruiters order Sri Lankan women to take birth control before working abroad (The Guardian, 2018). According to some, the goal is threefold. Firstly, it provides insurance to costumers of recruitment agencies that the worker is not pregnant and will thus be able to perform their work. Secondly, birth control makes women vulnerable towards abuse by the recruitment agents. Thirdly it serves to cover up sexual abuse by employers. As one expert claims in the article; “When a woman goes abroad, it’s implicit she’s going to be sexually active” (The Guardian, 2018).

It seems that the Sri Lankan government turns a blind eye towards the abuses their foreign workers experience. They exert little actual control over the recruitment agencies, and most of the times the suspects of abusive crimes go unpunished. This is partly due by the fact that Sri Lanka has not got much weight in their negotiations vis-à-vis richer and more powerful countries such as Saudi Arabia, but also by the fact that they are heavily dependent on the amount of foreign exchange earnings these workers bring in. Besides this, working abroad helps to combat national unemployment. On the other hand, the export of manual labour causes a deficit at a national level, which partly explains the lack of vocational workers signaled by the ILO. The next part of this chapter will elaborate on the migratory movements of the interviewed automotive workforce of Polonnaruwa; are they, just like the interviewed youth, focused on finding employment abroad?

10.3 Migration track respondents automotive sector

In order to have substantial data for the respondents’ migratory movements, all respondents were asked where they were born, raised (“Where did you attend school?”) and live at the moment. Furthermore, they were asked whether they have spent significant time in other places. Afterwards all respondents were asked the questions: “Do you want to stay where you live right now, or leave?” subsequently “Why?”. This data is summarized in Table 13. Eventually two paths surge towards living in Polonnaruwa: the straight one, as well as the bent one.

10.3.1 Straight road to living in Polonnaruwa: the importance of kinship and personal network

At the moment of doing research, all respondents were living either in the direct research area, or Polonnaruwa district. The brief conclusion that can be drawn from this, is that working in Polonnaruwa does not appear logical/attractive while living in another district. By using Table 13, we can figure out how most respondents ended up in Polonnaruwa (district). 20 respondents out of 31 were born in the area. 3 more respondents, were not born in the area but moved here at a young age to attend school. Hence 23 out of 31 respondents had limited own agency towards choosing to live in the area. Eventually 13 respondents indicated that their main reason of remaining in Polonnaruwa, was because they were (born and) raised there. It appears that a lot of value is attached towards one’s place of birth. As one respondent put it “I will stay here [Polonnaruwa]. This is the house where my parents lived, where I was born, where I raise my son, and where I will stay until I die”. When the respondents were asked why they would like to stay at the place where they were born, kinship and friends were the main reasons mentioned.

The 8 respondents that came to the area after their school period had three reasons to do so: work (5), marriage (2), and war (1). Those who moved to the area for work did not do so independently. On four occasions a friend, or family member, invited them to come and work at their store. In three cases, these respondents started an own shop after this initial phase. Two respondents moved to Polonnaruwa because of marriage, for which they moved

in with their wife, and subsequently found a job in the region. On one occasion, the respondent had to leave his natal place because of war-related violence.

The bigger conclusion one can draw from the picture as painted above, is that kinship and the personal network play a crucial role in the place to live: in 29 out of 31 cases, this is the reason for (initial) establishment. In only two cases was the choice triggered by another cause. In one of these cases it was forced by war. In the other the respondent found a job at a big company, without any ties in the area.

10.3.2 Bent road to living in Polonnaruwa

It would be short-sighted to assume that all workers road towards living in Polonnaruwa would be as straight as indicated above. As Table 13 indicates, 11 respondents lived a significant phase of their lives in another place, and came to Polonnaruwa afterwards. Three groups can be distinguished; those that went to a bigger city (Colombo in this case) for studies, respondents that worked elsewhere in the country and a third group who went to work abroad.

Out of the group who went to Colombo for their studies (4 persons in total), 2 indicated that they did so since educational opportunities in Polonnaruwa were/are limited. After coming back to Polonnaruwa, they found good employment. One started his own business, the other one became the manager of a big workshop. The other two who followed a course in Colombo were not prevenient from Polonnaruwa, but respectively Chilaw and Kurunegala, and went to Colombo for similar reasons as the other two respondents. One ended up in Polonnaruwa by his marriage, the other one through the invitation to work at his brother-in-law's store. Considering those that have worked elsewhere in the country (also 4 in total), 2 were born and raised in Polonnaruwa. One went to his uncle's shop in Kandy to learn the trade and returned to Polonnaruwa after having mastered this. The other 2 were working in other parts of the country before coming to Polonnaruwa (after recommendations of friends that business was good here). Both now run their own store.

Another interesting group is that of people who have worked abroad before settling in Polonnaruwa. Respondents in this research went to respectively Oman (to work with air conditioning, 5 years), Qatar (vehicle workshop, 5 years), the United Arab Emirates (housemaid, 10 years), and South-Korea (garment industry, 8 years). Their main reason to do so was, as expected, money. When asked if they would like to return, all respondents preferred to remain in Sri Lanka. Probably because the time abroad has proven fruitful for their employment; all these workers have grown out to be shop owners in Polonnaruwa. The respondent who went to Qatar, when asked if he would like to return, replied that "My income here is better. Here I am my own boss." Another respondent also stressed the importance of being her own boss "I can decide my own hours, close and open my shop when I want to."

It appears that in their cases working abroad had a rather emancipatory effect. From simple manual workers in other countries, they grew out to become shop owners at home. In fact; three out of the five biggest employing companies of this research were founded by workers that spent several years abroad. After this significant phase in another country, they raised enough money and knowledge in order to start their own business in Sri Lanka. This makes for rethinking the theoretical framework as presented in Figure 1 and the basic theory presented by Fields (1975). Instead of a local dynamic between urban and rural, the dynamic observed in Sri Lanka is an international one between countries. Higher wages abroad are a driving force for outmigration, which in its turn can lead to more employment at home. In this way, outmigration actually serves the local economy. On the other hand, it can be said that the same outmigration is harmful to the local economy because of the loss of work force. Indeed half of the respondents noted that there is a lack of manual labour in Polonnaruwa, partly caused by migration.

