

COMICS AND MIGRATION

Representation and Other Practices

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CONTRACTS VIA COMICS

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This chapter examines a particular type of comics that use a practice designed to overcome language barriers, namely *comic contracts*¹ that have been created for Myanmar and Cambodian migrants who work in the Thai fishing industry. The term “comic contract” refers to legally binding contracts where the parties in the contract are represented as characters and where the contract terms are communicated mainly visually (Haapio et al. 2016, 376–377). Comic contracts represent the contents of the contract with illustrations and other visual means and employ plain language in combination with the illustrations so that the document can be understood by people with low literacy or foreign-language skills. In other words, comic contracts aim to improve vulnerable people’s access to information, or, in legal terms, one’s *access to justice*. Furthermore, the visuality of a comic contract invites people to engage with the information and helps readers understand and remember its contents (Kalliomaa-Puha et al. 2023 [forthcoming]). In recent years, comics have been increasingly used as a legitimate method of visual communication in various fields of practice, such as medicine (e.g. Farthing and Priego 2016; Green and Myers 2010), technical communication (e.g. Yu 2015), law (Haapio et al. 2016; Botes 2017; Pitkäsalo and Kalliomaa-Puha 2019; Pitkäsalo 2020), and social welfare (Pitkäsalo et al. 2022).

Comic contracts are typically presented to the signing parties in print form. This chapter will also touch on the deployment of comic contracts via a new online contracting platform where the comic contract is presented in an audio-visual format with virtual camera movement, which takes the reader through the contract. In addition, the digital version includes a voice-over narration in different languages, which aims to assist readers with poor or non-existent reading skills. In this chapter, we refer to this type of comic contract as *audio-visual contracts*, a term established by Colette R. Brunschwig (2019).

The comic contract examined in this chapter² is created for migrants from Myanmar and Cambodia who work for the Thai fishing industry, where poor working conditions and human rights violations have been widely reported. One of the several problems in the industry has to do with employment contracts. The Thai government has issued a standardised employment contract to be used in the industry, but no statistics exist on how often the contracts are actually provided. According to a Human Rights Watch (2018, 103) report on the working conditions of migrants, only one individual interviewed for the report could recall signing an employment contract; most others had concluded that they had been required to sign some documents but had not understood what they were for, and none of the interviewees had received a written copy of the papers they signed. In other words, even if migrants are given a contract to sign, they often do not understand its contents due to poor foreign-language and literacy skills. The document is written in contract-language jargon and is only available in Thai and English (the latter presumably serving for purposes of international human rights investigation). In addition, as stated in a report by Plan International Thailand (2020, 34), migrant workers often come from socioeconomically disadvantaged groups, and hence many have low literacy levels.

The contract cannot benefit the worker if they do not understand it. For instance, many are unaware that they are entitled to a decent amount of rest, or food and drinking water provided by the employer at no extra cost; these rights are often violated, as we discuss further in the chapter. The Human Rights Watch (2018, 9) report recommends that “Employers should be required to fully explain to workers their rights and the terms and conditions of work before they sign a contract”, and this needs to be done “in a language [the migrants] understand”. The comic contract discussed in this chapter aims to carry out this requirement.

The comic contract is available in four languages: Burmese, Cambodian,³ Thai, and English. The audio-visual version of the comic contract is offered in Burmese and Cambodian – the languages of the migrant workers. In comparison to the employment contracts offered to this group of workers in the past, this particular contract aims to afford the employee the dignity of autonomously understanding their rights during employment. The comic contract has been produced by Creative Contracts (Pty) Ltd,⁴ a South African company focused on creating visual- and audio-based contracts. The aim is for the comic contract, in both printed and audio-visual forms, to become the industry standard for transparent contracting of vulnerable migrant workers on all vessels that supply Thai Union PLC, which is one of the largest seafood companies in the world. The comic contract has the potential to improve working conditions for a great number of people: there are over 42,000 fishing vessels and approximately 200,000 fishers working in the industry, most of whom are migrants (USAID 2018, 7). However, Thai Union cannot impose comic contracts on the vessel owners, so their uptake will depend on how well they perform in the first field tests, that is, the first, monitored situations of actual use.⁵ The field tests will be carried out with the Thai and Burmese versions

of the comic contract; the Cambodian version will be finalised after receiving field test feedback.

