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*Stitching Governance for Labour Rights. Towards Transnational Industrial Democracy?*, by Juliane Rainecke and Jimmy Donaghey. Cambridge University Press, 2023, pp. 260, ISBN 9781108764421.

In 2013, the collapse of the Rana Plaza factory complex in the Dakha (Bangladesh) caused the death of more than 1100 garment workers, and the injury of thousands more. Within the Rana Plaza complex operated suppliers to some of the most famous fashion brands. Just a few months before its collapse, working conditions within Rana Plaza had been certified as safe by audits conducted as parts of brands' voluntary corporate code of conducts. The Rana Plaza collapse highlighted the extremely unsafe conditions in which often workers in global supply chains have to work, as well as the ineffectiveness of voluntary code of conducts in addressing health and safety hazards.

The shock and indignation caused by the Rana Plaza disaster spurred a one-of-a-kind private regulatory initiative. Just three weeks after the Rana Plaza collapse, an alliance of trade unions and international NGOs signed a binding agreement with multiple fashion brands, the Bangladesh Accord for Fire and Building Safety ('Accord' henceforth). Financed by the brands, administered by a steering committee with equal representation for unions and brands, and chaired by the ILO, the Accord foresaw independent factory safety inspections, health and safety training, a remediation process for hazards and a complaint mechanism for workers. There is agreement that the Accord led to improvements in workers' safety in Bangladesh.

The book by Juliane Reinecke and Jimmy Donaghey investigates the dynamics that led to the signing of the Accord, and analyzes more broadly the responses to the Rana Plaza disaster to interrogate the conditions for the emergence of what the authors call 'transnational industrial democracy'. The book is based on several years of fieldwork in Bangladesh, with dozens of interviews and group meetings with different actors involved in the garment industry, and on the encounter between two different scholarly fields - industrial relations and organization theory.

After introducing their theoretical framework, the authors argue that the conditions for the emergence of the Accord lied in a 'representative alliance' between global unions and international NGOs, an alliance that compensated for each other's weaknesses. Unions and NGOs followed two different logics of representation, which became 'highly complementary' (p. 90) to achieve the Accord. Global Unions federations – IndustriAll and UNI – represented workers through their *structure*: they include among their affiliates Bangladeshi trade unions in the garment industry. Yet, union density in Bangladesh is low (at about 4 per cent), due to structural and institutional obstacles. NGOs such as the Clean Clothes Campaign and the Worker Rights Consortium represented workers through their *claims*, and focused their campaign on consumers, threatening brands' reputation. Yet, they lacked the democratic accountability to workers that unions can offer through their structure. It was thus the unions and NGOs joint effort that allowed for the Accord to be signed.

Reinecke and Donaghey investigates not only the success of the Accord, but also the challenges it encountered and its limitations. Some fashion brands from the US resisted a binding agreement, and promoted instead a competing voluntary initiative, the Alliance for Bangladesh Worker Safety. Beyond being non-binding, the Alliance also differed from the Accord in that it marginalized labour in its governance structure. While aiming for the same goals – increase workers' safety in the Bangladesh garment industry –

the two followed diverse logics. For instance, in the area of workers' compensation in case of factory closures, the Alliance pursued a short-term approach that relied 'on brands to act benevolently on behalf of workers' (p. 132). The Accord instead relied more on negotiations between Bangladeshi firms and workers. While the latter approach was slower, it was also aimed at capacity building for the future. Eventually, the Alliance was dissolved once it expired in 2018.

While the Accord was extended beyond 2018, it encountered increasing resistance in Bangladesh. This was due to the 'politics of exclusion' (Chapter 7) that characterized it. By design, the Accord excluded from its signatory parties both the brands' suppliers – Bangladeshi firms – which were the targets of regulation, and also the Bangladeshi government. This inevitably provoked tensions, and led to local competing regulatory initiatives, as well as to legal challenges against the Accord, which hampered its renewal. These issues are connected to the peculiar form of transnational industrial democracy that the Accord represents, one which is *market-driven*, as it relies on brands' economic power over their suppliers as the main enforcement mechanism of regulation. Here, however, lies a major contradiction of brands-led labour regulatory initiatives, which aim to tame some of the worst consequences of supply chains capitalism, while maintaining the conditions that led to them, i.e. the price squeeze that they exercise on their suppliers. This is the 'structured antagonism' that lies at the core of the supply chain relationship (p. 190).

This contradiction emerges clearly from another case study analyzed by the authors, the attempt to enhance workplace social dialogue in the Bangladesh garment industry as part of a project promoted by the Ethical Trade Initiative. In factories part of the project, non-union workplace social dialogue structures were created, providing a forum for workers to express their voice. Yet, 'representative structures were created with a view to maintaining control of suppliers by the brands, while taking the worst edges off labour rights violations. They certainly were not created as a mechanism to undermine the cost basis of the supply chain model' (p. 191).

The final chapter offers reflections on the contours of a possible transnational industrial democracy. While noting the positive developments brought by post Rana Plaza regulatory initiatives such as the Accord, the authors acknowledge that these are 'second-best' institutions. While better than no regulation at all, they suffer of structural limitations, connected to the asymmetrical power relations within supply chain capitalism. Thus, the authors argue, market-driven regulatory initiatives need to be complemented by other forms of regulation in buyer countries, such as the recent EU directive on corporate sustainability due diligence. While the book does not address the interaction of different regimes of global labour governance, it provides a compelling theoretical and empirical contribution on the possibilities and obstacles for the advancements of workers' rights along global supply chains.

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