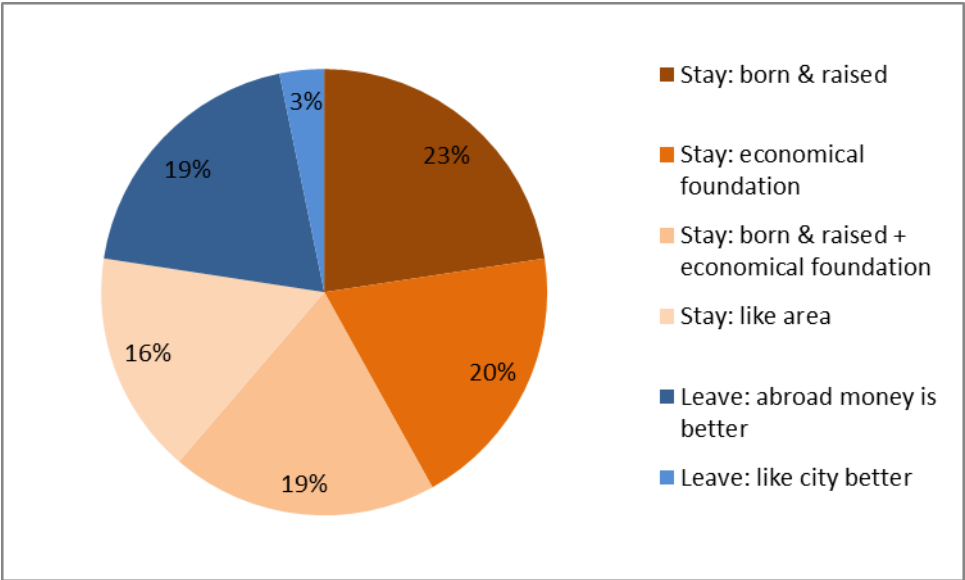
10.3.4 Future destinations

One of the final questions of the questionnaires was: "Would you like to stay living in Polonnaruwa? Or leave? Why?" Most respondents indicated that they are inclined to stay (24 out of 31). The answers were founded on

social and economic arguments. As indicated in Graph 11 and Table 13, three reasons were given to stay in Polonnaruwa; being born (and raised) in the area, having one’s economic base in Polonnaruwa, or liking the area. Being (born and) raised in the area is a more social argument to remain in Polonnaruwa, since the answer always went hand in hand with having one’s friends and family living in the area. Born and raised was often mentioned in combination with an economic reason, namely having the economic base in Polonnaruwa. This economic base is mentioned in the form of one’s clientele being located in the area, or the ownership of a plot of land (with a shop, paddy fields, or a house) in Polonnaruwa. A 36-year old tuning shop owner remarked that “I recently opened up my own shop, and my clientele live in the area.” The 35-year old owner of a tinker company said that “I just bought a plot of land close by, and hope to open up my own shop in two years’ time”.

These two arguments, social ties and the economic base, form the lion’s share of the reasons to stay. A third argument, is that of respondents who indicated to really like the area. One respondent that lived for 20 years in the area said that “I lived here for a long period, and like the people and place in general”. Another mentions ”I like the city and the nature. There are good people here, and I have got a good job”. A 28-year old mechanic appreciated the good facilities, lack of natural disasters such as tsunamis and landslides, and calmness of Polonnaruwa.

Graph 11: Mentioned reasons to stay or leave Polonnaruwa. N=31



7 out of 31 respondents indicated that, when given the option, they would rather leave Polonnaruwa. The biggest share (6) would like to work abroad. The preferred destination would be Japan, South-Kore or the EU. 2 respondents replied that they wanted to go “Anywhere” abroad for work. After asking; where specifically, they did not give a further specification about which country/region exactly. When asked what the main reason was for these 6 respondents to go abroad, the unilateral answer was money. Most of them are employed in the lesser-earning branches within the automotive sector, that of service mechanic and tire changer.³³ Their income hovers between 20.000 – 30.000 SLR on a monthly basis. Enough for a decent living for one person, as Figure 3 shows. However, these respondents had an own family with wife and children to take care of. To meet these needs, the income is simply perceived as not enough. Several years abroad could help solve money issues in their opinion, after which they can return to their families again. Furthermore, these respondents were in the age group 18-38, thus relatively young. They do not own a business, or a significant plot of land which ties them to Polonnaruwa.

Besides having the desire, these respondents do not have a clear end on how to reach their goal. Their objective to go abroad seems to stem out of general dissatisfaction with current living conditions, rather than a calculated strategy. At this moment, it seems unlikely for several reasons that these respondents will get a job abroad in the near future. Firstly because of the lack of initial capital. In order to go abroad one needs to pay for a ticket (3/4

³³ See Table 11 for further specifications of income in this line of work.

monthly wages), a fee to the recruitment agency, visa costs and sometimes a guarantee as well. Besides this, for some abroad it is necessary to present official certificates of courses. 4 of the 6 respondents have only finished their GCE O-level, which is (partly) the reason they are employed in a more low-end job in the first place. One 18-year old respondent, who already has a (minor) certificate as a motorcycle mechanic, might be able to land a job abroad. He plans to follow a course in vehicle wiring, and would subsequently be able to use his brother's network (who already worked there) in South-Korea to find foreign employment. The other 5 respondents will be more dependent on their luck.

Considering the ample literature on the topic, one would expect a lot of younger respondents (14 of the workers interviewed were in the age group 18 to 35) to go and work in a bigger city for the so-called 'bright lights lifestyle' (Chea & Huijsmans, 2018). Nevertheless, there was only 1 respondent who indicated that he preferred to live in a bigger city, since "It [Kandy] is a nice place to live, there are lots of things to do, and there is a lot of people there". A possible explanation for the relative absence of youth that wants to go the bigger cities, could be that those desiring said lifestyle have already left for the city, or that they are not employed in the automotive sector in general (corresponding with the earlier mentioned 'pursuit of a smart life' by the younger generations). A respondent that was formerly educated and working as a carpenter indicated that better money is to be made in Colombo. All his former classmates were employed in construction projects in the capital and were making between 40.000 to 70.000 SLR a month, according to their working skills. A lot more than the 28.000 monthly SLR the respondent was making. If it were not for some family issues in Polonnaruwa, this respondent would probably have worked there as well. A final explanation could be that the theories around 'bright lights' are not really applicable to the national context of Sri Lanka.