Comic contracts are an example of how versatile comics are as a communication medium. Different types of comics employ different genre-specific means in their expression: instructive comics follow the typical form of instructions, and the structure of comic contracts resembles the fragmentary structure of contracts. Comics can include sequences that build narratives as well as sequences where narration is of secondary importance (Lefèvre 2000); they can include sequences of images that easily translate into narratives as well as sequences of images that are (seemingly) disparately juxtaposed, as well as anything in between (Groensteen 2014). Regardless of whether a comic contract offers clear narratives or not, the reader typically intends to parse its contents into some type of a cohesive whole.

Comic contracts are legal documents. They lay out the contract parties' roles, rights, and responsibilities, and offer clarity and protection by being as unambiguous as possible. In this chapter, we examine how the creators of the comic contract have used visual resources to create a document that is comprehensible by its users and able to fulfil its function in legal knowledge exchange. The overall aim of the chapter is to reflect on how the comic contract can benefit those workers who sign it. We do this by examining what has been included in the contract in the first place and how the contract has been made more comprehensible with visual means.

Background of the Thai fishing industry

Seafood is one of Thailand's largest industrial sectors, with annual exports valued at 5.8 billion USD (SeafoodSource 2019). The industry mainly runs on a migrant workforce, with most of the workers being from Myanmar and Cambodia (Mutaqin 2018, 81). There is ample evidence that a significant number of these workers experience work conditions that violate human rights and labour rights. For instance, according to a recent report published by Plan International Thailand in 2020, migrants regularly encounter unfair wage payment, withholding of wages, daily physical violence, emotional abuse, dangerous working conditions, and excessive working hours. According to a 2017 survey of Thai fishing industry workers conducted by the Issara Institute, over 74 percent of the respondents reported working at least 16 hours per day.

Due to an entrenched system of "agents" and transport costs, recruitment into the fishing industry involves high fees that need to be covered by the worker. Many are unable to pay in advance and are forced to take out loans from local money lenders, brokers, or boat owners. According to the Issara Institute report (2017, 7), 76 percent of those surveyed had been in debt bondage. Furthermore, employers often have control over workers' bank books and ATM cards, and migrant workers may not be able to track the debt repayments made from their salary; therefore, they may not know how much they still owe (Lindgren et al. 2019, 8). Transnational travel to the workplace is regularly arranged at night and/or via irregular, hazardous routes in order to avoid police checkpoints, and migrants may face demands for

bribes and additional payments. Many find themselves being held in confinement at transit places, and being subjected to physical abuse by traffickers; the confiscation of personal documents such as passports and work permits is not uncommon.

The comic contract was commissioned by Thai Union Group PLC. In 2017, Thai Union introduced a Fishing Vessel Improvement Program and Vessel Code of Conduct. The program was designed to provide clear guidance about working conditions on board the vessels which Thai Union sources from, in order to ensure that they do not engage in forced labour, slavery, child labour, and discrimination. A subsequent third-party audit⁶ of their suppliers revealed, *inter alia*, that the migrant workers' contracts did not have the required content, record-keeping was not adequate, and that crews did not understand their contracts due to language barriers or low literacy levels. Thai Union approached Creative Contracts to develop a comic contract and audio-visual contract for vessel owners to use with their workers to address these contract concerns. Thai Union requested that the comic contract be produced in Burmese and Cambodian, which are by far the major migrant languages in the industry, as well as in Thai language for the employee side.

The fundamental starting point dictating the conditions for fishery employment contracts in Thailand is the *Ministerial Regulation concerning Labour Protection in Sea Fishery Work B.E.2557 (2014)* (hereafter referred to as the “Ministerial Regulation”), issued by the Ministry of Labour of the Thai government. It aims to strengthen legal protection for employees in the fishing industry and prevent human trafficking. The key points of the Ministerial Regulation include the prohibition of employment of persons under 18 years of age, the description of the minimum hours of rest, and the provision for drinking water, toilets, and medical supplies, to mention a few.

