

## Semi-archives and interim archives: A history of the national wages council in Singapore

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### Abstrak

The National Wages Council (NWC) was the orchestra of Singapore's wage policy in the 1970s and 1980s. Our paper explores two key episodes in its history: its formation in February 1972 and its adoption of a high wage policy between 1979 and 1981 as part of Singapore's economic restructuring. We were able to draw upon partially declassified government records held at the National Archives of Singapore. Yet these records are incomplete and lacking in certain aspects as archival sources. We complemented them with other archival and published sources, including the oral history and writings of the NWC's longtime chairman, Lim Chong Yah. Our research urged us to conceptualize a pair of ideas, "semi-archives" and "interim archives," acknowledging the partiality of both archival and published sources in Singapore. The history of the NWC suggests a rethinking of the centrality of the documentary archive in the Western academic tradition. In Asian contexts like Singapore, a multi-archival approach is necessary for the writing of recent history. Singapore historians can work both modestly and imaginatively with a wider range of available historical sources, including archival, oral, and published sources.