Table 13: Migration tracks respondents

Legend by Table 13				
Places of residence			Reason to stay or leave	
Code	Area	Definition	Code	Reason
1	Polonnaruwa (research area)	As described in chapter 2.1	A	Born & raised
2	Polonnaruwa district	Other localities within Polonnaruwa district, except for the area as described in chapter 2.1	B	Has own shop/clientele/land
3	Other small city in Sri Lanka	Mentioned are: Chilaw, Habarana, Kurunegala, Matara, Ratnapura & Trincomalee	C	Lived for a long time and likes area
4	Other big city in Sri Lanka	Mentioned are: Colombo & Kandy	D	Better money is to be made abroad
5	Gulf States	Oman, Qatar & UAE	E	More to do in bigger city
6	East-Asia	Japan & South-Korea		
7	EU			
8	Anywhere abroad			
X	Not applicable	When significant time spent in another place is not mentioned		

Migration tracks respondents						
<i>Respondent</i>	<i>Born</i>	<i>Raised</i>	<i>Between</i>	<i>Now</i>	<i>Future</i>	<i>Why?</i>
1	1	1	5	1	1	A
2	3	3	X	1	1	B
3	1	1	X	1	1	B
4	1	1	X	1	6	D
5	1	1	X	1	1	A
6	1	1	X	1	1	A
7	4	4	X	1	1	B
8	1	1	X	1	1	B
9	1	1	X	1	6,7	D
10	1	1	X	1	6,7	D
11	3	3	X	1	1	C
12	4	1	X	1	1	A, B
13	1	1	6	1	1	A, B
14	2	2	X	2	2	A
15	1	1	X	1	1	A, B
16	1	1	4	1	1	A, B
17	1	1	4	1	1	A
18	4	1	X	1	1	A
19	2	2	X	2	2	C
20	4	4	3	1	1	C
21	3	3	4	1	1	C
22	4	2	5	1	2	B
23	2	2	X	2	2	A, B
24	3	3	2	1	1	B
25	2	2	X	2	2	A
26	1	1	4,5	1	1	A, B
27	3	3	4	1	6	D
28	4	4	X	2	2	C
29	1	1	X	1	4	E
30	1	1	3	1	8	D
31	1	1	X	1	8	D

11. Conclusion

All these data lead back to the main question; is the automotive sector a source for decent employment in Polonnaruwa? And what is the role of education in this? To answer these questions, in this research the automotive sector of Polonnaruwa was mapped first. Afterwards, 31 aselect interviews were conducted with employers and employees of 20 businesses in the sector. Finally, 20 more interviews were conducted with males aged 18-30 from the economically less developed zones near Polonnaruwa town. As shown in Figure 2, 6 variables were found key into answering these questions, being the economic conjuncture of the sector, absorption power, skills gap, required skills, working conditions, and attitudes and aspirations. This conclusion will briefly discuss these variables and give answer to the questions as posed above. Afterwards it will give recommendations to solve the mismatch in the labour market between youth and workshop owners, as well as recommendations for future research

Considering the economic conjuncture; the automotive business is doing well. There is a lot of demand for their services and goods since the national vehicle population is ever-rising. By now almost every Sri Lankan family owns a vehicle for the first time in history. The bonanza in the period of 5-10 years ago has cooled down, and sales have relatively dropped, but the general numbers are still on the rise. The amount of shops related to the sector in Polonnaruwa speak for this matter; 140 on a population anywhere between 12.000-40.000. During the investigation period, another 3 shops related to this sector opened their doors. Because Polonnaruwa has a large automotive sector in place, it seems that they comply with Ramasamy's (2016) precondition for vocational education to be effective, namely that it is demand-driven.

As a result, good money can be made working in the sector (especially as a shop owner). The sector could be thriving better though. Most people in Polonnaruwa are still employed in agriculture, so the local economy is largely dependent on the success/failure of harvests. The crop failures of the last years have had a big negative impact on the regional economy. Besides this, they note that government regulations are to be blamed for the slowdown in the automotive sector (through higher import rates and other taxes) and the national economy in general. Nevertheless respondents were largely positive (80%) on the future of the sector.

So what about the ability of the sector to absorb new workers? Most of the work in the automotive business is done manually, especially in the workshops. This makes the sector rather labour intensive, and thus a good sector to absorb labour surplus. Because of new national legislation, all vehicles are to be checked on their emissions on a yearly basis, for which most vehicle owners bring their vehicle to a workshop (before the test, or after when failing the test). This provides for a steady stream of costumers next to the regular ones, and consequently good job security. Half of the companies interviewed were looking for new workers at the moment, or within one year, and 80% of the respondents said that it is difficult to find workers for the sector, especially considering manually labour. They point the finger at the failure to attract younger generations to work in the sector for this, besides the fact that it is difficult to maintain experienced workers.

Does the sector fail to attract youth because of high entry requirements for the sector? Is it for example necessary to have prior education to find a job as a manual worker? The answer is no. There is a big skills gap in the sector; experienced mechanics and technicians are heavily in demand, and difficult to maintain. Finding workers in general is really difficult. As a result, entry requirements are low. Only 2 companies required an official certificate as a technician in order to work in the shop. This makes working in the automotive industry easily accessible. Nevertheless; when starting work, one will have to learn on the job, with and without prior education. This is an unpaid apprenticeship which lasts approximately 6-12 months, depending on the line of work, as well as the competencies of the apprentice. So why bother with extra education, for which precious time has to be invested if you can eventually do the same job without education? For those with prior education, the apprenticeship is shorter as noted by the respondents, and they are able to select from a wider range of companies, and probably will make more money faster than their peers without prior education.

When looking at the working conditions as a manual labourer in the automotive industry, opinions are divided. When compared to construction work, farming and fishing, working as (for example) a technician in a workshop

seems to be a more resilient job. There is a steady flow of work, and no environmental dependency. Income is good for experienced workers, as well as shop owners. However when starting or inexperienced, little money is earned for a period of a couple of years. An investment that few people can/are willing to make. Besides this, working in a workshop is dirty, occasionally dangerous (when working with machinery) and there is a lack of job security when one grows old or gets ill. It is these working conditions that cause the mismatch on the labour market between the youth and manual work in the automotive business, according to current workers. They maintain that youth want a 'smart life', work on a computer, with air conditioning, in a suit, preferably for the government. Getting dirty while working, or working with hands, is a no-go for these youngsters. A mismatch with the attitudes and aspirations and youth so to speak.

From interviewing 20 young males, it appeared that there is actually limited interest for a 'smart life'. For them, only one thing counts; making a good amount of money. It appears that it does not seem to matter where, how, what, and if they like or dislike the work, as long as it earns well. The pressure to earn good money does not only come from one's pursuit to maximize income but also from familial spheres. One is expected to maintain the parental family, as well as making enough money to start/maintain one's own family. It is true that most of the youth are interested in working a smart job at an office, but most of them are also realistic; not everybody can do the high-end jobs. Hence they are very willing to work manually and do not care if they get dirty while working, as long as the pay is good. Some of them also explicitly mentioned that they would like to work as a vehicle mechanic.

Then what causes the mismatch on the labour market between the youth and the automotive sector? Again, money seems the key issue. Firstly there is a big gap between the money one can earn when starting in the automotive business, and what youth would like to earn. Eventually good money can be made, but most are not able/willing to make the investment of time and money. Especially the unpaid apprenticeship is an issue. Besides this, working as a manual labourer in this sector has a dubious reputation; the work is dirty, and workers are unreliable, tend to drink and fight, as well as waste their money. For the biggest share of the youth, having a respectable job is found key, so this is another main cause of the mismatch.