Based on this regulation, a bilingual (Thai-English) contract has been made for public use by the Thai government, titled *Sea Fishery Work Employment Contract* (hereafter referred to as “Employment Contract”). As concluded in a report published by the International Labour Organization (ILO 2020, 37), the fact that this contract is not available in the workers' native languages – and is hence typically not understood by the workers – is highly problematic. Both the Ministerial Regulation and the Employment Contract were used as the basis for the comic version of the contract.

Producing the comic contract

The development of comic contracts is collaborative and transdisciplinary, with contributions from illustrators, designers, and lawyers. The production team at Creative Contracts follows a structured process to create comic contracts. The first step is to establish what terms are contained in the client's typical verbal-only contract. However, the verbal-only contracts are often incomplete or deficient, whether by design or neglect, and often require updating to comply with relevant laws. The second step is to then get the client's agreement on the terms that will be

included in the comic contract. The decision is often delicate, as using terms that are too prescriptive could result in the new comic contract facing resistance unrelated to its key features of easy comprehension and transparency. The transparency of the comic contract often motivates a client to drop or tone down very onerous clauses that would escape the same level of scrutiny in a language contract. In their report on contract transparency, Shmuel I. Becher and Uri Benoliel (2021, 45) conclude that people perform at higher standards when they know that others can observe, monitor, and criticise their behaviour. Contract transparency, therefore, can encourage accountability and fairness (Becher and Benoliel 2021, 45).

The terms of the contract are then interpreted in a script, which is basically a description of the images, text, and layout to best represent the terms. The script is tested with the client before the following stage, which is a rough illustration of the terms, referred to as *scamps*. Once all parties are happy with the scamps, the images are worked up with finer lines, referred to as *inks*. Once the client is happy with the inks, the client is asked to test the inks with a sample of intended users, to see whether the interpretations and visualisations are understood as intended, and that no cultural or other errors have been made. After this stage, the images get coloured and finally enhanced with shading to create a subtle three-dimensional aspect.

Signing a contract is a serious moment, especially for the vulnerable user. The process of making the contract more approachable can mean including one or two mildly humorous images: the team at Creative Contracts has learned that such images, even if it is just a facial expression that elicits a smile from the user, goes a long way to help users relate to the contract, identify with the characters in the contract and put the users more at ease with the process. It also makes the provision and the contract more memorable to the users.

The register used in the different language versions of the comic contract is slightly colloquial; the team has learned from past projects that sworn translations (officially accepted translations of a legal document or any document that needs to be accepted in a legal situation) are likely to baffle the users with their complex language. In other words, the text produced for the comic version of the contract has been modified so that it is more linguistically accessible for a readership with varied levels of reading proficiency. Where the original contract is written partly in the passive tense, partly addressing the reader distantly in the third person (e.g. “The employee shall completely perform his/her duties with accuracy”), the comic version of the contract addresses the reader in the second singular and the first plural tenses (“Do your work the right way”).

Structure and contents of the comic contract

The comic contract is produced in four languages: Burmese, Cambodian, Thai, and English. The audio-visual version of the comic contract is produced for the Burmese and Cambodian translations – the languages of the migrant workers. The Thai version is for the employers, and the English is the baseline version made by

the English-speaking comic contract production team for internal and compliance purposes; it is not used on the fishing vessels. The voice-over in the audio-visual version of the comic contract narrates the contract clauses verbatim, so as not to create dissonance between the text and the voice-over. This serves to give a sense of consistency and reliability to the user, so that they can feel confident about what they see and hear. While the clauses are narrated verbatim, the voice-over includes additional language in between the parts of the contract text (e.g. “We now turn to the next page”) to guide the user and to smooth the flow of the voice-over.