As Chun & Watanabe (2013) have argued; diversification of income is crucial in countering rural poverty and stimulating the local economy. In the case of Polonnaruwa, the automotive sector seems a good area for this diversification. At the moment the biggest share of the population is employed in the farming and fishing industries. These industries have a restrained absorption capacity for the rural workforce, mainly caused by environmental limitations. Farmers are heavily dependent on climate for their harvest, which proved troublesome in the last years. Just as fishermen, the ecological limits of their work are being met, for which other lines of work are necessary to create resilient incomes. The automotive sector seems perfect to create more resilient incomes, and diversify the regional economy. Of course not all farmers can become motor parts salesmen and fishermen tuktuk-technicians. But as Dev (2007) has pointed out, the ability to earn income from non-farm employment is crucial to become less dependent on rural gains and strengthen the local economy. Furthermore, the sector can absorb rural surplus workforce that otherwise would go work abroad, or in other cities.

So what is the role of education in employment in the automotive sector? As mentioned, entry requirements for manual labour in the automotive sector are (very) low. Little to no experience is required. Those who possess official certificates note that they can easily find work, pick out better sites, learn and work faster than peers without, and thus get paid more money faster than those without prior education. But they still have to go through the same unpaid training phase, as it appears that this training phase is not interchangeable with a course at an educational facility. So the incentive to follow a course might be not so big. However, respondents note that certificates are increasingly important because of the recent 'officialization' of working skills. Having a certificate might not be important for working activities right now, but in the near future it might be. Besides this, official skills certificates are important to land government and big company contracts or starting an own shop. Furthermore, official certificates greatly help with doing work abroad since it increases the chance of getting a working visa.

Migration is and will be key in solving employment issues, as well as bringing regional economic development. The current workforce is (mostly) keen on staying in Polonnaruwa, whereas most of the youth will leave the country if they have the chance. Education can play an important role in these dynamics; on the one hand it allows for finding better employment within Sri Lanka, as it does increase the possibilities to find work abroad. As long as there exists a (big) gap in wages between Sri Lanka and other countries, foreign countries will remain an attractive destination for most. Though it has been argued that outmigration does not lead to sustainable change in the regional economy, this study found interesting examples of workers that founded thriving companies after spending several years abroad. This provides an argument for migration as a tool of regional economic development, and counters the image painted by Fields (1975) that migration will only lead to further economic depression. This study has found that the system painted by Fields is more than a local one between rural and urban, and also functions internationally. On an international scale, migration can actually be a powerful catalyst of local economic development. However, the cases found are only the success stories.

At the current moment, several recommendations can be made to improve the employment situation in Polonnaruwa's automotive sector. Firstly, dialogue between workshop owners and unemployed youth could be very useful. Workshop owners are in search of a reliable workforce, unemployed youth of a (decent paying) job. It seems that there exists a lot of incomprehension on both sides. On the one hand employers accuse the youth of being decadent, only wanting to have a smart job. On the other hand, youth have little comprehension for the fact that apprenticeships are unpaid, and pay is low in general for the first couple of years. Dialogue between both sides could lead to clear agreements on salary, and mutual understanding. In its turn this can lead to good employment with a sufficient income for the youth, and a reliable workforce for the workshop owners.

Secondly, the most important reason why government jobs are found more interesting than automotive jobs, is that government jobs provide more job security and a pension scheme. When a vehicle technician gets old or ill, there is nothing to support him. It seems that the sector would be much helped by a collective employment agreement, which guarantees a minimum-wage, and some sort of back-up in case of the inability to work. This might be hard to realize, since the sector in Polonnaruwa is largely characterized by its informal character. Besides this, the Global South in general does not seem to be the best ecosystem for such Dutch ideals on employment to take root. However, a 'light' version of a collective employment agreement, guaranteeing only a minimum wage for example, might be feasible.

When looking towards the planned VTC in Polonnaruwa, one can conclude that the planned automotive school connects to the local economy. Though there are little big companies present, there are about 140 smaller shops that can provide the VTC with knowledge (and vice versa), as well as places where graduates could find internships and/or employment. However, at this very moment tertiary education is not a requirement in order to find employment in the automotive sector. The VTC will probably replace the current system in place, where one learns the necessary skills on the job. It has the positive side of professionalization and tightened state control on education, but also the negative side that it will become more difficult in the future for those without education (because they cannot afford it) to find employment.

The main reason youth are disinterested in working in the sector, is the level of the wages. Vocational training can lead to higher wages, especially with jobs that have longer learning curves (and as a result have higher incomes). This does not mean that everybody can switch from being an uneducated low-earning tire changer towards being an educated high-earning engine mechanic. But having an official certificate certainly improves one's bargaining power vis a vis employers, as well as the ability to find employment outside of one's personal network or locality. Education thus has an emancipatory function. Furthermore, vocational training legitimizes having an own shop (from which most money can be made), though it does not provide starting capital. The most important point is however that the planned VTC will make tertiary education accessible for those that cannot afford it at the moment. It is not to be expected that all high school graduates or drop-outs will be extremely excited to start a course, but there is a share of current youth that want to follow extra education (outside the limited courses offered by the local technical school), but lack the opportunity due to the fact that they will have to travel too far or live in another city to do so, for which they lack both money and time.

To conclude, there are two specific areas of interest for future research. Considering the effectiveness of vocational education in Sri Lanka, there is a great opportunity to do research. Three years ago, the University of Vocational Technology in Anuradhapura (UVTA) started with their curriculum. By now, the first batches of students are graduating. It is very interesting to see if these recent graduates get jobs, where they find work, how much they will get paid, etc. and compare these to students that went to 'classical' universities and others that did a lower vocational training. This can provide a case that argues for or against such institutions of higher vocational training. The researcher has had personal contact with the director of the UVTA, who himself is also very interested in said research and will probably want to help out. Most probably, the planned VTC in Polonnaruwa will have a similar character, and can thus provide valuable information for the project in Polonnaruwa as well.

Besides the effectiveness of vocational training in finding employment, this research has also found an interesting opening in the debate around migration as a tool of development. As mentioned, several shop owners worked abroad, and were able to start their own shop with the money earned over there. These shops grew out to be the more successful of all the shops interviewed. Sri Lanka provides a very interesting case study in studying the outcomes of migratory workers, since there is a lot of eagerness to work abroad, but also to return and invest in the home country. Who eventually finds work abroad? What are key factors in doing so? For how much time do they stay? In which sectors do they find work? And most importantly; what are the consequences at home? What happens with the remittances sent back home? Are the cases found in this study exemplary, or just a lucky few? This research is just a first touch of the water on the topics of employment, manual labour, education and migration in Sri Lanka. A lot of research still remains to be done in these areas, for which this thesis indicates several interesting directions.

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Appendix A: Discussion

A few points of this research remain up for discussion, being several moral aspects, the credibility of the results, cooperation with the translator and thorough understanding of the participants. Considering moral aspects, the researcher found it difficult to position himself in the field at first. As mentioned in 4.4, the research officially lacked legality. Of course it is difficult to get through the Sri Lankan bureaucratic machine in obtaining the right paperwork, which might not be worth the effort considering the fact that the research was merely 3-months fieldwork for a master thesis, on a topic that is not that sensitive. Probably the main idea behind a research visa is to gain more foreign currency, since a research visa would cost about 350 USD, versus 40 USD for a tourist visa. But consciously ignoring the advice of the Sri Lankan diplomatic corps is against most of the ethical standards we were taught at university. As a consequence it did not feel right to do something 'illegal'.

Next to this moral aspect, the credibility of results is also up for discussion. Though the shops visited were (largely) selected randomly and aselect, it might be that the wrong criteria were chosen to make this selection. The method chosen aimed to give a wide range of opinions on the topic, which thus might not be as representative to the whole of Polonnaruwa's automotive sector. Also it proved that the register made by the researcher was not as complete as thought at first hand. However, the method chosen might not have been ideal, but the best possible under the local circumstances.

Besides the method of selection of companies, the interviewing phase is also up for discussion. On several occasions the interviews did not take place privately between three persons (the respondent, translator and interviewer), but more people were present. These were mostly people passing by, other employees or customers. At the very moment this did not seem to hinder the process, though sometimes these fourth persons would mix into the conversation. In hindsight it might have been better for the purity of the research to have done these interviews more privately, since the fourth persons sometimes distracted from the actual interview. Besides this, they could have had an influencing effect on the answers given. In Sri Lankan society most things happen out in the open, and people are free to wander in and off in most places. Having the interview in private might have uneased the respondents, or raise suspicion amongst others. Since the topics discussed in the interview were not deemed too sensitive, the researcher valued the interviewee feeling at ease higher than privacy.

Another point open for debate, is the cooperation with the translator. The translator found was the best possible option, considering the fact that few people actually master the English language in Polonnaruwa, and it is even more difficult to find an English speaker that could make time for interviews. Clear agreements were made with the translator that his function was to merely translate the questions asked by the researcher, and the answers given by the respondent. Sometimes the translator would give his own opinion on a topic, when the researcher would ask the question "Why?" after having heard a response from the interviewee. Besides this, the translator every now and then did not fully understand the questions asked by the researcher, leading to illogical responses to questions. This sometimes complicated understanding what the words were that of the respondent, and what words were those of the translator. And have led to some pollution of the data.

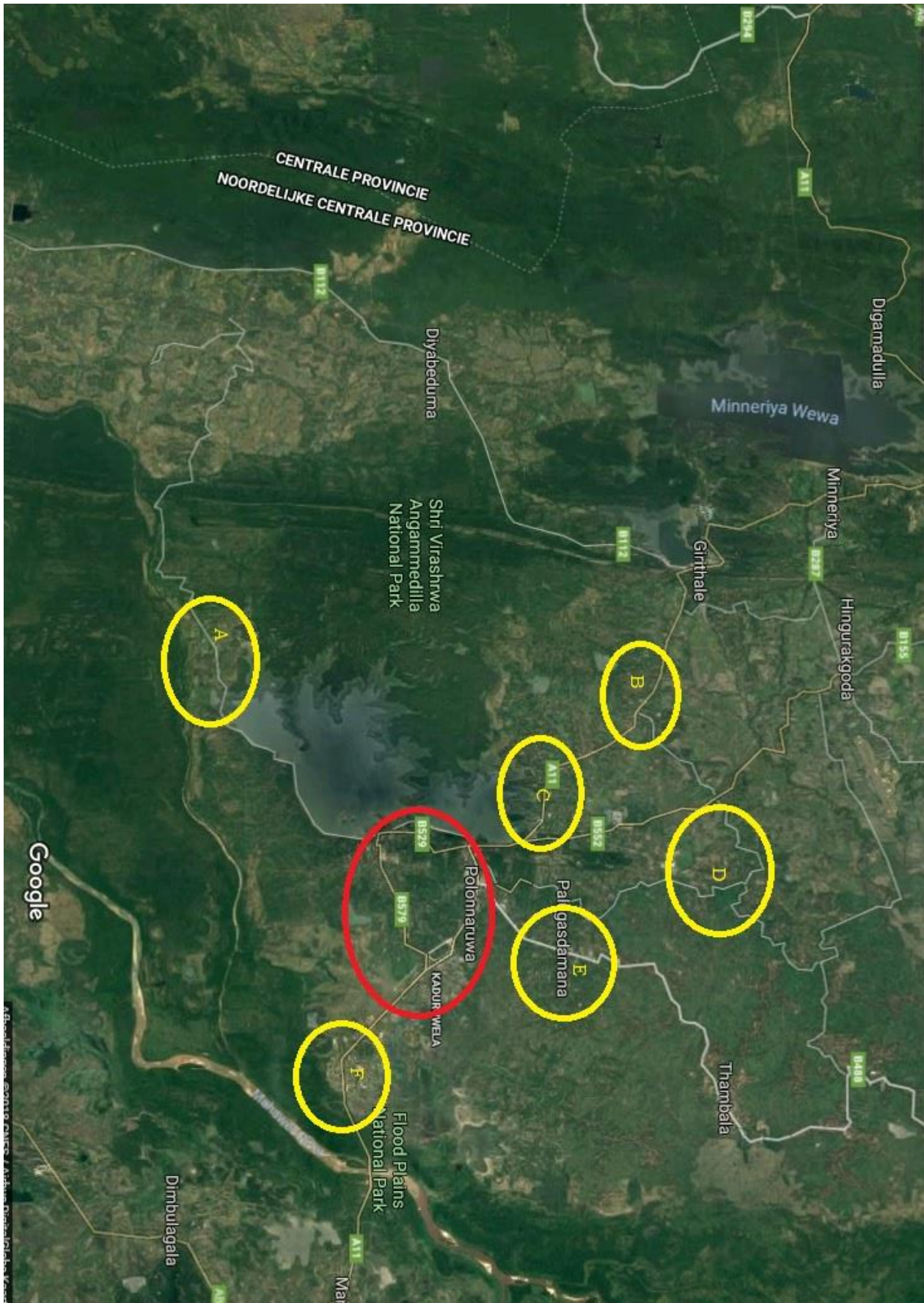
Whether or not the respondents thoroughly understood that they were partaking in an interview for a research, is also disputable. The translator would always give an introduction into the research, and explained what it served for. At the end of every interview respondents were given the opportunity to ask their questions to the interviewer and translator, and a lot of times they asked: "Why are you writing this down?" or "What are you writing down all the time?". Although informed consent was theoretically a ticked box, it appeared that in practice that it was not really the case. In general, respondents found it difficult to understand what the researcher was studying, and why he was in Sri Lanka all by himself, without wife or parents.