The process of signing the contract unfolds as follows: The employee is first presented with the audio-visual version of the contract. In the beginning of the audio-visual contract video, the employee is told that they may raise their hand at any time if they do not understand something or if they have questions, and that sections of the video can be replayed if needed. After the audio-visual contract has been digitally signed, the employee receives a link to an audio-visual version of their personal contract, which they can view at any time, and a pdf version of their personal contract, which they can view, download, and print as needed.

The comic contract has 16 pages (in comparison, the traditional contract used as its basis has two pages). It starts with a cover page with the words “Thai fishing vessel | Employment contract”, accompanied by a nearly full-page image of an employee boarding a vessel. The contract then presents a table of contents, which improves navigation of the document. The actual contents of the contract start with the presentation of the contract parties, the worker who signs the contract (the character in the red shirt in the figures below), and the employer (the character in the yellow shirt in Figures 4.2 and 4.3), and their personal data and contact information. The contract then introduces the employee’s job position and job activities, as well as the vessel and the geographical area in which the employee will work.

The document then introduces the duration of the contract, the amount of pay, and the payment schedule. This part of the contract also includes a separate info box that says, “You will be paid via ATM”, with an image of an ATM card and the worker at an ATM machine withdrawing a stack of bills, and lines where bank and card details are to be added. The inclusion of this section can improve the worker’s awareness of the fact that the bank card should legally be in their own possession, contrary to the general custom described earlier.

The following section of the contract introduces the working hours by describing the amount of rest and holidays the worker is entitled to have, and then describes what happens if the worker gets sick or injured (see Figure 4.3). The next section displays what the worker is entitled to receive on the boat (see Figure 4.2). The contract then outlines the duties of the worker and the behaviour that is expected of them on the boat. Finally, it explains that in unexpected situations (the worker getting injured, the vessel sinking, and so on), the employer has to pay for or take the worker back to the location where they were recruited. This section also includes, in large print, two government hotline numbers the worker can call if they are mistreated. The visual emphasis given to these phone numbers is well justified: according to a survey conducted by the International Labour Organization

in 2020, only 3 percent of workers knew that there was a phone number they could call in case they were mistreated (ILO 2020). The last page is reserved for the signatures of both contract parties, and the back cover mentions Creative Contracts as the creator of the document and the names of the documents used as its basis.

In the audio-visual version of the comic contract, a virtual camera movement takes the reader through the contract pages. What the reader sees on the computer screen are static images of the comic contract pages, first as entire pages, then zoomed in on specific details. In general, audio-visual contracts carry the potential to guide the reading and to attract the reader's focus towards the most essential contents with panning and zooming. For this reason, audio-visual contracts can be less ambiguous than regular comic contracts.

From word to image

In this section of the chapter, we examine three examples from the comic contract. Each example is examined from two different perspectives. In the first place, we compare the comic contract with its source materials, namely, the Ministerial Regulation and the Employment Contract currently used in the industry. Our discussion aims to show that the comic contract displays the contents of the Ministerial Regulation more accurately than the Employment Contract, from which certain essential contents have been omitted. We also show examples of content that has been added to the comic contract in order to guarantee the actualisation of the employees' rights beyond the current local laws. Second, we analyse the ways in which the verbal content has been converted into visual form in ways that aim to support comprehension. In particular, we examine the need to restructure information as well as different visual means that have been used to convey temporality and causality.

Our first example is the visual translation of the sentence "Sometimes you may be asked to work in your rest time, but you will be given time to rest after" (Figure 4.1). This information is presented in the Ministerial Regulation but not in the Employment Contract. The International Labour Organization's report mentions that having to work on call at any time, seven days a week, is one of the prevalent forms of involuntary work on the vessels (ILO 2020, 27).