A final debatable point is the conceptual understanding of the respondents. It was difficult to ask theoretical questions to the respondents. A brief overview of this would be the following fictional conversation: "If the situation was like A, what would you do?" "Situation now is B, so that does not really apply". By running into

the same problem several times, this was a good realization for the researcher that a lot of academic research is about theoretical situations, with theoretical responses, that do not really apply to day-to-day life (of respondents). People are asked on their opinions on topics, of which they probably have not really thought of before. The more complicated the topic, the bigger the eventual gap will be between stated behavior versus actual behavior. Throughout the research it became clear that the less abstraction from everyday life, the more useful the answers for the research and eventual better understanding. I would thus like to end this thesis with a plea for a return to simplicity when performing fieldwork.

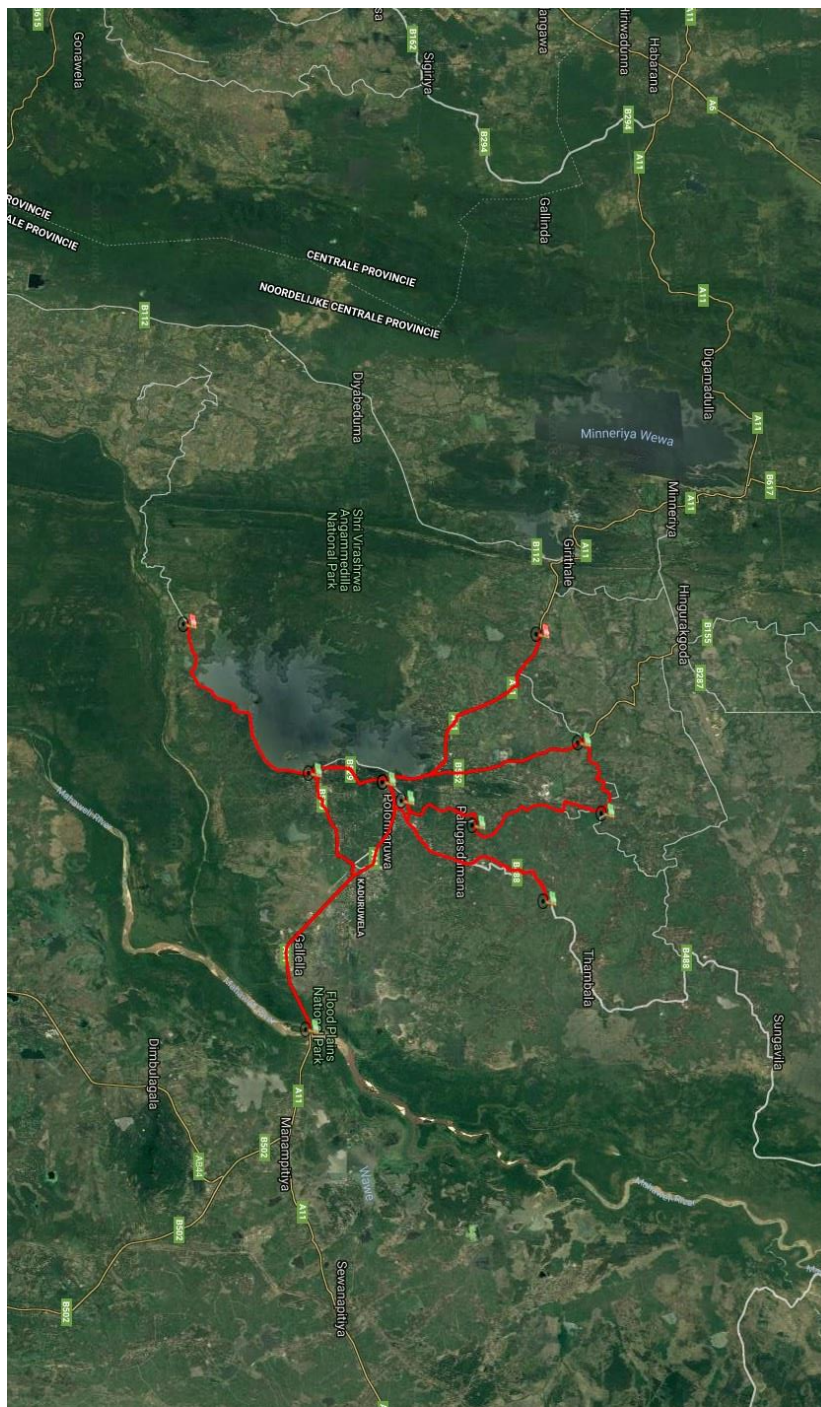
Appendix 1: Map research area

Legend	
Red circle	Urbanized Polonnaruwa, with nuclei of Polonnaruwa, New Town and Kaduruwela
Yellow circles	Nearby villages within direct service area. Polonnaruwa. A: Kalahagala, B: Jayanthipura, C: Bendiwewa, D: Ungalawahera/Lakshauyana, E: Palugasdamana, F: Gallella.



Appendix 2: Covered routes

Route summary	Route	KM covered
KR	From New Town to Kalahagala	13
A11 P-J	from Clock Tower Polonnaruwa to Jayanthipura	9
B552 P-U	from Clock Tower Polonnaruwa to Ungalawehera	6
GR	from Ungalawehera to Clock Tower Polonnaruwa	8
B488	from Clock Tower Polonnaruwa to Palugasdamana	6
A11 P-G	from Clock Tower Polonnaruwa to Gallela	10
B579 K-NT	from Kaduruwela to New Town	5
B529 NT-P	from New Town to Clock Tower Polonnaruwa	3
	Main side streets all routes	5
<i>Total</i>		65



Appendix 3: Register companies automotive industry Polonnaruwa

Definitions used in Register			
Vehicle focus			
<i>Agricultural</i>	Motor driven vehicles meant for agricultural use, such as tractors		
<i>Busses</i>	Large motor driven vehicles designed to carry passengers		
<i>Cars</i>	Four-wheeled motor driven vehicles		
<i>Pick-ups</i>	Light truck with enclosed cab and an open body with low sides and tailgate		
<i>Threewheelers</i>	Three-wheeled motor driven vehicles. Also commonly referred to as tuk-tuk		
<i>Twowheelers</i>	Two-wheeled motor driven vehicles. This involves both subtypes of scooters and motors, when specifically focussed mentioned in category extra		
<i>Trucks</i>	Wheeled vehicle meant for moving heavy articles		
<i>Vans</i>	Multipurpose enclosed motor vehicle having a boxlike shape, rear or side doors, and side panels.		
<i>Undefined</i>	1. Focus business is not specifically for one type of vehicle (gas stations, audio/videosystems, cushions, tyres, lubricants, etc.)		
	2. Focus of business is on more than three types/all kind of vehicles (for example twowheelers, threewheelers, cars, trucks)		
	3. Focus vehicle type is unclear (case with some spare parts shops)		
Type shop			
<i>Dealer</i>	Selling point for complete vehicles		
<i>Lease</i>	Long-term rental of vehicles		
<i>Multiple service center</i>	Larger centers involving more than two different activities (e.g. gas station, service center & workshop)		
<i>Other</i>	Gas stations, vehicle emission testing center		
<i>Rental</i>	Short-term rental of vehicles		
<i>Selling point</i>	Retail of products related to automotive business, such as spare parts, oil, lubricants, etc. Specific focus mentioned in Extra when applicable		
<i>Service center</i>	Focus on light maintenance tasks, such as car-wash and lubricants		
<i>Tires</i>	Selling point with explicit focus on tires		
<i>Workshop</i>	Focus on more technical tasks, such as repairs, parts replacement, etc.		
<i>Workshop/scrapyard</i>	Unclear whether workshop or scrapyard		
Size			
	<i>Selling point/tires</i>	<i>Workshop/service center</i>	<i>Dealer/lease/rental</i>
<i>Small</i>	Floor business approximately <10m ²	Floor business approximately <10m ²	Floor business approximately <20m ²
<i>Medium</i>	Floor business approximately between 10m ² and 15m ²	Floor business approximately between 10m ² and 20m ²	Floor business approximately between 20m ² and 30m ²
<i>Big</i>	Floor business approximately between 15m ² and 25m ²	Floor business approximately between 20m ² and 30m ²	Floor business approximately between 30m ² and 40m ²
<i>Extra big</i>	Floor business >25m ²	Floor business >30m ²	Floor business >40m ²

Register companies automotive industry Polonnaruwa

Nr. ³⁴	Vehicle focus	Shop type	Shop size
1	Twowheelers	Dealer	Small
2	Agricultural	Dealer	Medium
3	Twowheelers	Dealer	Medium
4	Twowheelers	Dealer	Small
5	Twowheelers	Dealer	Medium
6	Agricultural	Dealer	Medium
7	Trucks + pick-ups	Dealer	Medium
<u>8</u>	Twowheelers	Dealer	Medium
9	Twowheelers	Dealer	Medium
10	Twowheelers	Dealer	Medium
11	Twowheelers	Dealer	Small
12	Agricultural	Dealer	Small
13	Agricultural	Dealer	Big
14	Cars	Dealer	Small
15	Cars	Dealer	Medium
16	Twowheelers + agricultural	Dealer	Medium
17	Twowheelers	Dealer	Medium
18	Cars	Dealer	Small
19	Agricultural	Dealer + rental	Medium
20	Twowheelers + threewheelers	Dealer + selling point	Medium
21	Cars	Dealer + selling point	Medium
22	Twowheelers	Dealer + selling point	Medium
23	Twowheelers	Dealer + selling point	Medium
24	Twowheelers	Dealer + selling point	Medium
25	Twowheelers	Dealer + selling point	Medium
26	Twowheelers	Lease	Medium
27	Agricultural	Lease	Small
28	Undefined	Multiple service center	Medium
29	Undefined	Multiple service center	Extra big
30	Trucks	Selling point	Small
31	Undefined	Selling point	Small
32	Undefined	Selling point	Small
33	Undefined	Selling point	Medium
34	Undefined	Selling point	Small
35	Twowheelers	Selling point	Small
36	Undefined	Selling point	Medium
<u>37</u>	Undefined	Selling point	Medium
38	Threewheelers	Selling point	Medium
39	Twowheelers	Selling point	Medium
40	Undefined	Selling point	Small

³⁴ Numbers that appear in bold (**3**, **13**, etc.) are those selected randomly. The numbers that appear with a line (8, 37, etc.) are those randomly selected within specific categories. See paragraph 4.1 for further explanation.

41	Undefined	Selling point	Small
42	Undefined	Selling point	Small
43	Trucks	Selling point	Small
44	Undefined	Selling point	Medium
45	Cars	Selling point	Small
46	Threewheelers	Selling point	Small
47	Undefined	Selling point	Small
48	Undefined	Selling point	Small
49	Undefined	Selling point	Medium
50	Undefined	Selling point	Small
51	Undefined	Selling point	Small
52	Undefined	Selling point	Small
53	Undefined	Selling point	Small
54	Undefined	Selling point	Small
55	Twowheelers	Selling point	Small
56	Agricultural	Selling point	Medium
57	Twowheelers	Selling point	Medium
58	Undefined	Selling point	Small
59	Twowheelers	Selling point + workshop	Big
60	Cars	Selling point + workshop	Small
61	Undefined	Selling point + workshop	Medium
62	Undefined	Service point	Big
63	Cars	Service point	Big
64	Cars	Service point	Medium
65	Undefined	Tires	Medium
66	Undefined	Tires	Small
67	Undefined	Tires	Big
68	Undefined	Tires	Big
69	Undefined	Tires	Medium
70	Undefined	Tires	Big
<u>71</u>	Undefined	Tires + workshop	Medium
72	Undefined	Tires + workshop	Medium
73	Undefined	Tires + workshop	Big
74	Undefined	Tires + workshop	Extra big
75	Undefined	Tires + workshop	Medium
76	Undefined	Tires + workshop	Small
77	Undefined	Tires + workshop	Small
78	Undefined	Tires + workshop	Medium
79	Undefined	Workshop	Small
<u>80</u>	Threewheelers	Workshop	Small
81	Agricultural + busses	Workshop	Medium
82	Trucks	Workshop	Small
83	Twowheelers	Workshop	Medium
84	Trucks	Workshop	Medium