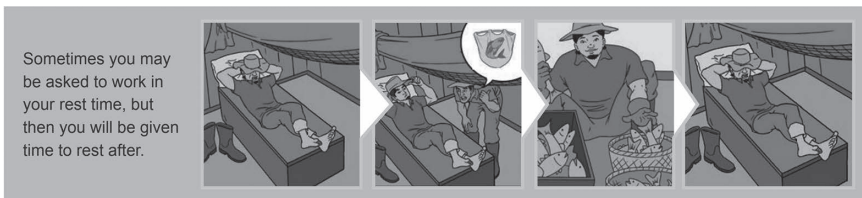


FIGURE 4.1 Excerpt describing a situation in which the employee is asked to work during his rest period, *Thai Fishing Vessel Employment Contract*, Creative Contracts (Pty) Ltd.

Source: Creative Contracts (Pty) Ltd. and Thai Union Group PCL. Reproduced with kind permission.

The source sentence presents a possible situation and its outcome at a future point in time. The visual translation of this sentence is a strip of four panels: A man (who has in the first pages of the comic contract been identified as the worker who signs the contract) is resting on a bed with a hat over his eyes. Another man arrives to interrupt his rest and says something; a speech bubble displays the iconic image of a fish in a fishing net. The worker then handles fish, perhaps sorting them by size. Finally, the worker rests again.

The semantic content of the source sentence (being asked to work while resting, then resting again) corresponds to the second and the fourth panels of the strip. However, these two panels alone are not quite enough to fully convey the sentence visually; instead, a small narrative has been created in which temporal points of reference (the first and third panels) have been added. The first panel (the man resting) emphasises the idea that the man is indeed resting *before* the interruption arrives. The third panel (the man sorting fish) is needed to fully contextualise the action that takes place in the final, fourth panel (resting *after* work). The source sentence presents a possible situation and its outcome at a future point in time. The visual expression is grounded in the “present”; it offers very limited means to convey temporality. Referring to different points in time needs to be done by adding panels that construct a narrative. The white arrows between the panels add to the narrative effect, guiding the reader from one state of action to the next.

To aid interpretation, the comic contract includes verbal information where necessary – based on the images alone, the worker might misinterpret this part of the contract (in the case of this strip, for instance, it may not be unambiguously clear what the speech bubble with the iconic fish image refers to). The voice-over that reads the corresponding verbal information in the worker’s own native language significantly improves the document’s comprehensibility for a low-proficiency reader and diminishes possibilities for false interpretations.

Naturally, not all types of verbal content need to be presented as visual narratives in the comic. As our second example, we analyse a different type of visual solution, an entire comic contract page (Figure 4.2), including individual panels. This comic contract page shows a collection of parts of the Ministerial Regulation and the Employment Contract that are thematically linked; they all present things that are provided to the employees on the vessel. The title of the page is “what will we give you on the boat?” There are nine list items in total: for instance, clean drinkable water, healthy food, toilets, and training in the use of tools and equipment and safety procedures. The final panel on the page includes the word “Other”, followed by dotted lines to be filled out in case any additional inclusions are needed.

Further, one piece of information has been added to the page: unlike the source materials, the comic contract states that the employer must provide the worker with “a safe and healthy place to sleep”, which can reasonably be considered as a basic human right for an employee. According to the International Labour Organization report (ILO 2020, 23), only 17 percent of the surveyed workers had a bed of their own on the vessel. As the Employment Contract that is currently used does not require employers to provide beds, they have been under no obligation to do so.

7. What will we give you on the boat?

Clean drinkable water

Healthy food

Toilets/place to wash

Medicine/First Aid Kit

Tools and equipment for you to work safely

Information on working conditions and how to stay safe and healthy

A way to talk with family or others

A safe and healthy place to sleep

Training on the tools and equipment

Other:

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FIGURE 4.2 Excerpt depicting what the employee is entitled to receive on the vessel, *Thai Fishing Vessel Employment Contract*, Creative Contracts (Pty) Ltd.

Source: Creative Contracts (Pty) Ltd. and Thai Union Group PCL. Reproduced with kind permission.

The information included on this comic contract page is mentioned here and there in the source documents. The decision to collect it on one page conveniently condenses information into a single place. The title works as introductory wording to all the panels. The thematic assembly of this information also makes it easier for the reader to grasp it at a glance. If examined in terms of comics theory, the page could be viewed as what Thierry Groensteen (2014, 171) describes as an *inventory* of images: a set of juxtaposed images that are drawn from the same thematic repertoire (“things that I am entitled to receive on the vessel”). Unlike the previous example, there is no narrative being built between the individual images, but the images can be interpreted as belonging together.

Our third example deals with a part of the comic contract that presents the employee’s rights in case they get sick or injured (Figure 4.3). The information presented in this example is not included in the Employment Contract presently used in the industry. The Ministerial Regulation includes the information regarding the length of sick leave and wages during sick leave, but the information regarding the employee’s and their families’ right to compensation in cases of permanent disability or death has been added. This is another example of how the comic

What happens if I get sick or injured?



If you get sick or injured on the boat you will be taken ashore for professional medical care, when necessary.



Some of your medical costs will be paid for by your employer or the government.

You will still be paid for the days when you were too sick to work, up to 30 days a year.

If you lose a limb or your sight or die while working, you and your family have the right to compensation.

FIGURE 4.3 Excerpt depicting a situation where the employee is injured and/or ill, *Thai Fishing Vessel Employment Contract*, Creative Contracts (Pty) Ltd.

Source: Creative Contracts (Pty) Ltd. and Thai Union Group PCL. Reproduced with kind permission.

contract can improve the ability of the fishing industry employees to understand their rights. Working in the fishing industry imposes significant risks for worker safety and health. According to the workers surveyed in the 2020 International Labour Organization report, 30 percent stated that within the past five years they had experienced work injuries or illnesses that required medical attention and required them to take time away from work. The most common of these injuries were slips, falls, cuts, and lacerations (ILO 2020, 20–21).

This example includes both panels that combine into a narrative and panels that are separate. The top three panels – visually interconnected by the slanted panel edges that are missing from the panels in the bottom row – are a separate strip that forms a narrative: the employee has hurt his arm; the employer takes him to the hospital; a doctor dresses the wound. Unlike our first example earlier, creating the visual narrative has not required additional panels.

The bottom row displays three separate panels that introduce other information related to injuries and sickness (the employer paying a hospital fee; a banknote as well as a calendar with 30 days marked in blue, juxtaposed over an image of the employee lying in bed, looking sick; the employee with an amputated arm as well as a banknote, juxtaposed over an image of his family members crying while looking at a frame – assumably the man’s photo – suggesting the man has deceased). The gutters on the bottom row differ from the upper row on purpose: the broader gutters between the bottom panels aim to indicate that these panels are to be interpreted as separate. If one were to interpret the bottom panels as a narrative, misinterpretations might result (for instance, one might think that the employee is only entitled to paid sick leave after an injury, as opposed to a sickness of any sort). Again, the voice-over ensures that readers with a low level of reading proficiency understand this information correctly.

The last two panels with smaller insets – images overlapping a larger one – demonstrate that representing *causality* is not as visually straightforward as it is verbally. In the middle panel, there are smaller, juxtaposed insets (banknote, calendar page of a month) over a larger background image (man lying in bed looking sick). It was the production team’s intention to depict the inset images as the *result* of the situation depicted in the background image (e.g. paid sick leave resulting from an illness), but the precise relationship between the images needs to be described verbally.

The final panel, however, does not follow the same visual logic. A similar inset image of a banknote is presented in the same panel with two other images: the man with the amputated arm in a small, superimposed image, as well as the larger background image of the family members crying. Two blue arrows point from the banknote to the two other images. The banknote represents the idea of financial compensation, and the arrows indicate to whom the compensation will go (to the worker himself if he is alive, and to his family if he is deceased). This solution has perhaps resulted in there being too much semantic content in one panel, so that it may be difficult to understand. The two semantically equal scenarios of *getting injured* or *dying* in the source sentence are not visually translated as equal. The solution of presenting one scenario superimposed over the other might be confusing, especially

without the clarifying voice-over. On the other hand, the relative image size of the death scenario can be interpreted as the death being a greater tragedy than the injury.