85	Trucks + busses	Workshop	Medium
86	Vans	Workshop	Medium
87	Twowheelers	Workshop	Small
88	Twowheelers	Workshop	Small
89	Undefined	Workshop	Small
90	Trucks + busses	Workshop	Medium
91	Trucks + busses	Workshop	Medium
92	Cars + trucks	Workshop	Big
93	Twowheelers	Workshop	Small
94	Twowheelers	Workshop	Small
95	Undefined	Workshop	Small
96	Cars	Workshop	Small
97	Trucks + busses + vans	Workshop	Big
98	Twowheelers	Workshop	Small
99	Twowheelers	Workshop	Small
100	Twowheelers + cars	Workshop	Medium
101	Twowheelers	Workshop	Small
102	Trucks + busses	Workshop	Medium
103	Threewheelers	Workshop	Extra big
104	Threewheelers	Workshop	Big
105	Twowheelers	Workshop	Small
106	Undefined	Workshop	Small
107	Cars + trucks	Workshop	Extra big
108	Undefined	Workshop	Small
109	Twowheelers	Workshop	Small
110	Threewheelers	Workshop	Small
111	Twowheelers	Workshop	Small
112	Threewheelers	Workshop	Small
113	Twowheelers	Workshop	Small
<u>114</u>	Trucks + busses	Workshop	Medium
115	Trucks	Workshop	Small
116	Cars	Workshop	Small
117	Threewheelers	Workshop	Medium
118	Trucks	Workshop	Medium
119	Twowheelers	Workshop	Medium
120	Trucks + busses	Workshop	Medium
121	Cars	Workshop	Medium
122	Cars	Workshop	Medium
123	Cars	Workshop	Small
124	Twowheelers	Workshop	Small
125	Twowheelers	Workshop	Small
126	Undefined	Workshop	Small
127	Twowheelers	Workshop	Small
128	Twowheelers	Workshop	Small

129	Cars	Workshop	Small
130	Threewheelers	Workshop	Small
131	Cars	Workshop	Medium
132	Twowheelers	Workshop	Small
133	Twowheelers	Workshop	Small
134	Threewheelers	Workshop	Small
135	Cars	Workshop	Big
136	Twowheelers	Workshop + selling point	Small
137	Undefined	Workshop + selling point	Small
138	Threewheelers + twowheelers	Workshop + selling point	Big
139	Cars	Workshop/scrapyard	Medium
140	Trucks + busses	Workshop/scrapyard	Big
<u>141</u>	Cars + vans	Workshop	Medium

Appendix 4: outline survey employers & employees automotive business

General information

1. Name.....
2. Age.....
3. Sex: m/f
4. Function:.....

Opening

5. How long are you currently working in this business? (years)
6. Why do you work here/ how ended up?

Economic conjuncture

7. How is business going?
8. How is going compared to last year?
9. Expect the business to grow or decline? What are trends?

Required skills/education:

10. What education received?
11. Where did you learn skills necessary for the job?
12. How look towards official certificates?
13. Are there bottlenecks getting decent skilled employees?

Skills gap:

14. What are common reparations/actions that cannot undertake?
15. Would like to receive more training? In what?

Absorption power:

16. How many people work in enterprise?
17. Looking for employees?
18. If yes: what does the employee need?

Working conditions:

19. Do you like your work?
20. How does the work pay?
21. What are downsides to work?

Aspirations

22. Where do you want to be in 5 years? And in 10 years?

Attitudes towards migration

23. Want to stay in Polonnaruwa? Or live/work somewhere else?

Finishing

24. Anything/remarks you would like to add to the questions above?
25. Any questions for me?

Appendix 5: outline survey youth on work

General information

1. Name..... 2. Age..... 3. Sex: m/f

General occupation

4. Are you currently at school/studying? Yes/No If yes: what?

5. Are you currently working? Yes/No If yes: what?

6. What is highest finished education?

7. What work do your parents do?

Mother.....

Father.....

Aspirations

7. What would your preferred job be?

Why? What are important aspects in job?

8. What job do you think you will have?

Why?

9. Where (location) would you like to work?

Why?

10. Where think will work?

Why?

11. How much money want to earn on a daily/monthly basis when starting?

12. How much money is necessary for a decent living on a daily/monthly basis?

Attitudes towards automotive industry

13. What do you think of working as a manual labourer in the automotive industry?

14. Would you like to do this work? Why yes/no?

Optional: do you want to follow a tertiary education course? In what? Where?

Hypotheses	Yes	Neutral	No	Why?
A. Money is the most important aspect of employment				
B. Social status is the most important aspect of employment				
C. It is important to start earning right away when starting work				
D. It is important to have a clean job				
E. It is important to work on a computer				
F. It is important to work with air conditioning				
G. It is important to go to work in a suit				
H. Following a course (tertiary education) is necessary to find a good job				

I. Having a job with a pension scheme is important				
J. Having a job with job security is important				
K. Being one's own boss is important				
L. Working at a big company is important				
M. If I can, I want to go abroad for work				
N. Working in a big city is better than working in Polonnaruwa				
N. I want to stay in Polonnaruwa for work				
M. I want to stay in Sri Lanka for work				
L. The size of the company where I work is not important				
K. I do not want to have my own business				
J. Job security is not important for me				
I. A pension scheme is not important for me				
H. Tertiary education is not necessary finding a good job				
G. I don't care how I look when working/going to work				
F. Working without air conditioning is fine by me				
E. I want to work with my hands				
D. I do not care if I get dirty while working				
C. I am fine with not being paid while learning my job for 6-12 months				
B. It is important that people respect me for the work that I do				
A. I do any kind of job as long as the money is good				

13. Anything/remarks you would like to add to the questions above?

.....

14. Any questions for me?

.....

Appendix 6: table of SLR to EUR conversion rates

In the period of August 2017 until August 2018, the exchange rate of 1 EUR ranged between 175 to 195 SLR. In this table, the conversion rate used is conveniently put at 185 SLR.

General	
SLR	EUR
185	1
1.000	5,4
10.000	54
100.000	540
1.000.000	5.400
1.000.000.000	5.400.000

Vehicle prices estimates		
	SLR	EUR
New motorcycle	250.000	1.350
Threewheeler price India	350.000	1.890
Threewheeler price Sri Lanka	750.000	4.050
Second-hand car A-brand, new car B-brand	2.000.000	10.810

Living costs & salaries (monthly)		
	SLR	EUR
Official poverty line	4.500	24
Estimated cost of living 1 person low	17.500	95
Estimated cost of living 1 person medium	25.000	135
Estimated cost of living 1 person high	30.000	160
Estimated cost of living 4 persons low	50.000	270
Estimated cost of living 4 persons medium	57.500	310
Estimated cost of living 4 persons high	70.000	380
Wage automotive low	15.000	81
Wage automotive medium	30.000	162
Wage automotive high	55.000	295