The way forward: an industry-wide change

The prevention of labour exploitation within the Thai fishing industry requires action on various fronts. As the report by the Issara Institute (Issara Institute and International Justice Mission 2017, 33–34) concludes, the Royal Thai Government is responsible for enforcing the laws surrounding the industry and proactively investigating and punishing systematic violations of criminal and labour law. The report maintains that, on an international level, buyers and retailers of Thai foods have an important role in encouraging the Thai government to establish a robust framework and support the fishing industry to implement necessary changes. The report also encourages media, advocacy groups, and consumers to apply pressure on global brands by tracing their supply chains, in order to affect the sourcing decisions of multinational corporations worried about a potential loss of brand value (Issara Institute and International Justice Mission 2017).

The Human Rights Watch report (2018, 8–9) remarks that labour inspectors working with the industry need better tools to help them investigate working conditions in the industry and spot indications of forced labour; they also need more interpreters in order to properly dialogue with workers. The report also acknowledges the language gap regarding employment contracts: a contract written in Thai and in legal jargon is not accessible to migrant workers and thus does not improve their access to justice.

In this chapter, we have discussed a measure that has been introduced as an attempt to bridge this comprehension gap: the comic contract presents contract information in the migrant workers' native languages in an audio format (as opposed to written text only, which is inaccessible to poor readers), in simple language (as opposed to contract jargon), and, most importantly, in a visual format that aims to support comprehension of the contents. In addition, the comic contract aims to further improve the rights of workers with the inclusion of information that is mentioned in the Ministerial Regulation but missing in the Employment Contract, as well as details that are not, strictly speaking, required by local law, such as the right of employees and their families to compensation in cases of permanent disability or death.

By making the contract contents more comprehensible, the comic contract has the potential to improve workers' access to justice by informing them of what they are entitled to and how they need to act in case their rights are violated. In general, the transparency of a contract makes it harder for contract parties to engage in unethical behaviour (Becher and Benoliel 2021, 45–46). Yet, implementing such an innovation in such a large, corrupt industry is not a straightforward operation. The field tests will provide the first insights into the reception of the comic contract. The comic contract can potentially be an impetus for improvement of existing practices, but only time will tell if all the agents involved will take the steps that are necessary to achieve the required changes.

Notes

- 1 Even though the term *comics contract* may be more idiomatic with regard to current parlance in comics studies, where *comics* is regularly used as a singular noun, this chapter employs the term *comic contract* since that is the term established in all but one of the articles we use as references. In her work, Brunschwig (2019) employs the term *contract comic* and justifies this ordering of words by emphasising that *contract comic* is more aligned with the terminological orientation indicated by terms such as *contract design*. Our view is that both word orders make sense, but they display different orientations to the topic. In English (open) compound words, the first word describes the qualities and essence of the second. A *comic contract* is a *contract* that has the quality of being in a comics-style format; a *contract comic* is a *comic* that conveys the contents of a contract. Since the focus of our chapter is on the ability of the analysed document to improve the rights of its primary users, it makes sense for us to primarily examine it as a contract.
- 2 This chapter is a part of the “Graphic Justice” research project (2020–2024), funded by the Academy of Finland (decision number 333367).
- 3 The official name of the language is Khmer. However, within Thai society, the term *Khmer* is somewhat established to refer to long-established members of the Khmer minority in Thailand who do not experience a great deal of discrimination or obstacles in the country. In this article, we refer to the language spoken by Cambodian migrants as *Cambodian* to eliminate associations with the Khmer people per se.
- 4 Chapter author Robert de Rooy is the founder of Creative Contracts (Pty) Ltd and was involved in the process of creating the comic contract discussed here. This chapter, particularly the third section, is based on his insight into the production process.
- 5 At the time of writing the chapter in 2021, the global COVID-19 pandemic made the logistics of the field tests challenging to coordinate in Thailand. If things proceed as planned, they will be completed before the end of 2022.
- 6 The results of the audit are unpublished; they were shared with Creative Contracts during the project.

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